

Christian Classics Ethereal Library

**Private Thoughts
Upon Religion and
a Christian
Life
Volume I**

William Beveridge



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Private Thoughts Upon Religion and a Christian Life; to which is Added the Necessity and Advantage of Frequent Communion. Volume I.

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Contents

Title Page	1
Prefatory Material	5
Introductory Essay.	5
Private Thoughts upon Religion Digested into Twelve Articles; with Practical Resolutions Formed Thereupon.	20
Contents.	21
Thoughts on Religion.	29
Introductory.	30
Article I.	33
Article II.	36
Article III.	53
Article IV.	55
Article V.	57
Article VI.	61
Article VII.	63
Article VIII.	65
Article IX.	73
Article X.	79
Article XI.	85
Article XII.	91
Resolutions	95
Resolutions Formed Upon the Foregoing Articles.	96
Introduction.	97
Resolution I.	98
Resolution II.	99
Resolution III.	100

Concerning My Conversion in General.	102
Introduction.	102
Resolution I.	103
Resolution II.	104
Resolution III.	106
Concerning My Thoughts.	107
Introduction.	108
Resolution I.	109
Resolution II.	110
Resolution III.	111
Resolution IV.	112
Resolution V.	114
Concerning My Affections.	115
Introduction.	116
Resolution I.	117
Resolution II.	119
Resolution III.	121
Resolution IV.	123
Resolution V.	124
Resolution VI.	126
Resolution VII.	127
Concerning My Words.	129
Introduction.	130
Resolution I.	131
Resolution II.	133
Resolution III.	135
Resolution IV.	137
Resolution V.	139
Concerning My Actions.	141
Resolution I.	142
Resolution II.	144
Resolution III.	145

Resolution IV.	147
Resolution V.	148
Concerning My Relations.	150
Resolution I.	151
Resolution II.	153
Resolution III.	155
Resolution IV.	157
Resolution V.	159
Resolution VI.	161
Concerning My Talents.	163
Resolution I.	164
Resolution II.	165
Resolution III.	167
Resolution IV.	169
Resolution V.	171
Resolution VI.	172
Private Thoughts Upon a Christian Life; or, Necessary Directions for Its Beginning and Progress Upon Earth, in Order to Its Final Perfection in the Beatific Vision.	174
Thoughts Upon Christian Education.	175
Thoughts Upon the Knowledge of God.	186
Indexes	201
Index of Scripture References	202
Greek Words and Phrases	205
Latin Words and Phrases	206
Index of Pages of the Print Edition	207



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OF

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THE QUEEN.

THE

SACRED CLASSICS:

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EDITED BY

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AND

THE REV. H. STEBBING, M.A.



VOL. X.

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AND CUMMING, DUBLIN.**

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[vi]

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PRIVATE THOUGHTS

[vii]

UPON

RELIGION AND A CHRISTIAN LIFE

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

THE

NECESSITY AND ADVANTAGE

OF FREQUENT COMMUNION.

IN TWO VOLS.

BY
WILLIAM BEVERIDGE, D.D.
LORD BISHOP OF ST. ASAPH.

WITH
INTRODUCTORY ESSAYS,
BY THE
REV. HENRY STEBBING, M.A.

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viii
ix

INTRODUCTORY ESSAY.

STUDY and reflection are allowed to be necessary preparatives to all great pursuits. To attempt to gain by hazardous risks, what may be secured by the safe methods of a sober and laborious diligence, is both unwise and dishonest: in the annals of learning a sciolist and an empiric are characters proverbially treated with contempt; and the worth of all those systems by which states are supported, and civilization carried on, consists in their greatest possible freedom from what is empirical or capricious. But if the exercise of thought and sound judgment be thus necessary in the affairs of life, it can scarcely be less so in those which intimately regard the condition and fate of man in his eternal relations: to make him fit for immortality, must, at all events, require as much care as to render him respectable in the world; and the road to heaven is certainly not more easy to be discovered than the well-beaten path to temporal distinction. The exercise therefore of thought, the pursuit of knowledge, the careful employment, in short, of all the means by which wisdom can be acquired, is plainly our interest as well as our duty, if a future existence, with its attendant glory, be the object of our hopes and wishes. That state of mind in which truth sheds the brightest of its beams into our hearts, is not to be reached by a few sudden and hasty steps. The thoughts which spring from momentary impulses may gladden for a moment, but it is by those only which have their origin in the depths of the soul, steady and contemplative, that we are carried forward to heaven. A discipline of the most careful kind is necessary to render the mind capable of generating such thoughts: inquiry must be made into all' the sources of divine knowledge, and the heart summoned to give up the secrets by which it has nourished passion and prejudice. By this method the channels through which the stream of intelligence flows most readily will be kept ever open, and we shall grow, at least in our intellectual nature, up to the stature of the fulness of men.

Wisdom is the knowledge of truth combined with a disposition to obey it. It has its beginning in the head, and its confirmation in the heart. It observes, and from observation gains skill in judgment: experience teaches it prudence, and prudence gives it safety. By the familiarity which it acquires with the objects in which goodness resides, it learns to love goodness itself: and so with truth,—till, possessed by these gracious principles, it expands and strengthens, and grows up into an image of that sublime attribute of the Deity, by which, it is said, 'He founded the earth, and established the heavens.' Wisdom is, therefore, the grandest quality after which we can strive. It is more than prudence, more than knowledge, more than a habit of observation, more even than the love of goodness,—it is all these virtues blended together by the consent of the willing spirit; and each imparting to the rest a portion of its own nature, it is thereby fitted to inspire peace, yet promote activity; to induce caution, but establish faith; to teach judgment, and yet nourish love.



A principle by which the human soul is so highly exalted above its ordinary condition, is surely worth any exertion we can make as the price of its acquisition. Let us, therefore, consider the position in which we stand for commencing the work, and what are the principal points at which we must aim in its progress.

It is not difficult to prove that the world itself offers few excitements to the pursuit of wisdom, or that there is less freedom, less knowledge, less in short of every thing that forms the foundation of happiness, than either a wise or a good man would desire. In vast tracts of the globe, and where the human race leaves not a plain or valley unpeopled with its dense masses, tyranny, vice, and superstition reign in undisputed strength. When we pass the boundaries which separate them from lands that lie under a brighter sun, and expect to find civilization, and its accompanying refinements, producing corresponding additions of tranquillity and good, the first lesson which reason, careful in its examinations, teaches us is, that a little, a very little below the surface, the state of mankind, in these favoured countries, is but in a small degree essentially better than it is in those where the arts of life have advanced with few and slower steps. True it is, that the passions will be seen curbed, and the necessities of existence supplied with greater regularity; that men will be found less daring in their attacks on each others lives and liberties; and the dark, tormenting fears, and gloomy vices which mark the dominion of ignorance, less strong in their hold on the minds of the multitude. But how little is this to what we might reasonably look for from high civilization—a civilization supported and advanced on all sides by the substantial increase of every species of knowledge, and having ever at hand a ready supply of strength, and regenerating influences from the widely-opened Gospel? What ought we not to have expected from a civilization like this? Should we have looked for too much had we desired to see governments receive as maxims of state the plain rule of Christian benevolence? Should we have been extravagant visionaries had we thought that no crooked, no sophistical reasonings of politicians would have been allowed to nullify the great maxims of heavenly charity? Should we have been prepared to hear the necessity which gross error, and even grosser corruptions have produced, set up to silence the calls of suffering nature, and much injured humanity? Or might we not have supposed that where a strong sense of the advantages of order prevails; where justice is figured out by all the crossings and recrossings of positive law; where the right ordering of cities and communities is the subject of perpetual study and consideration, might we not have supposed that where such is the case, few instances would occur of misery produced by the ill-managed resources of wealth, power, influence, or any other of the mighty results of far-advanced civilization, and long-received Christianity? But what is the actual state of things? Is there a single advantage conferred by civilization, to which united wickedness and perverseness has not appended some crying ill? Is accumulating wealth made to produce its hoped for good? Is power employed for its legitimate purposes? Are the talents, the interests, the dispersed forces of the civilized nations at large ever combined together in the

xii

xiii

resolve to effect some high and noble object? Rather is not the contrary true? Is not wealth, in most instances, the mere instrument of selfish, enervating enjoyment, or the minister of a vain pomp? Is not power perpetually converted into an engine for ambition to work with—to shake things which should remain fixed on their basis—to controvert, and make despised the plainest of natural principles? And what does the multiplying of foolish fashions—the existence of innumerable pernicious customs declare, but that, with all the light and knowledge spread around us, mankind will willingly combine to enslave and debase their reason?

xiv

Now what may we deduce from this? Can we hesitate to conclude, that though we have passed over the boundary line, both in respect to the country and the age in which we live, there is, even on this side of it, much confusion, many evils, and a still wide and open space left for their increase? And when we bear this in mind, while we picture to our thoughts the scenes where truth hath not yet set her hallowed foot—where no light hath fallen on men's hearts to soften and direct them—what is the prospect which the world presents, but a series of vast, ill-cultivated tracks, where wisdom hath to struggle hard for a spot of ground to stand on, and her efforts are perpetually resisted by the untoward dispositions of those who should worship and obey her? And what have we to counterbalance these discouraging circumstances? 'Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth,' said the Almighty, in an age long since past. Beholding the misery which mankind were bringing upon themselves, he thus recalled them to a sense of their condition. The voice of the prophet by whom he spoke could be heard only by the people among whom he dwelt; but his providential dispensations—the signs which he set in the heavens and the earth—were revelations of his will to every portion of the universe; and wherever the human mind awoke to what was passing around, there the voice of the Eternal might be heard proclaiming this sublime truth, that a return to him would be a return to nature and to happiness. We have seen that the state of the world is not yet such as to warrant us in supposing, that during the period which has passed away since the call was first made, the value of the summons has become less. We have also an equal certainty that it has lost nothing of its force. Providence and nature never grow old; their proclamations of God's power can never become obscured by change or time; they have lost none of their power to instruct mankind in the lapse of ages: and he who when the world was young read of the glory of God in the starry heavens, or heard the voice of his omnipotence in the swell of the awful sea, might, if he lived now, still read and hear the same solemn mysteries, in the same workings of nature. The progress of knowledge of another kind dims not the light of natural truth; but while to many a region of the earth

xv

this is the only light vouchsafed from heaven, nation after nation has been blessed with the effulgent revelation of the Saviour of the world: the veil which hung from generation to generation before the sanctuary of divine glory has been drawn aside; the Son of God is seen sitting on his everlasting throne—himself the substantial truth of heavenly mysteries—and

xvi

through him it is that the Almighty now speaks to his creatures, and calls them to salvation. And how hath Christ conveyed the message of his Father? how doth he continue to repeat it in the ears of mankind? First he delivered it in the simple, severe, but affectionate language of true wisdom, only employing his authority to substantiate his right to exercise the office of a teacher: next he delivered it as a bleeding sacrifice from the cross; then as a triumphant conqueror rising from the grave; and lastly as the King of glory, ascending in the fulness of his power to the throne prepared for him in heaven: and now he proclaims that sacred truth of his Father's love, not only by the language of his gospel, or by the recollection of what he suffered, but by the Holy Ghost—by that mighty Being who hath made himself by a most sublime mystery—by a mystery, reader, which I know not how sufficiently to express my awe, or my delight at, obedient to the will of the Son, because the Son humbled himself to re-establish that truth and righteousness in the souls of men, of which he, the Holy Spirit, is the blessed source.

xvii

It is through this great interpreter of heavenly wonders that Christ still publishes the message of his Father, 'Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.' Men's hearts are drawn by his influence to desire truth: their consciences are awakened, and being awakened, are taught where to seek for peace: attention thus secured, the voice of God is heard clear and distinct above all the clamour of the world. On some souls the call produces great and conspicuous effects: they live deeply and solemnly impressed with holy convictions of the divine power and mercy; and these convictions are accompanied with strivings after good, with open declarations of devotion to the cause of God, and manifold instances of piety, both by word and action, the true development of holy principle. On the rest the impression is less vivid, and the effects far less remarkable; but the words of God are heard: it is known that he calls men unto him, and while they pursue their course, neglectful of righteousness, contradicting and despising the laws of the gospel, there is a general consciousness that the Almighty is calling to repentance, that a system is in action which shall crush the spirit, and crumble into ashes the substance of the world through its resistance. to its progress; and this feeling gives a character to our age full of singular contradictions, all demonstrating that the world hears the call of God, but refuses to recognize and obey it.

xviii

Thus our birth into the world gives us an existence in which we have a great capacity for happiness, and possess faculties for performing works of equal wonder and utility; but it places us at the same time in the midst of evil, and leaves us at the beginning the prey of evil. In the midst of all those elements of good and of greatness which form the proper groundwork of human nature, corruption has commenced its operations, and in the very core of the precious fruit, in the very heart and blood, we see the original of evil transplanted from Adam to ourselves, as it was transfused in the beginning from the devil into Adam. And a great point for our consideration is the universality of the ill. Go where we may, do what we may; be sunk in poverty and distress, be elevated to the highest pinnacle of grandeur,

it is still present to us, still infests our nature, still poisons every draught we take of life. At the first mention of this fact the human mind naturally resists its admission: it recoils from the idea of inborn corruption; it cannot endure to have a mirror placed before it, which so clearly manifests its deformity; and it strives, from the beginning, to argue itself out of the feeling which lies so deeply ingrafted in the very consciousness of the soul. Success, to a great degree, attends this endeavour; for though the sense of evil cannot be got rid of, it can be concealed, it can be clothed in the garb of speciousness, of natural passions and sentiment; and the world, with all its bustle and its fashions, can be so brought to bear upon the subject, as to prevent its being heard of in the thronged mart of public life: so that, greatly as every human heart is polluted by original sin, and closely as it is held in bondage by the guilt which has grown and multiplied out of that fruitful source of offences, it is no easy matter to convince a man that he is truly under the power of sin, or that his nature is in its very root and human origin thoroughly corrupt. But can any good ever come from the concealment of a truth from ourselves which so greatly concerns us? Can we expect to make any advancement towards good, if we altogether mistake our condition at the beginning, and consequently the principles on which we ought to proceed? Certainly not: and, therefore, let us pray God to enable us to look with a deeply humbled spirit on our inborn wickedness, and to lament the guilt that attaches therefrom to all which, in the natural man, we have done throughout life.

xx

If we succeed in acquiring this first view of our condition, we shall see that our danger is fully proportionable to our corruption. The powers of the mind will be found to have contracted their share of the evil, and to have lost strength and activity accordingly: while the body has its passions leagued with evil, as their subsidiary, that has its love of false devices, its pride, its envy, its jealousies and its prejudices. In every point of view our nature will give signs of the darkness which has come upon it through sin; and when the question is put, Why do you allow your bad passions so to get the better of you—why do you indulge yourselves in those sudden bursts of wrath —how is it that you take not a greater delight in truth? The answer is direct and explicit. Sin has got so strong a hold upon all the energies of our being, that it impels us where it will, and forbids our viewing things in their fair light. And this answer, which Christians have given in all ages of the church, contains the first great reason for the solemn apostolic exhortation, ‘Pass the time of your sojourning here with fear:’ for since we are thus in bondage to sin, and sin so darkens the light of the mind, and weakens all those powers which ought to guide and protect us from its influences, what have we not to fear? How can we be secure from sorrows and afflictions of the darkest kind? Where are we to find help, seeing that the enemy is not simply on the way towards us—is not merely standing at the door, but is tabernacled in our very hearts?

xx

But this condition of sin is not one of simple danger, resulting from the errors into which it may lead us. Were there no God, the violation of the proper laws of our being, and

xxi

of the relations which belong to its in social existence, would be attended with the most terrible consequences; but seeing that sin is not only a breaking of the rules by which alone good can be attained, but an open defiance of the Almighty, it necessarily brings upon us not only that vast class of ills which result from gross errors of conduct—from headstrong passion—from blindness of heart and mind; but exposes us to the wrath of the Most High God, which, as his creatures, we have incomparably greater reason to dread than any other evil of which it is possible to form a conception; for not only are life and death dependent on his will, but all that can make life happy, or death terrible. It is therefore not simply because he can with one sweep of his lightning cut off myriads of his creatures, or that he can, whenever he will, bury us in darkness, that we have reason to tremble at the idea of his anger; but because the withdrawal of his mercy must necessarily be the extinction of every gleam of hope, and must leave us a prey to deep and perpetual despair; and, because the punishments which he will inflict on sin will be according to the intended immortality of our being; so that while we are left, by the refusal of his light, to walk on in darkness—while, by the withdrawal of his mercy, we must bend beneath the load of accumulating fears and sorrows, and at last by the execution of his decrees on all that move upon the earth, shall be borne on the wings of that fearful blast which sweeps through the valley of the shadow of death, even to the innermost darkness of the grave, we shall, yet further, be pursued even into that gloomy receptacle of spirits, by the ministers of his justice; and our guilt shall even there involve the soul in a darkness deeper than the darkness of death, and shall teach us the terrible things of God's right-hand, working his mighty wonders, and bringing against us the artillery of his wrath in the realms of darkness and shadows.

xxii

And is not the hare imagination of such a sequel to all the cares, the toils and troubles of this life, sufficient to make us tremble with horror? Is it not beyond conception dreadful to think, that after having passed through the world labouring to gain wealth, to possess the smiles of our fellow-creatures, to make a name for ourselves; and after having perhaps succeeded, and been allowed to enjoy for a succession of years something like a satisfied ambition, or to have lived in comfort and quiet on the fruits of our industry; is it not terrible to think that we may, in the midst of our satisfaction, be by one fell stroke of disease, not simply bowed in feebleness to the earth, not merely sent to the grave—for the mind might soothe itself, were that all, by the thought of weeping friends still bearing us in remembrance—but that we may be carried thereby to regions of pale, substantial horror, which the Maker of all things, even the wicked for the day of wrath, hath shut out by fathomless and everlasting gulfs from all contact with the lightsome universe, where life keeps alternate change with death, and decay is more than counterbalanced by the sweet mystery of regeneration?

xxiii

The strongest proof, indeed, that we can have of men's blindness is the little and partial impression which the thought of these things makes upon their minds: but what, if touched with some anxiety respecting our personal fate; what, if now trembling lest when the thread

of life is cut, our own spirits should feel themselves borne away into that region of endless sorrow—what comfort must we not derive from that precious doctrine which accompanies the warning, and which tells us, that while we must pass the time of our sojourning here in fear, from the consideration just stated, so we ought to do so from the remembrance of God's wonderful mercy; inasmuch as those very souls which we have in our keeping, and the fate of which depends upon the manner in which we pass the time of our sojourning here, have been redeemed, purchased from the condemnation they had incurred by the precious blood of Christ? Silver and gold could not buy off a single spirit from the claims of sin and death. Had all the treasures of the earth been gathered together in a heap, and offered for the redemption of the poorest or the youngest sinner that ever died, it could have effected nothing in his favour: nay, if multitudes had come forward, and offered to shed their blood to save him, the price, however great to those who offered it, would have had no value for the purchase; for that blood would have had impurity, the essential spirit of guilt within itself: nay, further, if angels in heaven had supplicated to suffer some diminution of their glory to deliver that one poor guilty wretch from torment, their tears, their sacrifice would have been unavailing, for their glory, their own purity, their happiness, their life in heaven, are all but the gift of God's mercy, the result of his free grace to them; and as they are but creatures they have nothing to offer to redeem a creature. But Christ had. He could unite himself, everlasting as he was in purity and glory, to the nature of man: he could take upon him our form and all the principles of humanity: he could become our perfect representative without sin; and thus, God in man, could offer up himself to the Eternal Father—could shed blood that had no possible taint of sin—could make an atonement out of his own free-will for sinful creatures, the whole efficacy of which should belong to them. For he had no guilt in himself to atone for, and the life which he had be had in himself, like his Father; and the glory which he possessed was a glory which he might veil when he chose, for he had it from the Father, not as a creature, but as a Son. And the price which Christ could by his nature and condition pay he did pay. He refused not to humble himself to the lowest grade of human poverty, in order that, while by his royal descent he was equal to the highest as a man, there might be no one on the earth, however low, that could fear to look at him as a brother. Nor did he refuse to undergo any of the ills which can attend human existence: he suffered hunger and thirst; he walked the highways at all times and seasons, frequently without a shelter; his body was bowed with weariness and hardships endured scarcely by the most friendless of mankind; and what sickness can we have to hear—what pain, equal to that agony which he suffered in Gethsemane? Nor, lastly, did he refuse to (lie in our stead, but willingly poured out his blood to cleanse us from the pollution of sin on the one hand, and on the other to free us from its penalties. This is a cursory view of the work of our redemption; but the great question to our consciences is, shall we lightly treat

xxiv

xxv

so vast a mercy? Shall we be contented with the dim and imperfect view of it caught through the medium of worldly minds and worldly sentiments?

The world forms its plans on the notion of its perpetuity and independence. It takes into account none of those modifying influences which should spring from the expectation of a futurity, in which its whole system must be lost in one of infinitely greater magnitude. Pursuing the course which would be wise, or consistent only, were it assured of the unchangeable continuance of things as they now exist, it expends all its forces upon the present; contemplates the power it possesses in relation only to immediate necessities; and in its boldest attempts to pursue, or seize upon the means of good, looks not beyond the narrow limit which the voice of some popular experimentalist has marked out for the struggle. With this notion of the all-sufficiency of the present is combined that of its self-power and independence. It concludes, that it can effect what is essential to its happiness; that it sees and can put in motion the various springs of life, so as to make them produce the required result; and that having attained the object immediately sought, reflection and foresight may remain unexercised till some other purpose of present importance require their employment. But what is the real state of things, while the world is thus confining its thoughts to temporal affairs, and thus regarding itself as an independent power, which rightly exerting its strength, is sufficient for all its attempts and projects? Why, there is, we have seen, a mighty system in operation for the glorifying of man, to which, however small be the number of those who take advantage of it, every circumstance and event in this introductory system is in reality made subservient by the great Governor of the universe. When mankind, in the happier moments of reasonable resolve, allow their actions and determinations to work in harmony with the decrees of this Eternal Ruler, a positive addition is made to the good they enjoy; and it is wholly owing to these occasional brightenings of thought, to the few discoveries which men have made of this grand secret, that the world has any of those cultured spots in the wilderness, where wisdom and charity raise their tabernacles. But, for the most part, the existence of any system which connects the present with eternity is unrecognized in the world: it is not allowed that the Almighty Spirit is the sovereign source of life, of power, of wisdom: it is not remembered, that lying under condemnation, it has been redeemed by the sacrifice of Christ, in order, that beginning a new course, it may become perfected in righteousness; or that, if it do not become thus sanctified, the original curse remains in full force against it. Did it remember these things, it could never be in the state in which we see it: the decrees of governments would more plainly acknowledge that the Lord is the head and chief of all Christian communities: there would be an evident, a palpable recognition of his presence, even where the business of the day only was spoken of. Though there might be varieties of opinion as to the method of worship, there would be no hesitation in allowing that it should be the first and most sacred of a nation's cares to see it well established:—though there might be difference of opinion as to some of the outworks of the system, the voice of

xxvi

xxvii

xxviii

both people and rulers would be heard uniting in the confession of the power, the goodness, and the majesty of God. But resting in the observance of present occurrences, men of the world never get beyond the mere agents of our good or ill, to look at Him who sets those agents in operation; they are content to know that it is the sun and the fertilizing dew which clothes the earth with plenty; they care not to think of that power which, on the other side of the veil that envelops them, works the primal wonder, gives life and action to the principles by which the light and the dew penetrate the bosom of the earth, and awakens the hidden elements of life: they are content to learn, from the experience of the day, that if they employ labour and diligence, if they obtain powerful friends, and omit to use no caution by which their first successes may be confirmed, that they will, in all probability, go prosperously forward: they therefore never examine by what other means they are enabled to acquire influence in the world—by what secret source of power they are urged forward in their strength; it is enough for them to see that a particular set of circumstances lead to this or that result, and they rest contented with observing those circumstances; or, if they are tempted to go a step further, they ascribe their occurrence to their good or ill fortune. This is the way in which the power and providence of God are forgotten; and it requires a positive study, a thorough tuition of the mind and heart, to overcome that effect which the long habit of ascribing every thing which occurs to the causes which we see with our eyes, and hear with our ears to be in operation, must have upon the feelings. But what is the awful consequence of men's thus forgetting God in the events of the world? Why, it leads to positive atheism; it leads to the practical denial of the Almighty; and, whatever may be the professions they make—by whatever name they may be called —those who do thus neglect to recognize his hand are, to all intents and purposes, living without God.

xxix

There is, on the other hand, a very numerous class, who do often speak of the mercy of God, who refuse not to acknowledge the influence of his benignity in the production of the good which they see around them; and what are the nature of these acknowledgments? Are they the result of a careful consideration of the Almighty's bounty? Do they spring from long-cherished feelings of dependence on his power, and from those assurances which follow the exercise of deep and grateful devotion? No such thing: they are the fruit of the lips, not of the heart: they are uttered either with the careless, listless feeling which is glad of any common phrase to excuse the want of a thought, or under some momentary excitement, when the heart, overburdened with satisfaction, is ready to ascribe goodness not to God only, but to any thing which may present itself at the moment. There are, however, different degrees in this carelessness; and while some may attach no meaning at all to the phrase they employ when speaking of God's goodness, others will give it a sufficient colouring of thought to make themselves delighted with the appearance of gratitude to which they have attained. But can this ever become the gratitude of a rational creature and a Christian? Can it ever be made the fruitful source of heart-felt prayers, and comforting convictions? Can it ever

xxx

be any thing more than the vain expression of a mind, which not having found God, would yet wish to escape the open disgrace of not knowing something of his attributes and his operations?

Unfortunately the youth of both the higher and middle ranks are fearfully neglected in respect to religious instruction: they are educated as people of the world, not as Christians; and the truths which should be impressed upon their minds, not by some few, quick, impatient snatches at the catechism; but by frequent, calm, steady, and explanatory converse, are not brought within reach even of their hearing. Thus a numerous body of men are ignorant of the gospel because they have really never heard it; because its doctrines have never been distinctly stated to them; and the whole system of grace is as hidden from the eyes of their understanding, as if it formed no part of the decrees of God. This, however, is not wholly the case; and we are to seek for the more common origin of this ignorance of the gospel, in an unwillingness to examine it, as well as in the voluntary allowed indulgence of feelings that oppose and obscure its lustre. In order to avoid the evil ourselves, therefore, we must learn to consider what the system is; and then, by examining what our notions of it are, and whether it have, or have not, produced any effects on our minds corresponding to its power, we shall be enabled to discover in what degree it is hidden from our minds.

Now, look where we will, study what we may, it is almost invariably found that the first and general views we take of things are altogether erroneous. In the natural world, not an object presents itself to the eye of the ordinary observer, without his passing over something in its composition which the man of science can prove to be essential to its proper nature and condition. In all moral subjects this is equally the case. Not an idea is formed of those great systems of policy by which governments are kept up, by which nations are balanced against nations, and the vast and complicated interests of trade preserved from instantaneous confusion at every change of circumstance. They are, it is true, the subjects of perpetual discussion; every man thinks himself capable of examining them, and giving an opinion on their nature and tendency; but bring in some one to take a part in the inquiry, who is fairly acquainted with the subject, and who knows not but that he will throw an entirely new light upon its bearings? Who doubts but that, if the question be one of politics, the historian, the political economist will regard as absurd the speculations of the ignorant and inexperienced? That, if it be of commerce, the merchant will assure us that ruin would follow, were the systems of the untutored theorist put in practice; that, if it were one of mechanical ingenuity, the common, practical workman would at once show that the resources of his art are capable of effecting objects which the best uninstructed ingenuity could not have touched. And thus in every thing else, the first, or cursory views which we take, always fall far short of the extent of the subject, always miss some essential feature in its character, and leave us, in fact, as ignorant of its relations and influence as if it were wholly hidden from our understanding. Now this being the case with almost every subject on which the mind can be employed, may

xxxii

xxxiii

xxxiv

we not fairly conclude that it is so in regard to religion? May we not certainly consider that, as no art can be made to reveal its wonders to the unpractised eye; no principle of truth and order, sits efficacious operations to the sudden glance of the boldest curiosity;—that religion cannot be made to do so? For what is there in religion which can lead us to suppose that it may be understood with less attention than any other system of truth? ‘What is there in the nature of any of its doctrines to tempt us into the presumptuous notion that the mind can comprehend them at a glance? From these considerations we may conclude, that where there has not been reflection—where there has not been some adapting of the thoughts to the spirit which reigns through the system, the system cannot be truly comprehended; and did we go no further, we might conclude from this, that the gospel is hid from a large number of those to whom it is even preached—to whom its doctrines are cautiously displayed.

Our next consideration must be, what is the nature of these doctrines; and why, when so many allow their importance, so few are willing to learn them as they ought. With regard to these enquiries, there are two points which, if always borne in mind, would act as a preservative against innumerable errors. The one is, that as the doctrines of the gospel respect the grandest objects of man’s creation, and appeal to the loftiest principles of his being, they must themselves be of the sublimest kind. The other is, that when they are disregarded, or treated lightly, a sure evidence is afforded, that no just idea has been formed of the dignity, or true tendencies of the human soul. For take the principles of the gospel one by one; examine them by all the light which reason gives, or which may be obtained from a higher source, and each will be found so accordant with the noblest characteristics of the mind, that we must needs treat them with profound reverence, or reject the very honours which nature, or rather its great Author, hath put upon us. Look at the doctrine of redemption; what does it teach us? Why, not simply the necessary relation between God and man, as the Creator and the creature; not simply the operation of the divine benignity, in breathing forth the spirit of life; but the positive existence, and operative exercise of a plan, by which we are brought within the circle of the Almighty’s most mysterious decrees. Look at the doctrine of regeneration—of renewals by the Holy Spirit; what doth this teach us? Not merely that God hath endowed us with an active principle; not merely that he hath given us reason, with all its capacity of comparing and judging; but that he hath given to the soul a portion of that very power in which reason bad its birth, a portion of that pure, essential spirit of wisdom, truth, and goodness, which inspires, through everlasting ages, the hierarchies of angels, and unites in one shining orb of glorious life the whole mass of rational, sanctified beings. It teaches us, that that frailty and darkness which have so long oppressed us, and held our thoughts in miserable captivity, are not natural to us, but are the corruption of our nature; and that, as the principle of life is hidden, as the workings of the mind are all secret and mysterious, so there is also a secret and mysterious power, by which whatever is deformed or depraved, in that strange empire of the inner man, may be restored to its original perfec-

xxxiv

xxxv

tion. The most general view we can take of these two main doctrines of the Gospel, that is, the doctrine of redemption, and the doctrine of sanctification,—may convince us of the necessity of viewing them with deep and most serious attention, even from the simple principle, that whatever so nearly respects the highest objects, and the noblest tendencies of our being, must certainly demand the steadiest efforts of the soul to comprehend. Let us find, then, a man who takes no thought of the lofty arguments of the Gospel—a man who cares not to meditate on the doctrines of grace, on the wondrous mystery of godliness, by which God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, and by that mystery reconciling the world unto himself; a man who disregards the doctrine—that sublime, that elevating doctrine which the sages of antiquity would have given a universe to know—the doctrine of regeneration—the doctrine of man's entire renewal, of his purification and enlightenment by the indwelling of the Spirit of God: let us find a man who thinks not of these things, and we shall see also that he is blind, totally blind to whatever is brightest and most worthy of admiration in the constitution of his being; that his thoughts want life, his intellect power, his sympathies comprehensiveness.

xxxvi

And how, then, is the mind to obtain that clarifying and enlargement of its faculties which may render it sensible of the truths before, perhaps, wholly unperceived? As truth may be unknown, first, because of the state of the mind, and secondly, because of the nature of the subject; so the fitness by which the mind is made capable of entering the noble circle of universal truth, and divine truth alone forms the bright circumference to that circle, must have a twofold influence; that is, in the one instance, it must purify and strengthen the soul; and in the other, it must adapt the faculties, before unfitted for that purpose, to behold and contemplate steadily things which have no outward sign in the visible world—things of which the forms still lie treasured in the secret tabernacle of the Most High, and the beauty and glory of which having not been made a portion of this lower sphere, can only be enjoyed by the spirit of man when he enters into intimate communion with the eternal Son of God. Now, as it cannot for a moment be doubted but that the mind, when full of worldly anxieties, when torn by passion, or occupied with a thousand petty wishes and desires, is not in a fit condition for discovering or enjoying any kind of pure truth whatever, so is it plain that to put itself in a better state for this purpose, it must propose to itself a different class of objects on which to fix its thoughts, and become occupied with pursuits in themselves essentially better, and leading to some more certain good. But what design can be so decidedly and obviously beneficial for a rational being, as the improvement of his condition in respect to God? By what method can he so certainly put himself in a more thoughtful and steady frame of mind, as by beginning with great earnestness and sincerity, to inquire into the will of his Creator, to examine the astonishing plan by which divine mercy keeps so much good and

xxxvii

holiness in the world, amid all the conflicting interests of desperate wickedness, and to place himself in such a position that the rays of the Almighty's love and wisdom, must fall, in his silent hours of meditation, full upon his heart? Let him try the effect of this earnest inquiry into the will of God, and of this devout contemplation of his glory, and he will find every faculty of his soul becoming daily stronger, and fitter for exertion; he will gradually feel less and less interested in the low pursuits of sensual pleasure; the objects on which the world thinks it can scarcely set too high a value, will be reduced in his eyes to their exact and proper standard; and with this better ability to estimate things according to their true worth, those violent views of the questions which agitate society, those bitter prejudices which keep men savages even in the most polished state of civilization, will lose their hold upon his understanding, which thus recovering itself from the deep oppression it hath long suffered from Satan, and the numerous host of error, will become every hour more capable of discerning the sublimity of truth, and the harmony of its revelations.

xxxviii

The general effects of a systematic and patient attention to the exercise of religious thought are infinitely greater and more important than those who have not pursued it are willing to believe. It abridges no power or faculty in its just liberty of action; but, on the contrary, by freeing the mind from the enervating sloth which ever follows sinful indulgences; by gathering around it pure and elevating visions of glory to be revealed in the last time; and, yet more, by preserving it constantly in the calm and even path of duty, where every breath of the moral atmosphere is redolent of health and vigour, it secures to it all that tends most certainly to its purification and advancement.

xxxix

From general considerations of this kind, the reader may profitably pass to those particular meditations and rules of thought and action contained in the following work. They are founded on the soundest principles of Christian truth; but to be practically useful, they must be read with singleness of heart, and a spirit teachable and quiet. Thus studied, they will, without doubt, conduct him to the full enjoyment of that happiness which is the exclusive possession of the wise and the holy.

The pious and learned author of the valuable Reflections to which we thus allude, was born at Barrow, in Leicestershire, in the year 1638. Having completed the earlier part of his education, he entered St. John's College, Cambridge, and shortly became distinguished, not only for his general advancement in learning, but for his extensive acquirements in the languages of the East. He was ordained both deacon and priest in the month of January, 1660, and immediately received the living of Ealing, in Middlesex. The following year he was presented by the corporation of London to the parish of St. Peter, Cornhill, and he resigned his former preferment. The devout and laborious zeal which characterized this inestimable man as a minister of the gospel, acquired him the honourable title of "The great reviver and restorer of primitive piety." As a mark of their affection for so valuable a labourer in the vineyard, bishop Hinchman, and his successor, Dr. Compton, successively conferred

xl

upon him a stall in St. Paul's Cathedral, and the archdeaconry of Colchester. In 1684 he was further promoted to a prebendal stall in Canterbury, and became chaplain to king William and queen Mary. This latter appointment led to his elevation to the bench. In 1691, government offered him the see of Bath and Wells, from which the pious bishop Kenn had lately been ejected; but he could not be persuaded to accept a see rendered vacant by mere political considerations; and it was not till 1704, when the bishopric of St. Asaph became vacant, that he obtained the rank to which his learning and piety so richly entitled him. The same holy virtues which had adorned his character as a parish-priest, shone conspicuously forth in all he did as a prelate. But his episcopal labours were of short duration. He died in the month of March, 1707.

Cotemporary writers speak in the strongest and most affectionate terms of this true ornament of the Christian church. Dr. Felton, in his Dissertation on the Study of the Classics, and on the Formation of Style, describes the writings of Beveridge as models of gravity and simplicity. In a paper in the "Guardian." his Sermon on the Deity is characterized as equalling, "in acuteness of judgment, ornaments of speech, and true sublimity, the choicest writings of the fathers." Another writer, fully acquainted with his character and habits, has left the following more detailed eulogium on his virtues, and on the value of his productions. "This great and good bishop," says he, "had very early addicted himself to piety and a religious course of life, of which his 'Private Thoughts upon Religion' will be a lasting evidence. They were written in his younger years; and he must, a considerable time before this, have devoted himself to such practices, otherwise he could never have drawn up so judicious and sound a declaration of his faith, nor have formed such excellent resolutions, so agreeable to the Christian life, in all its parts. These things show him to be acquainted with the life and power of religion long before; and that even 'from a child he knew the Holy Scriptures.' And as his piety was early, so it was very eminent and conspicuous in all the parts and stations of his life. As he had formed such good resolutions, he made suitable improvements upon them; and they, at length, grew up into such settled habits, that all his actions savoured of nothing but piety and religion. His holy example was a very great ornament to our church; and he honoured his profession and function by zealously discharging all the duties thereof. How remarkable was his piety towards God! What an awful sense of the divine Majesty did he always express! How did he delight in his worship and service, and frequent his house of prayer! How great was his charity to men; how earnestly was he concerned for their welfare, as his pathetic addresses to them in his discourses plainly discover! How did the Christian spirit run through all his actions, and what a wonderful pattern was he of primitive purity, holiness, and devotion! As he was remarkable for his great piety and zeal for religion, so he was highly to be esteemed for his learning, which he wholly applied to promote the interest of his great Master. He was one of extensive and almost of universal reading: he was well skilled in the Oriental languages and the Jewish learning, as may appear from many of his

xli

xlii

sermons; and, indeed, he was furnished to a very eminent degree with all useful knowledge. He was very much to be admired for his readiness in the Scriptures: he had made it his business to acquaint himself thoroughly with those sacred oracles, whereby he was ‘furnished unto all good works.’ He was able to produce suitable passages from them on all occasions, and was very happy in explaining them to others. Thus, he improved his time and his abilities in serving God, and doing good, till he arrived at a good old age, when it pleased his great Master to give him rest from his labours, and to assign him a place in those mansions of bliss, where he had always laid up his treasure, and to which his heart had been all along devoted through the whole course of his life and actions. He was so highly esteemed among all learned and good men, that when he was dying, one of the chief of his order deservedly said of him, ‘*There goes one of the greatest, and one of the best men, that England bred.*’”

xliii

The character of Bishop Beveridge thus drawn is clearly manifested in his writings. Some things there are in them which may be attributed to the spirit of the age in which he lived; and we lament that so amiable and holy a man should ever have been betrayed into the use of expressions which always savour more of wrath than of the zeal which warms itself before the altar of divine love. There is also an occasional obscurity in his expositions of doctrine; but this is rarely or ever the case except when he endeavours to assist the comprehension of his readers by the false aids of metaphysics or scholastic logic. Few writers, on the whole, can he read with equal profit: still fewer are more earnest or more spiritual.

H.S.

Sept. 22, 1834.

xliv

xlv

**PRIVATE THOUGHTS
UPON
RELIGION,
DIGESTED INTO
TWELVE ARTICLES;
WITH
PRACTICAL RESOLUTIONS
FORMED THEREUPON.**

xlvi

xlvii

CONTENTS.

THOUGHTS ON RELIGION.

INTRODUCTORY.—Page 1.

Article I.—Page 6.

I believe there is One God, the Being of all beings.

Article II.—Page 10.

I believe, that whatsoever the most high God would have me to BELIEVE or DO, in order to his glory, and my happiness, he hath revealed to me in his holy Scriptures.

Article III.—Page 39.

I believe that as there is one God, so this one God is three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Article IV.—Page 41.

I believe that I was conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity; and that, ever since, I have been continually conceiving mischief, and bringing forth vanity.

Article V.—Page 44.

I believe the Son of God became the Son of man, that I, the son of man, might become the son of God.

xlviii

Article VI.—Page 50.

I believe that Christ lived to God, and died for sin, that I might die to sin, and live with God.

Article VII.—Page 53.

I believe that Christ rose from the grave, that I might rise from sin, and that he is ascended into heaven, that I may come unto him.

Article VIII.—Page 57.

I believe that my person is only justified by the merit of Christ imputed to me; and that my nature is only sanctified by the Spirit of Christ implanted in me.

Article IX.—Page 72.

I believe God entered into a double covenant with man, the covenant of works made with the first, and the covenant of grace made in the second Adam.

Article X.—Page 82.

I believe, that as God entered into a covenant of grace with us. so hath he signed this covenant to us by a double seal, baptism and the Lord's supper.

Article XI.—Page 93.

I believe that after a short separation, my soul and body shall be united together again, in order to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, and be finally sentenced according to my deserts.

Article XII.—Page 103.

I believe there are two other worlds, besides this I live in; a world of misery for unrepenting sinners, and a world of glory for believing saints.

RESOLUTIONS

xlix

ON THE FOREGOING ARTICLES.

Resolution I.—Page 115.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to walk by rule, and therefore think it necessary to resolve upon the rules to walk by.

Resolution II—Page 116.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to make the Divine Word the rule of all the rules I propose to myself.

Resolution III.-Page 118.

1 am resolved, that as I am not able to think or do any thing that is good, without the influence of the divine grace; so I will not pretend to merit any favour from God, upon account of any thing I do for his glory and service.

CONCERNING MY CONVERSATION IN GENERAL.

Resolution I.—Page 121.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to make Christ the pattern of my life here, that so Christ may be the portion of my soul hereafter.

Resolution II.—Page 122.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to walk by faith, and not by sight, on earth, that so I may live by sight, and not by faith, in heaven.

Resolution III.—Page 125.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, always to be looking upon God, as always looking upon me.



CONCERNING MY THOUGHTS.

Resolution I.—Page 128.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to watch as much over the inward motions of my heart, as the outward actions of my life.

Resolution II.—Page 129.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to stop every thought, at its first entering into my heart, and to examine it whence it comes, and whither it tends.

Resolution III.—Page 131.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to be as fearful to let in vain, as careful to keep out sinful thoughts.

Resolution IV.—Page 133.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to be always exercising my thoughts upon good objects, that the devil may not exercise them upon bad.

Resolution V.—Page 135.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, so to marshal my thoughts, that they may not jostle one another, nor any of them prejudice the business I am about.

CONCERNING MY AFFECTIONS.

Resolution I.—Page 139.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, always to make my affections subservient to the dictates of my understanding, that my reason may not follow, but guide my affections.



Resolution II.—Page 141.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to love God, as the best of goods, and to hate sin, as the worst of evils.

Resolution III.—Page 145.

I am resolved, by the assistance of divine grace, to make God the principal object of my joy, and sin the principal object of my grief and sorrow; so as to grieve for sin more than suffering, and for suffering only for sin's sake.

Resolution IV.—Page 147.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to desire spiritual mercies more than temporal; and temporal mercies only in reference to spiritual.

Resolution V.—Page 149.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to hope for nothing so much as the promises, and to fear nothing so much as the threatening, of God.

Resolution VI.—Page 153.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to arm myself with that spiritual courage and magnanimity, as to press through all duties and difficulties whatsoever, for the advancement of God's glory and my own happiness.

Resolution VII.—Page 155.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, so to be angry, as not to sin; and, therefore, to be angry at nothing but sin.

CONCERNING MY WORDS.

Resolution I.—Page 159.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, never to speak much, lest I often speak too much; and not to speak at all, rather than to no purpose.



Resolution II.—Page 161.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, not only to avoid the wickedness of swearing falsely, but likewise the very appearance of swearing at all.

Resolution III.—Page 163.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, always to make my tongue and heart go together, so as never to speak with the one, what I do not think in the other.

Resolution IV.—Page 166.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to speak of other men's sins only before their faces, and of their virtues only behind their backs.

Resolution V.—Page 168.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, always to speak reverently to my superiors, humbly to my inferiors, and civilly to all.

CONCERNING MY ACTIONS.

Resolution I.—Page 171.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to do every thing in obedience to the will of God.

Resolution II.—Page 174.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to do every thing with prudence and discretion, as well as with zeal and affection.

Resolution III.—Page 175.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, never to set my hand, my head, or my heart, about any thing but what I verily believe is good in itself, and will be esteemed so by God.



Resolution IV.—Page 178.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to do all things for the glory of God.

Resolution V.—Page 180.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to mingle such recreations with my business, as to further my business by my recreations.

CONCERNING MY RELATIONS.

Resolution I.—Page 184.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to honour and obey the king, or prince, whom God is pleased to set over me, as well as to expect that he should safeguard and protect me, whom God is pleased to set under him.

Resolution II.—Page 187.

I am resolved, by the same divine grace, to be as constant in loving my wife, as cautious in choosing her.

Resolution III.—Page 191.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to do my endeavour to give to God whatsoever children he shall be pleased to give me; that as they are mine by nature, they may be his by grace.

Resolution IV.—Page 194.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to do my duty to my servants as well as expect they should do theirs to me.



Resolution V.—Page 196.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to feed the flock that God shall set me over, and with wholesome food, neither starving them by idleness, poisoning with error, nor puffing them up with impertinence.

Resolution VI.—Page 200.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to be as faithful and constant to my friend, as I would have my friend to be faithful and constant to me.

CONCERNING MY TALENTS.

Resolution I.—Page 204.

I am resolved, if possible, to redeem my time past by using a double diligence for the future, to employ and improve all the gifts and endowments, both of body and mind, to the glory and service of my great Creator.

Resolution II.—Page 206.

I am resolved, by the divine grace, to employ my riches, the outward blessings of Providence, to the same end; and to ob. serve such a due medium in the dispensing of them, as to avoid prodigality on the one hand, and covetousness on the other.

Resolution III.—Page 209.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to improve the authority God gives me over others, to the suppression of vice, and the encouragement of virtue; and so for the exaltation of God's name on earth, and their souls in heaven.

Resolution IV.—Page 211.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to improve the affections God stirs up in others towards me, to the stirring up of their affections towards God.

lv

Resolution V.—Page 215.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to improve every good thought, to the producing of good affections in myself, and as good actions with respect to God.

Resolution VI.—Page 216.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to improve every affliction God lays upon me, as an earnest or token of his affection towards me.

THOUGHTS UPON A CHRISTIAN LIFE.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION.—Page 241.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD—Page 214.

lv

1

THOUGHTS ON RELIGION.

INTRODUCTORY.

WHEN, in my serious thoughts, and more retired meditations, I am got into the closet of my heart, and there begin to look within myself, and consider what I am, I presently find myself to be a reasonable creature: for was I not so, it would be impossible for me thus to reason and reflect. But, am I a reasonable creature? Why then, I am sure, within this veil of flesh there dwells a soul, and that of a higher nature, than either plants or brutes are endued with; for they have souls indeed, but yet they know it not, and that because their souls, or material forms, as the philosophers term them, are not any thing really and essentially distinct from the very matter of their bodies; which being not capable of a reflective act, though they are, they know it not, and though they act, they know it not; it being impossible for them to look within themselves, or to reflect upon their own existence or actions. But it is not so with me; I not only know I have a soul, but that I have such .a soul, which can consider of itself, and deliberate of every particular action that issues from it. Nay, I can consider, that I am now considering of my own actions, and can reflect upon myself reflecting; insomuch, that had I nothing else to do, I could spin out one reflection upon another, to infinity.

2

And, indeed, was there never another argument in the world to convince me of the spiritual nature of my soul, this alone would be sufficient to wrest the belief and confession of it from me: for what below a spirit can thus reflect upon itself? or, what below a spirit can put forth itself into such actions, as I find I can exercise myself in? My soul can, in a moment, mount from earth to heaven, fly from pole to pole, and view all the courses and motions of the celestial bodies, the sun, moon, and stars; and then the next moment returning to myself again, I can consider where I have been, what glorious objects have been presented to my view; and wonder at the nimbleness and activity of my soul, that can run over so many millions of miles, and finish so great a work in so small a space of time. And are such-like acts as these the effects of drossy earth, or impenetrable matter? Can any thing below a spirit raise itself so much beyond the reach of material actions?

But stay a little; what is this soul of mine that I am now speaking of, that it is so nimble in its actions, and so spiritual in its nature? Why, it is that which actuates and informs the several organs and members of my body, and enables me not only to perform the natural actions of life and sense; but likewise to understand, consult, argue, and conclude; to will and nill, hope and despair, desire and abhor, joy and grieve, love and hate; to be angry now, and again appeased. It is that by which at this very time, my head is inditing, my hand is writing, and my heart resolving, what to believe, and how to practise. In a word, my soul is myself; and therefore, when I speak of my soul, I speak of no other person but myself.

3

Not as if I totally excluded this earthly substance of my body from being a part of myself; I know it is. But I think it most proper and reasonable to denominate myself from my better part: for, alas! take away my soul, and my body falls of course, into its primitive corruption,

and moulders into the dust, from whence it was first taken. ‘All flesh is grass,’ says the prophet, ‘and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field.’ And this is no metaphorical expression, but a real truth; for what is that which I feed upon, but merely grass digested into corn, flesh, and the like; which by a second digestion, is transfused and converted into the substance of my body? And thence it is, that my body is but like the grass, or flower of the field, fading, transient, and momentary, to-day flourishing in all its glory, to-morrow cut down, dried up, and withered. But now, how far is this beneath the spiritual and incorruptible nature of my immortal soul? which subsists of itself, and can never be dissolved, being not compounded of an earthly or elementary matter, as the body is, but is a pure spiritual substance infused into me by God, to whom, after a short abode in the body, it is to return, and to live and continue for ever, either in a state of happiness or misery, in another life.

But must it so indeed? How much then does it concern me, seriously to bethink myself, where I had best to lead this everlasting life, in the heavenly mansions of eternal glory, or else in the dreadful dungeon of infernal misery! but betwixt these (as there is no medium, so) there is no comparison; and therefore, I shall not put it to the question, which place to choose to live in; but without giving the other that honour to stand in competition with it, I, this morning, with the leave of the most high God, do choose the land of Canaan, the kingdom of heaven, to be the lot of mine inheritance, the only seat of bliss and glory for my soul to rest and dwell in, to all eternity.

4

But heaven, they say, is a place hard to come at, yea, the King of that glorious place hath told me, that ‘strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leads to life, and that there be but few that find it.’¹ Yea, and that ‘many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able.’² What therefore must I do? Why, I must either resolve to make it my whole business to get to heaven, or else I must never hope or expect to come thither. Without any further dispute, therefore, about it; I resolve, at this time, in the presence of almighty God, that from this day forward, I will make it my whole business here upon earth, to look after my happiness in heaven, and to walk circumspectly in those blessed paths, that God hath appointed all to walk in, that ever expect to come to him.

Now, though there be but one way, and that a narrow one too, that leads to heaven; yet there are two things requisite, to all those that walk in it; and they are faith and obedience, to believe and to live aright. So that it as much behoves me, to have my faith rightly confirmed in the fundamentals of religion, as to have my obedience exactly conformed to the laws of God. And these two duties are so inseparably united, that the former cannot well be supposed without the latter; for I cannot obey what God hath commanded me, unless I first believe

5

1 [Matt. vii. 14.](#)

2 [Luke, xiii. 24.](#)

what he hath taught me. And they are both equally difficult, as they are necessary: indeed, of the two, I think it is harder to lay the sure foundation of faith, than to build the superstructure of obedience upon it; for it seems next to impossible, for one that believes every truth, not to obey every command that is written in the word of God. But it is not so easy a thing as it is commonly thought, to believe the word of God, and to be firmly established in the necessary points of religion; especially in these wicked times wherein we live; in which there are so many pernicious errors and damnable heresies crept into the articles of some men's faith, as do not only shock the foundation of the church of Christ, but strike at the root of all religion. The first thing, therefore, that by the grace of God, I am resolved to do, in reference to my everlasting state, is to see my faith, that it be both rightly placed and firmly fixed; that I may not be as a 'wave tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, by the cunning craftiness of those that lie in wait to deceive;' but that I may be thoroughly settled in my faith and judgment concerning those things, the knowledge of, and assent unto which, is absolutely necessary to my future happiness. Let, therefore, what times soever come upon me; let what temptations soever be thrown before me; I am resolved, by the grace of God, steadfastly to believe as followeth.

ARTICLE I.

I believe there is One God, the Being of all beings.

THE other articles of my faith I think to be true, because they are so; this is true because I think it so: for if there was no God, and so this article not true, I could not *be*, and so not think it true. But in that I think, I am sure I *am*; and in that I am, I am sure there is a God; for if there was no God, how came I to *be*? How came I hither? Who gave me my being? Myself? That could not be; for before I had a being, I was nothing; and therefore, could do nothing, much less make myself a being. Did my parents give me my being? Alas! they knew not that I should be, before I was; and, therefore, certainly, could not give me my being, when I was not.

As to my soul, (which I call myself,) it is plain they could not give me that, because it is a being of a spiritual nature, quite distinct from matter, (as my own experience tells me,) and, therefore, could not be the product of any natural or material agent: for, that a bodily substance should give being to a spiritual one, implies a contradiction. And if it could neither make itself, nor take its rise from any earthly or secondary cause, I may certainly conclude, from my own reason, as well as from divine revelation, that it must be infused by God, though I am not able to determine, either when, or how, it was done.

As to my body; indeed, I must own it was derived from my parents, who were immediately concerned in bringing the materials of it together: but, then, who made up these coarse materials into the form or figure of a body? Was this the effect of natural generation? But how came my parents by this generative power? Did they derive it, by succession, from our first parents in paradise? Be it so. But whence came *they*? Did they spring out of the earth? No: what then? Were they made by chance? This could not be; for as chance seldom or never produces any one effect that is regular and uniform, so it cannot be supposed, that a being of such admirable beauty, symmetry, and proportion, and such a nice contexture of parts, as the body of a man is, should ever be jumbled together by a fortuitous concourse of atoms, which nothing but the chimeras of Epicurus could ever reduce into a regular form and composition.

7

And the like may be said of all other created beings in the world. For there is no natural cause can give being to any thing, unless it has that being it gives, in itself; for it is a received maxim in philosophy, that nothing can give what it has not. And so, however the bodies of men, or brutes, or plants, may now, in the ordinary course of nature, be produced by generation, yet there must needs be some one supreme almighty Being in the world, that has the being of all other beings in itself; who first created these several species; and endued them with this generative power to propagate their kind. And this supreme Being is that which we call God.

Hence it is, that there is not a leaf, no not a line, in this great book of the creation, wherein we may not clearly read the existence and perfections of the great and glorious Creator, and that even by the glimmering light of nature. For who is it that bedecked yonder stately canopy of heaven, with those glittering spangles, the stars? Who is it that commands the sun to run his course, and the moon to ride her circuit so constantly about the world? Who is it that formed me so curiously in my mother's womb? Who is it that gives my stomach power to digest such variety of meats into chyle, and my heart or liver to turn them all to blood; and thence to send each particle to its proper place, and all to keep up this crazy carcass? Doubtless, these, and such like things, however ordinary or natural they may appear to us at present, are in themselves very great and wonderful effects, that must at first be produced by some infinitely powerful and supernatural agent, the high and mighty God, who is not only the chiefest of beings, but the Being of all beings whatsoever.

8

I say, the Being of all beings, because whatsoever excellency or perfection is in any other thing, is eminently, yea, infinitely comprehended in him; so that he is not only the creature's perfection in the concrete, but in the abstract too; he is not only all-wise, all-good, all-mighty, &c., but he is all-wisdom, all-goodness, all-might, all-mercy, all-justice, all-glory, &c. And as he is the ocean and abyss of all these perfections in himself; so is he the fountain of them all to us. Insomuch that we have nothing, not so much as the least moment of life, but what is communicated to us from this ever-living God. And not only what we, poor sinful worms are, or have, but even whatsoever those nobler creatures the angels have, it is but a beam darted from this sun, it is but a stream flowing from this overflowing fountain.

Lift up thine eyes therefore, O my soul, and fix them a little upon this glorious object! How glorious, how transcendently glorious, must he needs be who is the Being of all beings, the perfection of all perfections, the very glory of all glories, the eternal God! He is the glory of love and goodness, who is good, and doth good continually unto me, though I be evil, and do evil continually against him. He is the glory of wisdom and knowledge, unto whom all the secret thoughts, the inward motions and retirements of my soul, are exactly known and manifest. Never did a thought lurk so secretly in my heart, but that his all-seeing eye could espy it out: even at this time, he knows what I am now thinking of, and what I am doing, as well as myself. And indeed, well may he know what I think, and speak, and do, when I can neither think nor speak, nor do any thing, unless himself be pleased to give me strength to do it. He is the glory of might and power, who did but speak the word, and there presently went out that commanding power from him, by which this stately fabric of the world was formed and fashioned. And as he created all things by the word of his power, so I believe, he preserves and governs all things by the power of the same word: yea, so great is his power and sovereignty, that he can as easily throw my soul from my body into hell, or nothing, as I can throw this book out of my hand to the ground: nay, he need not throw me into nothing; but, as if I should let go my hold, the book would presently fall, so, should

9

God but take away his supporting hand from under me, I should of myself, immediately fall down to nothing. This, therefore, is that God, whom I believe to be the Being of all beings; and so the creator, preserver, governor, and disposer of all things in the world.

10

ARTICLE II.

I believe, that whatsoever the most high God would have me to BELIEVE or DO, in order to his glory, and my happiness, he hath revealed to me in his holy Scriptures.

UPON the same account that I believe there is a God, I believe likewise, that this God is to be worshipped; the same light that discovers the one, discovering the other too. And therefore it is, that as there is no nation or people in the world, but acknowledge some deity, so there is none, but worship that deity which they acknowledge; yea, though it be but a stick or a stone, yet if they fancy any thing of divinity in it, they presently perform worship and homage to it. Nay, that God is to be worshipped, is a truth more generally acknowledged, than that there is a God. No nation, I confess, ever denied the latter, but no particular person ever denied the former: so that the very persons, who through diabolical delusions, and their own prevalent corruptions, have suspected the existence of a Deity, could not but acknowledge that he was to be worshipped, if he did exist; worship being that which is contained in the very notion of a Deity; which is, that he is the Being of all beings, upon whom all other things or beings do depend, and unto whom they are beholden both for their essence and subsistence. And if there be such a Being, that is the spring and fountain of all other beings, it is necessary that all others should reverence and worship him, without whom they could not subsist. And therefore it is that men are generally more superstitious in their worshipping than they ought to be, rather than deny that worship to him, which they ought to give.

11

That, therefore, there is a God, and that this God is to be worshipped, I do not doubt; but the great question is, who is this God whom I ought to worship? And, what is that worship which I ought to perform unto him? The former I have resolved upon in the foregoing article, as the light of reason and my natural conscience suggested to me; the latter I am resolved to search out in this, viz. Which of all the several kinds of worship that men perform to the Deity, and the several religions that men profess in the world, I had best make choice of to profess and adhere to. The general inclinations which are naturally implanted in my soul to some religion, it is impossible for me to shift off; but there being such a multiplicity of religions in the world, I desire now seriously to consider with myself, which of them all to restrain these my general inclinations to.

And the reason of this my inquiry is not, that I am in the least dissatisfied with that religion I have already embraced; but because it is natural for all men to have an overbearing opinion and esteem for that particular religion they are born and bred up in. That, therefore, I may not seem biased by the prejudice of education, I am resolved to prove and examine them all, that I may see and hold fast to that which is best. For though I do not, in the least, question, but that I shall upon inquiry, find the Christian religion to be the only true religion in the world, yet I cannot say it is, unless I find it, upon good grounds, to be so indeed: for, to profess myself a Christian, and believe that Christians are only in the right, because my

12

forefathers were so, is no more than the heathens and Mahometans have to say for themselves.

Indeed, there was never any religion so barbarous and diabolical but it was preferred before all other religions whatsoever, by them that did profess it: otherwise they would not have professed it. The Indians, that worship the devil, would think it as strange doctrine to say that Christ is to be feared more than the devil; as such as believe in Christ, think it is, to say the devil is to be preferred before Christ. So do the Mahometans call all that believe not in Mahomet, as well as Christians call those that believe not in Christ, infidels. And why, say they, may not you be mistaken, as well as we? Especially, when there is at least, six to one against your Christian religion; all of which think they serve God aright, and expect happiness thereby as well as you. So that to be a Christian, only upon the grounds of birth or education, is all one, as if I was a Turk or a heathen; for if I had been born amongst them, I should have had the same reason for their religion, as now I have for my own: the premises are the same, though the conclusion be ever so different. It is still upon the same grounds, that I profess religion, though it be another religion which I profess upon these grounds; so that I can see but very little difference, betwixt being a Turk by profession, and a Christian only by education; which commonly is the means and occasion, but ought by no means to be the ground of any religion. And hence it is that in my looking out for the truest religion, being conscious to myself how great an ascendant Christianity hath over me, beyond the rest, as being that religion whereunto I was born and baptized, that which the supreme authority has enjoined and my parents educated me in, that which every one I meet withal highly approves of, that which I myself have, by a long-continued profession, made almost natural to me; I am resolved to be more jealous and suspicious of this religion, than of the rest, and be sure not to entertain it any longer without being convinced, by solid and substantial arguments, of the truth and certainty of it.

13

That, therefore, I may make diligent and impartial inquiry into all religions, and so be sure to find out the best, I shall, for a time, look upon myself as one not at all interested in any particular religion whatsoever, much less in the Christian religion; but only as one who desires, in general, to serve and obey him that made me, in a right manner, and thereby to be made partaker of that happiness my nature is capable of. In order to this, it will be necessary to propose to myself some certain marks or characters, whereby I may be able to judge and make choice of the religion I intend to embrace: and they are, in general, these two, viz.

First, That is the best religion, wherein God is worshipped and served most like himself, i. e. most suitably and conformably to his nature and will. And,

Secondly, Since all men naturally desire, and aspire after happiness, and our greatest happiness consists in the fruition of God, that is certainly the best religion, which gives me the best and most comfortable assurances of being happy with God to all eternity.

To embrace a religion without these marks, would be worse than to have no religion at all; for better it is to perform no worship to God, than such as is displeasing to him; to do

14

him no service, than such as will be ineffectual to make me happy, and not only frustrate my expectations of bliss, but make me for ever miserable.

The religion, then, that I am to look after, must be such a one, wherein I may be sure to please God, and to be made happy with him; and, by consequence, such a one, wherein all the cause of his displeasure and my misery may be removed; and that is sin. For sin being infinitely opposite to him, as he is a Being of infinite purity and holiness, must certainly set me at the greatest distance from him, and render me most odious in his sight; and whosoever does so, must make me as miserable as misery can make me. For as our holiness consisteth in likeness, so doth our happiness in nearness to God: and if it be our happiness to be near unto him, it must certainly be our misery to be at a distance from him. In enjoying him we enjoy all things, he being and having all things in himself; and so in not enjoying him, we are not only deprived of all that we can enjoy, but made liable to the punishments that are the consequence of it.

That there is no such thing in nature, as virtue and vice, as good and evil, as grace and sin, is what I can by no means persuade myself to, for my conscience tells me, that there is: and not only mine, but every one that ever yet lived, upon the face of the earth; all people of whatsoever nation or language, still acknowledging sin to be sin, and that the displeasing the deity, which they worship, is indeed an evil that ought to be carefully avoided. And therefore, the very heathens did not only upbraid others with it, but likewise often checked themselves for it; and all men naturally desire to *seem* though not to *be* holy. But let others say what they will, I, for my own part, cannot but see sin in myself, by the very light of nature. For, my reason tells me, that if God be God, he must be just and perfect; and if I be not so too, I am not like him; and, therefore, must needs displease him; it being impossible any thing should please him but what is like unto him. And this deformity to the will and nature of God, is that which we call sin, or which the word *sin* in its proper notion, brings into my mind.

And being thus conscious to myself, that I have sinned against my Maker, I may reasonably conclude, that as he is omniscient, and, by consequence, a witness of these my offences, so must he likewise be just in the punishment of them; for it cannot stand with his justice, to put up with such offences, without laying suitable punishments upon the offender. And these punishments must be infinite and eternal; for wherein doth the nature of divine justice consist, but in giving to sin its just punishments, as well as to virtue its due rewards? Now that the punishment of sin in this world, is not so much as it deserves, nor, by consequence, as much as, in justice, ought to be laid upon it, to me it is clear, in that every sin being committed against an infinite God, deserves infinite punishment; whereas all the punishments we suffer in this world cannot be any more than finite, the world itself being no more than finite, that we suffer them in.

15

16

Upon these grounds, therefore it is, that I am fully satisfied in my conscience, that I am a sinner; that it cannot stand with the justice, nor the existence of God that made me, to pardon my sins, without satisfaction made to his divine justice for them; and yet, that unless they be pardoned, it is impossible for me to be happy here, or hereafter. And therefore must I look after some religion, wherein I may be sure, my sins may be thus pardoned, and my soul made happy, wherein I may please God and God may bless me. Which that I may be the better able to discover, I shall take a brief survey of all the religions I ever heard of, or believe to be in the world.

Now, though there be as many kinds of religions as nations; yea, almost as particular persons in the world; yet may they all be reduced to these four; the Paganish, Mahometan, Jewish, and Christian religion.

As to the first, it is indeed of a very large extent, and comprehends under it all such as neither acknowledge Mahomet to be a prophet, nor expect a promised Messiah, nor believe in a crucified Jesus: and, since it is the majority of numbers, that usually carries the vogue, let me see whether the paganish religion, being further extended, and more generally professed than any, or indeed all the rest, be not the true religion, wherein God is most rightly worshipped, and I may be the most certainly saved. And here, when I take a view of this religion, as it is dispersed through several parts of Asia, Africa, and America, I find them very devout in worshipping their deities, such as they are, and they have great numbers of them: some worship the sun, others the moon and stars, others the earth, and other elements, serpents, trees, and the like. And others again pay homage and adoration to images and statues, in the fashion of men and women, hogs, horses, and other shapes; and some to the devil himself, as in Pegu, &c.

17

But now, to go no further, this seems to me at first sight to be a very strange and absurd sort of religion; or rather, it is quite the reverse of religion. For the true notion we have of religion, is the worshipping the true God, in a true manner: and this is the worshipping false gods in a false manner. For, I cannot entertain any other notion of God, than as one supreme Almighty Being, who made and governs all things, and who, as he is a spirit, ought to be worshipped in a spiritual manner. And therefore, as the very supposing more deities than one implies a contradiction; so the paying divine homage, in a gross, carnal manner, to material and corporeal beings, which are either the work of men's hands, or at best, but creatures like ourselves, which can neither hear nor understand what we say to them, much less give us what we desire of them, is not religion, but idolatry and superstition, or rather madness and delusion. So that this religion, I see, if I should embrace it, would be so far from making me happy, that the more zealous I should be for it, the more miserable I should be by it. For he that made these things cannot but be very angry at me, if I should give that worship to them, which is only due to himself; and so, in the way whereby I expect my sins

should be pardoned, they would be more increased; it being a sin against the very light of nature, to prefer any thing before God, or to worship any thing in his stead; therefore, leaving these to their superstitious idolatries, and diabolical delusions, I must go and seek for the true religion somewhere else.

18

The next religion, that hath the most, suffrages and votes on its side, is the Mahometan religion, so called from one Mahomet an Arabian, who, about a thousand years ago, by the assistance of one Sergius, a Nestorian monk, compiled a book in the Arabian tongue, which he called Alcoran, which he made the rule of his followers' faith and manners, pretending that it was sent from heaven to him, by the hand of the angel Gabriel.

This book I have perused, and must confess, find many things in it agreeable to right reason: as that there is but one God, gracious and merciful, the Lord of the whole universe; that this God we are to resign ourselves wholly to; that all that obey him shall be certainly rewarded, and all that disobey him, as certainly punished; and the like. But yet, I dare not venture my soul upon it, nor become one of the professors of it; because, as there are many things consonant., so there are many things dissonant to the natural light that is implanted in me; as, that God should swear by figs and olives, by Mount Sinai, as this book makes him to do, in the chapter of the figs: that Solomon should have an army composed of men, and devils, and birds; and that he should discourse with a bird, which acquainted him with the affairs of the queen of Sheba, and the like.

As to the argument whereby be would persuade us, that this book was sent from God, viz. that there are no contradictions in it, I take to be very false and frivolous. For besides that there are many books compiled by men, which have no contradictions in them, it is certain, there are a great many plain contradictions in this book, which overthrow his suppositions. Thus, in the chapter of the table, he saith, that "all that believe in God, and the resurrection of the dead, and have done good works, shall be saved:" but, in the chapter of gratification, he saith, "all that do not believe in the Alcoran shall be destroyed:" and so in the chapter of Hod. In like manner, he tells us again, in the chapter of the table, that the books of the Old and New Testaments were sent from God, and at the same time, supposes that the Alcoran was sent from him too; which to me, seems impossible. For, my reason tells me that God, who is truth and wisdom itself, cannot be guilty of falsehood and contradiction. And if these books contradict one another, as it is evident they do in many instances, it is plain God could not be the author of both; and by consequence, if the Scripture be true the Alcoran must of necessity be false. To instance but in one particular, the Alcoran says, in the chapter of women, "God hath no son:" in the Scripture, God said of Jesus, 'This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;'³ and it expressly calls that Jesus, 'the Son of God,'⁴

19

³ Matt. iii. 17.

⁴ Heb. iv. 14.

and so in many other things. Now it is impossible, that both these should be true, or, by consequence, that that should be true which says both are so.

But if this were granted, there is still another objection against this religion; and that is, that the rewards therein promised will not avail to make me happy, though I should be partaker of them. For all the promises made to us in this paradise, are but mere sensible pleasures; as that we shall have all manner of herbs, and fruits, and drinks, and women with exceeding great and black eyes, as in the chapter of the merciful and judgment, and elsewhere; and such pleasures as these, though they may indeed affect my body, yet they cannot be the happiness of my soul. Indeed, I know not how this book should promise any higher happiness than that of the body, because it shows no means of attaining to it; it shows no way, how my sins may be pardoned, and so my soul made happy. It saith, I confess, that God is gracious and merciful, and therefore will pardon sin; so be is also just and righteous, and therefore must punish it. And how these two can stand together, is not manifested in the Alcoran; and therefore I dare not trust my soul with it.

20

Thus, upon diligent search, have I found the two religions, that are most generally professed, to have little or nothing of religion in them. I shall therefore, in the next place, take a view of that religion which hath the fewest followers, and that is the Jewish. A religion, not established by any human laws, nor, indeed, generally professed in any nation, but only by a company of despicable people, scattered up and down the world, which as the prophet expresses it, ‘are become a proverb of reproach, and a by-word among all nations whither they are driven.’ The principles of this religion are contained in a book written in the Hebrew tongue, which they call the Torah, or law, composed of several precepts, promises, and threatenings; together with histories of things past, and prophecies of things to come: this book, they say, was written by men inspired by God himself; and therefore they avouch it not to be of human invention, but merely of divine institution.

21

This book also I have diligently read and examined into, and must ingenuously confess, that at the very first glance methought I read divinity in it, and could not but conclude, from the majesty of its style, the purity of its precepts, the harmony of its parts, the certainty of its promises, and the excellency of its rewards, that it could be derived from no other author but God himself. It is here only that I find my Maker worshipped under the proper notion of a Deity, as he is Jehovah, and that is the right manner, for we are here commanded ‘to love and serve him with all our hearts, with all our souls, our might and mind,’⁵ which is, indeed, the perfection of all true worship whatsoever. And as God is here worshipped aright, so is the happiness which is here entailed upon this true worship, the highest that it is possible a creature should be made capable of, being nothing less than the enjoyment of him we worship, so as to have him ‘to be a God to us, and ourselves to be a people to him.’⁶

5 [Deut. iv. 5](#); x. 12.

6 [Jer. xxxi. 33](#).

But that which I look upon, still, as the surest character of the true religion, is, its holding forth the way, how I being a sinner, can be invested with this happiness, or how God can show his justice, in punishing sin itself, and yet be so merciful, as to pardon and remit it to me, and so receive me to his favour; which the religions I viewed before did not so much as pretend to, nor offer at all. And this is what this book of the law does likewise discover to me, by showing that God Almighty would not visit our sins upon ourselves but upon another person; that he would appoint and ordain one to be our sponsor or Mediator, who by his infinite merit, should bear and atone for our iniquities, and to show his love and mercy, in justifying and acquitting us from our sins, at the same time that he manifests his justice, in inflicting the punishment of them upon this person in our stead. A method so deep and mysterious, that if God himself had not revealed it, I am confident no mortal man could ever have discovered or thought of it.

22

Neither are there any doubts and scruples concerning this great mystery, but what this book does clearly answer and resolve; as will appear more plainly from a distinct consideration of the several objections that are urged against it.

As, 1. That it does not seem agreeable either to reason or Scripture that one man should bear the sins of another; because every man has enough to do to bear his own burden; and since sin is committed against an infinite God, and therefore deserves infinite punishment, how can any finite creature bear this infinite punishment? especially, it being due to so many thousands of people as there are in the world!

But this book sufficiently unites this knot for me, by showing me, that it is not a mere man, but God himself, that would bear these my sins; even he whose name is, ‘Jehovah Tsidkenu,’ ‘The Lord our righteousness,’⁷ where the essential name of the most high God, which cannot possibly be given to any, but to him, who is the Being of all beings, is here given to him, who should thus bear my sins, and justify my person; whence David also calleth him Lord,⁸ Isaiah calleth him, ‘The mighty God’⁹ Yea, and the Lord of hosts himself, with his own mouth, calls him ‘his fellow.’¹⁰

23

Objec. 2. But my reason tells me, God is a pure Spirit, and, therefore, how can he suffer any punishments? or, suppose he could, how can one nature satisfy for the offences of another? It was man that stood guilty; and how can it stand with the justice of God, not to punish man for the sins he is guilty of?

To resolve this doubt, this holy book assures me, that this God should become man, expressly telling me that as his name is ‘Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Ever-

7 [Jer. xxxiii. 16.](#)

8 [Psalm cx. 1.](#)

9 [Isa. ix. 6.](#)

10 [Zech. xiii. 7.](#)

lasting Father, the Prince of Peace,' so he should be born a child, and given as a Son.¹¹ And, therefore, at the same time that the Lord of hosts calls him his fellow, he calls him a man too, 'Against the man that is my fellow, says the Lord of hosts.'¹²

Objec. 3. But if he be born as other men are, he must needs be a sinner, as other men be; for such as are born by natural generation, must necessarily be born also in natural corruption.

To remove this obstacle, this holy book tells me, that 'A virgin shall conceive and bear this Son, and his name shall be Emmanuel.'¹³ And so being begotten, but not by a sinful man, himself shall be a man, but not a sinful man: and so being God and man, he is every way fit to mediate betwixt God and man; to reconcile God to me, and me to God, that my sins may be pardoned, God's wrath appeased, and so my soul made happy in the enjoyment of him.

24

But there is one thing more yet, that keeps me from settling upon this religion; and that is, the expiration of the time in which this book promiseth this person should come into the world; for it is expressly said, that 'Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon the city, to finish the transgressions, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision, and the prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy.'¹⁴ From which anointing he is, in the next verse, called Messiah, the Anointed, (under which name he is, from hence, expected by the Jews,) and the beginning of these seventy weeks is expressly said to be 'at the going forth of the commandment to build and restore Jerusalem.'¹⁵ Now if we understand these seventy weeks in the largest sense for seventy weeks, or 'sabbaths of years,'¹⁶ as it is expressed, the time of the Messiah's coming must have been but four hundred and ninety years after the commandment for the building of the city; whereas whether we understand it of the decree and command that Cyrus made,¹⁷ or that which Darius made,[Ezra, vi.](#) or that Artaxerxes made,[Ezra, vii.](#) I say, whichsoever of these decrees we understand this prophecy of, it is evident that it is above two thousand years since they were all made; and therefore, the time of this person's coming hath been expired above one thousand six hundred years at least.

25

So likewise doth this book of the law, (as they call it) assure us, that the sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come,¹⁸ where the

11 [Isa. ix. 6.](#)

12 [Zech. xiii. 7.](#)

13 [Isa. vii. 14.](#)

14 [Dan. ix. 24.](#)

15 [Ibid. 25.](#)

16 [Lev. xxv. 8.](#)

17 [2 Chron. xxxvi. 22, 23;](#) Ezra, i. 1, 2, 3.

18 [Gen. xl ix. 10.](#)

Jews themselves, Jonathan and Onkelos, expound the word *Shiloh* by *Messiah*; and so doth the Jerusalem Targum too. Now it is plain that there hath been neither sceptre nor lawgiver in Judah, nor any political government at all among the Jews, for above sixteen hundred years; which plainly shows either their prophecies and expectations of a Messiah are false, or that he came into the world so many ages since, as were here prefixed.

So likewise it was expressly foretold in this book, that ‘the glory of the second temple should be greater than the glory of the former.’¹⁹ Now the Jews themselves acknowledge, that there were five of the principal things which were in the first, wanting in the second temple, viz. 1. The ark with the mercy-seat and cherubim. 2. The Shechinah, or divine presence. 3. The holy prophetical Spirit. 4. The Urim and Thummim. 5. The heavenly fire: and from the want of these five things they say, the words ‘I will be glorified’;²⁰ wants an *he* at the end, which in numeration denotes five. Yea, and when the very foundation of the second temple was laid, the old men that had seen the first, wept to see how far short it was likely to come of the former.²¹ To make up therefore the glory of the second temple, to be greater than the glory of the first, notwithstanding the want of so many glorious things, they must of necessity understand it of the coming of the Messiah into it, who is called, ‘The desire of all nations.’²² Whereas the Jews themselves cannot but confess that this temple hath been demolished above sixteen hundred years; and therefore, it is impossible for the Messiah to come into it, and for its glory to be greater than the glory of the first temple; and, by consequence, for the word which they profess to believe in to be true.

Indeed, the time of the Messiah’s coming was so expressly set down in these and the like places, that Elias, one of their great rabbies, gathered from hence that the world should last six thousand years; two thousand without the law, two thousand under the law, and two thousand under the Messiah,²³ which computation of the Messiah’s coming after four thousand years from the beginning of the world, comes near the time of the sceptre’s departing from Judah, and the end of Daniel’s seventy weeks. Which shows, that this rabbi was fully convinced, that it was about that time that the Messiah should come. And therefore it was, likewise, that above sixteen hundred years ago, the Jews did so generally expect his coming; and that so many did pretend to be the person, as Baz-Cozbah, who about that time, vaunting himself to be the man, almost the whole nation unanimously concurred in

19 [Hag. ii. 9.](#)

20 [Ib. 1.](#)

21 [Ezra, iii. 12.](#)

22 [Hag. ii. 7.](#)

23 [Sanh. c. 11.](#)

following him, insomuch, that, as the Jews report, there were no less than four hundred thousand, or as others, five hundred thousand men slain by Adrian the emperor, in the city Bitter, all fighting in defence of this pretended Messiah. There were likewise many others that fancied themselves to be the man, and were so esteemed by some till manifestly convinced of their error, as we may read in some of their books. And unto this day many of them hold that he is already come, but that, by reason of their sins, he is not yet revealed unto them.

27

Hence it is, that my natural reason draws me into this dilemma, that either that book which the Jews receive as the word of God is indeed not so; or else that they do not rightly apply it: and so, that either their religion is a false religion, or else their profession of it a false profession: and therefore, I must go hence and seek me some other religion to fix my soul upon. Not as if my reason told me. that all the prophecies which I have mentioned here, were false in themselves, but only that they appear so to this sort of professors; for, for my own part, I cannot shake off my faith in this law, which they profess to believe in; especially now I have so seriously perused it, and so deliberately weighed and considered of it. Neither can I believe that ever any Mahometan or Indian, that did, without prejudice, set himself to read it through, and to examine every particular, by the light of unbiased reason, could say, it was ever hatched in a human brain; but that it is indeed of a heavenly stamp and divine authority. And, therefore, though I am forced by the strength of reason to shake hands with this religion, yet the same reason will not suffer me to lay aside that law, which they do profess, but only their profession of it. So that whatsoever religion I settle upon, my natural conscience still commands me to stick close to this book of the Jewish law, and to receive and entertain it as the word of the glorious Jehovah, the Being of all beings.

28

Well, there is but one religion more generally professed in the world, that I am to search into; which if, upon good grounds, I cannot fix upon, I shall be the most miserable of all creatures; and that is, the Christian religion, so named from Jesus Christ, whose doctrine, life, and death, is recorded by four several persons, in a book which they call the Gospel. And this book appears to me to be of undoubted authority, as to the truth and certainty of those things that are therein recorded. For, if they had been false, both the persons that wrote them, and he of whom they wrote had so many malicious enemies ready, upon all occasions, to accuse them, that they had long ago been condemned for lies and forgeries. But now, these writings have been extant for above sixteen hundred years, and never so much as suspected, but even by the worst of enemies, acknowledged to be a true relation of what passed in the world about that time: my reason will not permit me to be their first accuser, but enjoins me to receive them, under that notion, in which they have been brought down to me through so many generations, without any interruption whatsoever. For this general reception on all hands, is a sufficient ground for me to build my faith upon, as to

the truth of the relation, though not a sufficient ground to believe every thing contained in the book to be the word of God himself; for, in this particular, it is not the testimony of others that I am to build upon, but its own; I may read its verity in man's testimony, but its divinity only in its own doctrines.

29

This book, therefore, I have also diligently perused, and find it expressly asserts that Jesus Christ, whose life and death it records, was indeed that person, who was long promised by God, and expected by the Jews: and, that all the prophecies under the old law, concerning that Messiah, God-man, were actually fulfilled in this person: which if, upon diligent search, I can find to be true, I shall presently subscribe both with hand and heart, to this religion. It is a comfort to me that it acknowledgeth the Jewish law to be sent from God; for, truly, if it did not, my conscience would scarcely permit me to give any credit to it; being so fully convinced that that book is indeed of a higher extract than human invention, and of greater authority than human institution. And therefore it is that I cannot, I dare not believe, but that every particular prophecy contained in it, either is, or shall be, certainly fulfilled, according to every circumstance of time and place mentioned therein; and by consequence, that this prophecy, in particular, concerning the Messiah's coming, is already past; the time wherein it was foretold he should come, being so long ago expired. So that I do not now doubt whether the Messiah be come or no, but whether this Jesus Christ, whom this book of the gospel speaks of, was indeed the person. And this I shall best find out by comparing the Christian's gospel with the Jewish law; or the histories of Christ under the one, with the prophecies of the Messiah, under the other; still concluding, that if whatsoever was foretold concerning the Messiah, was fulfilled in this Jesus Christ, then he was indeed the Messiah that was to come into the world. And, to make this comparison the more exact, I shall run through the several circumstances that attended his birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, and show how punctually the prophecies were fulfilled in every particular.

30

And first, for the birth of the Messiah, the law saith, he was to be 'born of the seed of Abraham,'²⁴ and David,'²⁵ 'and of the stem of Jesse,'²⁶ from whence he is frequently called by the Jews, 'Bar-David, the son of David.' The gospel saith, 'Jesus Christ was the son of David, the son of Abraham.'²⁷ The law, 'that he was to be born of a virgin.'²⁸ The gospel,

24 Gen. xxii. 18.

25 2 Sam. vii. 17.

26 Is. xi. 1.

27 Matt. i. 1.

28 Is. vii. 14.

that ‘Mary, a virgin, brought forth this Jesus.’²⁹ The law, ‘that he was to be born at Bethlehem Ephratah.’³⁰ The gospel, that this Jesus was born there.³¹

The law says, that he was to be ‘brought out of Egypt.’³² The gospel, that Jesus was called thence.³³ The law saith, that ‘one should go before the Messiah,’³⁴ and should ‘cry in the wilderness.’³⁵ The gospel, that John Baptist did so before Christ.³⁶ The law, that ‘the Messiah should preach the doctrine of salvation in Galilee,’ which sitting before in darkness should see great light.³⁷ The gospel, that Jesus did so.³⁸ The law, that in the Messiah’s days, ‘the eyes of the blind should be opened, and the ears of the deaf should be unstopped, and the lame leap, and the tongue of the dumb sing.’³⁹ The gospel, that it was so in the days of Jesus Christ.⁴⁰ But for all these wonders and miracles, the law saith, they ‘should hear, but not understand; and see, yet not perceive.’⁴¹ And the gospel, that ‘seeing, they did not see; and hearing, they did not hear; neither did they understand.’⁴² The law, that he should be ‘despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.’⁴³ The gospel, that Jesus Christ ‘had not where to lay his head;’ ‘his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death;’⁴⁴ yea, ‘he was in an agony, and his sweat was as drops of blood.’⁴⁵ so well was he acquainted with grief. The law says, that ‘he should ride into Jerusalem upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass.’⁴⁶ And the gospel, that, ‘Jesus Christ, as he was going to Jerusalem, having found an ass, sat thereon.’⁴⁷ At which time, the law saith the people should

31

29 Matt. i. 18; Luke, i. 17, 31, 35; ii. 5, 6, 7.

30 Mic. v. 2.

31 Matt. ii. 1.

32 Hos. xi. 1.

33 Matt. ii. 19, 20.

34 Mal. iii. 1; iv. 5.

35 Is. xl. 3.

36 Matt. iii. 1, 2; Mark, i. 2, 3.

37 Is. ix. 1, 2.

38 Matt. iv. 12, 23.

39 Is. xxxv. 5, 6.

40 Matt. iv. 23; xi. 5.

41 Is. vi. 9.

42 Matt. xiii. 13; Mark, iv. 12.

43 Is. liii. 3.

44 Matt. viii. 20; xxvi. 30.

45 Luke, xxii. 44.

46 Zech. ix. 9.

47 John, xii. 14; Matt. xxi. 6.

cry, ‘Hosannah, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.’⁴⁸ The gospel, that the multitude did so to Christ.⁴⁹ The law, that ‘one of his own familiar friends, in whom he trusted, which did eat of his bread, should lift up his heel against him.’⁵⁰ The gospel, that Judas, who was one of Christ’s disciples, and so eat of his bread, did betray him into the hands of the Jews.⁵¹ The law, that he should be prized at, and sold for thirty pieces of silver, with which should he bought the potter’s field.⁵² The gospel, that they covenanted with Judas to betray Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, with which they afterwards bought the potter’s field.⁵³ The law, that ‘he should be numbered amongst transgressors.’⁵⁴ The gospel, that Jesus was ‘crucified betwixt two thieves.’⁵⁵ The law, that he ‘should he wounded and bruised.’⁵⁶ The gospel, that ‘they scourged Jesus,’⁵⁷ and ‘smote him.’⁵⁸ The law saith they should ‘pierce his hands and feet.’⁵⁹ The gospel, that ‘they crucified Jesus;’⁶⁰ which was a death wherein they used to pierce the hands and feet of those that were put to death, and nailed them to the cross. But though they should pierce his flesh, yet the law saith that they should not ‘break his bones, no not one of them.’⁶¹ The gospel, that they ‘brake not the legs of Christ.’⁶² The law, that they who should see him, should laugh him to scorn, shoot out their lips, and shake their heads, saying, he trusted in the Lord that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.⁶³ The gospel, that the scribes and elders did so to Christ.⁶⁴ The law saith they should ‘give him gall for meat, and vinegar to drink.’⁶⁵ And the gospel, that they gave Christ ‘vinegar to drink, mingled with gall.’⁶⁶ The law, that

32

33

48 Psalm cxviii. 26.

49 Matt. xxi. 9.

50 Psalm xli. 9.

51 Matt. xxvi. 47; Luke, xxii. 6.

52 Zech. xi. 12, 13.

53 Matt. xxvi. 15; xxvii. 7.

54 Is. liii. 12.

55 Mark, xv. 27; Matt. xxvii. 38.

56 Is. liii. 5.

57 Matt. xxvii. 26.

58 Mark, xv. 19.

59 Psalm xxii. 16; Zech. xii. 10.

60 Matt. xxvii. 35; Luke, xxiii. 33.

61 Exod. xii. 46; Numb. ix. 12; Psalm xxxiv. 20.

62 John, xix. 33, 36.

63 Psalm xxii. 8.

64 Matt. xxvii. 42, 43.

65 Psalm lxix. 21.

66 Matt. xxvii. 34, 48.

they should ‘part his garments amongst them, and cast lots upon his vesture,’⁶⁷ The gospel, that they ‘parted Jesus’ garments, casting lots.⁶⁸

And as for the time of this Jesus coming into the world, it is certain that this Jesus came before the ‘second temple was demolished;’ for it is said, that he ‘went into it;’ yea, himself, ‘taught daily in it;’⁶⁹ by which means the ‘glory of the second temple was greater than the glory of the first,’⁷⁰ according to the prophecy. And as for Jacob’s prophecy, that ‘the sceptre should not depart from Judah, nor the lawgiver, till Shiloh,’ or the Messiah, ‘came,’⁷¹ it is certain that it did not depart from Judah, till Herod, by the senate of Rome, was made king of Judea; in whose days this Jesus was born.⁷² And so did Daniel’s seventy weeks, or four hundred and ninety years, exactly reach unto, and were determined in, the days of this Jesus, as might easily be demonstrated. So that all the old prophecies, concerning the time of the Messiah’s coming, are perfectly fulfilled in this Jesus of Nazareth.

But further, the law saith, that though the Messiah should be crucified, ‘yet God will not leave his soul in hell, nor suffer his Holy One to see corruption;’⁷³ and that ‘when God should make his soul an offering for sin, he should see his seed, and prolong his days;’⁷⁴ which plainly implies, that though the Messiah should die, yet he should rise again, and that within few days too, otherwise he would have seen corruption. Now the gospel saith, that this Jesus ‘rose from the dead;’⁷⁵ and that he was seen of several ‘after his resurrection, as of Mary Magdalen,’ ‘of the eleven disciples,’⁷⁶ ‘of the two that were going to Emmaus,’ ‘of Peter,’⁷⁷ ‘and of the disciples that were gathered together, the door being shut.’⁷⁸ And, to be sure it was himself and not an apparition, Thomas, one of the twelve, ‘thrust his hands into his side, and found it flesh and blood.’⁷⁹ indeed, as before. ‘And he eat before them,’⁸⁰ which it is impossible for a spirit to do; yea, ‘he was seen of above five hundred at one time,’



67 Psalm xxii. 18.

68 Matt. xxvii. 35; John, xix. 23; Mark, xv. 24.

69 Luke, xix. 45, 47.

70 Hag. ii. 9.

71 Gen. xl ix. 10.

72 Matt. ii. 1; Luke, i. 5.

73 Psalm xvi. 10.

74 Is. liii. 10.

75 Matt. xxviii. 6; Luke, xxiv. 6.

76 Matt. xxviii. 9, 16, 17, 18; Mark, xvi. 14.

77 Luke, xxiv. 13, 14, 15, 34.

78 John, xx. 19.

79 Ib. xx. 27.

80 Luke, xxiv. 43.

and ‘of Paul himself.’⁸¹ Neither did he lie so long as to see corruption, for he was buried but ‘the day before the sabbath,’ and rose the day after.⁸²

Lastly. He was not only to rise again, but the law saith, ‘he was to ascend on high, to lead captivity captive, and to give gifts to men.’⁸³ Now this cannot but be an undoubted character of the Messiah, not only to rise from the dead, but to ascend up to heaven, and thence to disperse his gifts among the children of men; and that Jesus did so, is likewise evident from the gospel; for, ‘after he had spoken with them, he was received up into heaven, and there sat at the right hand of God.’⁸⁴ And he gave such gifts to men, as that his disciples, of a sudden, were enabled to ‘speak all manner of languages;’ to ‘work many signs and wonders;’ to ‘heal all manner of diseases;’ yea, ‘with a word speaking, to cure a man lame from his mother’s womb.’⁸⁵

35

Thus the gospel seems to me to be a perfect transcript of the law, and the histories of Jesus nothing else but the prophecies of Christ turned into a history. And, when to this I join the consideration of the piety of the life which this man led, the purity of the doctrine which he taught, and the miraculousness of the works he wrought, I cannot but be further confirmed in the truth of what is here related. For the miracles which he wrought, as the healing of the sick with a word of his mouth, raising the dead, feeding so many thousands with five loaves, and the like, were so powerful and convincing, that his very enemies, that would not believe him to be the Messiah, could scarce deny him to be a god.⁸⁶ And it is to this day a tenet amongst some of them, that the miracles which Jesus did, were not the delusions and jugglements of the devil, but real miracles, wrought as they say, by the virtue of the name of God, Jehovah, which he had gotten out of the temple. By which it is plain, they acknowledged God to be the author of them, which I cannot see how he should be, unless they were agreeable to his will, and for the glory of his name.

36

Neither was the doctrine of the gospel only established at the first, but likewise propagated by miracles afterwards, as it was necessary it should be, for, if it had been propagated without miracles, itself had been the greatest miracle of all. It was, no doubt, a great miracle, that a doctrine so much contrary to flesh and blood, should be propagated by any means whatsoever; but a far greater, that it should be propagated by a company of simple and illiterate men, who had neither power to force, nor eloquence to persuade men to the embracing of it. For who would have thought that such persons as these were, should

81 1 Cor. xv. 6, 8.

82 Mark, xv. 42; xv. 1.

83 Psalm lxviii. 18.

84 Mark, xvi. 19; Luke, xxiv. 51.

85 Acts, ii. 8; v. 12, 15, 16; iii. 6, 7.

86 Joseph. Antiq. lib. xviii. c. 4.

ever make any of the Jews, who expected a king for their Messiah, to advance them to temporal dignities, or believe, that that Jesus, whom they themselves scourged and crucified at Jerusalem, was the person? Or, that they should be able to propagate the gospel amongst the Gentiles also, who neither believed in the true God, nor expected any thing of a Messiah to come and redeem them? But this they did, and brought over not only many persons, but whole nations and countries to the profession of the gospel; propagating this most holy doctrine among the most barbarous and sinful people in the world, maugre all the opposition that the world, the flesh, and the devil, could make against it. Now can any man, that exerciseth his reason think they did all this purely by their own strength? No sure, none of these wonderful effects could ever have been produced by any thing less than the wisdom, and power, and faithfulness of their Lord and master, whose service they were engaged in, and who promised to be with them ‘to the end of the world.’⁸⁷ Questionless, it was nothing else but the Spirit of the most high God, that went along with them, and accompanied the word they preached; otherwise, it never could have made such deep impression upon the hearts of them that heard it, as not only to command their attention, but to hinder them from resisting, when they strove and endeavoured to do it, the power and authority by which the disciples spake.

37

And now, methinks, I begin to perceive this divine Spirit is come upon me too, and seems, by its powerful influence, to be working up my heart into a thorough persuasion, that it is Christ, and Christ alone, I am to cast my soul upon; that it is he alone, that is the way to life, and his word alone, the word of life, which ‘whosoever believes, and is baptized into, shall be saved, and he that believeth not, shall be damned.’ Away, then, with your Pagan idolatries, your Mahometan superstitions, and Jewish ceremonies; it is the Christian religion alone, that I am resolved to live and die in, because it is this alone, in which I am taught to worship God aright, to obtain the pardon and remission of my sins, and to be made eternally happy. And, since all his doctrines and precepts are contained in the Holy Scriptures, it is necessary that I shall assent unto them, as a standing revelation of God’s will and an eternal treasure of divine knowledge; whereby all, that sincerely believe in Christ, may be sufficiently instructed, as well as thoroughly furnished, unto every good word and work.

38

Without any more ado, therefore, I believe, and am verily persuaded, that all the books of the ancient law, with all those that have been received into the canon of the Scripture by the church of God, since the coming of Christ, which we call the New Testament; I say, that all these books, from the beginning of Genesis to the end of the Revelations, are indeed the word of the eternal God, dictated by his own Spirit, unto such as himself was pleased to employ in the writing of them; and that they contain in them a perfect and complete rule of faith and manners; upon the due observance of which, I cannot fail of worshipping and

87 Matt. xxviii. 20.

serving God, in such a manner, as will be acceptable to him here, and of enjoying hereafter ‘those exceeding great and precious promises,’ that he has reserved in heaven, for such as do so.

Unto these books, therefore, of the law and gospel, I am resolved by his grace that wrote them, to conform all the ensuing articles of my faith, and all the actions and resolutions of my life. Insomuch that whatsoever I find it hath pleased his Sacred Majesty herein to insert, I believe it is my duty to believe; and whatsoever he hath been pleased to command me, I believe it is my duty to perform.



ARTICLE III.

I believe that as there is one God, so this one God is three Persons,—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

THIS, I confess, is a mystery which I cannot possibly conceive, yet it is a truth which I can easily believe; yea, therefore it is so true, that I can easily believe it; because it is so high, that I cannot possibly conceive it; for it is impossible any thing should be true of the infinite Creator, which can be fully expressed to the capacities of a finite creature: and, for this reason, I ever did, and ever shall, look upon those apprehensions of God to be the truest, whereby we apprehend him to be the most incomprehensible; and that to be the most true of God, which seems most impossible unto us.

Upon this ground, therefore, it is, that the mysteries of the gospel, which I am less able to conceive, I think myself the more obliged to believe; especially this mystery of mysteries, the Trinity in Unity, and Unity in Trinity, which I am so far from being able to comprehend, or indeed to apprehend, that I cannot set myself seriously to think of it, or to screw up my thoughts a little concerning it, but I immediately lose myself, as in a trance, or ecstacy: that God the Father should be one perfect God of himself, God the Son one perfect God of himself, and God the Holy Ghost one perfect God of himself; and yet that these three should be but one perfect God of himself; so that one should be perfectly three, and three perfectly one; that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost should be three, and yet but one; but one and yet three! O heart-amazing, thought-devouring, unconceivable mystery! Who cannot believe it to be true of the glorious Deity? Certainly, none but such as are able to apprehend it, which, I am sure, I cannot, and believe no other creature can. And, because no creature can possibly conceive how it should be so, I therefore believe it really to be so, viz.—That the Being of all beings is but one in essence, yet three in substance: but one nature, yet three persons; and that those three persons in that one nature, though absolutely distinct from one another, are yet but the same God. And I believe, these three persons, in this one nature, are indeed to one another as they are expressed to be to us, that the one is really a Father to the other, that the other is really a Son to him, the third the product of both; and yet, that there is neither first, second, nor third amongst them, either in time or nature. So that he that begat was not at all before him that was begotten, nor he that proceeded from them both, any whit alter either of them. And therefore, that God is not termed Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as if the divine nature of the one should beget the divine nature of the second; or the divine nature of the first and second should issue forth the divine nature of the third; (for then there would be three divine natures, and so three Gods essentially distinct from one another; by this means also, only the Father would be truly God, because he only would be essentially of and from himself, and the other two from him;) but what I think myself obliged to believe, is, that it was not the divine nature, but the divine person of the Father, which did, from eternity, beget the divine person of the Son; and from the divine persons



of the Father and of the Son, did, from eternity, proceed the divine person of the Holy Ghost; and so one not being before the other, in time or nature, as they are from eternity three perfectly distinct persons, so they are but one co-essential God. But dive not, O my soul, too deep into this bottomless ocean, this abyss of mysteries! It is the holy of holies, presume not to enter into it; but let this suffice thee, that he, who knows best himself, hath avouched it to himself, and therefore thou oughtest to believe it, ‘Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.’⁸⁸ And again, ‘There are three that bear record in heaven. the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one.’⁸⁹

88 Matt. xxviii. 19.

89 1 John, v. 7.

ARTICLE IV.

I believe that I was conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity; and that, ever since, I have been continually conceiving mischief, and bringing forth vanity.

This article of my faith, I must of necessity believe, whether I will or no; for if I could not believe it to be true, I should therefore have the more cause to believe it to be so; because unless my heart was naturally very sinful and corrupt, it would be impossible for me not to believe that which I have so much cause continually to bewail; or, if I do not bewail it, I have still the more cause to believe it; and, therefore, am so much the more persuaded of it, by how much the less I find myself affected with it. For, certainly, I must be a hardhearted wretch indeed, steeped in sin, and fraught with corruption to the highest, if I know myself so oft to have incensed the wrath of the most high God against me, as I do, and yet not be sensible of my natural corruption, nor acknowledge myself to he, by nature, a child of wrath, as well as others. For, I verily believe, that the want of such a due sense of myself argues as much original corruption, as murder and whoredom do actual pollution. And, I shall ever suspect those to be most under the power of that corruption, that labour most, by arguments, to divest it of its power.

42

And, therefore, for my own part, I am resolved by the grace of God never to go about to confute that by wilful arguments, which I find so true by woeful experience. If there be not a bitter root in my heart, whence proceeds so much bitter fruit in my life and conversation? Alas! I can neither set my hand nor heart about any thing, but I still show myself to be the sinful offspring of sinful parents, by being the sinful parent of a sinful offspring. Nay, I do not only betray the inbred venom of my heart, by poisoning my common actions, but even my most religious performances also, with sin. I cannot pray, but I sin: nay, I cannot hear, or preach a sermon, but I sin; I cannot give an alms, or receive the sacrament, but I sin; nay, I cannot so much as confess my sins, but my very confessions are still aggravations of them; my repentance needs to be repented of, my tears want washing, and the very washing of my tears need still to be washed over again with the blood of my Redeemer. Thus, not only the worst of my sins, but even the best of my duties, speak me a child of Adam: insomuch that whensoever I reflect upon my past actions, methinks I cannot but look upon my whole life, from the time of my conception to this very moment, to be but as one continued act of sin.

43

And whence can such a continued stream of corruption flow, but from the corrupt cistern of my heart? And whence can that corrupt cistern of my heart be filled, but from the corrupt fountain of my nature? Cease therefore, O my soul, to gainsay the power of original sin within thee, and labour now to subdue it under thee. But, why do I speak of my subduing this sin myself? Surely, this would be both an argument of it, and an addition to it. "It is to thee, O my God, who art both the searcher and cleanser of hearts, that I desire to make my moan? It is to thee I cry out in the bitterness of my soul, 'O wretched man that I am, who

shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Who shall? Oh! who can do it, but thyself?
Arise thou, therefore, O my God, and show thyself as infinitely merciful in the pardoning,
as thou art infinitely powerful in the purging away of my sins."

ARTICLE V.

I believe the Son of God became the Son of man, that I, the son of man, might become the son of God.

OH! how comfortably does this raise me from the lowest abasement of sin and misery, which I have before acknowledged to be my natural state, to the highest exaltation of happiness and glory, in a spiritual one! This is that great article of faith, by which all the benefits of our Saviour's death and passion are made over to me in the new covenant, and by which, if I perform the conditions therein required, I shall not only be retrieved from the bondage and corruption that is inherent in me, as a child of wrath, but be justified and accepted as the Son of God, and be made a joint heir with Christ. This is a point of the greatest moment and concern, which, by the grace and assistance of him of whom I speak, and in whom I thus believe, I shall therefore be the more exact and particular in the searching and examining into.

Now, when I say, and believe, that God became man, I do not so understand it, as if the divine nature took upon it a human person, but that a divine person took upon him the human nature, i.e. it was not the divine nature, in general, without respect to the persons, but one of the persons in the divine nature, which took flesh upon him, and yet to speak precisely, it was not the divine person abstracted or distinct from the divine nature, but it was the divine nature in that person which thus took upon it the human. And this was not the first or third, but the second person only in the sacred Trinity, that thus assumed our nature; and, considering the mysterious order and economy of the divine persons, it seems to be necessary that it should.

For, first, the Father could not have become this Son of man, because, then, he, that had begotten from eternity, should have been begotten in time; by which means, as he was the Father to the Son, so would the Son also have been the Father unto him; and so the order betwixt the Father and Son destroyed.

Nor, secondly, could the Holy Ghost have taken our nature upon him, because the bond of personal union betwixt the divine and human nature is from the Spirit; (and thence it is, that every one that is partaker of Christ's person, is partaker of his Spirit also;) which could not be if the Spirit itself had been the person assuming. For, I cannot conceive, how the same person could unite itself, by itself, to the assumed nature: and therefore we read, that in the virgin's conception of our Saviour, it was neither the Father nor the Son himself, but the Spirit of the Most High, which did overshadow her.⁹⁰

And, further, if the Holy Ghost had been my Redeemer, who should have been my sanctifier? If he had died personally for me, who should have applied his death effectually to me? That I could not do it myself is, beyond contradiction, evident; and that either the

90 Luke, i. 35.

Father, or the Son, should do it, is not agreeable to the nature or order of the divine operations; they, as I believe, never acting any thing *ad extra*, personally, but by the Spirit proceeding from them both. And, therefore it is, that Christ, to comfort his disciples after his death, promiseth them in his life-time, that he would send them the Comforter, ‘which is the Spirit of truth.’⁹¹ He doth not say he will come again personally, but mystically to them, by his Spirit.

46

But now, that the Spirit, whose office it is to apply the merit and mediation of God-man to me could not have done it, if himself had been that God-man, seems to me as clear and manifest as the other: for, if he had done it, he should either have done it by the Father, by the Son, or by himself. He could not do it by the Father, nor the Son, because he does nothing by them, but all things from them. The Father acts in the Son by the Spirit, the Son from the Father by the Spirit, the Spirit from the Father and the Son. And therefore it likewise follows, that as the Spirit could not unite itself before, so neither can it apply itself here, to the human nature; for, to assume the human nature into the divine, and to apply the divine nature to the human, are two distinct offices; and, therefore, to be performed by two distinct persons. The first could have been done only by one that was really man, as well as God; the other, only by one that was merely God, and not man.

And that must needs be so; for, otherwise, God should act upon man by man, by the person man, as well as God; and, by consequence, all the dispensations of his grace toward us, would have been stopped in the frailty of the human, though perfect nature. So that it would have availed me nothing, if the Spirit had taken my nature upon him; because, though he had assumed the human, I could not thence have participated of the divine nature; nay, therefore, I could not have participated of this, because he had assumed that, by which alone I could be brought into this capacity; and so by this means, I should be further off than I was before.

47

And lastly, as, if the Father had become man, there would have been two Fathers; so if the Spirit had become man, there would have been two Sons, the second person begotten from eternity, and the third person begotten in time. But now, by the Son’s taking our nature upon him, these and far greater difficulties are avoided, which we might easily perceive, could we sufficiently dive into the depth of that wisdom of the Father, in sending his Son, rather than his Spirit, or coming himself in his own person. However, to us, it cannot but seem most equitable, (if reason may hold the balance,) that he, who is the middle person, between the Father and the Spirit, should become the Mediator betwixt God and man: and that he, who is the Son of God in the glorious Trinity, should become the Son of man in his gracious mystery.

91 John, xvi. 7, 13.

But, on the other side, as it was not the divine nature, but a divine person that did assume, so neither was it a human person, but the human nature that was assumed; for otherwise, if he had assumed the person of any one man in the world, his death had been beneficial to none but him, whose person he thus assumed and represented. Whereas, now that he has assumed the nature of man in general, all that partake of that nature, are capable of partaking of the benefit he purchased for us, by dying in our stead. And thus under each, Adam, as the representation was universal, so were the effects designed to be; ‘For as in Adam all died, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.’⁹²

48

Again, when I say, the Son of God became the Son of man, I do not mean, as if, by this, he should cease to be what he was before, the Son of God, for he did not leave his godhead to take upon him the manhood; but I believe he took the manhood into his godhead; he did not put off the one, to put on the other, but he put one upon the other: neither do I believe that the human nature, when assumed into the divine, ceased to be human; but as the divine person so assumed the human nature, as still to remain a divine person, so the human nature was so assumed into a divine person, as still to remain a human nature: God, therefore, so became man, as to be both perfectly God, and perfectly man, united together in one person.

I say, in one person; for, if he should be God and man in distinct persons, this would avail me no more, than if he should be God only, and not man, or man only, and not God; because the merit and value both of his active and passive obedience is grounded merely upon the union of the two natures in one and the same person. He, therefore, by his life and death merited so much for us, because the same person, that so lived and died, was God as well as man; and every action that he did, and every passion that he suffered, was done and suffered by him that was God, as well as man. And hence it is, that Christ, of all the persons in the world, is so fit, yea, only fit to be my Redeemer, Mediator, and Surety; because he alone is both God and man in one person. If he was not man, he could not undertake that office; if he was not God, he could not perform it: if he was not man, he could not be capable of being bound for me; if he was not God, he would not be able to *pay my debt*. It was man by whom the covenant was broken; and, therefore, man must have suitable punishment laid upon him: it was God with whom it was broken; and, therefore, God must have sufficient satisfaction made unto him; and, as for that satisfaction, it was man that had offended, and, therefore, man alone could make it suitable: it was God that was offended, and, therefore, God alone could make it sufficient.

49

The sum of all this is—man can suffer, but he cannot satisfy; God can satisfy, but he cannot suffer; but Christ being both God and man, can both suffer and satisfy too; and so is perfectly fit both to suffer for man, and to make satisfaction unto God, to reconcile God to man, and man to God. And thus, Christ having assumed my nature into his person, and

so satisfied divine justice for my sins, I am received into grace and favour again with the most high God.

Upon this principle, I believe that I, by nature the son of man, am made by grace the son of God, as really as Christ, by nature the Son of God, was made by office the Son of man: and so, though in myself, 'I may say to corruption, thou art my mother,' yet in Christ I may say to God, 'Abba Father.' Neither do I believe this to be a metaphorical expression, viz. because he doth that for me which a father doth for his child, even provide for me whilst young, and give me my portion when come to age; but I believe, that in the same propriety of speech that my earthly Father was called the Father of my natural self, is God the father of my spiritual self: for, why was my earthly father called my father, but because that I, as to my natural being, was born of what proceeded from him, viz. his seed? Why so, as to my spiritual being, am I born of what proceeds from God, his Spirit: and as I was not born of the very substance of my natural parents, but only of what came from them; so neither is my spiritual self begotten again, quickened and constituted of the very substance of my heavenly Father, God, but of the Spirit and spiritual influences proceeding from him. Thus, therefore, it is, that I believe that Christ, the Son of God, became the son of man; and thus it is that I believe myself, the Son of man, to be made thereby the son of God. "I believe, O my God and Father, do thou help mine unbelief! and every day more and more increase my faith, till itself shall be done away, and turned into the most perfect vision and fruition of thine own glorious Godhead!"

ARTICLE VI.

I believe that Christ lived to God, and died for sin, that I might die to sin, and live with God.

AND thus, by faith, I follow my Saviour from the womb to the tomb, from his incarnation to his death and passion, believing all that he did or suffered, to be for my sake: Jim Christ did not only take my nature upon him, but he suffered and obeyed; he underwent miseries, and undertook duties for me; so that not only his passive, but likewise his active obedience unto God, in that nature, was still for me. Not as if I believed, his duty as man was not God's debt, by the law of creation; yes, I believe that he owed that obedience unto God, that if he had committed but one sin, and that of the lightest tincture, in all his lifetime, he would have been so far from being able to satisfy for my sins, that he could not have satisfied for his own: 'For such an High-priest became us, who is holy, harmless, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needed not daily, as those high-priests, to offer up sacrifice first for his own sins, and then for the people's.'⁹³ So that if he had not had these qualifications in their absolute perfection, he could not have been our High-priest, nor by consequence, have made atonement for, nor expiated any sins whatsoever. But now, though both as man, and as God-man or Mediator too, it behoved him to be thus faithful and spotless; yet, as being God, coequal and co-essential with the Father, it was not out of duty, but merely upon our account, that he thus subjected his neck to the yoke of his own law; himself, as God, being the legislator or lawgiver, and so no more under it than the Father himself.

And hereupon it is, that I verily believe, that whatsoever Christ either did or suffered in the flesh, was meritorious; not that his life was righteous towards God, only that his death might be meritorious for us, (which I believe otherwise it could not have been,) but that his life was equally meritorious as righteous. So, that I believe my person is really accepted, as perfectly righteous, by the righteousness of his life imputed to me, as my sins are pardoned by God, for the bitterness of the death he suffered for them; his righteousness being as really by faith imputed to me, as my sins were laid upon him: as those are set upon his, so is that set upon my score; and so every thing he did in his life, as well as every thing be suffered in his death, is mine; by the latter, God looks upon me as perfectly innocent, and therefore not to be thrown down to hell; by the former, he looks upon me as perfectly righteous, and therefore to be brought up to heaven.

And, as for his death, I believe it was not only as much, but infinitely more, satisfactory to divine justice, than though I should have died to eternity. For, by that means, justice is actually and perfectly satisfied already, which it could never have been, for my suffering for my sins myself; for if justice by that means could ever be satisfied, if it could ever say, 'It is

51

52

⁹³ Heb. vii. 26, 27.

enough;’ it could not stand with the same justice, now satisfied, still to inflict punishment, nor, by consequence, could the damned justly scorch in the flames of God’s wrath for ever. Neither did the death of my Saviour reach only to the condemning, but likewise to the commanding power of sin; it did not only pluck out its sting, but likewise deprive it of its strength; so that he did not only merit by his death, that I should never die for sin, but likewise that I should die to it. Neither did he only merit by his life, that I should be accounted righteous in him before God; but likewise that I should be made righteous in myself by God. Yea, I believe that Christ by his death hath so fully discharged the debt I owe to God, that now, for the remission of my sins, and the accepting of my person, (if I perform the condition he requires in his covenant,) I may not only appeal to the throne of grace, but likewise to the judgment-seat of God; I may not only cry, Mercy, mercy, O gracious Father, but, justice, justice, my righteous God; I may not only say, Lord, be gracious and merciful, but be just and faithful, to acquit me from that debt, and cancel that bond which my surety hath paid for me, and which thou hast promised to accept of; being ‘not only gracious and merciful, but just and faithful, to forgive me my sins, and to cleanse me from all unrighteousness.’⁹⁴

ARTICLE VII.

I believe that Christ rose from the grave, that I might rise from sin, and that he is ascended into heaven that I may come unto him.

As Christ came from heaven to earth, so I believe he went from earth to heaven, and all for the accomplishment of my salvation; that after he had lived a most holy life, he died a most cruel death; that he was apprehended, arraigned, accused, and condemned, by such as could not pronounce the sentence against him, did not himself, at the same time, vouchsafe them breath to do it; and that he came into the world to take away the sins of it, to bring sinners to the joys of life, was himself by those very sinners brought into the pangs of death. But yet, as it was not in the power of death long to detain the Lord of life; so, though the worms had power to send him to the grave, yet I believe they had not power or time to feed upon him there; for he rose again from the dead the third day: he lay three days. that I might believe he was not alive, but dead; he rose the third day, that I might believe he is not (lead, but lives; he descended down to hell, that he might make full satisfaction to God's justice for my sins; but he is now ascended up into heaven, that he might make intercession to God's mercy for my soul; thither I believe he is gone, and there I believe he is, not as a private person, but as the head and Saviour of his church. And under this capacity, as I believe that Christ is there for me, so I am there in him: 'For where the head is, there must the members he also;' that is, I am as really there in him, my representative now, as I shall be in my proper person hereafter; and he is as really preparing my mansion for me there, as I am preparing myself for that mansion here. Nay, I believe, that he is not only preparing a mansion for me in heaven, but that himself is likewise preparing me for this mansion upon earth, continually sending down and issuing forth from himself fresh supplies and influences of his grace and Spirit; and all to qualify me for his service, and 'make me meet to be partaker of his inheritance with the saints in light.'

54

Which inheritance, I believe, he doth so much desire his Father to bestow upon me, as he claims it for me; himself having purchased it with the price of his own blood. And as he hath purchased the inheritance itself, so likewise the way unto it for me; and, therefore, sues out for the pardon of those sins, and subduing those corruptions which would make me unworthy of it; and for the conveyance of those graces to me, whereby I may walk directly to it; not only saying to his Father, concerning me, as Paul said to Philemon, concerning Onesimus, 'If this thy servant oweth thee any thing, set it upon my account; I will repay it.' But what is this thy servant oweth thee, see, it is set upon my score already, and I have paid it; what punishments he is indebted to thee, for all the offences he hath committed against thee, behold I have borne them already; see, how I have been 'wounded for his transgressions, and bruised for his iniquities; the chastisement of his peace was upon me; with my stripes therefore let him be healed.'⁹⁵ And thus, as he once shed his blood for me amongst men,

55

95 Isa. liii. 5.

he now pleads it for me before God; and that not only for the washing out the guilt of my transgressions, but likewise for the washing away the filth of my corruptions; himself having purchased the donation of the Spirit from the Father, he there claims the communication of it unto me.

And that he hath thus undertaken to plead my cause for me, I have it under his own hand and seal; himself by his Spirit assuring me, that if ‘I sin, I have an advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the righteous.’⁹⁶ So that I believe, he is not so much my solicitor at the mercy-seat, as my advocate at the judgment-seat of God, there pleading my right and title to the crown of glory, and to every step of the way that I must go through the kingdom of grace unto it. In a word, I believe that Christ, upon promise and engagement to pay such a price for it in time, did purchase this inheritance for me from eternity; whereupon I was even then immediately chosen and elected into it; and had, by this means, a place in heaven before I had any being upon earth; and when the time appointed, by covenant, was come, I believe Christ, according to his promise, paid the purchase-money, even laid down his life for me; and then forthwith went up and took possession of this my kingdom, not for himself, but for me as my proxy and representative: so that whilst I am in my infancy, under age, I am in possession, though I have not as yet the enjoyment of this my inheritance; but that is reserved for me till I come at age. And howsoever, though I do not enjoy the whole as yet, my Father allows me as much of it as he sees convenient, so much grace and so much comfort as he thinks best; which are as a pledge of what he has laid up for me in his kingdom which is above.

56

56

96 1 John, ii. 1.

ARTICLE VIII.

I believe that my person is only justified by the merit of Christ imputed to me; and that my nature is only sanctified by the Spirit of Christ implanted in me.

AND thus I do not only believe Christ to be my Saviour, but I believe only Christ to be my Saviour. It was he alone ‘that trod the wine-press of his Father’s wrath’ filled with the sour and bitter grapes of my sins. It was he that carried on the great work of my salvation, being himself both the ‘author and the finisher’ of it. I say it was he, and he alone; for what person or persons in the world could do it, besides himself? the angels could not if they would, the devils would not if they could; and as for my fellow-creatures, I may as well satisfy for their sins, as they for mine; and how little able even the best of us are to do either, i. e. to atone either for our own transgressions, or those of others, every man’s experience will sufficiently inform him. For how should we, pour worms of the earth, ever hope, by our slime and mortar, (if I may so speak,) of our own natural abilities, to raise up a tower, ‘whose top may reach to heaven?’ Can we expect by the strength of our own hands to take heaven by violence? or by the price of our own works to purchase eternal glory? It is a matter of admiration to me, how any one that pretends to the use of his reason, can imagine, that he should be accepted before God for what comes from himself? For, how is it possible that I should be justified by good works, when I can do no good works at all before I be first justified? My works cannot be accepted as good, until my person be so; nor can my person be accepted by God, till first ingrafted into Christ: before which ingrafting into the true vine, it is impossible I should bring forth good fruit; for the ‘plowing of the wicked is sin,’ says Solomon, yea, ‘the sacrifices of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord.’⁹⁷ And, if both the civil and spiritual actions of the wicked be sin, which of all their actions, shall have the honour to justify them before God? I know not how it is with others, but for my own part, I do not remember, neither do I believe, that I ever prayed in all my life-time, with that reverence, or beard with that attention, or received the sacrament with that faith, or did any other work whatsoever, with that pure heart and single eye, as I ought to have done. Insomuch that I look upon all my ‘righteousness as filthy rags;’ and it is in the robes only of the righteousness of the Son of God that I dare appear before the majesty of heaven. Nay, suppose I could at length, attain to that perfection, as to do good works, exactly conformable to the will of God, yet must they have better eyes than I, that can see how my obedience in one kind, can satisfy for my disobedience in another; or how that which God commands from me, should merit any thing from him.

No, I believe there is no person can merit any thing from God, but he that can do more than is required of him; which it is impossible any creature should do. For, in that it is a

97 Prov. xxi. 4; xv. 8.

creature, it continually depends 'upon God, and therefore is bound to do every thing it can, by any means possible to do for him; especially, considering, that the creature's dependence upon God is such, that it is beholden to him even for every action that issues from it; without whom, as it is impossible any thing should be, so likewise that any thing should act, especially, what is good. So that to say, a man of himself can merit any thing from God, is as much as to say, that he can merit by that which of himself he doth not do; or that one person can merit by that which another performs; which is a plain contradiction. For in that it merits, it is necessarily implied, that itself acts that by which it is said to merit, but in that it doth not depend upon itself, but on another in what it acts, it is as necessarily implied, that itself doth not do that by which it is said to merit.

59

Upon this account, I shall never be induced to believe that any creature, by any thing it doth, or can do, can merit, or deserve any thing at the hand of God, till it can be proved that a creature can merit by that which God doth; or that God can be bound to bestow any thing upon us, for that which himself alone is pleased to work in us, and by us; which, in plain terms, would be as much as to say, that because God had been pleased to do one good turn for us, he is therefore bound to do more; and, because God hath enabled us to do our duty, he should therefore be bound to give us glory.

It is not, therefore, in the power of any person in the world to merit any thing from God, but such a one who is absolutely co-essential with him, and so depends not upon him either for his existence or actions. And, as there is no person can merit any thing from God, unless he be personally distinct from him: forasmuch as, though a person may be said to merit for himself, yet he cannot be said, without a gross solecism, to merit any thing from himself. So that he that is not as perfectly another person from God, as really as the same in nature with him, can never be said to merit any thing at his hands.

60

But further, God the Father could not properly be said to do it in his own person, because, being (according to our own conception) the party offended, should he have undertaken this work for me, he, in his own person, must have undertaken to make satisfaction to his own person, for the offences committed against himself; which, if he should have done, his mercy might have been much exalted, but his justice could not have been satisfied by it. For justice requires, either that the party offended should be punished for these offences, or, at least some fit person in his stead, which the Father himself cannot be said to be, in that he was the party offended, to whom the satisfaction was to be made: and it is absurd to suppose, that the same person should be capable of making satisfaction, both by and to himself, at the same time.

It remains, therefore, that there were only two persons in the holy Trinity, who could possibly be invested with this capacity; the Son and the Spirit: as to the latter, though he be indeed the same in nature with the Father, and a distinct person from him, and so far in a capacity to make satisfaction to him; yet not being capable both of assuming the human

nature into the divine, and also uniting and applying the divine nature to the human, (as I have showed before in the fifth article,) he was not in a capacity of making satisfaction for man; none being fit to take that office upon him, but he that, of himself, was perfectly God, and likewise capable of becoming perfectly man, by uniting both natures in the same person; which the Holy Ghost could not do, because he was the person by whom, and therefore could not be the person also in whom, this union of the two natures was to be perfected. And yet it was by this means, and this method only, that any person could have been completely capacitated to have borne the punishment of our sins: he that was only man could not do it, because the sin was committed against God; and he that was only God could not do it, because the sin was committed by man.

61

From all which, as I may fairly infer, so I hope I may safely fix my faith in this article, viz. That there was only one person in the whole world that could do this great work for me, of justifying my person before God, and so glorifying my soul with him; and that was the Son of God, the second person in the glorious Trinity, begotten of the substance of the Father from all eternity; whom I apprehend and believe to have brought about the great work of my justification before God, after this or the like manner.

He being, in and of himself, perfectly coequal, coessential, and coeternal with the Father, was in no sort bound to do more than the Father himself did; and so whatsoever he should do, which the Father did not, might justly be accounted as a work of supererogation; which, without any violation of divine justice, might be set upon the account of some other persons, even of such whom he pleased to do it for. And hereupon, out of mercy and compassion to fallen man, he covenants with his Father, that if it pleased his majesty to accept it, he would take upon him the suffering of those punishments which were due from him to man, and the performance of those duties which were due from man to him: so that whatsoever he should thus humble himself to do or suffer, should wholly be upon the account of man, himself not being any ways bound to do or suffer more in time than he had from eternity.

62

This motion, the Father, out of the riches of his grace and mercy, was pleased to consent unto: and hereupon, the Son assuming our nature into his Deity, becomes subject and obedient both to the moral and ceremonial laws of his Father, and, at last, to death itself; ‘even the death of the cross.’ In the one, he paid an active, in the other a passive obedience; and so did not only fulfil the will of his Father, in obeying what he had commanded, but satisfied his justice in suffering the punishment due to us for the transgressing of it. His active obedience, as it was infinitely pure and perfect, did, without doubt, infinitely transcend all the obedience of the sons of men, even of Adam too, in his primitive state. For, the obedience of Adam, make the best of it, was but the obedience of a finite creature; whereas the obedience of Christ was the obedience of one that was infinite God, as well as man. By which means the laws of God had higher obedience performed to them, than themselves in their primitive institution required; for being made only to finite creatures, they could

command no more than the obedience of finite creatures; whereas the obedience of Christ was the obedience of one who was the infinite Creator, as well as a finite creature.

Now, this obedience being more than Christ was bound to, and only performed upon the account of those whose nature he had assumed, as we, by faith, lay hold upon it, so God, through grace, imputes it to us, as if it had been performed by us in our own persons. And hence it is, that as, in one place, Christ is said to be ‘made sin for us,’⁹⁸ so, in another place, he is said to be ‘made our righteousness.’⁹⁹ And in the forecited place,¹⁰⁰ he is said to be made ‘sin for us,’ so we are said to be ‘made righteousness’ in him: but what righteousness? Our own? No, ‘the righteousness of God,’ radically his, but imputatively ours: and this is the only way, whereby we are said to be ‘made the righteousness of God,’ even by the righteousness of Christ’s being made ours, by which we are accounted and reputed as righteous before God.

These things considered, I very much wonder how any man can presume to exclude the active obedience of Christ from our justification before God, as if what Christ did in the flesh was only of duty, not at all of merit; or, as if it was for himself, and not for us. Especially, when I consider, that suffering the penalty is not what the law primarily requireth; for the law of God requires perfect obedience, the penalty being only threatened to (not properly required of) the breakers of it. For, let a man suffer the penalty of the law in never so high a manner, he is not therefore accounted obedient to it; his punishment doth not speak his innocence, but rather his transgression of the law.

Hence it is, that I cannot look upon Christ as having made full satisfaction to God’s justice for me, unless he had performed the obedience I owe to God’s laws, as well as borne the punishment that is due to my sins: for though he should have borne my sins, I cannot see how that could denominate me righteous or obedient to the law, so as to entitle me to eternal life, according to the tenor of the old law, ‘Do this and live.’¹⁰¹ Which old covenant is not disannulled or abrogated by the covenant of grace, but rather established,¹⁰² especially as to the obedience it requires from us, in order to the life it promiseth; otherwise, the laws of God would be mutable, and so come short of the laws of the very Medes and Persians, which alter not. Obedience, therefore, is as strictly required under the New, as it was under the Old Testament, but with this difference: there obedience in our own persons was required as absolutely necessary; here, obedience in our surety is accepted as completely sufficient.

63

64

98 [2 Cor. v. 21.](#)

99 [1 Cor. i. 30.](#)

100 [2 Cor. v. 21.](#)

101 [Lev. xviii. 5.](#)

102 [Rom. iii. 31.](#)

But now, if we have no such obedience in our surety, as we cannot have, if he did not live, as well as (he, for us; let any one tell me what title he hath, or can have, to eternal life. I suppose he will tell me, he hath none in himself, because he hath not performed perfect obedience to the law. And I tell him, he hath none in Christ, unless Christ performed that obedience for him, which none can say he did, that doth not believe his active, as well as passive obedience, to be wholly upon our account.

And now I speak of Christ's being our surety, as the apostle calls him,¹⁰³ methinks this gives much light to the truth in hand: for, what is a surety, but one that undertakes to pay whatsoever he, whose surety he is, is bound to pay, in case the debtor proves nonsolvent, or unable to pay it himself? And thus is Christ, under the notion of a surety, bound to pay whatever we owe to God, because we ourselves are not able to pay it in our own persons.

65

Now, there are two things that we owe to God, which this our surety is bound to pay for us, viz. first, and principally, obedience to his laws, as he is our Creator and governor; and secondly, by consequence, the punishment that is annexed to the breach of these laws, of which we are guilty. Now, though Christ should pay the latter part of our debt for us, by bearing the punishment that is due unto us; yet, if he did not pay the former and principal part of it too, i. e. perform the obedience which we owe to God, he would not fully have performed the office of suretyship, which he undertook for us; and so would be but a half-mediator, or half-saviour, which are such words as I dare scarce pronounce, for fear of blasphemy.

So that, though it is the death of Christ by which I believe my sins are pardoned; yet it is the life of Christ, by which I believe my person is accepted. His passion God accounts as suffered by me, and therefore I shall not die for sin: his obedience God accounts as performed by me, and therefore I shall live with him. Not as if I believed, that Christ so performed obedience for me, that I should be discharged from my duty to him: but only that I should not be condemned by God, in not discharging my duty to him in so strict a manner, as is required. I believe that the active obedience of Christ will stand me in no stead, unless I endeavour after sincere obedience in my own person; his active, as well as his passive obedience, being imputed unto none, but only to such as apply it to themselves by faith; which faith in Christ will certainly put such as are possessed of it upon obedience unto God. This, therefore, is the righteousness, and the manner of that justification, whereby I hope to stand before the judgment-seat of God; even by God's imputing my sins to Christ, and Christ's righteousness to me; looking upon me as one not to be punished for my sins, because Christ hath suffered, but to be received into the joys of glory, because Christ hath performed obedience for me, and does by faith, through grace, impute it to me.

66

103 [Heb. vii. 22.](#)

And thus it is into the merit of Christ that I resolve the whole work of my salvation; and this, not only, as to that which is wrought without me, for the justification of my person, but likewise as to what is wrought within me for the sanctification of my nature. As I cannot have a sin pardoned without Christ, so neither can I have a sin subdued without him; neither the fire of God's wrath can be quenched, nor yet the filth of my sins washed away, but by the blood of Christ.

So that I wonder as much at the doctrine that some men have advanced concerning free-will, as I do at that which others have broached in favour of good works; and it is a mystery to me, how any that ever had experience of God's method in working out sin, and planting grace in our hearts, should think they can do it by themselves, or any thing in order to it. Not that I do in the least question, but that every man may be saved that will; (for this, I believe, is a real truth) but I do not believe, that any man of himself can will to be saved. Wheresoever God enables a soul effectually to will salvation, he will certainly give salvation to that soul; but I believe, it is as impossible for my soul to will salvation of itself, as to enjoy salvation without God.

67

And this my faith is not grounded upon a roving fancy, but the most solid reasons; forasmuch as, of ourselves, we are not able, in our understandings, to discern the evil from the good, much less then, are we able, in our wills, to prefer the good before the evil; the will never settling upon any thing, but what the judgment discovers to it. But now, that my natural judgment is unable to apprehend and represent to my will the true and only good under its proper notion, my own too sad experience would sufficiently persuade me, though I had neither Scripture nor reason for it. And yet the Scripture also is so clear in this point, that I could not have denied it, though I should never have had any experience of it; the Most High expressly telling me, that the 'natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.'¹⁰⁴ 'Neither can he know them,' i. e. there is an absolute impossibility in it, that any one remaining in his natural principles, without the assistance of God, should apprehend or conceive the excellency of spiritual objects. So that a man may as soon read the letter of the Scripture without eyes, as understand the mysteries of the gospel without grace. And this is not at all to be wondered at; especially, if we consider the vast and infinite disproportion betwixt the object and the faculty; the object to be apprehended being nothing less than the best of beings, God; and the faculty whereby we apprehend it, nothing more than the power of a finite creature polluted with the worst of evils, sin.

68

So that I believe it a thousand times easier for a worm, a fly, or any other despicable insect whatsoever, to understand the affairs of men, than for the best of men in a natural state to apprehend the things of God. No; there is none can know God, nor, by consequence, any

104 1 Cor. ii. 14.

thing that is really good, but only so far as they are partakers of the divine nature: we must, in some measure, be like to God, before we can have any true conceptions of him, or be really delighted with him; we must have a spiritual sight, before we can behold spiritual things: which every natural man being destitute of, he can see no comeliness in Christ, why he should be desired; nor any amiableness in religion, why it should be embraced.

And hence it is, that I believe, the first work that God puts forth upon the soul in order to its conversion, is, to raise up a spiritual light within it, to clear up its apprehensions about spiritual matters, so as to enable the soul to look upon God as the chiefest good, and the enjoyment of him as the greatest bliss: whereby the soul may clearly discern between good and evil, and evidently perceive, that nothing is good, but so far as it is like to God; and nothing evil, but so far as it resembles sin.

But this is not all the work that God hath to do upon a sinful soul, to bring it to himself; for though I must confess that in natural things, the will always follows the ultimate dictates of the understanding, so as to choose and embrace what the understanding represents to it, under the comely dress of good and amiable, and to refuse and abhor whatever, under the same representation, appears to be evil and dangerous; I say, though I must confess, it is so in natural, yet I believe, it is not so in spiritual matters. For, though the understanding may have never such clear apprehensions of spiritual good, yet the will is not at all affected with it, without the joint operations of the grace of God upon us; all of us too sadly experiencing what St. Paul long ago bewailed in himself, that ‘what we do, we allow not,’¹⁰⁵ that though our judgments condemn what we do, yet we cannot choose but do it; though our understandings clearly discover to us the excellence of grace and glory, yet our wills overpowered with their own corruptions, are strangely hurried into sin and misery, I must confess, it is a truth which I should scarcely have ever believed, if I had not such daily experience of it: but, alas! there is scarce an hour in the day, but, I may go about lamenting, with Medea in Seneca, *Video meliora, proboque; deteriora sequor*; though I see what is good, yea, and judge it to be the better, yet I very often choose the worse.

And the reason of it is, because, as by our fall from God, the whole soul was desperately corrupted; so it is not the rectifying of one faculty, which can make the whole straight; but as the whole was changed from holiness to sin, so must the whole be changed again from sin to holiness, before it can be inserted into a state of grace, or so much as an act of grace to be exerted by it.

Now, therefore, the understanding and will being two distinct faculties, or, at least two distinct acts in the soul, it is impossible for the understanding to be so enlightened, as to prefer the good before the evil, and yet for the will to remain so corrupt, as to choose the evil before the good. And hence it is, that where God intends to work over a soul to himself,

69

70

¹⁰⁵ Rom. vii. 15.

he doth not only pass an enlightening act upon the understanding and its apprehensions, but likewise a sanctifying act upon the will and its affections, that when the soul perceives the glory of God, and the beauty of holiness, it may presently close with, and entertain it with the choicest of its affections. And without God's thus drawing it, the understanding could never allure the soul to good.

And therefore it is, that for all the clear discoveries which the understanding may make to itself concerning the glories of the invisible world, yet God assures us, it is himself alone that affects the soul with them, by inclining its will to them: for it is God 'which worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure.'¹⁰⁶ So that, though God offer heaven to all that will accept of it, in the holy Scriptures; yet none can accept of it, but such whom himself stirs up by his Holy Spirit to endeavour after it. And thus we find it was in Israel's return from Babylon to Jerusalem, though king Cyrus made a proclamation, 'that whosoever would might go up to worship at the holy city,' yet there was none that accepted of the offer, 'but those whose spirit God had raised to go up.'¹⁰⁷ So here, though God doth, as it were, proclaim to all the world, that whosoever will come to Christ shall certainly be saved, yet it doth not follow, that all shall receive salvation from him, because it is certain all will not come; or rather, none can will to come unless God enable him.

71

I am sure, to say none shall be saved, but those that will of themselves, would be sad news for me, whose will is naturally so backward to every thing that is good. But this is my comfort, I am as certain, my salvation is of God, as I am certain it cannot be of myself. It is Christ who vouchsafed to die for me, who hath likewise promised to live within me: it is he that will work all my works, Moth for me and in me too. In a word, it is to him I am beholding, not only for my spiritual blessings and enjoyments, but even for my temporal ones too, which, in and through his name, I daily put up my petitions for. So that I have not so much as a morsel of bread, in mercy, from God, but only upon the account of Christ: not a drop of drink, but what flows to me in his blood. It is he that is the very blessing of all my blessings, without whom my very mercies would prove but curses, and my prosperity would but work my ruin.

"Whither therefore, should I go, my dear and blessed Saviour, but unto thee? 'Thou hast the words of eternal life.' And how shall I come, but by thee? Thou hast the treasures of all grace. O thou, that host wrought out my salvation for me, be pleased likewise to work this salvation in me; give me, I beseech thee, such a measure of thy grace, as to believe in thee here upon earth: and then give me such degrees of glory, as fully to enjoy thee for ever in heaven."

72

106 [Phil. ii. 13.](#)

107 [Ezra, i. 3, 5.](#)

ARTICLE IX.

I believe God entered into a double covenant with man, the covenant of works made with the first, and the covenant of grace made in the second Adam.

THAT the most high God should take a piece of earth, work it up into the frame and fashion of a man, and ‘breathe into his nostrils the breath of life,’ and then should enter into a covenant with it, and should say, ‘Do this and live,’ when man was bound to do it, whether he could live by it or no, was without doubt, a great and amazing act of I love and condescension; but that, when this covenant was unhappily broken by the first, God should instantly vouchsafe to renew it in the second Adam; and that too upon better terms, and more easy conditions than the former, was yet a more surprising mercy; for the same day that Adam eat the forbidden fruit did God make him this promise, that ‘the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head.’¹⁰⁸ And this promise he afterwards explained and confirmed by the mouth of his prophet Jeremiah, saying, ‘This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days; I will put my law into their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.’¹⁰⁹ And again, by St. Paul under the New Testament, almost in the self-same words.¹¹⁰

73

A covenant so gracious and condescending, that it seems to be made up of nothing else but promises. The first was, properly speaking, a covenant of works, requiring on man’s part a perfect and unsinning obedience, without any extraordinary grace or assistance from God to enable him to perform it; but here, in the second, God undertakes both for himself and for man too, having digested the conditions to be performed by us, into promises, to be fulfilled by himself, viz. that he will not only pardon our sins, if we do repent, but that he will give us repentance, that so we may deserve his pardon; that he will not only give us life, if we come to Christ, but even draw us to Christ, that so he may give us life; and so not only make us happy, if we will be holy, but make us holy, that so we may be happy: for the covenant is, not that he will be our God, if we will be his people, but he will be our God, and we shall be his people. But still, all this is in and through Christ, the surety and mediator of this covenant, in whom all the ‘promises are yea and amen,’¹¹¹ so that Christ may be looked upon, not only as a surety, but as a party in this covenant of grace, being not only bound to God, but likewise covenanting with him for us. As God-man, he is a surety for us, but as man he must needs be a party with us, even our head in the covenant of grace, as Adam was in the covenant of works.

74

108 Gen. iii. 15.

109 Jer. xxxi. 33.

110 Heb. viii. 10.

111 2 Cor. i. 20.

What therefore though I can do nothing in this covenant of myself? yet this is my comfort, that he hath undertaken for me, who can do all things. And therefore it is called a covenant of grace, and not of works, because in it there is no work required from me, but what, by grace, I shall be enabled to perform.

And as for the tenor in which this covenant runs, or the *Habendum*, and grant which each party covenants for, it is express in these words, ‘I will be your God, and you shall be my people;’ God covenants with us, that we shall be his people, we covenant with God, that he shall be our God. And what can God stipulate more to us, or we stipulate more to him than this? What doth not God promise to us, when he promises to be our God? and what doth he not require from us, when he requires us to be his people.

First, He doth not say, I will be your hope, your help, your light, your life, your sun, your shield, and your exceeding great reward; but I will be your God, which is ten thousand times more than possibly can be couched under any other expressions whatsoever, as containing under it whatsoever God is, whatsoever God hath, and whatsoever God can do. All his essential attributes are still engaged for us; we may lay claim to them, and take hold on them: so that what the prophet saith of his righteousness and strength, ‘surely shall one say, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength.’¹¹² I may extend to all his other attributes, and say, surely in the Lord have I mercy to pardon me, wisdom to instruct me, power to protect me, truth to direct me, grace to crown my heart on earth, and glory to crown my head in heaven: and, if what he is, then much more what he hath, is here made over by covenant to me. ‘He that spared not his own Son,’ saith the apostle, ‘but delivered him up for us all; how shall he not but with him likewise freely give us all things?’¹¹³ But what hath God to give me? Why, all that he hath is briefly summed up in this short inventory; whatsoever is in heaven above, or the earth beneath, is his; and that this inventory is true, I have several witnesses to prove it, Melchizedec,¹¹⁴ and Moses,¹¹⁵ and David.¹¹⁶ Indeed, reason itself will conclude this, that he that is the Creator and preserver, must of necessity be the owner and possessor of all things; so that let me imagine what possibly I can, in all the world, I may with the pen of reason write under it, “this is God’s;” and if I take but the pen of faith with it, I may write, “this is mine in Jesus Christ.”

As for example; hath he a Son? He hath died for me. Hath he a Spirit? It shall live within me. Is earth his? It shall be my provision. Is heaven his? It shall be my portion. Hath he angels? They shall guard me. Hath he comforts? They shall support me. Hath he grace?

¹¹² Isa. xlvi. 24.

¹¹³ Rom. viii. 32.

¹¹⁴ Gen. xiv. 19.

¹¹⁵ Deut. x. 14.

¹¹⁶ 1 Chron. xxix. 11.

That shall make me holy. Hath he glory? That shall make me happy. For the Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from those that walk uprightly.¹¹⁷

And as he is nothing but what he is unto us, so he doth nothing but what he doth for us. So that whatsoever God doth by his ordinary providence, or (if our necessity requires) whatsoever he can do by his extraordinary power, I may be sure, he doth and will do for me. Now he hath given himself to me, and taken me unto himself, what will he not do for me that he can? And what can he not do for me that he will? Do I want food? God can drop down manna from the clouds, or bid the quails come down and feed me with their own flesh, as they did the Israelites;¹¹⁸ or he can send the ravens to bring me bread and flesh, as they did the prophet Elijah.¹¹⁹ Am I thirsty? God can broach the rocks, and dissolve the flints into floods of water, as he did for Israel.¹²⁰ Am I cast into a fiery furnace? He can suspend the fury of the raging flames, as he did for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.¹²¹ Am I thrown among the devouring lions? He can stop their mouths, and make them as harmless as lambs, as he did for Daniel.¹²² Am I ready to be swallowed up by the merciless waves of the tempestuous ocean? God can command a fish to come and ship me safe to land, and that in its own belly, as he did for his prophet Jonah.¹²³ Am I in prison? God can speak the word, as he did for St. Peter, and the chains shall immediately fall off, and the doors fly open, and I shall be set at liberty, as he was.¹²⁴ And thus I can have no wants, but God can supply them; no doubts, but God can resolve them; no fears, but God can dispel them; no dangers, but God can prevent them. And it is as certain that he will, as that he can, do these things for me, himself having, by covenant, engaged and given himself unto me.

And as in God's giving himself, he hath given whatsoever he is, and whatsoever he hath unto me, and will do whatsoever he can do for me; so in my giving myself to him, whatsoever I have, I am to give to him, and whatsoever I do I am to do for him. But now, though we should thus wholly give up ourselves to God, and do whatsoever he requires of us, (which none, I fear, without some degree of presumption, can say he has done,) yet I there is an infinite disproportion between the grant I on God's part, and that on ours, in that he is God, and we but creatures, 'the workmanship of his own hands,' to whom it was our duty to give

76

77

¹¹⁷ Psal. lxxxiv. 11.

¹¹⁸ Exod. xvi. 4, 13.

¹¹⁹ 1 Kings, xvii. 6.

¹²⁰ Deut. viii. 15.

¹²¹ Dan. iii. 23.

¹²² Dan. vi. 22.

¹²³ Jonah, ii. 10.

¹²⁴ Acts, xii. 7, 8, 9, 10.

ourselves, whether he had ever given himself to us or no: he is ours by covenant only, not by nature; we are his both by covenant and nature too.

Hence we may infer, that it is not only our duty to do what he hath commanded us, because he hath said, ‘Do this and live;’ but because he hath said, ‘Do this;’ yea, though he should say, Do this and die, it would still be our duty to do it, because we are his, wholly of his making, and therefore wholly at his disposing; insomuch that should he put me upon the doing that which would inevitably bring ruin upon me, I am not to neglect obeying him for fear of destroying myself, his will and pleasure being infinitely to be preferred before my life and salvation.

But, if it were my duty to obey his commands, though I should die for it, how much more when he hath promised, I shall live by it? Nay, I shall not only live, if I obey him, but my obedience itself shall be my life and happiness; for if I be obedient unto him, he is pleased to account himself as glorified by me; ‘for herein is my Father glorified, if ye bring forth much fruit.’¹²⁵ Now, what greater glory can possibly be desired, than to glorify my Maker? How can I be more glorified by God, than to have God glorified by me; it is the glory of God to glorify himself; and what a higher glory can a creature aspire after, than that which is the infinite glory of its all-glorious Creator? It is not, therefore, my duty only, but my glory to give myself, and whatsoever I am, unto him, ‘to glorify him both in my body and in my spirit which are his,’¹²⁶ to lay out whatsoever I have for him, ‘to honour him with all my substance,’¹²⁷ and ‘whether I eat or drink, or whatsoever I do, to do all to his glory.’¹²⁸ Not as if it was possible for God to receive more glory from me now, than he had in himself from all eternity. No: he was infinitely glorious then, and it is impossible for him to be more glorious now; all that we can do, is duly to acknowledge that glory, which he hath in himself, and to manifest it, as we ought, before others; which, though it be no addition to his glory, yet it is the perfection of ours, which he is pleased to account as his.

As for the grant, therefore, in the covenant of grace; I believe it to be the same on our parts, with that in the covenant of works, i. e. That we Christians are as much bound to obey the commands he lays upon us now, as the Jews under the old covenant were. What difference there is, is wholly and solely on God’s part; who, instead of expecting obedience from us, is pleased, in this new covenant, to give this obedience to us. Instead of saying, ‘Do this and live,’ he hath, in effect, said, I will enable you to do this, that so you may live. ‘I will put my laws into your minds, and write them in your hearts; and I will be to you a God, and you shall be to me a people.’¹²⁹ Not, I will, if you will, but I will, and you shall. Not, if you will

78

79

¹²⁵ John, xv. 8.

¹²⁶ 1 Cor. vi. 20.

¹²⁷ Prov. iii. 9.

¹²⁸ 1 Cor. x. 31.

¹²⁹ Heb. viii. 10.

do this, you shall live, but, you shall do this, and live. So that God doth not require less from us, but only hath promised more to us, in the new, than he did in the old covenant. There, we are to perform obedience to God; but it was by our own strength: here we are to perform the same obedience still; but it is by his strength. Nay, as we have more obligations to obedience upon us now, than we had before, by reason of God's expressing more grace and favour to us than formerly he did; so I believe God expects more from us, under the new, than he did under the old covenant. In that, he expected the obedience of men; in this, he expects the obedience of Christians, such as are by faith united unto Christ, and, in Christ, unto himself; and so are to do what they do, not by the strength of man, as before, but by the strength of the eternal God himself; who, as he at first created me for himself, so he hath now purchased me to himself, received me into covenant with him, and promised to enable me with grace to perform that obedience he requires from me; and, therefore, he now expects I should lay out myself, even whatsoever I have or am, wholly for him and his glory.

This, therefore, being the tenor of this covenant of grace, it follows, that I am none of my own, but wholly God's: I am his by creation, and his by redemption, and, therefore, ought to be his by conversion. Why, therefore, should I live any longer to myself, who am not my own but God's? And why should I grudge to give myself to him, who did not grudge to give himself for me? or rather, why should I steal myself from him, who have already given myself to him? But did I say, I have given myself to my God? Alas! it is but the restoring myself to him, whose I was ever since I had a being, and to whom I am still infinitely more engaged, than I can thus cordially engage myself to him; for, as I am not my own, but his, so the very giving of myself to him, is not from myself, but from him. I could not have given myself to him, had he not first given himself to me, and even wrought my mind into this resolution of giving myself to him.

But, having thus solemnly by covenant given myself to him, how doth it behove me to improve myself for him; my soul is his, my body his, my parts his, my gifts his, my graces his, and whatsoever is mine, is his; for, without him I could not have been, and therefore could have nothing. So that I have no more cause to be proud of any thing I have, or am, than a page hath to be proud of his fine clothes, which are not his, but his master's; who bestows all his finery upon him, not for his page's honour or credit, but for his own.

And thus it is with the best of us, in respect of God; he gives men parts and learning, and riches and grace, and desires and expects that we should make a due use of them: but to what end? Not to gain honour and esteem to ourselves, and make us proud and haughty: but to give him the honour due to his name, and so employ them as instruments in promoting his glory and service. So that, whensoever we do not lay out ourselves to the utmost of our power for him, it is downright sacrilege; it is robbing God of that which is more properly his, than any man in the world can call any thing he hath his own.

80

81

Having, therefore, thus wholly surrendered and given up myself to God, so long as it shall please his majesty to entrust me with myself, to lend me my being in the lower world, or to put any thing else into my hands, as time, health, strength, parts or the like; I am resolved, by his grace, to lay out all for his glory. All the faculties of my soul, as I have given them to him, so will I endeavour to improve them for him; they shall still be at his most noble service; my understanding shall be his, to know him; my will his, to choose him; my affections his, to embrace him; and all the members of my body shall act in subserviency to him.

And thus, having given myself to God on earth, I hope God in a short time will take me to himself in heaven: where, as I give myself to him in time, he will give himself to me unto all eternity.

ARTICLE X.

I believe, that as God entered into a covenant of grace with us, so hath he signed this covenant to us by a double seal, baptism and the Lord's supper.

As the covenant of works had two sacraments, viz. ‘the tree of life, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil;’ the first signifying and sealing life and happiness to the performance, the other death and misery to the breach of it: so the covenant of grace was likewise sealed with two typical sacraments, circumcision and the passover. The former was annexed at God’s first making his covenant with Abraham’s person; the other was added, at his fulfilling the promises of it, to his seed or posterity, which were therefore styled, ‘the promised seed.’ But these being only typical of the true and spiritual sacraments, that were afterwards to take place upon the coming of the Messiah, there were then, ‘in the fulness of time,’ two other sacraments substituted in their stead, viz. baptism and the supper of the Lord. And these sacraments were both correspondent to the types by which they were represented.

As to the first, viz. circumcision, whether I consider the time of conferring it, or the end of its institution, I find it exactly answers to the sacrament of baptism in both these respects. For, as the children under the law were to be circumcised in their infancy, at eight days old; so are the children under the gospel to be baptized in their infancy too. And as the principal thing intended in the rite of circumcision, was to initiate or admit the children of the faithful into the Jewish church, so the chief design of baptism now, is to admit the children of such as profess themselves Christians, into the church of Christ. And, for this reason, I believe, that as, under the Old Testament, children had the grant of covenant privileges, and church-membership, as really as their parents had; so this grant was not repealed, as is intimated,¹³⁰ but further confirmed in the New Testament, in that the apostle calls the children of believing parents holy.¹³¹ Which cannot be understood of a real and inherent, but only of a relative and covenanted holiness, by virtue of which, being born of believing parents, themselves are accounted in the number of believers, and are therefore called holy children under the gospel, in the same sense that the people of Israel were called a holy people under the law,¹³² as being all within the covenant of grace, which, through the faith of their parents, is thus sealed to them in baptism.

83

Not that I think it necessary, that all parents should be endued with what we call a saving faith, to entitle their children to these privileges (for then none but the children of such who have the Spirit of Christ truly implanted in them, would be qualified to partake of the covenant) but even such, who by an outward historical faith have taken the name of Christ upon them, are by that means in covenant with God, and so accounted holy in respect of

130 [Acts, ii. 39.](#)

131 [1 Cor. vii. 14.](#)

132 [Deut. vii. 6, and xiv. 2, 21.](#)

their profession, whatever they may be in point of practice. And if they are themselves holy, it follows of course, that their children must be so too, they being esteemed as parts of their parents, till made distinct members in the body of Christ, or, at least, till they come to the use of their reason, and the improvement of their natural abilities.

84

And therefore, though the seal be changed, yet the covenant privileges, wherewith the parties stipulating unto God were before invested, are no whit altered or diminished; believers children being as really confederates with their parents, in the covenant of grace now, as they were before under the Jewish administration of it. And this seems to be altogether necessary; for otherwise, infants should be invested with privileges under the type, and be deprived of, or excluded from them, under the more perfect accomplishment of the same covenant in the thing typified; and so the dispensations of God's grace would be more strait and narrow since, than they were before the coming of our Saviour, which I look upon to be no less than blasphemy to assert.

And, upon this ground, I believe, it is as really the duty of Christians to baptize their children now, as ever it was the duty of the Israelites to circumcise theirs; and therefore St. Peter's question, 'Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?'¹³³ may very properly be applied to this case. Can any man forbid water, that children should not be baptized, who are in covenant with the most high God as well as we? For what is it, I pray, that the right to baptism doth depend upon? Surely, not upon performing the conditions of the covenant; for then none shall be baptized, but such as are true believers in themselves, and known to be so by us, and, by consequence, none at all; it being only God's prerogative to search their hearts, and to know the truth of that grace, which himself hath been pleased to bestow upon them. But children's right to baptism is grounded upon the outward profession of their believing parents; so that as a king may be crowned in his cradle, not because he is able to wield the sceptre, or manage the affairs of his kingdom, but because he is heir to his father: so here, children are not therefore baptized because they are able to perform the conditions of the covenant, which is sealed to them, but because they are children to believing parents. And this seems yet to be further evident, from the very nature of seals, which are not administered or annexed to any covenant, because the conditions are already performed, but rather that they may be performed; and so children are not baptized because they are already true Christians, but that they may be so hereafter.

85

As for a command for infant baptism, I believe, that the same law that enjoined circumcision to the Jewish, enjoins baptism likewise to Christian children, there being the same reason for both. The reason why the Jewish children were to be circumcised, was because they were Jewish children, born of such as professed the true worship of God, and were in

133 [Acts, x. 47.](#)

covenant with him; and there is the same reason why Christian children are to be baptized, even because they are Christian children, born of such as profess the true worship of the same God, and are confederates in the same covenant with the Jews themselves. And, as there is the same reason, so likewise the same end for both, viz. that the children might be actually admitted into the same covenant with their parents, and have it visibly confirmed to them by this initiating seal put upon them: so that circumcision and baptism are not two distinct seals, but the same seal diversely applied; the one being but as a type of the other, and so to give place to it, whensoever, by the institution of Christ, it should be brought into the church of God. And therefore, the command for initiating children into the church by baptism, remains still in force, though circumcision, which was the type and shadow of it, be done away. And for this reason, I believe, that was there never a command in the New Testament for infant baptism, yet, seeing there is one for circumcision in the Old, and for baptism, as coming into the place of it, in the New, I should look upon baptism as necessarily to be applied to infants now, as circumcision was then.

86

But why should it be supposed, that there is no command in the New Testament for infant baptism? There are several texts that seem to imply its being practised in the first preaching of the gospel, as particularly in the case of Lydia and the keeper of the prison,¹³⁴ who had their whole families baptized, and we no where find that children were excepted. On the contrary, St. Peter exhorting the converted Jews to be baptized, makes use of this argument to bring them to it: ‘For the promise,’ says he, ‘is unto you, and to your children,’¹³⁵ which may as reasonably be understood of their infants, as of their adult posterity. But, besides, it was the express command of Christ to his disciples, that they should ‘go, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.’¹³⁶ The meaning of which words I take to be this; go ye, and preach the gospel among all nations, and endeavour thereby to bring them over to the embracing of it; that, leaving all Jewish ceremonies and heathenish idolatries, they may profess my name, and become my disciples, receive the truth, and follow me; which, if they do, I charge you to ‘baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost;’ for the word *matheteusate* doth not signify to teach, but to make disciples, denoting the same here, that *mathetas poiein* doth upon the like occasion.¹³⁷

87

And this is the sense that all the ancient translations agree in: nor, indeed, will the text itself bear any other; especially, not that of teaching; for, though the apostles should have taught all nations, yet they were not presently to baptize them unless they became disciples, and professors of the doctrine that they were taught. A man may be taught the doctrine of

134 [Acts, xvi. 15, 33.](#)

135 [Acts, ii. 38, 39.](#)

136 [Matt. xxviii. 19.](#)

137 [John, ix. 1.](#)

the gospel, and yet not believe it; and even though he should believe, yet unless he openly profess his faith in it, he ought not presently to be baptized. For, without this outward profession, the very professing of Christ cannot entitle a man to this privilege before men, though it doth before God; because we cannot know how any one stands affected towards Christ, but only by his outward profession of him. It is the inward profession of Christ's person that entitles us to the inward spiritual grace: but it is the outward profession of his name only, that entitles us to the outward visible sign in baptism: so that a man must, of necessity, be a professed disciple of the gospel, before he can be admitted into the church of Christ. And hence it is, that the words must necessarily be understood of discipling, or bringing the nations over to the profession of the Christian religion; or else we must suppose, what ought not to be granted, that our Saviour must command many that were visible enemies to his cross, to be received into his church; for many of the Jews were taught and instructed in the doctrine of the gospel, who, notwithstanding, were inveterate enemies unto Christ. They were taught that he was the Messiah, and Saviour of the world, and that 'whoever believed in him should not perish but have everlasting life;' and they had all the reason in the world to be convinced of it: yet, I hope, there is none will say, that the bare knowledge of; or tacit assent unto these things, are a sufficient ground for their reception into the church.

88

Now, as it was in the Jewish church, when any one became a proselyte, not only himself, but whatsoever children he had, were to be circumcised; so in the church of Christ, whensover any person is brought over into the profession of the Christian religion, his seed are equally invested with the outward privileges of it with himself, though they be not as yet come to years of discretion, nor able; of themselves, to make their profession of that religion they are to be received and baptized into. For, so long as children are in their infancy, they are (as I before observed) looked upon as parts of their parents, and are therefore accounted holy, by the outward profession which their parents, under whom they are comprehended, make of it; and in this sense, 'the unbelieving husband' is said to be 'sanctified by the believing wife, and the unbelieving wife by the believing husband,'¹³⁸ that is, man and wife being made one flesh, they are denominated, from the better part holy, and so are their children too.

89

And hence it is, that I verily believe, that in the commission which our Saviour gave to his apostles, to 'disciple and baptize all nations,' he meant, that they should preach the gospel in all nations, and thereby bring over all persons of understanding and discretion to the profession of his name, and in them, their children; and to ingraft both root and branch into himself, the true vine, by baptizing both parents and children in the 'name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.'

138 1 Cor. vii. 14.

The main objection against this is, that infants are not in a capacity either to learn and understand their duty in this covenant, or to stipulate, and promise for their future performance of the conditions of it. But this difficulty is easily removed, when I consider, that it is not by virtue of their own faith and knowledge, but that of their parents; that they are admitted to this sacrament; nor is it required that they should stipulate or promise in their own persons, but by their god-fathers or sponsors, who enter into this engagement for them, and oblige them, when they come to age, to take it upon themselves; which accordingly they do. And this engagement by proxy, does as effectually bind them to the performance of the conditions, as if they were actually in a capacity to have stipulated for themselves, or sealed the covenant in their own persons. For these spiritual signs or seals are not designed to make God's word surer to us, but only to make our faith stronger in him; nor are they of the substance of the covenant, but only for the better confirmation of it.

90

And, as baptism thus comes in the place of the Jews' circumcision, so doth our Lord's supper answer to their passover. Their paschal lamb represented our Saviour Christ, and the sacrificing it the shedding of his blood upon the cross; and as the passover was the memorial of the Israelites' redemption from Egypt's bondage,¹³⁹ so is the Lord's supper the memorial of our redemption from the slavery of sin, and assertion into Christian liberty; or rather, it is a solemn and lively representation of the death of Christ and offering it again to God, as an atonement for sin, and reconciliation to his favour.

So that, I believe, this sacrament of the Lord's supper under the gospel, succeeds to the rite of sacrificing under the law; and is properly called the Christian sacrifice, as representing the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross. And the end of both is the same: for, as the sacrifices under the law were designed as a propitiation or 'atonement for sins,' by transferring the punishment from the offerer to the thing offered, which is therefore called 'the accursed thing.'¹⁴⁰ So, under the gospel, we are told, that it was for this end that our Saviour died, and suffered in our stead, that he might obtain the pardon of our sins, and reconcile us to his Father, by laying the guilt of them upon his own person. And accordingly, he says of himself, that 'he came to give his life a ransom for many.'¹⁴¹ And St. Paul tells us, that 'he was made sin for us, who knew no sin.'¹⁴²

And as the end of both institutions was the same, so they were both equally extended. The paschal lamb was ordered for all the congregation of Israel, and so is the sacrament of the Lord's supper to be administered to all the faithful people in Christ, that do not exclude themselves from it. And for this reason, I believe, that as all the congregation of Israel was

91

¹³⁹ Exod. xii. 14.

¹⁴⁰ Lev. xvii. 11.

¹⁴¹ Matt. xx. 28.

¹⁴² 2 Cor. v. 21.

to eat the passover, so is all the society of Christians to receive the Lord's supper; those only to be excepted, who are altogether ignorant of the nature of that covenant it seals, or openly and scandalously guilty of the breach of the conditions it requires.

But why, say some, should there be any exception? Did not Christ die for all mankind? And is not that death said to be a 'full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the sins of the whole world?' All this is true, but it does not from hence follow, that all men must be actually saved and absolved from their sins, by virtue of his death. No, it is only they who apply to themselves the merit of his passion, by partaking duly of this holy sacrament, which is the proper means by which these blessings are conveyed to us, 'whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption.' I say, duly, because though this sacrament was ordained for all, yet all will not make themselves worthy of it; and those that are not so, are so far from reaping any benefit from it, that, as the apostle says, 'they eat and drink their own damnation, not discerning the Lord's body,'¹⁴³ And therefore, I believe, that as in the institution of the passover there were some particular duties and ceremonies enjoined for the better solemnization of it; so there are some preparatory duties and qualifications necessarily required for the celebration of the Lord's supper, which, before I presume to partake of it, I must always use my utmost endeavours to exercise myself in. And these are,

First, That I should examine, confess, and bewail my sins before God, with a true sense of, and sorrow for them; and taking firm resolutions for the time to come, utterly to relinquish and forsake them, solemnly engage myself in a new and truly Christian course of life.

Secondly, That I should be in perfect charity with all men; e. that I should heartily forgive those who have any ways injured or offended me; and make restitution or satisfaction to such whom I have, in any respect, injured or offended myself.

Thirdly, That I should, with an humble and obedient heart, exercise the acts of faith, and love, and devotion, during the celebration of that holy mystery; and express the sense I have of this mystery; by devout praises and thanksgivings for the great mercies and favours that God vouchsafes to me therein; and by all the ways and measures of charity that he has prescribed, manifest my love and beneficence to my Christian brethren.

These are the proper graces, this the wedding-garment that every true Christian, who comes to be a guest at this holy supper, ought to be clothed and invested with.

"Do thou, O blessed Jesus, adorn me with this holy robe, and inspire my soul with such heavenly qualities and dispositions as these; and then I need not fear, but that as 'oft as I eat the flesh of Christ, and drink his blood,' I shall effectually obtain the pardon and remission of my sins, the sanctifying influences of his Holy Spirit, and a certain interest in the kingdom of glory."

See further, Treatise of the Sacrament.

92

93

143 1 Cor. xi. 29.

ARTICLE XI.

I believe that after a short separation, my soul and body shall be united together again, in order to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, and be finally sentenced according to my deserts.

I KNOW this body, which, for the present, I am tied to, is nothing else but a piece of clay, made up into the frame and fashion of man; and therefore, as it was first taken from the dust, so shall it return to dust again: but then I believe, on the other hand, that it shall be as really raised from the earth, as ever it shall be carried to it; yea, though perhaps it may go through a hundred, or a thousand changes, before that day come. There are, I confess, some points in this article, which are hardly to be solved by human reason; but, I believe, there are none so difficult, but what may be reconciled by a divine faith: though it be too hard for me to know, yet it is not too hard for God to do. He that should have told me some years ago, that my body then was, or should be a mixture of particles fetched from so many parts of the world, and undergo so many changes and alterations, as to become in a manner new, should scarce have extorted the belief of it from me, though now I perceive it to be a real truth; the meats, fruits, and spices, which we eat, being transported from several different places and nations, and, by natural digestion, transfused into the constitution of the body. And why should not I believe, that the same almighty power, who made these several beings or particles of matter, by which I am fed and sustained, can as easily, with his word, recall each particle again from the most secret or remote place that it, can possibly be transported to? Or, that he who framed me out of the dust, can with as much ease gather all the scattered parts of the body, and put them together again, as he at first formed them into such a shape, and infused into it a spiritual being.

94

And this article of my faith, I believe, is not only grounded upon, but may, even by the force of reason, be deduced from, the principles of justice and equity; justice requiring that they who are co-partners in vice and virtue, should be co-partners also in punishments and rewards. There is scarce a sin a man commits, but his body lath a share in it; for though the sin committed would not be a sin without the soul, yet it could not be committed without the body; the sinfulness of it depends upon the former, but the commission of it may lawfully be charged upon the latter: the body could not sin, if the soul did not consent; nor could the soul sin, especially so oft, if the body did not tempt to it. And this is particularly observable in the sins of adultery, drunkenness and gluttony, which the soul of itself cannot commit, neither would it ever consent unto them, did not the prevalent humours of the body, as it, were, force it to do so. For in these sins, the act that is sinful is wholly performed by the body, though the foulness of that act doth principally depend upon the soul.

Neither is the body only partner with the soul in these grosser sins; but even the more spiritual sins, which seem to be most abstracted from the temperature of the body, as if they depended only upon the privity and corruption of the soul: I say, even these are partly to

95

be ascribed to the body. For instance, an atheistical thought, which, one would think, was to be laid upon the soul, because the thought takes its rise from thence; yet if we seriously weigh and consider the matter, we shall find, that it is usually the sinful affections of the body that thus debauch the mind into these blasphemous thoughts; and that it is the pleasures of sense that first suggested them to us, and raise them in us. And this appears, in that there was no person that ever was, or indeed ever can be, an atheist at all times; but such thoughts spring up in the fountain of the soul, only when muddled with fleshly pleasures. And thus it is in most other sins; the carnal appetite having gotten the reins into his hand, it misleads the reason, and hurries the soul, wheresoever it pleaseth. And, what then can be more reasonable, than that the body should be punished, both for its usurping the soul's prerogative, and for its tyrannizing so much over that, which, at the first, it was made to be subject to?

But further, it is the body that enjoys the pleasure, and therefore, good reason, that the body should likewise bear the punishment of the sin. Indeed, I cannot perceive, how it can stand with the principles of justice, but that the body, which both accompanies the soul in sin, enjoys the pleasures of it, and leads the soul into it, should bear a share in the miseries which are due to, and inflicted upon it. For what doth justice require, but to punish the person that offends, for the offence he commits? Whereas if the soul only, and not the body, were to suffer, the person would not suffer at all, the body being part of the person, as well as the soul, and therefore the soul no person without the body.

96

Hence it is, that though the Scriptures had been silent in this point, yet methinks I could not but have believed; how much more firm and steadfast, then, ought I to be in my faith, when truth itself hath been pleased so expressly to affirm it? For thus saith the Lord of hosts, ‘Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise.’¹⁴⁴ ‘And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.’¹⁴⁵ And thus saith the Saviour of the world, ‘who is the way, the truth, and the life: the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.’¹⁴⁶ The same hath it pleased his, divine Majesty to assert and prove with his own mouth, [Matt. xxii. 31, 32](#), and by his Spirit, [2 Cor. xv.](#), and in many other places: from all which, I may, with comfort and confidence, draw the same conclusion that holy Job did, and say, ‘I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin, worms

97

¹⁴⁴ [Isaiah, xxvi. 19.](#)

¹⁴⁵ [Dan. xii. 2.](#)

¹⁴⁶ [1 John, v. 28, 29.](#)

destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another, though my reins be consumed within me.¹⁴⁷

And, as I believe my body shall be thus raised from the grave, so I believe the other part of me, my soul, shall never be carried to it; I mean it shall never die, but shall be as much, yea, more alive, when I am dying, than it is now; so much my soul shall be the more active in itself, by how much it is less tied and subjected to the body.

And further I believe, that so soon as ever my breath is out of my nostrils, my soul shall remove her lodging into the other world, there to live as really to eternity, as I now live here in time. Yea, I am more certain, that my soul shall ‘return to God who gave it,’ than that my body shall return to the earth, out of which I had it. For I know, it is possible my body may be made immortal, but I am sure my soul shall never be mortal. I know, that at the first, the body did equally participate of immortality with the soul, and that had not sin made the divorce, they had lived together, like loving mates, to all eternity. And I dare not affirm that Enoch and Elias underwent the common fate; or, suppose they did, yet, sure I am, the time will come, when thousands of men and women shall not be dissolved and die, but be immediately changed and caught up into heaven, or to their eternal confusion, thrust down into hell; whose bodies, therefore, shall undergo no such thing as rotting in the grave, or being eaten up of worms, but, together with their souls, shall immediately launch into the vast ocean of eternity. But who ever yet read or heard of a soul’s funeral? Who is it? Where is the man? Or, what is his name, that wrote the history of her life and death? Can any disease arise in a spiritual substance, wherein there is no such thing as contrariety of principles or qualities to occasion any disorder or distemper? Can an angel be sick or die? And, if not an angel, why a soul, which is endowed with the same spiritual nature here, and shall be adorned with the same eternal glory hereafter? No, no, deceive not thyself, my soul; for it is more certain, that thou shalt always live, than that thy body shall ever die.

Not that I think my soul must always live, in despite of omnipotence itself, as if it was not in the power of the Almighty, to take my being and existence from me; for I know, I am but a potsherd in the potter’s hands, and that it is as easy for him to dash me in pieces now, as it was to raise it up at the first. I believe, it is as easy for him to command my soul out of its being, as out of its body; and to send me back into my mother’s nothing, out of whose womb he took me, as it was at first to fetch me thence. I know he could do it, if he would, but himself hath said, he will not, and therefore, I am sure, he cannot do it; and that, not because he hath not power, but because he hath not will to do it; it being impossible for him to do that which he doth not will to do. And that it is not his will or pleasure even to annihilate my soul, I have it under his own hand, that my ‘dust shall return to the earth as it was;

147 Job. xix. 25, 26, 27.

and my spirit to God that gave it.¹⁴⁸ And if it return to God, it is so far from returning to nothing, that it returns to the Being of all beings; and so death to me, will be nothing more than going home to my father and mother; my soul goes to my Father, God; and my body to my mother, earth.

99

Thus, likewise, hath it pleased his sacred Majesty to assure me, that if ‘our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens,’¹⁴⁹ so clearly hath the great God ‘brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.’¹⁵⁰ The light of nature shows the soul can never perish or be dissolved, without the immediate interposition of God’s omnipotence, and we have his own divine word for it, that he will never use that power, in the dissolution of it. And therefore I may, with the greatest assurance, affirm and believe, that as really as I now live, so really shall I never die; but that my soul, at the very moment of its departure from the flesh, shall immediately mount up to the tribunal of the most high God, there to be judged, first privately, by itself, (or perhaps with some other souls that shall be summoned to appear before God the same moment,) and then, from these private sessions, I believe that every soul that ever was, or shall be separated from the body, must either be received into the mansions of heaven, or else sent down to the dungeon of hell, there to remain till the grand assizes, the ‘judgment of the great day, when the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.’¹⁵¹ And when our bodies, by the word of the almighty God, shall be thus called together again, I believe that our souls shall be all prepared to meet them, and be united again to them, and so both ‘appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, to receive sentence according to what they have done in the flesh, whether it be good, or whether it be evil. And though it is very difficult, or rather impossible, for me to conceive or determine the particular circumstance of this grand assize, or manner and method how it shall be managed, yet, from the light and intimations that God has vouchsafed to give us of it, I have ground to believe, it will be ordered and carried after this, or the like manner.

100

The day and place being appointed by the King of kings, the glorious Majesty of heaven, and Saviour of the world, Jesus Christ, who long ago received his commission from the Father to be the ‘judge of the quick and dead,’¹⁵² ‘shall descend from heaven with the shout of the archangel, and with the trump of God,’¹⁵³ royally attended with an innumerable company of ‘glorious angels.’¹⁵⁴ These he shall send with the great sound of a trumpet, and

148 [Eccles. xii. 7.](#)

149 [2 Cor. v. 1.](#)

150 [2 Tim. i. 10.](#)

151 [1 Cor. xv. 52.](#)

152 [John, v. 22; Acts, xvii. 31.](#)

153 [1 Thess. iv. 16.](#)

154 [Matt. xxv. 31.](#)

they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the one end of heaven to the other,¹⁵⁵ yea, and the wicked too, from whatsoever place they shall be in; and then shall he ‘sever the wicked from the just.’¹⁵⁶ So that all nations, and every particular person, that ever did, or ever shall live upon the face of the earth, shall be gathered together before him, and he shall separate the one from the other, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats, and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, and the goats upon the left.¹⁵⁷

Things being thus set in order, the judge shall read his commission, i. e. declare and manifest himself to be the judge of all the earth, sent by the God of heaven to judge them that had condemned him, and, in that very body, that was once crucified upon the cross, at Jerusalem, for our sins. So that all the world shall then behold him shining in all his glory and majesty, and shall acknowledge him to be now, what they would not believe him to be before, even both God and man, and so the judge of all the world from whom there can be no appeal.

101

And having thus declared his commission, I believe the first work he will go upon, will be to open the book of God’s remembrance, and to cause all the indictments to be read, that are there found on record against those on his right hand; but behold, all the black lines of their sins being blotted out, with the red lines of their Saviour’s blood, and nothing but their good works, their prayers, their sermons, their meditations, their alms and the like, to be found there; the righteous judge, before whom they stand, turning himself before them, with a serene and smiling countenance, will declare to them before all the world, that their sins are pardoned, and their persons accepted by him, as having believed in him; and therefore will he immediately proceed to pronounce the happy sentence of election on them, saying, ‘Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’

The sentence being thus pronounced, the righteous (and I hope myself amongst the rest) shall go up with shouts of joy and triumph, to sit with our blessed Redeemer, to judge the other parts of the world, who sit at the left hand of the tribunal, with ghastly countenances and trembling hearts, to receive their last and dreadful doom. Against these all the sins that they committed, or were guilty of, shall be brought up in judgment against them, as they are found on record in the book of God’s remembrance, and the indictments read against every particular person, high or low, for every particular sin, great or small which they have committed.

102

And the truth of this indictment shall be attested by their own consciences, crying, Guilty, guilty; I say, by their own consciences, which are as a thousand witnesses: yea, and

155 Matt. xxiv. 31.

156 Matt. xiii. 49.

157 Matt. xxv. 32, 33.

by the omniscience of God too, which is as a thousand consciences. And therefore, without any further delay, shall the judge proceed to pronounce the sentence, the doleful sentence of condemnation upon them, Depart ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'

This, I believe, or such like, will be the method of Christ's proceeding with us in that great and terrible day of trial and retribution.

"Oh! may those awful thoughts and ideas of it always accompany me, and strike such a deep and lively impression upon my heart, in every action of life, as to deter me from offending this just and Almighty being, in whose power it is to 'destroy both soul and body in hell;' and engage me in such a regular, strict, and conscientious course of life, as to be always ready, whenever he shall please to summon me, to give in my accounts at the great audit, and with an holy assurance fly for mercy and succour into the hands of my Redeemer, and be permitted to 'enter into the joys of his rest?'"

ARTICLE XII.

I believe there are two other worlds, besides this I live in; a world of misery for unrepenting sinners, and a world of glory for believing saints.

WHEN death hath opened the cage of flesh, wherein the soul is penned up, whither it flies, or how it subsists, I think it not easy to determine, or indeed to conceive. As for the Platonic ærial and ethereal vehicles, succeeding this terrestrial one, I find neither mention of, nor warrant for them, in the word of God. And, indeed, to suppose that a spiritual substance cannot subsist of itself, without being supported by a corporeal vehicle, is, in my opinion, too gross a conceit for any philosopher, much more for one that professes himself a divine, to advance or entertain. Only this I am sure of, that according to the distinction of lives here into good or bad, and the sentence passed upon all hereafter, of absolution or condemnation, there will be a twofold receptacle for the souls of men, the one of happiness, and the other of misery.

As to the first, I believe, that at the great and general assizes of the world, there will be a glorious entrance opened for the righteous into the holy of holies, the seat and fountain of all bliss and happiness, where they shall draw nigh to the most high God, ‘behold his presence in righteousness,’ and reign with him for ever in glory, where they shall see him ‘face to face,’¹⁵⁸ ‘and know him the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.’¹⁵⁹

And this knowing and beholding God face to face, is, I believe, the very heaven of heavens, even the highest happiness that it is possible a creature should be made capable of: for in having a perfect knowledge of God, we shall have a perfect knowledge of all things that ever were, are, shall, yea, or can be in the world. For God being the Being of all beings, in seeing him, we shall not only see whatsoever hath been, but whatsoever can be communicated from him. The contemplation of which, cannot but ravish and transport my spirit beyond itself; especially, when I consider, that in knowing this One All-things, God, I cannot but enjoy whatsoever it is possible any creature should enjoy. For the knowing of a thing is the soul’s enjoyment of it; the understanding being to the soul, what the senses are to the body. And therefore, as the body enjoys nothing but by its senses, so neither doth the soul enjoy any thing but by its understanding. And, as the body is said to have whatsoever affects its proper senses, so may the soul be said to have whatsoever comes under its knowledge. Nay, the soul so far hath what it knows, that in a manner, it is what it knows; itself being, in a spiritual manner, enlarged, according to the extent of the objects which it knows, as the body is by the meat it eats; the truths we know turning into substance of our souls, as the meat we eat doth into the substance of our bodies.

104

105

158 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

159 John, xvii. 3.

But oh! what a rare soul shall I then have, when it shall be extended to every thing that ever was, or ever could have been! What a happy creature shall I then be, when I shall know, and so enjoy him that is all things in himself! What can a creature desire more? yea, what more can a creature be made capable of enjoying or desiring! And that which always will accompany this our knowledge and enjoyment, is, perfect love to what we enjoy and know, without which we should take pleasure in nothing, though we should have all things to take pleasure in. But who will be able not to love the chiefest good, that knows and enjoys him, and therefore enjoys him because he knows him? Questionless, in heaven, as I shall enjoy whatsoever I can love, so shall I love what- soever I enjoy. And this, therefore, I believe to be the perfection of my happiness, and the happiness of my perfection, in the other world; that I shall perfectly know and love, and so, perfectly enjoy and rejoice in the most high God; and shall be, as known, so perfectly loved, and rejoiced in him. And questionless, for all our shallow apprehensions and low estimations of these things now, they cannot choose but be vast and unconceivable pleasures, too great for any creature to enjoy whilst here below.

If we have but the least drop of these pleasures distilled into us here upon earth, how strangely do they make us, as it were, beside ourselves, by lifting us above ourselves! If we can but at any time get a glimpse of God, and of his love to us, how are we immediately carried beyond all other pleasures and contentments whatsoever! How apt are we to say with Peter, 'It is good for us to be here!' and if the foretastes of the blessings of Canaan, if the dark intimation of God's love to us, be so unspeakably pleasant, so ravishingly delightful; oh! what will the full possession of him be! What transporting ecstasies of love and joy shall those blessed souls be possessed with, who shall behold the King of glory smiling upon them, rejoicing over them, and shining forth in all his love and glory upon them! Oh! what astonishing beauty will they then behold! What flowing, what refreshing pleasures shall then solace and delight their spirits, unto all eternity! Pleasures! far greater than I am able either to express or conceive, much less' to enjoy, on this side heaven! my faculties are now too narrow and scanty for such an entertainment, and therefore, till they are spiritualized and enlarged, they cannot receive it! This is the portion of another world, this the 'crown of righteousness,' which the 'Lord the righteous judge' reserves in heaven for me, and which at his second coming, he has promised to bestow upon me, and not upon me only, but 'upon all them also that love his appearing.'

106

As to the other state, viz. that of the wicked in another life, I believe, it will be as exquisitely miserable and wretched, as that of the righteous is happy and glorious. They will be 'driven for ever from the presence of the Lord,' from those bright and blessed regions above, where 'Christ sits at the right hand of God,' to those dark and dismal dungeons below, where the devil and his angels are for ever doomed to be tormented.

What sort of torments or punishment they are there to undergo, I am as unable to express, as I am unwilling ever to experience; but according to the notions which Scripture

107

and reason give me of these matters, I believe they will be twofold, viz. 1. *Privative*, and, 2. *Positive*, that is, the wicked will not only be deprived of all that is good and happy, but actually condemned to all that is evil and miserable; and this in the most transcendent degree.

The first part of their punishment will consist in envious melancholy, and self-condemning reflections upon their having defeated and deprived themselves, not only of their carnal mirth and sensual enjoyments, their friends, fortunes, and estates in this world; but also of all the infinite joys and glories of the next, the presence of God, the society of saints and angels, and all the refreshing and ravishing delights which flow from the fruition of the chiefest good. And what adds yet further to their anguish and remorse, is that they have lost the hopes of ever regaining any of these enjoyments.

Oh! how infinitely tormenting and vexatious must such a condition be, which at once gives them a view both of the greatest happiness and the greatest misery, without the least hopes either of recovering the one, or being delivered from the other! How must they tear, torment, and curse themselves for their former follies; and too late wish that they had been stifled in the womb, or drowned in the font which was to be their second birth?

And, if the late privation of heaven and happiness be so miserable and tormenting, how will it rack their consciences, and fill their souls with horror and amazement, to behold the eternal God, the glorious Jehovah, in the fierceness of his wrath, continually threatening to pour out his vengeance upon them! how much more, when he positively consigns them over to the power of the devil, to execute his judgment in full measure! when they are gnawed upon by the worm of their own consciences, feel the wrath of the Almighty flaming in their hearts, and fire and brimstone their continual torture! and all this without the least alloy or mixture of refreshment, or the least hopes of ending or cessation.

108

In a word, when they have nothing else to expect but misery for their portion, weeping and wailing for their constant employment, and the devil and damned fiends their only companions to all eternity: and this is that world of misery, which all that will not be persuaded to believe in Christ here, must be doomed for ever to live in hereafter.

I know the subjects of this article were never the objects of my sight, though they are of my faith. I never yet saw heaven or hell, the places I am now speaking of; but why should my faith be staggered or diminished because of that; I never saw Rome, Constantinople, or the flaming Sicilian hill, Etna, yet I believe there is such a burning mountain, and such glorious cities; because others who have been there, have told me so, and faithful writers have related and described them to me, and shall I believe my fellow-worms, and not my great Creator, who is truth itself? What though I never did see the new Jerusalem that is above, nor the flaming tophet that is below; yet since God himself hath both related and described them to me, why should I doubt of them? Why should not I, a thousand times sooner, believe them to be, than if I had seen them with my own eyes? I cannot so much believe, that I now have a pen in my hand, have a book before me, and am writing, as I do

109

and ought to believe that I shall, one day, and that ere long, be either in heaven or hell; in the height of happiness, or in the depth of misery.

I know my senses are fallible, and therefore may deceive me, but my God, I am sure, cannot. And therefore let others raise doubts and scruples as they please, I am as fully satisfied and convinced of the truth of this article, as any of the rest.

“Do thou, O my God, keep me steadfast in this faith, and give me grace so to fit and prepare myself to appear before thee, in the white robes of purity and holiness in another world, that whenever my dissolution comes, I may cheerfully resign my spirit into the hands of my Creator and Redeemer; and from this crazy house of clay, take my flight into the mansions of glory; ‘where Christ sits at the right hand of God;’ and with the joyful choir of saints and angels, and the blessed spirits of ‘just men made perfect,’ chant forth thy praises to all eternity.”

110

111

RESOLUTIONS

FORMED UPON THE FOREGOING ARTICLES.

112

113

RESOLUTIONS
FORMED
UPON THE FOREGOING ARTICLES

As obedience without faith is impossible, so faith without obedience is vain and unprofitable: ‘For as the body,’ says St. James, ‘without the spirit is dead, so faith without good works is dead also.’¹ Having therefore, I hope, laid a sure foundation, by resolving what, and how, to believe, I shall now, by the grace of God, resolve so to order my conversation, in all circumstances and conditions of life, as to raise a good superstructure upon it, and to finish the work God has given me to do, i. e. so to love and please God in this world, as to enjoy and to be happy with him for ever in the next. And it is absolutely necessary that I should be speedy and serious in these resolutions; especially when I reflect with myself how much of my time I have already spent upon the vanities and follies of youth, and how much enhanced and increased this work is, by acquired guilt, by settled and repeated habits of sin, which are not without great difficulty to be atoned for, and removed. My heart, alas! is now more hardened in iniquity, more puffed with pride, and more averse from God, than when I first entered into covenant with him; and I have added many actual sins and provocations to my original guilt and pollution: instead of glorifying God, I have dishonoured him; and, instead of working out my own salvation, I have taken a pleasure and delight in such things as would, in the end, be my ruin and destruction. So that, before I can be able to make any progress in the duties of religion, or walk in the paths that lead to life, I must first be freed and disentangled from these weights and encumbrances that clog and retard me in my spiritual course; I must have my heart cleansed and softened, humbled and converted to God, and all my transgressions purged and pardoned by the merits of my Redeemer. And then being fully persuaded that there is no way for me to come to the joys of heaven, but by walking according to the strictest rules of holiness upon earth, I must endeavour for the future, by a thorough change and reformation of my life, to act in conformity to the divine will and pleasure in all things, ‘and perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord:’ for the Most High has told me in his word, that ‘without holiness no man shall see the Lord.’

114

In order, therefore, to qualify myself for this happiness, it will be necessary for me to settle firm and steady Resolutions, to fulfil my duty, in all the several branches of it, to God, my neighbour, and myself; and to take care these Resolutions be put in practice according to the following method.

115

¹ James, ii. 26.

RESOLUTION I.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to walk by rule, and therefore think it necessary to resolve upon the rules to walk by.

AND this rather, because I perceive the want of such rules has been the occasion of all, or most of my miscarriages. For, what other reason can I assign to myself; for having trifled and slimed away so much time, as I have done in my younger years, but because I did not thoroughly resolve to spend it better? What is the reason I have hitherto lived so unserviceably to God, so unprofitably to others, and so sinfully against my own soul, but because I did not apply myself with that sincerity of resolution, diligence, and circumspection, as a wise man ought to have done, to discharge my duty in these particulars? I have, indeed, often resolved to bid adieu to my sins and follies, and to enter upon a new course of life; but these resolutions being not rightly formed upon steady principles, the first temptation made way for a relapse, and the same bait that first allured me, has no sooner been thrown in my way, but I have been as ready to catch at it again, and as greedy to swallow it, as ever. At other times again, I have acted without any thought or resolution at all; and then, though some of my actions might be good in themselves, yet being done by chance, and without any true design or intention, they could not be imputed to me as good, but rather the quite contrary: so that, in this respect, the want of resolution has not only been the occasion of my sinful actions, but the corruption of my good ones too. And shall I still go on in this loose and careless manner, as I have formerly done? No, I now resolve with myself, in the presence of the most high and eternal God, not only in general, to walk by rule, but to fix the rule I design to walk by; so that, in all my thoughts, and words, and actions, in all places. companies, relations, and conditions, I may still have a sure guide at hand to direct me, such a one as I can safely depend upon without any danger of being deceived or misled; that is, the holy Scripture. And therefore,

RESOLUTION II.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to make the Divine Word the rule of all the rules I propose to myself.

As the will of God is the rule and measure of all that is good, so there is nothing deserves that name, but what is agreeable and conformable thereto: and this will being fully revealed and contained in the holy Scripture, it will be necessary for me, in directing my course over the ocean of this world, that I should fix my eye continually upon this star, steer by this compass, and make it the only landmark, by which I am to be guided to my wished-for haven. I must not, therefore, have recourse to the inward workings of my own roving fancy, or the corrupt dictates of my own carnal reason: these are but blind guides, and will certainly lead me into the ditch of error, heresy, and irreligion, which in these our self-admiring days, so many poor souls have been plunged in. Alas! how many hath the impetuous torrent of blind zeal and erroneous conscience borne down into a will-worship and voluntary subjection of themselves to the spurious offspring of their own deluded fancies! If the light that is within them doth but dictate any thing to be done; or rather if the whimsey doth but take them, that they must do thus or thus, they presently set about it, without ever consulting the sacred writings, to see whether it is acceptable to God, or displeasing to him. Whereas, for my own part, I know not how any thing should be worthy of God's accepting, that is not of God's commanding. I am sure the word of God is the good old way that will certainly bring me to my Father's house; for how should that way but lead to heaven, which truth itself hath chalked out for me? Not as if it was necessary, that every one of my resolutions should be contained word for word in the holy Scriptures; it is sufficient that they be implied in, and agreeable thereto. So that, though the manner of my expressions may not be found in the word of God, yet the matter of my resolutions may be clearly drawn from thence. But let me dive a little into the depth of my sinful heart! What is the reason of my thus resolving upon such an exact conformity to the will and word of God? Is it to work my way to heaven with my own hands? to purchase an inheritance in the land of Canaan with the price of my own holiness and religion? or to swim over the ocean of this world, into the haven of happiness, upon the empty bladders of my own resolutions? No.

117

118

RESOLUTION III.

I am resolved, that as I am not able to think or do any thing that is good, without the influence of the divine grace; so I will not pretend to merit any favour from God, upon account of any thing I do for his glory and service.

AND indeed I may very well put this resolution amongst the rest; for should I resolve to perform my resolutions by mine own strength, I might as well resolve never to perform them at all: for truth itself, and mine own woeful experience hath convinced me, that I am not able of myself, so much as to think a good thought; and how then shall I be able of myself, to resolve upon rules of holiness according to the word of God, or to order my conversation according to these resolutions, without the concurrence of the divine grace? Alas! should the great God be pleased to leave me to myself to resolve upon what is agreeable to my corrupt nature, what strange kind of resolutions should I make? What should I resolve upon? Certainly, only nothing but to gratify my carnal appetite with sensual and sinful pleasures, to indulge myself in riot and excess, to spend my time, and revel out my parts and talents, in the revels of sin and vanity. But now, ‘to live holily, righteously, and godly in this present world,’ to deny my own will, that I may fulfil the will of God; alas! such resolutions as these would never so much as come into my thoughts, much less would they discover themselves in my outward conversation.

But suppose I should be able to make good resolutions, and fulfil them exactly in my life and actions; yet, what should I do more than my duty? And what should I be esteemed of for doing that? Alas! this is so far from pulling me up, that I am verily persuaded should I spend all my time, my parts, my strength, my gifts, for God, and all my estate upon the poor; should I water my couch continually with my tears, and last my body into a skeleton; should I employ each moment of my life in the immediate worship of my glorious Creator; so that all my actions, from my birth to my death, should be but one continued act of holiness and obedience; in a word, should I live like an angel in heaven, and die like a saint on earth, yet I know no truer, nor should I desire any better epitaph to be engraven upon my tomb than this, ‘Here lies an unprofitable servant.’ No, no; it is Christ, and Christ alone that my soul must support itself upon. It is holiness, indeed, that is the way to heaven; but there is none, none but Christ can lead me to it. As the worst of my sins are pardonable by Christ, so are the best of my duties damnable without him.

But if so, then whither tend my resolutions? Why so strict, so circumspect a conversation? Why, it is to justify that faith before others, and mine own conscience, which I hope, through Christ, shall justify my soul before God. And I believe further, that the holier I live here, the happier I shall live hereafter; for though I shall not be saved for my works, yet I believe I shall be saved according to them. And thus, as I dare not expect to be saved by the perform-

ance of my resolutions without Christ's merit, so neither do I ever expect to be enabled to perform my resolutions, without his Spirit assisting me therein.

No, "it is thyself, my God, and my guide, that I wholly and solely depend upon! Oh! for thine own sake, for thy Son's sake, and for thy promise sake, do thou both make me to know what thou wouldest have me to do, and then help me to do what thou wouldest have me to know! Teach me first what to resolve upon, and then enable me to perform my resolutions; that I may walk with thee in the ways of holiness here, and rest with thee in the joys of happiness hereafter!"

120

CONCERNING MY CONVERSATION IN GENERAL.

HAVING thus far determined in general, to form resolutions for the better regulating of my life, I must now descend to particulars, and settle some rules with myself, to resolve my future life and conversation wholly into holiness and religion. I know this is a hard task to do; but I am sure, it is no more than what my God and my Father has set me; why therefore should I think much to do it? Shall I grudge to spend my life for him, who did not grudge to spend his own blood for me? Shall not I so live that he may be glorified here on earth, who died that I might be glorified in heaven, especially considering, that if my whole life could be sublimated into holiness, and moulded into an exact conformity unto the will of the Most High, I should be happy beyond expression? Oh, what a heaven should I then have on earth! What ravishments of love and joy would my soul be continually possessed with! Well; I am resolved by the grace of God, to try; and to that end do, this morning, wholly sequester and set myself apart for God, resolving, by the assistance of his grace, to make all and every thought, word, and action, to pay their tribute unto him. Let this man mind his profit; a second, his pleasures; a third, his honours; a fourth, himself; and all, their sins; I am resolved to mind and serve my God, so as to make him the Alpha and Omega, the first and last of my whole life. And, that I may always have an exact copy before me, to write and frame every letter of this my life by:

RESOLUTION I.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to make Christ the pattern of my life here, that so Christ may be the portion of my soul hereafter.

LET the whole world go whither it will, I am resolved to walk in the steps that my Saviour went in before me: I shall endeavour in all places I come into, in all companies I converse with, in all the duties I undertake, in all the miseries I undergo, still to behave myself as my Saviour would do, were he in my place. So that wheresoever I am, or whatsoever I am about, I shall still put this question to myself, Would my Saviour go hither? Would he do this or that? And, every morning, consider with myself, Suppose my Saviour was in my stead, had my business to do, how would he demean himself this day? How meek and lowly would he be in his carriage and deportment? How circumspect in his walking? How savoury in his discourse? How heavenly in all, even his earthly employments? Well, and am I resolved, by strength from himself, to follow him as near as possible. I know, I can never hope perfectly to transcribe this copy, but I must endeavour to imitate it in the best manner I can, that so by doing as he did, in time I may be where he is to all eternity. But, alas! his life was spiritual, and ‘I am carnal, sold under sin;’ and every pretty object that doth but please my senses, will be apt to divert and draw away my soul from following his steps. In order, therefore, to prevent this,

RESOLUTION II.

I am resolved, by (he grace of God, to walk by, faith, and not by sight, on earth, that so I may live by sight, and not by faith, in heaven.

AND truly, this resolution is so necessary to the performance of all the rest, that without it I can do nothing, with it I can do every thing that is required. The reason why I am so much taken with the garnish and seeming beauty of this world's vanities, so as to step out of the road of holiness to catch at, or delight myself in them, is only because I look upon them with an eye of sense. For could I behold every thing with the eye of faith, I should judge of them, not as they seem to me, but as they are in themselves, 'vanity and vexation of spirit.' For, faith has a quick and piercing eye, that can look through the outward superficies into the inward essence of things. It can look through the pleasing bait to the hidden book, view the sting, as well as the honey, the everlasting punishment, as well as the temporal contentment there is in sin. It is, as the apostle very well defines it, 'the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.'¹⁶⁰ It is the substance of whatsoever is promised by God to me, or expected by me from him: so that, by faith, whatsoever I hope for in heaven, I may have the substance of upon earth: and it is 'the evidence of things not seen, the presence of what is absent, the clear demonstration of what would otherwise seem impossible; so that I can clearly discern, as through a perspective, hidden things and things afar off, as if they were open, and just at hand; I can look into the deepest mysteries, as fully revealed, and see heaven and eternity as just ready to receive me.'

123

And, oh, could I but always look through this glass, and be constantly upon the mount, taking a view of the land of Canaan, what dreams and shadows would all things here below appear to be? Well, by the grace of God, I am resolved no longer to tie myself to sense and sight, the sordid and trifling affairs of this life, but always to walk as one of the other world, to behave myself in all places, and at all times, as one already possessed of my inheritance, and an inhabitant of the New Jerusalem; by faith assuring myself I have but a few more days to live below, a little more work to do: and then I shall lay aside my glass, and be admitted to a nearer vision and fruition of God, and 'see him face to face.'

124

By this means, I shall always live, as if I was daily to die; always speak, as if my tongue, the next moment, were to cleave to the roof of my mouth: and continually order my thoughts and affections in such a manner, as if my soul were just ready to depart, and take its flight into the other world. By this means, whatsoever place I am in, or whatsoever work I am about, I shall still be with my God, and demean myself so, as if, with St. Jerome, I heard the voice of the trumpet crying out, "Awake, ye dead, and come to judgment."

And thus, though I am at present here in the flesh, yet I shall look upon myself as more really an inhabitant of heaven, than I am upon earth. Here I am but as a pilgrim, or a so-

160 [Heb. xi. 1.](#)

journer, that has ‘no abiding city;’ but there I have a sure and everlasting inheritance, which Christ has purchased and prepared for me, and which faith has given me the possession of. And, therefore, as it is my duty, so I will constantly make it my endeavour, to live up to the character of a true Christian, whose portion and conversation is in heaven, and think it a disgrace and disparagement to my profession, to stoop to, or entangle myself with such toys and trifles as the men of the world busy themselves about; or to feed upon husks with swine here below, when it is in my power, by faith, to be continually supplied with spiritual manna from heaven, till at last I am admitted to it. And that I may awe my spirit into the performance of these, and all other my resolutions,



RESOLUTION III.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, always to be looking upon God, as always looking upon me.

WHERESOEVER I am, or whatsoever I am doing, I must still consider the eye of the great God as directly intent upon me, viewing and observing all my thoughts, words, and actions, and writing them down in the book of his remembrance, and that all these, unless they be washed out with the tears of repentance, and crossed with the blood of my crucified Saviour, must still remain on record, and be brought in judgment against me at the great day. That therefore, I may always behave myself as in his presence, it behoves me thoroughly to consider, and be persuaded, not only that my outward man, but even also, the secret thoughts, the inward motions and retirements of my soul, all the several windings and turnings of my heart, are exactly known and manifest, as anatomized before him. He knows what I am now thinking, doing, and writing, as well as I do myself; yea, he sees every word whilst it is in my heart, before it be brought forth and set down. He knows all the resolutions I have made, and how often, poor creature! I have broken them already since I made them.

Upon this consideration, I resolve to stand my ground against all temptations, and whenever I find myself in danger to be drawn aside by them, to oppose the bent of my corrupt affections, by these or the like questions: am I really in the presence of the Almighty, the great Lord of heaven and earth, and shall I presume to affront him to his face, by doing such things as I know are odious and displeasing to him? I would not commit adultery in the presence of my fellow-creatures, and shall I do it in the presence of the glorious Jehovah? I would not steal in the sight of an earthly judge, and shall I do it before the Judge of all the world? if fear and shame from men have such an influence upon me, as to deter me from the commission of sin, how ought I to be moved with the apprehensions of God's inspection, who does not only know my transgressions, but will eternally punish me for them?

May these thoughts and considerations always take place in my heart, and be accompanied with such happy effects in my conversation, that I may live with God upon earth, and so love and fear his presence in this world, that I may for ever enjoy his glory in the next!

CONCERNING MY THOUGHTS.

BUT who am I, poor, proud, sinful dust and ashes, that I should expect to live so holy, so heavenly, as is here supposed! ‘Can grapes be gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles?’ Can the fruit be sweet, when the root is bitter? Or the streams healthful, when the fountain is poisoned? No, I must either get me a new and better heart, or else it will be impossible for me ever to lead a new and better life. But how must I come by this pearl of inestimable value, a new heart? Can I purchase it with my own riches? or find it in my own field? Can I raise it from sin to holiness? from earth or heaven; or from myself to God? Alas! I have endeavoured it, but I find by woeful experience, I cannot attain to it: I have been lifting and heaving again and again, to raise it out of the mire and clay of sin and corruption; but, alas! it will not stir: I have rubbed and chafed it with one threatening after another, and all to get heat and life into it; but still it is as cold and dead as ever: I have brought it to the promises, and set it under the dropping of the sanctuary; I have shown it the beauty of Christ, and the deformity of sin; but yet it is a hard and sinful, an earthly and sensual heart still. What, therefore, shall I do with it? O my God, I bring it unto thee! thou that madest it a heart at first, can only make it a new heart now! O do thou purify and refine it, and ‘renew a right spirit within me!’ Do thou take it into thy hands, and out of thine infinite goodness, new mould it up, by thine own grace, into an exact conformity to thy own will! Do thou but give me a new heart, and I shall promise thee, by thy grace to lead a new life, and become a new creature! Do thou but clear the fountain, and I shall endeavour to look to the streams that flow from it; which that I may be able to do with the better success,

RESOLUTION I.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to watch as much over the inward motions of my heart, as the outward actions of my life.

FOR, my heart, I perceive is the womb, in which all sin is first conceived, and from which, my Saviour tells me, ‘proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness.’¹⁶¹ So that, as ever I would prevent the commission of these sins in my life, I must endeavour to hinder their conception in my heart, following the wise man’s counsel, ‘to keep my heart with all diligence, because out of it are the issues of life.’¹⁶² Neither is this the only reason, why I should set so strict a watch over my heart, because sinful thoughts lead to sinful acts; but because the thoughts themselves are sinful, yea, the very first-born of iniquity; which though men cannot pry into or discover, yet the all-seeing God knows and observes, and remembers them, as well as the greatest actions of all my life. And oh! what wicked and profane thoughts have I formerly entertained, not only against God, but against Christ, by questioning the justice of his laws, and doubting of the truth of his revelation, so as to make both his life and death of none effect to me! which that they may never be laid to my charge hereafter, I humbly beseech God to pardon and absolve me from them, and to give me grace for the remainder of my life, to be as careful of thinking, as of doing well, and as fearful of offending him, in my heart, as of transgressing his laws in my life and conversation. To this end,

129

161 [Mark, vii, 21, 22.](#)

162 [Prov. iv. 23.](#)

RESOLUTION II.

I am resolved by the grace of God to stop every thought, at its first entering into my heart, and to examine it whence it comes, and whither it tends.

So soon as ever any new thought begins to bubble in my soul, I am resolved to examine what stamp it is of, whether it springs from the pure fountain of living waters, or the polluted streams of my own affections; as also, which way it tends, or takes its course, towards the ocean of happiness, or pit of destruction. And the reason of this my resolution, I draw from the experience I have had of the devil's temptations, and the working of my own corruptions; by which I find that there is no sin I am betrayed into, but what takes its rise from my inward thoughts. These are the tempters that first present some pleasing object to my view, and then bias my understanding, and prevent my will, to comply with the suggestion. So that, though the Spirit of God is pleased to dart a beam into my heart at the same time, and show me the odious and dangerous effects of such thoughts; yet I know not how or why, I find a prevailing suggestion within, that tells me, it is but a thought, and that so long as it goes no further, it cannot do me much hurt. Under this specious colour and pretence, I secretly persuade myself to dwell a little longer upon it; and finding my heart pleased and delighted with its natural issue, I give it a little further indulgence, till at last my desire breaks out into a flame, and will be satisfied with nothing less than the enjoyment of the object it is exercised upon. And what water can quench such a raging fire, as is thus kindled by the devil, and blown up by the bellows of my own inordinate affections, which the more I think of, the more I increase the flame? How nearly therefore does it concern me to take up this resolution, of setting a constant watch and guard at the door of my heart, that nothing may enter in, without a strict examination? Not as if I could examine every particular thought that arises in my heart, for by that means I could do nothing else but examine my thoughts without intermission. But this I must do: whensoever I find any thought that bears the face or appearance of sin, I must throw it aside with the utmost abhorrence; and when it comes in disguise, as the devil under Samuel's mantle, or when it is a thought I never conceived before, and know not but it may be bad, as well as good; then, before I suffer it to settle upon my spirits, I must examine as well as I can, whether it be sent from heaven or hell, and what message it comes about, and what will be the issue of it. And thus by the divine assistance, I shall let nothing into my heart, but what will bring me nearer to my God, and set me at a greater distance from the evil and punishment of sin. Neither do I think it my duty only to be so watchful against such thoughts as are in themselves sinful; but,

130

131

RESOLUTION III.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to be as fearful to let in vain, as careful to keep out sinful, thoughts.

I DO not look upon vain thoughts as only tending to sin, but as in themselves sinful; for that which makes sin to be sin, is the want of conformity to the will of God; and that vain thoughts are not conformable and agreeable to the divine will, appears, in that God himself, by the mouth of his royal prophet, expressly saith, ‘I hate vain thoughts.’¹⁶³ Again, vain thoughts are therefore sinful, because they have in them nothing that can denominate them good: for, as in a moral sense, there is never a particular individual act, so neither is there any particular thought, but what is either good or bad, in some respect or other. There is not a moment of my life, but it is my duty either to be thinking, or speaking, or doing good; so that whosoever I am not thus employed, I come short of my duty, and by consequence, am guilty of sin.

But what are these vain thoughts, I am thus resolving against? Why all wanderings and distraction in prayer, or hearing the word of God; all useless, trifling, and impertinent thoughts, that do not belong to, nor further the work I am about, the grand affair of my salvation, may properly be called vain thoughts. And, alas! what swarms of these are continually crowding into my heart? How have I thought away whole hours together, about I know not what chimeras, whereof one scarce ever depends upon another: sometimes entertaining myself with the pleasure of sense, as eating and drinking, and such like earthly enjoyments; sometimes building castles in the air, and climbing up to the pinnacle of wealth and honour, which I am not half way got up to, but down I fall again into a fool’s paradise?

Or, if I chance, at any time, to think a good while upon one thing, it is just to as much purpose as the man’s thoughts were, which I have sometimes heard of and smiled at, who having an egg in his hand, by a sort of chimerical climax, improved it into an estate; but while he was thus pleasing himself with these imaginary products, down drops the egg, and all his hens, and cattle, and house, and lands, that he had raised from it, vanished in the fall. These, and such like, are vain thoughts, that I must, for the future, endeavour to avoid; and though it will be impossible for me wholly to prevent their first entering into my mind, yet I resolve, by the grace of God, not to harbour or dwell upon, or delight myself with them. And then notwithstanding they are, in some sense, sinful, yet they will not be imputed to me as such, provided I use my utmost endeavours to avoid them. Which that I may be the better able to do,

132

133

163 Psal. cxix. 113.

RESOLUTION IV.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to be always exercising my thoughts upon good objects, that the devil may not exercise them upon bad.

THE soul being a spiritual substance, is always in action, and its proper and immediate act is thinking, which is as natural and proper to the soul, as extension is to the body: it is that upon which all the other actings of the soul are grounded; so that neither our apprehensions of, nor affections to, any object can be acted without it. And hence it is, that I think the soul is very properly defined, *substantia cogitans*, a thinking substance; for there is nothing else but a spirit can think, and there is no spirit but always doth think. And this I find by experience to be so true and certain, that if at any time I have endeavoured to think of nothing (as I have oftentimes done) I have spent all the time in thinking upon that very thought.

How much, therefore, doth it concern me to keep my soul in continual exercise upon what is good; for be sure, if I do not set it on work, the devil will; and if it do not work for God, it will work for him; I know sinful objects are more agreeable to a sinful soul; but I am sure, holy thoughts are more conformable to a holy God. Why, therefore, should I spend and revel out my thoughts upon that which will destroy my soul? No, no; I shall henceforth endeavour always to be employing my thoughts upon something that is good: and, therefore, to have good subjects constantly at hand to think upon, as the attributes of God, the glory of heaven, the misery of hell, the merits of Christ, the corruption of my nature, the sinfulness of sin, the beauty of holiness, the vanity of the world, the immortality of the soul, and the like; and likewise to take occasion from the objects I meet or converse with in the world, to make such remarks and reflections as may be for my advantage or improvement in my spiritual affairs. For, there is nothing in the world, though it be never so bad, but that I may exercise good thoughts upon; and my neglect in this kind has been the real occasion of all those vain thoughts that have hitherto possessed my soul. I have not kept them close to their work, to think upon what is good, and therefore, they have run out into those extravagancies, which, by the blessing of God in the performance of these resolutions, I shall endeavour to avoid.

134

It is, indeed, a singular advantage of that high and heavenly calling, in which the Most High, of his wisdom and goodness, has been pleased to place me, that all the objects we converse with, and all the subjects we exercise our thoughts upon, are either God and heaven, or something relating to them. So that we need not go out of our common road to meet with this heavenly company, good thoughts. But then, I do not account every thought of God, or heaven, which only swims in my brain, to be a good and holy thought, unless it sinks down into my heart and affections, e. unless to my meditations of God, and another world, I join a longing for him, a rejoicing in him, and a solacing myself in the hopes of a future enjoyment of him. Neither will this be any hinderance, but a furtherance to my

studies; for, as I know no divine truths as I ought, unless I know them practically and experimentally; so I never think I have any clear apprehensions of God, till I find my affections are inflamed towards him; or that ever I understand any divine truth aright, till my heart be brought into subjection to it.

135

This resolution, therefore, extends itself, not only to the subject-matter of my thoughts, but also to the quality of them, with regard to practice, that they may influence my life and conversation, that whether I speak, or write, or eat, or drink, or whatsoever I do, I may still season all, even my commonest actions, with heavenly meditations; there being nothing I can set my hand to, but I may likewise set my heart a working upon it. Which, accordingly I shall endeavour, by the blessing of God, to do. And, for the better ordering of my thoughts,

RESOLUTION V.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, so to marshal my thoughts, that they may not justly one another, nor any of them prejudice the business I am about.

MY soul being by nature swift and nimble, and by corruption inordinate and irregular in its operations, I can never set myself to think upon one thing, but presently another presses in, and another after that, and so on, till by thinking of so many things at once, I can think upon nothing to any purpose. And hence it is that I throw away thousands of thoughts each day for nothing, which, if well managed, might prove very profitable and advantageous to me. To prevent, therefore, this tumultuous, desultory, and useless working of my thoughts, as I have already resolved to fix my heart upon necessary, and useful and good objects, so to prevent my thoughts rolling from one thing to another, or leaping from the top of one to the height of another object, I must now endeavour to rank and digest them into order and method, that they may for the future be more steady and regular in their pursuits. I know the devil and my own corrupt nature will labour to break the ranks, and confound the order of them; what stratagem, therefore, shall I use to prevent this confusion I shall endeavour, by the grace of God, whosoever I find any idle thoughts begin to frisk and rove out of the way, to call them in again, and set them to work upon one or other of those objects before mentioned, and to keep them, for some time, fixed and intent upon it; and, considering the relations and dependencies of one thing upon another, not to suffer any foreign ideas, such I mean, as are impertinent to the chain of thoughts I am upon, to justle them out, or divert my mind another way. No, not though they be otherwise good thoughts; for thoughts in themselves good, when they crowd in unseasonably, are sometimes attended with very ill effects, by interrupting and preventing some good purposes and resolutions, which might prove more effectual for promoting God's glory, the good of others, and the comfort of our own souls.

These, and such like, are the methods by which I design and resolve to regulate my thoughts: and, since I can do nothing without the divine assistance, I earnestly beg of God to give me such a measure of his grace, as may enable me effectually to put these resolutions in practice, that I may not think and resolve in vain.

136

137

CONCERNING MY AFFECTIONS.

BUT whilst I am thus arranging my thoughts, I find something of a passion or inclination within me, either drawing me to, or driving me from, every thing I think on; so that I cannot so much as think upon a thought, but it is either pleasing or displeasing to me, according to the agreeableness or disagreeableness of the object it is placed upon, or to my natural affections, If it comes under the pleasing dress and appearance of good, I readily choose and embrace it; if otherwise, I am as eagerly bent to refuse and reject it. And these two acts of the will are naturally founded in those two reigning passions of the soul, love and hatred, which I cannot but look upon as the grounds of all its other motions and affections. For what are those other passions of desire, hope, joy, and the like, but love in its several postures? and what else can we conceive of fear, grief, abhorrence, &c. but so many different expressions of hatred, according to the several circumstances that the displeasing objects appear to be under. Doth my understanding represent any thing to my will, under the notion of good and pleasant? My will is presently taken and delighted with it, and so places its love upon it; and this love, if the object be present., inclines me to embrace it with joy; if absent, it puts forth itself into desire; if easy to be obtained, it comforts itself with hope; if difficult, it arms itself with courage; if impossible, it boils up into anger; if obstructed, it presently falls down into despair.

On the other hand, doth my understanding represent any object to my will, as evil, painful, or deformed? How doth it immediately shrink and gather up itself into a loathing and hatred of it! and this hatred, if the ungrateful object he present, puts on the mournful sables of grief and sorrow: if it be at any distance from it, it boils up into detestation and abhorrence; if ready to fall upon it, it shakes for fear; if difficult to be prevented, it strengthens itself with courage and magnanimity, either to conquer or undergo it. These affections, therefore, being thus the constant attendants of my thoughts, it behoves me as much to look to those as to the other, especially, when I consider, that not only my thoughts, but even my actions too, are generally determined to good or bad, accordingly as they are influenced by them. That my affections, therefore, as well as my thoughts, may be duly regulated,

138

139

RESOLUTION I.

I am resolved by the grace of God, always to make my affections subservient to the dictates of my understanding, that my reason may not follow, but guide my affections.

THE affections, being of themselves blind and inordinate, unless they are directed by reason and judgment, they either move towards a wrong object, or pursue the right a wrong way. And this judgment must be mature and deliberate, such as arises from a clear apprehension of the nature of the object that affects me, and a thorough consideration of the several circumstances that attend it. And great care must be taken, that I do not impose upon myself by fancy and imagination, that I do not mistake fancy for judgment, or the capricious humours of my roving imagination, for the solid dictates of a well-guided reason. For, my fancy is as wild as my affections: and, ‘if the blind lead the blind, they will both fall into the ditch.’

And, alas! how oft am I deceived in this manner! If I do but fancy a thing good and lovely, how eager are my affections in the pursuit of it? If I do but fancy any thing evil and hurtful to me, how doth my heart presently rise up against it, or grieve or sorrow for it? and this, I believe hath been the occasion of all the enormities and extravagancies I have been guilty of, through the whole course of my past life, divesting me of my reasonable faculties, as to the acts and exercises of them, and subjecting my soul to the powers of sense, that I could not raise my affections above them. Thus, for instance, I have not loved grace, because my fancy could not see its beauty; I have not loathed sin, because my fancy could not comprehend its misery; and I have not truly desired heaven, because my fancy could not reach its glory: whereas, if the transient beauty and lustre of this world’s vanities was but presented to my view, how has my fancy mounted up to the highest pitch of pleasure and ambition, and inflamed my heart with the desire of them!

140

And thus, poor wretch, have I been carried about with the powerful charms of sense, without having any other guide of my affections, but what is common to the very brutes that perish; fancy supplying that place in the sensitive, which reason does in the rational, soul. And, alas! what is this, but, with Nebuchadnezzar, to leave communion with men, and herd myself with the flocks of the beasts of the field? And what a shame and reproach is this to the image of God, in which I was created!

Oh! Thou, that art the author of my nature, help me, I beseech thee, to act more conformably to it, for the time to come; that I may no longer be bewildered or misled by the blind conduct of my straggling fancy; this *ignis fatuus*, that hurries me over bogs, and precipices to the pit of destruction, but that I may bring all my affections and actions to the standard of a sound and clear judgment; and let that judgment be guided by the unerring light of thy divine word: that so I may neither love, desire, fear, nor detest any thing, but what my judgment thus formed, tells me I ought to do.

I know it will be very hard thus to subdue my affections to the dictates and commands of my judgment: but howsoever, it is my resolution, this morning, in the presence of almighty God, to endeavour it, and never to suffer my heart to settle its affections upon any object, till my judgment hath passed its sentence upon it. And, as I will not suffer my affections to run before my judgment; so whenever that is determined, I steadfastly resolve to follow it: that so, my apprehensions and affections always going together, I may be sure to walk in the direct path of God's commandments, and enter the gate that leads to everlasting life. And, the better to facilitate the performance of this general resolution, it being necessary to descend to particulars:

RESOLUTION II.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to love God, as the best of goods, and to hate sin, as the worst of evils.

As God is the centre of our concupiscent affections, so sin is the object of those we call irascible; and the affections of love and hatred being the ground of all the rest, I must have a great care that I do not mistake or miscarry in them: for if these be placed upon wrong objects, it is impossible any of the rest should be placed upon right ones. In order, therefore, to prevent such a miscarriage, as God is the greatest good, and sin the greatest evil, I resolve to love God above all things else in the world, and to hate sin to the same degree; and so to love other things, only in relation to God; and to hate nothing but in reference to sin.

As for the first, the loving God above all things, there is nothing seems more reasonable, inasmuch as there is nothing lovely in any creature, but what it receives from God; and by how much the more it is like to God, by so much the more it is lovely unto us. Hence it is that beauty, or an exact symmetry and proportion of parts and colours, so attracts our love, because it so much resembles God, who is beauty and perfection itself. And hence it is likewise, that grace is the most lovely thing in the world, next to God, as being the image of God himself stamped upon the soul; nay, it is not only the image and representation, but it is the influence and communication of himself to us; so that the more we have of grace, we may safely say, so much the more we have of God within us. Why, therefore, should I grudge my love to him, who only deserves it? who is not only infinitely lovely in himself, but the author and perfection of all loveliness in his creatures; why, the true reason is, that my affections have run a gadding without my judgment, or else my judgment hath been baulked or anticipated by my fancy; whereas, now that my apprehensions of God are a little cleared up, and my judgment leads the way, though nobody sees me, yet methinks I cannot but blush at myself, that I should ever lie doting upon these dreams and shadows here below, and not fix my affections upon the infinite beauty and all-sufficiency of God above, who deserves my love and admiration so infinitely beyond them. However, therefore, I have heretofore placed my affections upon other things above God, I am now resolved to love God, not only above many, or most things, but above all things else in the world.

And here, by loving God, I do not understand that sensitive affection I place upon material objects; for it is impossible, that that should be fixed upon God, who is a pure spiritual being; but that, as by the deliberate choice of my will I take him for my chiefest good, so I ought to prefer him as such, before my nearest and clearest possessions, interests, or relations, and whatsoever else may at any time stand in competition with him.

And thus, as I shall endeavour to love God, so likewise to hate sin, above all things: and this is as necessary as the former; for all things have something of good in them, as they are made by God; but sin being, in its own nature, a privation of good, and directly opposite to the nature and will of God, (as I have before showed,) it has nothing of beauty or amiableness

142

143

to recommend it to my affections. On the contrary, it is a compound of deformity and defilement, that is always attended with punishment and misery: and must, therefore, be the object of my hatred and abhorrence, wheresoever I find it. For, as God is the centre of all that is good, so is sin the fountain of all the evil in the world. All the strife and contention, ignominy and disgrace, misfortunes and afflictions that I observe in the world; all the diseases of my body, and infirmities of my mind; all the errors of my understanding, and irregularities of my will and affections; in a word, all the evils whatsoever, that I am affected with, or subject to, in this world, are still the fruits and effects of sin: for if man had never offended the chiefest good, he had never been subject to this train of evils which attended his transgression. Whensoever, therefore, I find myself begin to detest and abhor any evil, I shall, for the future, endeavour to turn my eyes to the spring-head, and loathe and detest the fountain that sends forth all those bitter and unwholesome streams as well as the channels of those corrupt hearts in which they flow. And for this reason I resolve to hate sin wheresoever I find it, whether in myself or in others, in the best of friends, as well as the worst of enemies. Love, I know, and charity, ‘covers a multitude of sins,’ and where we love the man, we are all of us but too apt to overlook, or excuse his faults. For the prevention of this, therefore, I firmly resolve, in all my expressions of love to my fellow-creatures, so to love the person, as yet to hate his sins; and so to hate his sins, as yet to love his person. The last of which, I hope, I shall not find hard to practise, my nature, by the blessing of God, being not easily inclined to hate any man’s person whatsoever; and the former will not be much more difficult, when I consider, that by how much more I love my friend, by so much more should I hate whatsoever will be offensive or destructive to him.

Having thus fixed my resolutions with regard to those two commanding passions of my soul, love and hatred;

144

145

RESOLUTION III.

I am resolved, by the assistance of divine grace, to make God the principal object of my joy, and sin the principal object of my grief and sorrow; so as to grieve for sin more than suffering, and for suffering only for sin's sake.

THE affections of joy and grief are the immediate issues of love and hatred, and, therefore, not at all to be separated in their object. Having, therefore, resolved to love, I cannot but resolve likewise to rejoice in God above all things; for the same measure of love I have towards any thing, the same measure of complacency and delight I must necessarily have in the enjoyment of it. As, therefore, I love God above all things, and other things only in subserviency to him, so much I rejoice in God above all things, and in other things only as coming from him. I know I not only may, but must rejoice, in the mercies and blessings that God confers upon me; but it is still my duty to rejoice more in what God is in himself, than in what he is pleased to communicate to me: so that I am not only bound to rejoice in God, when I have nothing else, but when I have all things else to rejoice in. Let therefore my riches, honours, or my friends fail me: let my pleasures, my health and hope, and all fail me; I am still resolved, by his grace, to rejoice in the Lord, and to joy in the God of my salvation. On the other hand, let honour or riches be multiplied upon me; let joy and pleasure, and all that a carnal heart (like mine) can wish for or desire, be thrown upon me; yet I am still resolved, that as it is my business to serve God, so shall it be my delight and comfort to rejoice in him.

And, as God shall be my chiefest joy, so shall sin be my greatest grief; for I account no condition miserable, but that which results from, or leads me into sin; so that when any thing befalls me, which may bear the face of suffering, and fill my heart with sorrow, I shall still endeavour to keep off the smart till I know from whence it comes. If sin has kindled the fire of God's wrath against me, and brought these judgments upon me, oh! what a heavy load shall I then feel upon my soul! and how shall I groan and complain under the burden of it: but if there be nothing of the poison of sin dropped into this cup of sorrows, though it may perhaps prove bitter to my senses, yet it will in the end prove healthful to my soul, as being not kindled at the furnace of God's wrath, but at the flames of his love and affection for me. So that I am so far from having cause to be sorry for the sufferings he brings upon me, that I have much greater cause to rejoice in them, as being an argument of the love and affection he bears to me; 'For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.'¹⁶⁴

146

And having thus resolved to rejoice in nothing but God, 'and grieve for nothing but sin, I must not be cast down and dejected at every providence which the men here below account a loss or affliction; for, certainly, all the misery I find in any thing extrinsical, is created by

164 [Heb. xii. 6.](#)

myself; nothing but what is in me being properly an affliction to me; so that it is my fancy that is the ground of misery in all things without myself: If I did not fancy some evil or misery in the loss of such an enjoyment, it would be no misery at all to me, because I am still the same as I was, and have still as much as I had before. For it is God that is the portion of my soul; and, therefore, should I lose every thing I have in the world besides, yet having God, I cannot be said to lose any thing, because I have Him that hath, and is, all things in himself. Whensoever, therefore, any thing befals me, that uses to be matter of sorrow and dejection to me, I must not presently be affected with or dejected at it, but still behave myself like an heir of heaven, and living above the smiles and frowns of this world, account nothing matter of joy, but so far as I enjoy of God's love; nor any thing matter of sorrow, but so much as I see of his anger in it.

RESOLUTION IV.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to desire spiritual mercies more than temporal; and temporal mercies only in reference to spiritual.

HAVING rectified the balance of my judgment according to the Scripture; when I would begin to weigh temporal things with spiritual, I find there is no proportion, and so no comparison to be made betwixt them. And will any wise man, then, that pretends to reason, be at a stand which of these to choose, which to esteem the best, or desire most? Alas! what is there in the world, that can fill the vast desires of my soul, but only he who is infinitely above me and my desires too? Will riches do it? No, I may as soon undertake to fill my barns with grace, as my heart with gold; and as easily stuff my bags with virtue, as ever satisfy my desires with wealth. Do I hunt after pleasures? These may, indeed, charm and delight my brutish senses, but can never be agreeable or proportionate to my spiritual faculties. Do I grasp at honour and popularity? These, again, are as empty and unsatisfying as the former; they may make me look high and great in the eye of the world, turn my head giddy with applause, or puff up my heart with pride, but they can never fill up the measure of its desires. And thus, if I should have the whole world at command, and could, with Alexander, wield both sword and sceptre over all the nations and languages of it, would this content me? or rather, should I not sit down, and weep with him, that I had not another world to conquer and possess? Whereas, God being an infinite good, it is impossible for me to desire any thing, which I may not enjoy in him and his mercies: let me, or any other creature, extend our desires never so far, still the graces and blessings of this infinite God will be infinitely beyond them all: insomuch that though ten thousand worlds are not able to satisfy one soul, yet one God is able to satisfy ten thousand souls? yea, and ten millions more to them, as well as if there was only one soul in all the world to satisfy.

148

Come, therefore, my dear Lord and Saviour! whilst thy servant is breathing after thee; and possess my heart with the spiritual blessings of grace and faith, peace and charity; and let none of these empty and transient delights of this world stand in competition with them! Thou art the source and centre of all my wishes and desires; ‘even as the hart panteth after the water-brook; so panteth my soul after thee, O God!’ When shall I appear in thy presence? When, when shall that blessed time come, that I shall see thy sacred majesty race to face? This is a mercy, I confess, which I cannot expect, whilst imprisoned in the body; but, howsoever, though I must not yet appear before thee, do thou vouchsafe to appear in me, and give me such glimpses of thy love and graces here, as may be an earnest of the bliss and glory I am to enjoy hereafter.

149

RESOLUTION V.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to hope for nothing so much as the promises, and to fear nothing so much as the threatenings, of God.

MY soul being inflamed with holy desires after God, my heart cannot but be big with the hopes and expectations of him: and, truly, as there is nothing that I can absolutely desire, so neither is there any thing that [can assuredly hope for and depend upon but God himself, and the promises he has made to me in his divine word. For, as all things derive their being and subsistence from him, so they are all at his beck and command, and are acted and influenced as his wisdom and pleasure sees fit to order them. All the secondary causes are in his hand, and he turns them which way soever he will; so that, howsoever improbable and disproportionate the means he uses may appear to be, he never fails to accomplish the end, or whatever he wills or decrees to be done. And., therefore, wherever I meet with any promises made over to the faithful in his sacred word. (since they are the promises of one who is infinitely just and true, who can neither dissemble nor deceive) I cannot in the least doubt but they will be punctually fulfilled; and if I am of that happy number (as I trust through the merits of Christ, and my own sincere endeavours, I shall approve myself to be) I have as much assurance of being partaker of them, as if I had them actually in possession, or as any of the faithful servants of God, who have already experienced the accomplishment of them.

150

But suppose God should not favour me with the bright part of his promises, but, instead of the blessings of health and prosperity, should visit me with crosses and afflictions; yet I have still the same grounds for my hope and confidence in him, and may say, with the psalmist, ‘The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what the devil or man can do unto me.’ For, though their spite and malice may sometimes cross, torment, afflict, and persecute me; yet, since I am assured they are only as instruments in the hand of God, that cannot go beyond their commission, nor make me suffer more than I am able to bear, I may comfort myself, under all these afflictions, by the same divine promise that St. Paul had recourse to, on the like occasion, to wit, ‘That all shall work together for good, to them that love God, who are the called according to his purpose.’¹⁶⁵ The devil could not touch the possessions of Job, till he had received a commission from God; nor could he come near his body till that commission was renewed; and so, neither can he, nor any creature whatsoever, throw any evil upon me, without the divine permission; and even that, though it seems to be evil, shall really, in the end, turn to my benefit and advantage. Oh! what a sovereign antidote is this against all despondency and despair, even under the deepest and severest trials? Permit me, O my God, to apply this sacred promise to myself, and say, I am assured of it by my own experience. For I can hardly remember any one thing that ever happened to me, in the whole

151

165 Rom. viii. 28.

course of my life, even to the crossing of my most earnest desires, and highest expectations, but what I must confess, to the praise of thy grace and goodness, has really, in the end, turned to my advantage another way: Oh! make me truly sensible of all thy promises to, and dealings with me, that whatever storms and surges may arise, in the tempestuous ocean of this transient world, I may still fix the anchor of my hope and happiness in thee, who art the source and spring of all blessings, and without whom no evil or calamity could ever befall me!

And as the promises of God, upon all these accounts, are to be the object of my hope; so are his threatenings to be of my fear and aversion; as the former are of excellent use to raise and revive the most drooping hearts, so the latter are of weight enough to sink and depress the stoutest and most undaunted spirits, and make them lick up the dust of horror and despair. Not to mention any thing of the exquisite and eternal miseries denounced against the wicked in the next world, with which the Scriptures every where abound, there is one punishment threatened to be inflicted here, which is, of itself, sufficient to do this; and that is, 'If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory to my name, saith the Lord of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and curse your blessings.'¹⁶⁶ Most dreadful sentence! which none, that consider aright, can be able to read without trembling and astonishment. Alas! if God should curse me, where should I seek for a blessing, since He is the only fountain from which it flows, and by which it is conveyed and communicated to me? And if he should curse my very blessings, what could I hope for but misery and despair? my health, my wealth, my preferments, my relations, nay, my very life itself, would all be accursed to me; and what is yet worse, even my spiritual exercises and performances, upon which I chiefly build my hopes of happiness, my preaching, praying, and communicating, would all become a snare and a curse to me: yea, and Christ himself, who came into the world to bless and redeem me, if I walk not in his fear, believe not his gospel, or give not glory to his name, will himself be a curse and condemnation to me. So that I may say of every thing I have, or enjoy, or expect, All these God has made curses to me, because I have not blessed and glorified him in them. Oh! who would not tremble and be wrought upon by these threatenings; who would not fear thee, O King of nations, who art thus terrible in thy judgments; who would not love and obey thee, who art so gracious in thy promises? Teach me, I beseech thee, so to place my fear upon the former, that I may still fix my hope upon the latter, that though I fear thy dreadful curses, yet I may never despair of thy tender mercies!

152

153

166 Mal. ii. 2.

RESOLUTION VI.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to arm myself with that spiritual courage and magnanimity, as to press through all duties and difficulties whatsoever, for the advancement of God's glory and my own happiness.

CHRISTIANITY is well termed a warfare, for a warfare it is, wherein no danger can be prevented, no enemy conquered, no victory obtained, without much courage and resolution. I have not only many outward enemies to grapple with, but I have myself, my worst enemy, to encounter and subdue. As for those enemies which are not near me, by the assistance of God's Spirit, I can make pretty good shift to keep them at the sword's point: but this enemy, that is gotten within me, has so often foiled and disarmed me, that I have reason to say, as David did of his enemies, 'It is too strong for me;' and as he said of the chief of his, 'I shall one day fall by the hands of Saul:' so I have too much occasion to say, I shall fall by myself, as being myself the greatest enemy to my own spiritual interest and concerns. How necessary is it, then, that I should raise and muster up all my force and courage, put on my spiritual armour, and make myself strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might? I know I must strive, before I can enter in at the strait gate; I must win the crown, before I can wear it, and be a member of the church militant, before I can be admitted into the church triumphant. In a word, I must go through a solitary wilderness, and conquer many enemies, before I come to the land of Canaan: or else I must never be possessed of it. What then? Shall I lose my glory, to baulk my duty? Shall I let go my glorious and eternal possession, to save myself from a seeming hardship, which the devil would persuade me to be a trouble and affliction? Alas! if Christ had laid aside the great work of my redemption, to avoid the undergoing of God's anger, and man's malice, what a miserable condition had I been in? And, therefore, whatever taunts and reproaches I meet with from the presumptuous and profane, the infidel and atheistical reprobates of the age; let them laugh at my profession, or mock at what they are pleased to call preciseness; let them defraud me of my just rights, or traduce and bereave me of my good name and reputation; let them vent the utmost of their poisonous malice and envy against me; I have this comfortable reflection still to support me, that if I suffer all this for Christ's sake, it is in the cause of one who suffered a thousand times more for mine; and, therefore, it ought to be matter of joy and triumph, rather than of grief and dejection to me: especially, considering that 'these my light afflictions, which are but for a moment, will work out for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' Upon the prospect of which, I firmly resolve, notwithstanding the growing strength of sin, and the overbearing prevalency of my own corrupt affections, to undertake all duties, and undergo all miseries, that God in his infinite wisdom, thinks fit to lay upon me, or exercise my patience in.

154

155

RESOLUTION VII.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, so to be angry, as not to sin; and, therefore, to be angry at nothing but sin.

THE former part of the *resolution* is founded in the express command of St. Paul, ‘Be ye angry, and sin not.’¹⁶⁷ And the latter is an explication of, as well as an inference drawn from it. For, if anger be not only lawful, but a duty, as is here supposed, when it does not involve us in sin; the only difficulty is, to know how that passion ought to be qualified, to justify the exercise of it without being guilty of sin: and the circumstances or qualifications required for this are, first, That it be placed upon a due object; and, secondly, That it do not exceed its proper bounds.

Now, as nothing can deserve my anger, but what is disagreeable to my nature, and offensive to the author of it, so nothing but sin can properly be called its object. The chief thing that I am to aim at in my actions, is the honouring, serving, and pleasing of God; and how can I serve and please God in being angry at any thing but what I know is displeasing to him? I may be scorned, reproached, and vilified among my equals, or accused, condemned, and punished by my superiors; and these are treatments that are but too apt to raise and transport men into anger and revenge: but then, before I suffer this passion to boil up in me, I ought to consider whether I have not behaved myself so as to deserve this sort of treatment; if I have, then there is no injury or injustice done me thereby, and therefore, I ought not to be angry at it: if I have not, I must not be angry at the persons who act thus falsely and unjustly against me, but only at their sin; for, to speak properly, it is not the person that offends me, but the sin. And this, not because it is injurious to me, but because it is offensive and displeasing to God himself: for to be angry at any thing but what displeases God is to displease God in being angry. Whenever, therefore, I receive any affronts or provocations of this nature, I am resolved, by God’s grace assisting my endeavours, never to be moved or troubled at them, further than they are in their own nature sinful, and at the same time abstracting the sin from the persons, to pray for the pardon of those that are guilty of it; and not only so, but, according to the command and example of my Saviour, even to love them too.

But, how shall I be sure to be angry at nothing but sin, and so not to sin in my anger, when every petty trifle or cross accident is so apt to raise this passion in me? Why, the best method I can take, is, that which the wise man directs me to, ‘not to be hasty in my spirit,’¹⁶⁸ but ‘to defer my anger’ according to ‘discretion.’¹⁶⁹ So that, whosoever any thing happens, that may incense and inflame my passion, I must immediately stop its career, and suspend

167 Eph. iv. 26.

168 Eccles. vii. 9.

169 Prov. xix. 11.

the acts of it, till I have duly considered the motives and occasions that raised it. And as this will be a very good means to regulate the object of my anger, so likewise the measure of it: for, he that is slow to wrath, takes time to consider, and by consequence, puts his passion under the conduct of his reason; and, whoever does so, it will never suffer it to be transported beyond its proper bounds: whereas he whose anger is like tinder, that catches as soon as the spark is upon it, and who uses no means to stop its spreading, is presently blown up into a furious flame, which, before it is extinguished, may do more mischief than he is ever able to repair; for, no man knows whither his anger may hurry him, when once it has got the mastery of him. In order, therefore, to prevent the fatal consequences of this passion, I now resolve never to speak or do any thing, while I am under the influence of it, but take time to consider with myself, and reflect upon the several circumstances of the action or object it arises from, as well as the occasion and tendency of it; and, as oft as I find any thing in it displeasing to God, to be regularly angry at that, to correct, rebuke, and reprove it, with a zeal and fervour of spirit, suitable to the occasion; but still, to keep within the bounds of the truly Christian temper, which is always distinguished by love and charity, and exercises itself in meekness and moderation. And, oh! what a sedate and contented spirit will this resolution breed in me! How easy and quiet shall I be under all circumstances? Whilst others are peevish and fretful, and torment themselves with every petty trifle that does but cross their inclinations, or seem to be injurious to them: or fall into the other extreme, of a stoical apathy or insensibility; I shall, by this resolution, maintain a medium betwixt both, and possess my soul in peace and patience.

157

158

CONCERNING MY WORDS.

HAVING thus far cleansed the fountain of my heart, with regard to my thoughts and affections, which are the immediate issues of my active soul, the next thing incumbent upon me, is to regulate my outward conversation, both with respect to my words and actions. As to the first, the holy Scripture assures me, that the tongue is ‘a world of iniquity.’ And again, that ‘it is an unruly evil, which no man can tame.’¹⁷⁰ But is it, indeed, so unruly? Then there is the more occasion to have it governed and subdued; and, since that is not to be done by man alone, it is still more necessary, that I should call in the assistance of that divine Spirit that gives this character of it, first to fix my resolutions, and then to strengthen me in the performance of them. I steadfastly purpose to imitate the royal psalmist in this particular, and ‘to take heed to my ways, that I offend not with my tongue.’¹⁷¹ Yea, I am resolved, with holy Job, ‘that all the while my breath, and the Spirit of God, is in my nostrils, my lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit.’¹⁷² But, since it is such an unruly instrument, so very difficult to be bridled or restrained, do thou, O God, who first mutest it, enable me to get the mastery of! ‘Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and keep the door of my lips,’ that, with St. Paul, ‘I may speak forth the words of truth and soberness,’ and make this unruly evil a happy instrument of much good! Which that I may do,

170 James, iii. 6, 8.

171 Psalm xxxix. 1.

172 Job, xxvii. 3, 4.

RESOLUTION I.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, never to speak much, lest I often speak too much; and not to speak at all, rather than. to no purpose.

IT is the ‘voice of fools that is known by the multitude of words.’ In which there are ‘diverse vanities,’¹⁷³ and sin too,¹⁷⁴ whereas, ‘he that refraineth his lips is wise.’ This is that piece of Christian wisdom which I am now resolving to look after; and therefore never to deliver my words out to the world by number, but by weight; not by quantity, but quality: not hiding any meaning under ambiguous terms and expressions, but fitting words exactly to express my meaning; not amusing those I converse with, with circles of impertinence and circumlocution, but coming directly to the matter by the strait line of apt expressions, so as never to speak more than the matter requireth; nor to speak at all, when no matter requireth. For, why should I spend my breath for nothing? Alas! that is not all; if I spend it ill, it will be far worse, than spending it for nothing; for, our blessed Saviour has told me that I must answer ‘for every idle’ and unprofitable as well as profane word.¹⁷⁵ But now, if the vain word, if all the vain words I ever spoke should be written, as I have cause to believe they are, in the book of God’s remembrance, how many vast volumes must they make! and if an index should be made, where to find profitable, and where idle words, how few references would there be to the former! what multitudes to the latter! and (what is yet more terrifying) if all these words should be brought in judgment against me at the last day, how would those very words then make me speechless! and what shame and confusion of face would they then strike me with! But I trust, through the blood of my Redeemer, and the tears of my repentance, they will be all washed and blotted out, before I come to appear before him. In order to this, as I heartily bewail and detest my former follies in this respect, so I firmly purpose and resolve to use my utmost endeavours for the time to come, not to give way any more to such idle words and expressions, as are likely to be thus prejudicial to my eternal interest; but always to consider well beforehand, what, and how, and why I speak, and suffer no corrupt communication to ‘proceed out of my mouth, but that which is good, to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers.’¹⁷⁶

160

I know there are some words, that are purely jocose, spoken with no other intent but only to promote mirth, and divert melancholy; and these words, so long as they are harmless and innocent, so long as they do not reflect dishonour upon God, nor injure the character and reputation of my neighbour, are very lawful and allowable; inasmuch as they conduce to the refreshing and reviving of my spirits, and the preservation of my health. But then, I

173 [Eccles. v. 3, 6.](#)

174 [Prov. x. 19.](#)

175 [Matt. xii. 36.](#)

176 [Eph. iv. 29.](#)

must always take care so to wind and turn my discourse, that what recreates me in speaking, may profit others when spoke; that my words may not only be such as have no malignity in them, but such as may be useful and beneficial; not only such as do not hurt, but likewise such as may do much good to others as well as myself. To this end, I firmly resolve, by the grace of God, never to speak only for the sake of speaking, but to weigh each word before I speak it, and to consider the consequence and tendency of it, whether it may be really the occasion of good or evil, or tend to the edifying or scandalizing of the person I speak it to.

161

RESOLUTION II.

I am resolved by the grace of God, not only to avoid the wickedness of swearing falsely, but likewise the very appearance of swearing at all.

PERJURY is a sin, condemned by the very laws of nature; insomuch that I should wrong my natural faculties should I give way to, or be guilty of it. For the same nature that tells me, the person of God is to be adored, tells me likewise his name is to be reverenced; and what more horrid impiety can possibly be imagined, than to prostitute the most sacred name of the most high God, to confirm the lies of sinful men? I know swearing in a just matter, and right manner, may be as lawful under the New, as under the Old Testament; for thus I find St. Paul saying, ‘As God is true, I call God for a record upon my soul,’¹⁷⁷ wherein is contained the very nature of an oath, which is the calling God for a record and a witness to the truth of what we speak; but when it is to maintain falsehood, which is to an ill purpose, or lightly and vain, which is to no purpose at all, it is a sin of the highest aggravation, that ought, with the greatest detestation and abhorrence, to be shunned and avoided. God saith, by Moses, ‘Thou shalt not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the Lord.’¹⁷⁸ And, ‘Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless, that taketh his name in vain.’¹⁷⁹ But further, God says, by Christ, ‘Swear not at all, neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool,’ &c. So that not only, by God, and by Jesus, are oaths, but swearing by any of God’s creatures, is, in a manner, to swear by God himself. I swear by the heavens; can the heavens hear, or witness what I say? No; it is the glorious Majesty that rules there, that I call upon to witness the truth of the words I speak, and the sinfulness of my heart for swearing to them. Do I swear by my faith? But how is that? Can faith testify what I say? No, it is only he that wrought this faith in my heart, can witness the truth of my words. And if I swear by the gifts of God, I do in effect swear by God himself; otherwise, I ascribe that to the creature, which is only compatible to the glorious Creator, even the knowledge of the thoughts of my heart, how secret soever they be.

But, again, there is more in the third commandment than the devil would persuade the world there is: for, when God commands me ‘not to take his name in vain,’ it is more than if he had commanded me only not to swear by it; for, I cannot persuade myself, but that every time I speak of God, when I do not think of him, take his name in vain: and, therefore, I ought to endeavour to avoid even the mentioning of God, as well as swearing by him, unless upon urgent occasions, and with reverence and respect becoming his Majesty; for, questionless, “O Lord,” and “O God,” may be spoken as vainly, as, “By Lord,” and “By God:” and,

162

163

177 2 Cor. i. 18, 23.

178 Lev. xix. 12.

179 Exod. xx. 7.; Deut. v. 11.

therefore, I ought never to speak such words, without thinking really in my heart, what I speak openly with my mouth, lest my name be written amongst those that ‘take the name of God in vain.’ But further still, I am resolved not only to avoid downright swearing, but likewise the very appearance of it: so that what doth but look like an oath, shall be as odious to me, as what looks like nothing else.

RESOLUTION III.

I am resolved by the grace of God, always to make my tongue and heart go together, so as never to speak with the one, what I do not think in the other.

As my happiness consisteth in nearness and vicinity, so doth my holiness in likeness and conformity to the chiefest good, I am so much the better, as I am the liker the best; and so much the holier, as I am more conformable to the holiest, or rather to him who is holiness itself. Now, one great title which the Most High is pleased to give himself, and by which he is pleased to reveal himself to us, is, the God of truth: so that I shall be so much the liker to the God of truth, by how much I am the more constant to the truth of God. And, the further I deviate from this, the nearer I approach to the nature of the devil, who ‘is the father of lies,’¹⁸⁰ and liars too. And hence it is, that of all the sins the men of fashion are guilty of, they can least endure to be charged with lying. To give a man the lie, or to say, You lie, is looked upon as the greatest affront that can be put upon them. And why so? But only because this sin of lying makes them so like their father the devil, that a man had almost as well call them devils, as liars: and therefore to avoid the scandal and reproach, as well as the dangerous malignity of this damnable sin, I am resolved, by the blessing of God, always to tune my tongue in unison to my heart, so as never to speak any thing, but what I think really to be true. So that, if ever I speak what is not true, it shall not be the error of my will, but of my understanding.

164

I know lies are commonly distinguished into officious, pernicious, and jocose: and some may fancy some of them more tolerable than others. But, for my own part, I think they are all pernicious, and therefore, not to be jested withal, nor indulged upon any pretence or colour whatsoever. Not as if it was a sin, not to speak exactly as a thing is in itself, or as it seems to me in its literal meaning, without some liberty granted to rhetorical tropes and figures; (for so the Scripture itself would be chargeable with lies; many things being contained in it, which are not true in a literal sense;) but, I must so use rhetorical, as not to abuse my Christian liberty; and, therefore, never to make use of hyperboles, ironies, or other tropes and figures, to deceive or impose upon my auditors, but only for the better adorning, illustrating, or confirming the matter.

165

But, there is another sort of lies most men are apt to fall into, and they are promissory lies; to avoid which, I am resolved never to promise any thing with my mouth, but what I intend to perform in my heart; and never to intend to perform any thing, but what I am sure I can perform. For, this is the cause and occasion of most promissory lies, that we promise that absolutely, which we should promise only conditionally. For, though I may intend to do as I say now, yet there are a thousand weighty things may intervene, which may turn the balance of my intentions, or otherwise hinder the performance of my promise.

180 John, viii. 44.

So that, unless I be absolutely sure I can do a thing, I must never absolutely promise to do it; and, therefore, in all such promises, shall still put in God willing, or by the help of God, at the same time lifting up my heart to God, lest I take his name in vain.

RESOLUTION IV.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to speak of other men's sins only before their faces, and of their virtues only behind their backs.

To commend men when they are present, I esteem almost as great a piece of folly as to reprove them when they are absent; though I do confess, in some cases, and to some persons, it may be commendable; especially when the person is not apt to be puffed up, but spurred on by it. But to rail at others, when they hear me not, is the highest piece of folly imaginable; for, as it is impossible they should get any good, so is it impossible but that I should get much hurt by it. For, such sort of words, make the very best we can of them, are but idle and unprofitable, and may not only prove injurious to the person of whom, but even to whom they are spoken, by wounding the credit of the former, and the charity of the latter; and so, by consequence, my own soul; nay, even though I speak that which is true in itself, and known to be so to me; and, therefore, this way of backbiting ought by all means to be avoided.

But, I must, much more, have a care of raising false reports concerning any one, or of giving credit to them that raise them, or of passing my judgment, till I have weighed the matter; lest I transgress the rules of mercy and charity, which command me not to censure any one upon other's rumours, or my own surmises; nay, if the thing be in itself true, still to interpret it in the best sense. But, if I must needs be raking in other men's sores, it must not be behind their backs, but before their faces; for, the one is a great sin, and the other may be as great a duty, even to reprove my neighbour for doing any thing offensive unto God, or destructive to his own soul; still endeavouring so to manage the reproof, as to make his sin loathsome to him, and prevail upon him, if possible, to forsake it: but there is a great deal of Christian prudence and discretion to be used in this, lest others may justly reprove me for my indiscreet reproof of others. I must still fit my reproof to the time when, the person to whom, and the sin against which it is designed; still contriving with myself how to carry on this duty so as that, by 'converting a sinner from the evil of his ways, I may save a soul from death, and cover a multitude of sins.'¹⁸¹ Not venting my anger against the person, but my sorrow for the sin that is reproved. Hot, passionate, and reviling words, will not so much exasperate a man against his sin that is reproved, as against the person that doth reprove it. It is 'not the wrath of man that worked] the righteousness of God.'¹⁸² But this, of all duties, must be performed with the spirit of love and meekness; I must first insinuate myself into his affections, and then press his sin upon his conscience, and that directly or indirectly, as the person, matter, or occasion shall require; that so he that is reproved by me now, may have cause to bless God for me to all eternity,

181 James, v. 20.

182 James, i. 20.

RESOLUTION V.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, always to speak reverently to my superiors, humbly to my inferiors, and civilly to all.

THE most high God, the master of this great family, the world, for the more orderly government of it, hath, according to his infinite wisdom, set some in higher, some in lower places; hath made some as stewards, others as under servants: and according to every man's work that he expects from him, he measures out his talents to him. Blessed be his name for it, he hath set me in a middle form, giving me Agar's wish, subject neither to envy on one hand, nor pity on the other; so that I have both superiors to reverence, and inferiors to condescend to. And accordingly, it is my duty so to behave myself towards them, that the reverent expressions of my mouth may manifest the obedient subjection of my heart to the power and authority God has given them over me. It is the express command of the gospel, that we should render to every man his due, 'Fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour belongeth,'¹⁸³ which words plainly imply, both that it is some men's due to receive honour, and other men's duty to give it. And accordingly we find Paul, when he was brought before Festus, doth not say, 'Art thou he whom they call Festus?' or, thou Festus, as the misguided enthusiasts, in our days, would have said; but, 'Most noble Festus.'¹⁸⁴ In like manner St. John doth not call her he writes to, in his second epistle, being a person of quality, Woman, but, Elect lady. And this sort of reverence is further confirmed to us, not only by the constant custom of all nations in all ages of the world, but it is likewise highly agreeable to the rules of right reason, as well as the order of government. For, as there is both a natural and civil superiority, a superiority in gifts and age, and a superiority likewise in office and station; so there is nothing can be more necessary, than that there should be, in both these respects, a reverence and respect paid to the persons of men answerable to these distinctions. And therefore I cannot but condemn that rude and unmannerly behaviour of some of our schismatics towards their superiors, as factious and unreasonable, as well as repugnant to the dictates of the divine Spirit, which the prophets and apostles were inspired and influenced by.

169

And as there is a reverence due from inferiors to superiors, in point of conversation, so likewise are there some decent regards and civilities to be showed even by superiors to their inferiors, who are always treated with candour and condescension, in their ordinary capacities; and even when they are considered as criminals, with meekness and moderation. Insomuch that methinks it is one of the worst sights in the world, to see some men that are gotten upon a little higher ground than their neighbours are, to look proudly and scornfully down upon all that are below them, disdaining to vouchsafe them the least favour or respect

183 Rom. xiii. 7.

184 Acts, xxvi. 25.

whatsoever. Such churlish, haughty, and foul-mouthed Nabals as these, are not only very unjust, and unreasonable in their behaviour to others, but they are certainly the greatest enemies to themselves, that they have in all the world besides; not only by drawing upon them the hatred and enmity of all that are about them, but likewise by tormenting themselves with such frivolous things, as such spirits commonly do. Wherefore, that I may please God, my neighbour, and myself, in what I speak. though I could exceed other men (which is impossible for me to suppose) in every thing; I resolve, by God's grace, always to behave myself so, as if I excelled them in nothing; and not only to speak reverently to them that are above me, but humbly and civilly to those that are beneath me too. I will always endeavour to use such humble and winning words, as to manifest more of my love to them than my power over them: I will always season my tongue with savoury, not bitter expressions, not making my mouth a vent for my fury and passion to fume out at, but rather an instrument to draw others' love and affection in by; still speaking as civilly unto others, as I would have them speak civilly to me.

CONCERNING MY ACTIONS.

THE other way of my soul's putting forth, and showing herself to the world, is by her actions, which it concerns me as much to look to and regulate, as my words; forasmuch as there is not the least ill circumstance in any action, but what, unless it be repented of, must be brought into question, and answered for at the last day: for, though an action cannot be denominated good, unless it be good in all circumstances and respects; yet it is always denominated bad, if it is bad only in one. As it is in music, if but one string jar, or be out of tune, the whole harmony is spoiled; so here, if but one circumstance in an action be wanting or defective, the whole action is thereby rendered immoral.

171

How much, therefore, doth it behove me to keep a strict watch over myself, and so to perform every action, and place every circumstance in it, that it may have its approbation in the court of heaven? Well, I am resolved, by the grace of God, to try what I can do. I know it is impossible for me to resolve upon particular actions: but howsoever I shall resolve upon such general rules, the application of which to particular acts may make them pleasing and acceptable in the sight of God; always premising this which I have resolved upon before, as the best foundation, viz. to square all my actions by the Scripture rule, and to do nothing but what I have some way or other, a warrant for from the word of God. Upon this fixed and steady principle,

RESOLUTION I.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to do every thing in obedience to the will of God.

IT is not sufficient, that what I do is the will of God, but I must therefore do it because it is the will of God. For, what saith my Father? ‘My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.’¹⁸⁵ So that my Father will not only have my hand, but my heart too. And my feet must not walk in the ways of God, till my eyes have observed and discerned them to be so. I may do an action that is in itself good; and yet, at the same time, not do a good action, if I do not therefore do it, because it is so: for example, I may give an alms to the poor, feed the hungry, or clothe the naked; but let me examine and consider well, upon what principle these actions are founded, whether I therefore do them, because God hath commanded them; if not, my feeding the poor will be no more a good action, than the ravens feeding the prophet was.¹⁸⁶ Their feeding of the prophet was commanded by God, as well as my feeding of the poor, but I cannot say they did a good action, because though they did do this, which was commanded by God, yet being irrational creatures, they could not reflect upon that command, and so could not do this in obedience to it.

172

There are some persons, to the very frame and disposition of whose spirits some sins are, in their nature, odious and abominable. Thus I have know some, whose very constitutions have curried them into an antipathy to lust and luxury; and others again, who could never endure to drink beyond their thirst, much less to unman and be-beast themselves, by drinking to excess. And the like may be observed of covetousness which Luther was such an enemy to, that it is said to be against his very nature. Now, I say, though the abstaining from these sins be highly commendable in all sorts of persons, yet, unless together with the streams of their natural disposition, there run likewise a spiritual desire to please God, and obey his commands, their abstaining from these vices, is no more than the brute beasts themselves do, who always act according to the temper of their bodies, and are never guilty of any excesses that are prejudicial to them,

173

Hence, servants are commanded to be ‘obedient to their masters, with good will doing service as to the Lord, and not to men,’¹⁸⁷ which clearly shows, that though a servant doth obey his master, yet if he doth not do it in obedience to God, he will not find acceptance with him. So that, whensoever I set my hand to any action that is good, I must still fix my eye upon God’s commanding of it, and do it, only in respect to that; as knowing, that if I give but a farthing to the poor in all my life, and do it in obedience to God’s commands, it shall be accepted sooner than theirs, who feed hundreds at their table every day, and have not respect to the same command.

185 Prov. xxiii. 26.

186 1 Kings, xvii. 6.

187 Eph. vi. 5, 6, 7.

Do I see a poor wretch ready to fall down to the earth for want of a little support, and my bowels begin to yearn towards him? Let me search into my heart, and see what it is that raises this compassion in me. If it flows only from a natural tenderness to a brother in misery, without regard to the love of God, who has commanded and enjoined it, the poor man may be succoured and relieved, but God will not be pleased or delighted with it. Again, do my friends stir me up to pray or hear, or do any other spiritual or civil action, and I therefore only do it because of their importunity? I may satisfy my friends' desire, but cannot properly be said to obey the commands of God in such a performance; so that the great and only foundation that I must resolve to build all the actions of my life upon, is an uniform obedience to that God, by whom alone I am enabled to perform them.

RESOLUTION II.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to do every thing with prudence and discretion, as well as with zeal and affection.

WHILST I am penned up in this earthly tabernacle, I live almost as in a darksome dungeon, having no light to work by, but a little that springs in at the narrow crevices of my understanding. So that I have need to make use of all that little light and knowledge I have, to regulate the heat and zeal that sometimes sit upon my spirit. For good passions may sometimes carry me into bad actions; my zeal, when hot in the pursuit of God's glory, may sometimes hurry me beyond his laws; especially when Christian prudence hath not first chalked out the way, and set the bounds for it: as, in discourse, my zeal may put me upon throwing pearls before swine, or using words, when silence may be more commendable; so in my actions too, unless wisdom and discretion govern and command my affections, I shall frequently run into such as would be altogether needless and impertinent, and therefore ought to be omitted; and daily neglect several duties which ought to be performed.

But, my understanding and discretion is chiefly requisite for the ordering of time and place, and other particular circumstances, the irregular management of which may easily spoil the best of actions. For instance, that may be a good work at one time and place, which is not at another; and may be very innocent and becoming in one person, though quite contrary in another. It is therefore the proper office of my understanding to point out the fittest time, and place, and person, for the performance of each action I engage in. As for example, in distributing to the poor, my hand of charity must be either guided by the eye of understanding, where, when, how much, and to whom to give; or else I may, at the same time, not only offend God, but wrong my neighbour and myself too. And so for all other actions whatsoever, which I ought therefore never to set myself about, though it be of the lowest rank, without consulting the rules of wisdom, modelled by the law of God.

RESOLUTION III.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, never to set my hand, my head, or my heart, about any thing but what I verily believe is good in itself, and will be esteemed so by God.

WITHOUT faith, the apostle tells me, it is impossible to please God.¹⁸⁸ ‘For whatsoever is not of faith, is sin.’¹⁸⁹ Where, by faith, we are not to understand that saving faith, whereby I believe that my person is justified through Christ; but that, whereby I believe that my works shall be accepted by God: for faith here is opposed to doubting; and that, not about Christ’s dying for me, or my living in him, but about the particular actions of my life. ‘He that doubteth,’ saith the apostle, ‘is damned if he eats;’ that is, He that eateth that which he doubteth whether it may be lawfully eat or no, is damned, because he sins in doing it, and therefore may be damned for it. But why so? because ‘he eateth not of faith;’ because he doth that which he knows not whether he may do or no, not believing it to be really good in itself, or acceptable unto God. And, though the apostle here instances only in that particular action of eating, yet what he says with relation to that, is properly applicable to all the other actions of life: for he afterwards subjoins, ‘Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin:’ whatsoever it is, good or bad, if not done by faith, it is sin.

176

And truly, this particular will be of great use through my whole life for the avoiding of many sins, and for the doing of much good: for, many things which are good in themselves, may, for want of faith, become quite otherwise to me; my heart not believing what I do is good, my hand can never make it so. Or, if I think what I do is bad, though it be not so in itself, yet my very thinking it so, will make it so to me.

And this is what we call doing a thing with a good conscience, or keeping, as St. Paul did, ‘our conscience void of offence.’ And to go contrary to the dictates of my conscience in this particular, is to transgress the commands of God. For in this, conscience is as God’s vicegerent in my soul; what conscience commands, God commands; what conscience forbids, God forbids; that is, I am as really under the power of conscience, as the commands of God, in such a case. So that, if I do not obey the former, it is impossible for me to obey the latter. But how much then doth it behove me to see, that my conscience be rightly informed in every thing? For as if a judge be misinformed, it is impossible he should pass righteous judgment; so, if conscience be misinformed, it is impossible I should do a righteous act. And, what a miserable case shall I then be in? If I do what is in itself sinful, though my conscience tell me it is good, yet I sin, because the act in itself is sinful; and if I do what in itself is good, and my conscience tells me it is bad, because my conscience tells me it is bad, I sin because my conscience tells me it is so: so that as my conscience is, so will my actions be.

177

188 [Heb. xi. 6.](#)

189 [Rom. xiv. 23.](#)

For this reason, I resolve, in the presence of my great Creator, never to do any thing, till I have first informed my conscience from the word of God, whether it be lawful for me to do it, or no; or in case it be not determined there, to make a strict search and inquiry into each circumstance of it, considering with myself what good or evil may issue from it, and so what good or evil there is in it; and according as my conscience, upon the hearing of the argument on both sides, shall decide the matter, I shall do, or not do it; never undertaking any thing upon mere surmises, because it may be good, but upon a real and thorough persuasion that it is so.

178

RESOLUTION IV.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to do all things for the glory of God.

As I was not made by, so neither for myself; for God, says the wise man, made all things for himself.¹⁹⁰ And being thus made for God, it follows of course, that I ought to act for God; otherwise I shall frustrate the end of my creation. Insomuch that whatsoever I make my chief aim in what I do, I make that my God. Do I aim at the glory of the all-glorious Jehovah? it is him I make my god: Do I aim at riches? then it is mammon I make my god: and therefore it is that covetousness is called idolatry.¹⁹¹ Do I aim at pleasure? it is my senses I make my god.¹⁹² Do I aim at popular applause, or worldly advancement? or, do I aim at my own health or life? these are my gods. For what is worshipping, but making all the powers of my soul, and actions of my body, to bow and stoop to them? Hence it is, that the most high God, who hath said, ‘He will not give his glory to another,’ hath been so express in commanding me to do all things to his glory, ‘Whether ye eat or drink,’ says the apostle, ‘or whatsoever you do, do all things to the glory of God.’¹⁹³

But how can I, poor worm, be said to do any thing to the glory of the eternal God? Why, in the same manner as he is said to do what he doth for his own glory; and how is that? By manifesting his glory to others. Thus, if I can but so live and act, as thereby to evidence, that the God I serve is a glorious God, glorious in holiness, glorious in goodness, glorious in wisdom, glorious in power, and the like; this is doing all things to the glory of God. For example, by praying to God, I avouch him to be a God infinite in knowledge, that he is present with me, and hears me pray, wheresoever I am; and I own him to be infinite in mercy, in that he will suffer such a sinful creature as I am to address myself to him, &c. And so there is not the least action I undertake, but I am so to manage it, as to manifest the glory of God by it, making it my end and design so to do; otherwise let me do what I will I am sure to sin; for though I confess, a good end can never make a bad action good, yet a bad end will always make a good action bad: so that, if ever I would do any thing that is good, I must be sure to do it to the glory of God.

179

180

190 Prov. xvi. 4.

191 Col. iii. 5.

192 Phil. iii. 19.

193 1 Cor. x. 31.

RESOLUTION V.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to mingle such recreations with my business, as to further my business by my recreations.

HAVING wholly devoted myself to God, all I have, or am, is still to be improved for him; insomuch that was it not for the necessities of nature, every moment of my life should and ought to be spent in the immediate worship and service of him. But though nature requires some time from my solemn serving him, for the recreating of myself; yet grace requireth, that this recreating of myself should still be for the promoting of his service; so that my recreations do not only fit me for further service, but they, in themselves, should some way or other, be serviceable to him; which that they may be I must have as great a care in the choice, as in the use of my recreations.

There are some recreations that are so far from conduced to his service, that they may make more for the incensing of his wrath: as drinking and gaming, which though in themselves lawful, yet, as they often prove an occasion of swearing, lying, cheating, and contention amongst men, and by consequence of wrath in God; so they ought, by all means, to be shunned and avoided. Indeed, it may be questioned, whether gaming be ever a lawful recreation? For, either it is a lottery, or not. If it be a lottery, it is not lawful, because it is a great presumption and sin to set God at work to recreate ourselves; for poor nothings to employ the chiefest good, immediately to determine such frivolous and trifling impertinencies. If it be not a lottery, then it is not a pure recreation, for if it depends upon man's wit and study, it exercises his brain and spirits, as much as it' he were about other things: so that being on one side not lawful, on the other side no recreation; it can on no side be a lawful recreation.

181

For what is the end of recreation, but to revive my languishing spirits, to let them rest and be quiet a little, when they are .tired with too much exercise, that they be fresher, livelier, and fitter for work afterwards? hence it is, that God indeed hath provided a recreation for all sensible creatures; sleep, which is the rest of the spirits in the nerves. When the little animal spirits have been all the day running up and down upon the soul's errands, to lie down still and quiet, is a great refreshment and revivement to them, provided still, that it be moderately used. Whereas the indulging ourselves too much in it, is rather a clogging and stupifying of them: as we see in our bodies, which, when not accustomed to, are most averse from, and unfit for exercise.

So that the chief and only time for recreation, is, when my spirits are either weary with labour and study, or else called in to some necessary employment in some other place; as at and after meals, especially such as are of a hard digestion; for then the spirits have enough to do, to turn the food we eat into good nourishment. And, therefore, the intenseness of study, running, wrestling, and such like violent exercises, are not proper at such a time; because in studying, we draw the spirits from the stomach to the head; so in the other exercises,

such as moderate walking, conference, and free discourse about common but necessary points, we send them from the stomach into other parts of the body, where they are to be set on work.

182

But, that which I have found the best recreation, both to my body and mind, whensoever either of them stands in need of it, is music, which exercises, at once, both my body and my soul; especially when I play myself. For then, methinks, the same motion that my hand makes upon the instrument, the instrument makes upon my heart; it calls in my spirits, composes my thoughts, delights my ear, recreates my mind, and so, not only fits me for after business, but fills my heart, at the present, with pure and useful thoughts, so that when the music sounds the sweetliest in my ears, truth commonly flows the clearest into my mind. And hence it is, that I find my soul is become more harmonious, by being accustomed so much to harmony, and so averse to all manner of discord, that the least jarring sounds, either in notes or words, seem very harsh and unpleasant to me.

That there is something more than ordinary in music, appears from David's making use of it, for driving away the evil spirit from Saul, and Elisha for the bringing of the good spirit upon himself. From which I am induced to believe, that there is really a sort of secret and charming power in it, that naturally dispels, from the mind, all or most of those black humours, which the evil spirit uses to brood upon, and by composing it into a more regular, sweet, and docile disposition, renders it the fitter for the Holy Spirit to work upon, the more susceptible of divine grace, and more faithful messenger, whereby to convey truth to the understanding. But however that be, I must necessarily acknowledge, that of all recreations, that is by far the more suitable to my temper and disposition, in that it is not only an exercise to my body, but to my mind too; my spirits being thereby made the more nimble and active, and, by consequence, the fitter to wait upon my soul, and be employed by her, in whatever business she is engaged.

183

But in this and all other recreations, I must always take care not to exceed my measure, either in point of time or intention; I must not follow them too close, nor spend too many hours in them, but still resolve to use them, as they may not become a snare to me, but answer the ends for which they were designed, that when God shall call me to it, I may give him as good an account of my recreations, as of my necessary duties.

CONCERNING MY RELATIONS.

BUT be not deceived, O my soul; thou art not yet advanced far enough; it is not sufficient to pretend to holiness in my thoughts and affections, and in my words and actions; unless I express it likewise in all the relations and conditions of life. The commandments of God are said to be exceeding broad; they extend themselves to every capacity I can possibly be in, not only enjoining me to live soberly in respect to myself, but righteously to my neighbour, obediently to my sovereign, lovingly to my wife, and faithfully to my people; otherwise I cannot live holily unto God; and, therefore, if I would be thoroughly religious, I must further endeavour to fix my resolutions with regard to the several duties the Most High expects from me, in all these particular relations I bear to him, during my sojourning here on earth.

184

RESOLUTION I.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to honour and obey the king, or prince, whom God is pleased to set over me, as well as to expect that he should safeguard and protect me, whom God is pleased to set under him.

THE King of kings, and Lord of lords, the great and glorious Monarch of all the world, having enacted many gracious laws, is pleased to set over every kingdom and nation such persons as may put them in execution. So that I cannot but look upon a lawful king, as truly a representative of the most high God, as a parliament is of the people; and am therefore persuaded, that whoever rebels against him, rebels against God himself; not only in that he rebels against the ordinance of God, and so, against the God of that ordinance, but because he rebels against him, whom God hath set up as his vicegerent, to represent his person, and execute his laws in such a part of his dominions.

Hence it is, that these two precepts, ‘Fear God, and honour the king,’ are so often joined together in holy writ; for he that fears God’s power cannot but honour his authority; and he that honours not the king, that represents God, cannot be said to fear God, who is represented by him. And hence, likewise, it is, that God has been as strict and express in enjoining us obedience to our governors as to himself; for, thus saith the Lord of hosts, ‘Let every soul be subject to the higher powers.’¹⁹⁴ Why? because ‘there is no power but of God; the powers that be, are ordained of God.’

And he hath denounced as great a judgment against such as rebel against the magistrate he hath ordained, as against those that rebel against himself; ‘For whosoever resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist, shall receive to themselves damnation.’¹⁹⁵ So that the wrath of God shall as certainly fall upon those that rise up against the king, as upon those that fight against God. And no wonder that the punishment should be the same, when the fault is the same: for he that fights against his king, fights against God himself, who hath invested him with that power and authority to govern his people, representing his own glorious majesty before them.

Upon this ground it is, that I believe the wickedness of a prince cannot be a sufficient plea for the disobedience of his subjects; for it is not the holiness, but the authority of God that he represents, which the most wicked, as well as the most holy person, may be endowed with; and therefore, when the gospel first began to spread itself over the earth, though there was no Christian king, or supreme magistrate, of what title soever, to cherish and protect it; nay, though the civil powers were then the greatest enemies to it; yet, even then were the disciples of Christ enjoined to ‘submit themselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord’s sake.’

¹⁹⁴ Rom. xiii. 1.

¹⁹⁵ Ib. xiii. 2.

Insomuch, that did I live among the Turks, I should look upon it as my duty to obey the Grand Seignior, in all his lawful edicts, as well as the most Christian and pious king in the world. For, suppose a prince be never so wicked, and never so negligent in his duty of protecting me, it doth not follow, that I must neglect mine of obeying him. In such a case, I have another duty added to this: and that is to pray for him, and intercede with God for his conversion: for thus hath the King of kings commanded, that ‘prayers, supplications, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men,’ so more especially, ‘for kings and those that are in authority, that we may live a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty.’¹⁹⁶ So that whensoever I address myself to the court of heaven, I must be sure to remember my sovereign upon earth, that God would be pleased to enable his servant to reign on earth as himself doth in heaven, in righteousness and mercy. But especially, in case of any seeming or real default or defect, though I do not think it a subject’s duty to judge or censure their sovereign’s actions, I am to be the more earnest in my prayers and intercessions for him; but, upon no account to fight or rebel against him.

186

And, if I am thus strictly obliged to honour, obey, and pray for a bad prince, how much more should 1 pay those duties to one, who represents God, not only in his authority, but in his holiness too? In this case, sure, as there is a double engagement to reverence and obedience, so I am doubly punishable, if I neglect to show it, either to the prince himself, or those that are set under him; for the same obligations that lie upon me, for my obedience to the king, bind me likewise to obey his inferior officers and magistrates, that act under him; and that for this reason, because, as he represents God, so they represent him; and, therefore, whatever they command, in his name, I look upon it as much my duty to obey, as if it was commanded by his own mouth; and, accordingly, do, from this moment, by the grace of God, resolve to put this duty in practice.

187

196 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2.

RESOLUTION II.

I am resolved, by the same divine grace, to be as constant in loving my wife, as cautious in choosing her.

THOUGH it be not necessary for me to resolve upon marrying, yet it may not be improper to resolve, in case I should, to follow these rules of duty; first in the choice of a wife; and secondly, in the affection that I ought to bear towards her.

As for the first, I shall always endeavour to make choice of such a woman for my spouse, who hath first made choice of Christ as a spouse for herself; that none may be made one flesh with me, who is not also made one spirit with Christ my Saviour. For I look upon the image of Christ as the best mark of beauty I can behold in her; and the grace of God as the best portion I can receive with her. These are excellencies, which, though not visible to carnal eyes, are nevertheless agreeable to a spiritual heart; and such as all wise and good men cannot choose but be enamoured with. For my own part, they seem to me such necessary qualifications, that my heart trembles at the thought of ever having a wife without them. What shall I marry one that is wedded already to her sins, or have possession of her body only, when the devil hath possession of her soul? shall such a one be united to me here, who shall be separated from me for ever hereafter, and be condemned to scorch in everlasting burning? No, if it ever be my lot to enter into that state, I beg of God, that he would direct me in the choice of such a wife only to lie in my bosom here, as may afterwards be admitted to rest in Abraham's bosom to all eternity; such a one, as will so live and pray, and converse with me upon earth, that we may be both entitled to sing, to rejoice, and be blessed together, for ever in heaven.

188

That this, therefore, may be my portion and felicity, I firmly resolve, never to set upon a design, before I have first solicited the throne of grace, and begged of my heavenly Father to honour me with the partnership of one of his beloved children; and shall afterwards be as careful and cautious as I can, never to fix my affections upon any woman for a wife, till I am thoroughly persuaded of the grounds I have to love her, as a true Christian.

If I could be thus happy, as to meet with a wife of these qualities and endowments, it would be impossible for me not to be hearty and sincere in my affection toward her, even though I had the greatest temptations to place them upon another: for, how could I choose but love her, who has God for her Father, the church for her mother, and heaven for her portion; who loves God, and is beloved of him? especially, when I consider that this love to her, will not only be my duty but my happiness too.

As to the duty, it is frequently inculcated in the Scripture, that 'husbands shall love their wives,' and that not with a common love, but as 'Christ loved his church,' yea, 'as their own body,' or, 'as themselves,'¹⁹⁷ and they are so to love them, as not to 'be bitter against them,'¹⁹⁸

189

197 Eph. v. 25, 28, 33.

198 Col. iii. 19.

not to be passionate or angry with them upon every light matter, nor suffer their resentments to rise to that height, upon any occasion whatsoever, as to abate the least spark of conjugal affection towards them, but to ‘nourish and cherish them even as the Lord the church.’ In a word, to do all the kind offices they can for them in their civil capacities, and to help and forward them by all means possible, in the way that leads to heaven; that as they are united in the flesh, so they may likewise be united in the spirit, and raised and rewarded together at the general resurrection.

And, as love is the great duty, so it is likewise the chief happiness of a married state. I do not mean that love whereby she loves me, but that wherewith I love her; for, if I myself have not a cordial esteem and affection for her, what happiness will it be to me, to be beloved by her? or rather, what a misery would it be to be forced to live with one I know I cannot love? As ever, therefore, I desire to be happy, I must perform my duty in this particular, and never aim at any other end in the choice of a wife, nor expect any other happiness in the enjoyment of her, but what is founded in the principle of pure and inviolable love. If I should court and marry a woman for riches, then, whensoever they fail, or take their flight, my love and my happiness must drop and vanish together with them. If I choose her for beauty only, I shall love her no longer than while that continues, which is only till age or sickness blasts it, and then farewell at once, both duty and delight.

190

But if I love her for her virtues, and for the sake of God, who has enjoined it as a duty, that our affections should not be alienated, or separated by any thing but death; then, though all the other sandy foundations fail, yet will my happiness remain entire, even though I should not perceive those mutual returns of love, which are due from her to me upon the same foundation. But, oh! the happiness of that couple, whose inclinations to each other are as mutual as their duties; whose affections, as well as persons, are linked together with the same tie! this is the chief condition required to make the state of matrimony happy or desirable, and shall be the chief motive, with me, to influence me to enter into it. For, though it be no happiness to be beloved by one I do not love; yet it is certainly a very great one to be beloved by one I do. If this, then, be my lot, to have mutual expressions of love from the person I fix my affections upon, what joy and comfort will it raise in my heart? with what peace and amity shall we live together here? and what glory and felicity may we not promise ourselves hereafter?

What is here said of the duty in choosing and loving a wife, may be likewise applied to a woman’s duty in choosing and loving her husband. But being not so immediately concerned in this, I pass on to my next resolution.

191

RESOLUTION III.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to do my endeavour to give to God whatsoever children he shall be pleased to give one; that as they are mine by nature, they may be his by grace.

I HAVE sometimes wondered at the providence of God, in bringing so many millions of people out of the loins of one man; and cannot but make this use of it, even to stir up myself to a double diligence, in bringing up my children ‘in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.’ For who knows, but the salvation of ten thousand souls may depend upon the education of one single child?

If I train up my son in the ways of religion, and teach him what it is to ‘keep a conscience void of offence towards God, and towards man;’ he will then not only have an inward sense of his own duty, but take all possible care to instil it into others, whether children or servants, that are committed to his charge; and these; again, will do the same to theirs, by teaching them to walk in the same path; till, by degrees, the piety and holiness of one man has diffused itself to all succeeding generations. But now, on the other hand, if I neglect the care of my son’s education, and suffer the leprosy of sin and wickedness to taint and corrupt him, it is great odds, without an extraordinary interposition of divine grace, but the infection may spread itself over all my posterity; and so draw down upon me the curses and accusations of ten thousand souls in hell, which might otherwise have been praising and blessing God for me, to all eternity, in heaven.

192

Hence it is, that I am resolved to endeavour to be a spiritual, as well as natural father to my children; yea, to take more care to get a portion for their souls in heaven, than to make provision for their bodies upon earth. For, if he be accounted ‘worse than an infidel that provides not for his family,’ the sustenance of their bodies, what is he that suffers his family to neglect the salvation of their souls?

That nothing of this, therefore, may be laid to my charge, if ever Providence sees fit to bless me with children of my own, I will take effectual care, so soon as conveniently I can, to devote them unto God by baptism; that what guilt they have contracted, by coming through my loins, may be washed away by the laver of regeneration; and then to be constantly soliciting at the throne of grace, that he who hath given them to me, would be pleased likewise to give himself to them.

The next thing to be done, as soon as they come to be capable of instruction, is to take all occasions and make use of all means, to work the knowledge of God into their heads, and the grace of Christ into their hearts; by teaching them to ‘remember their Creator in the days of their youth;’ by acquainting them with the duties that he that made them expects from them; with the rewards they shall have, if dutiful; and the punishments they shall feel, if disobedient children; still accommodating my expressions to the shallow capacity of their tender years. And, according to their doing, or not doing, of what they have been told, I shall reward them with what is most pleasing, or punish them with what is most displeasing

193

to their years. To speak to them of heaven and eternal glory, will not encourage them so much as to give them their childish pleasures and desires; and the denouncing of a future hell, will not Alight them so much as the inflicting a present smart. Hence it is, that Solomon so often inculcates this upon parents, as their duty to their children, that they should not ‘spare the rod, lest they spoil the child.’

But I must still take care to let them understand, that what I do is from a principle of love and affection to them, not of fury and indignation against them; for, by this means God may correct me for correcting them: I may set before my children such an example of indiscreet and sinful passion, as they will be apt enough to learn, without my teaching them. On the other hand, it behoves me, if possible, so to order my family, that my children may not see or hear, and so not learn, any thing but goodness in it; for commonly, according to what we learn when we are young, we practise when we are old. And, therefore, as I shall take great care, that my children learn nothing that is evil or sinful at home; so likewise that they do not come into such company abroad, where their innocence may be assaulted with swearing, cursing, or any kind of profane or obscene discourse, which the generality of our youth are so obnoxious to.

Or at least, if this is not wholly to be avoided, to prevent those poisonous weeds from taking root in the heart, it behoves me to take all opportunities of discoursing to them of God and Christ, of the immortality of their souls, and the future state they are to be doomed to in another world, when they have lived a little while in this; that, according as they grow in years, they may ‘grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.’ And when they come to years of discretion, capable of doing further honour and service to God and their country, by some calling or profession, I must be sure to place them in such a one as may be no hinderance to that high and heavenly calling, which they have in Christ Jesus, but rather contribute to further and promote it; that, being like tender plants engrafted into the true vine, they may bring forth much fruit, to God’s glory, to my comfort, and their own salvation.

RESOLUTION IV.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to do my duty to my servants as well as expect they should do theirs to me.

IT was Joshua's, and, by God's grace, it shall be my resolution, that 'I and my house fear the Lord.' I, in the first place, and then my house; for if I myself do not, I cannot expect that they should. So that, for the ordering of my family in general, I must not only press their duty upon them, but likewise practise my own duty, in suppressing all vicious and lewd conversation, and composing all strife and contention amongst them; in praying every day, at least twice with them; in catechising and expounding the principles of religion to them, and in calling for an account of every sermon and godly discourse they hear, either in private or in public; in seeing that they constantly frequent the divine ordinances, and that they behave themselves so conscientiously therein, that they may be, some way or other, the better by them. And to these ends, I think it my duty to allow my servants some time, every day, wherein to serve God, as well as to see they spend their other hours in serving me; and to make them sensible that they do not serve me only for myself, but ultimately and principally in reference unto God; their serving me making way for my better serving God.

195

And, for this reason, I cannot believe, but it is as great a sin to cumber my servants, as myself with too much worldly business. For how can they spend any time in the service of God, when I require all their time in my own? And how justly should I be condemned, if by this means I should bring them into a sort of necessity of sinning, either in not obeying God or not obeying me; not that I think it is a servant's duty to neglect his Creator to serve his master; on the contrary, he is obliged, in all cases, where their commands interfere, to 'obey God, rather than man.' But where they do not, there is a strict injunction upon all servants, that they should be 'obedient to their masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of heart, as unto Christ.'¹⁹⁹ But how with fear and trembling? why, fearing lest they should offend God, in offending them, and trembling at the thoughts of being disobedient to the divine command, which enjoins them to 'be obedient to their masters in all things, not answering again';²⁰⁰²⁰¹ that is, not repining at their master's lawful commands, not muttering and maundering against them, as some are apt to do: for it is as great a sin in servants to speak irreverently to their masters, as in masters to speak passionately to their servants.

196

But how are servants to give obedience to their masters, 'with singleness of heart, as unto Christ?' Why, by obeying them only in obedience unto Christ; that is, they are therefore to do their master's will, because it is the Lord's will they should do it; serving them, 'not

¹⁹⁹ Eph. vi. 5.

²⁰⁰ Tit. ii. 9.

²⁰¹ Tit. ii. 9.

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 unto the Lord, and not to men.²⁰² This is the duty, therefore, that I shall be oft inculcating upon my servants, and shall as oft be reflecting upon myself, that what I require for my own service may be always in subordination to God's, who is our common Lord and master, whose laws are equally obliging on all ranks and conditions of men, and in whose sight 'there is no respect of persons.'

202 Eph. vi. 6, 7; Col. iii. 22.

RESOLUTION V.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to feed the flock that God shall set me over, with wholesome food, neither starving them by idleness, poisoning with error, nor puffing them up with impertinence.

AND here I cannot but declare, that ever since I knew what it was to study, I have found by experience, that spiritual and intellectual pleasures do as far surpass those that are temporal and sensual, as the soul exceeds the body. And, for this reason, as I always thought the study and profession of divinity to be the noblest and most agreeable of all others, as carrying with it its own encouragement and reward; so I have often wondered with myself, that the greatest persons in the world should not be desirous and ambitious of exercising their part in the study of this necessary, as well as sublime science, and even devoting themselves to the profession of it. For, do they aspire after honour? What greater honour can there be, than to be the mouth of God to the people, and of the people unto God; to have the Most High himself, not only to speak by them, but in them too? What greater honour than to have a commission from the King of kings, to represent himself before his people, and call them, in his name, to ‘return from the error of their ways, and walk in the paths of God to everlasting glory?’ What greater honour than to be an instrument, in his hand, to bring poor souls from the gates of hell, to set them among princes in the court of heaven? Do they thirst after pleasures? What greater pleasure can they have, than to make it their business to feed themselves and others with the bread and water of life?

197

But stay, my soul, let not thy thoughts run only upon the dignity of thy function, and the spiritual pleasures that attend the faithful discharge of it; but think likewise upon the strict account thou must give of it in another life: the serious consideration of which, as it cannot but be a great comfort to the true and faithful pastor, who has diligently fed his flock with the ‘sincere milk of God’s word;’ so must it be a great terror and confusion to the slothful and negligent, the false and deceitful dispensers of the divine mysteries, who have either carelessly lost, or treacherously deluded the souls of those committed to their charge, which they must one day answer for, as well as for their own. And therefore, that nothing of this kind may be ever laid to my charge, I solemnly promise and resolve, before God, so to demean myself in the exercise of my ministerial function, as to make the care of souls, especially of those committed to my charge, the chief study and business of my life.

198

And that without partiality or exception, I must not single out some of the best of my flock, such as I have the highest respect for, or have received the greatest obligations from; but ‘minister to every one according to their several necessities.’ If I meet with men of knowledge and virtue, my business must be to confirm and establish them therein; if with those that are ignorant and immoral, to teach and instruct them in the ways of religion, and by all means possible, to reclaim and reduce them to the exercise of their duty; always remembering, that as the blessed Jesus, the ‘great shepherd and bishop of our souls, was not

sent, save unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance; so it is the indispensable duty of his apostles and ministers (and by the grace of God I shall make it mine) to follow his example in this particular; to spare no time nor pains in the reformation of sinners, though it be never so irksome and difficult to accomplish; even though I should meet with such as the prophet David speaks of, ‘who hate to be reformed, and cast my words behind them.’ And therefore as I know it is my duty, so I shall always endeavour to take pleasure in the several offices I perform of this kind, ‘to strengthen the weak, heal the wounded, and bind up the broken heart;’ to call in those that err and go astray, and ‘seek and save them that are lost.’

199

To these ends, though preaching is, without doubt, a most excellent and useful, as well as necessary duty, (especially if it be performed, as it ought, with zeal and reverence, and the doctrine applied and pressed home, with sincerity of affection,) yet, I shall not think it sufficient to instruct my people only from the pulpit, but take all opportunities to instil good thoughts and principles into their minds in my private conversation. I know it is impossible for all ministers frequently to visit every particular person or family in their parish, there being, in some parishes, especially in and about London, so many thousands of souls: but, howsoever, if it should please the Lord to call me to such a flock, though I cannot visit all, I shall visit as many as I can; especially those that are sick or infirm, and be sure to feed them ‘with the sincere milk of the word,’ such as may turn to their spiritual nourishment, and make them ‘grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.’ I will not fill their heads with speculative notions and niceties in divinity; (which, among the less judicious, are very often the occasion of heresy and error, and sometimes also, of delusion and distraction;) but my chief care shall be to instruct them in those necessary truths which their Christian faith indispensably obliges them to know and believe, and press them to the performance of those duties, without which they cannot be saved; meekly and impartially reproving the particular vices they are most inclined and addicted to, and cheerfully encouraging and improving whatever virtuous actions they are, any of them, exemplary in, and whatever good habits and inclinations the divine grace has put into their hearts.

200

And since love and charity is the great characteristic of our profession, the bond and cement of all other Christian duties, in order to make my ministry the more successful, I resolve, in the last place, not only to avoid all differences and disputes with them myself, but amicably to compose all such as may arise among the neighbours. In a word, I shall make it my endeavour, in all things, so to approve myself as a faithful minister, both in life and doctrine before them, that at the last day, when the great God shall call for my parish, and myself to appear before him, I may be prepared to give an account of both; at least, to answer for as many of them as he requires; and may, with joy and comfort, pronounce this sentence of my Saviour, if it may, without offence, be applied to his ministers, ‘Behold I and the children which thou hast given me.’

RESOLUTION VI.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to be as faithful and constant to my friend, as I would have my friend to be faithful and constant to me.

HAVING before resolved to be zealous in loving God, I here resolve to be as constant in loving my friend. But why do I resolve upon this? Is it possible to live and not to love? This to me seems as plain a contradiction, as to live and not to live. For love, in my opinion, is as much the life of the soul, as the soul is the life of the body. So that, for my own part, I shall expect to cease to live, at the very moment that I cease to love; nay, I do not look upon love only as my life, but as the joy and comfort of it too. And, for this reason, I shall never envy any man his riches, pleasures, or preferments, provided that I can but enjoy the persons my soul delights in, viz. Christ in the first place, and my friend and neighbour in the second.

201

But then I must have a great care where and how I place this affection; for if I place it wrong, my very loving will be sinning. And therefore, I shall always endeavour to make such only my friends, as are friends to God. Not that I look upon it as necessary to love my friends always under that notion only as they are friends of God; for then, no love but that which is spiritual would be lawful; whereas there is, doubtless, a natural love, that is no less a duty, and, by consequence, no less lawful, than the other; as, the love of parents towards their children, and children towards their parents; and the mutual complacency that arises betwixt friends, as well as relations, from the harmony and agreement of humours and tempers. Thus our Saviour is said to have loved St. John more than any of his other disciples, which cannot be understood of a spiritual love; for this, undoubtedly, was equal to all; but being a man subject to the like passions (though not imperfections) as we are, he placed more natural affection upon, and might have more natural complacency in John than in his other disciples.

And, therefore, when I say, I am to make such my friends only as are friends to God, my meaning is, that I will make none my friends, but such as I know to be good men and good Christians, such as deserve my love in a spiritual as well as a natural sense; and since I may lawfully love my friend in both these senses, the one is so far from being exclusive, that it is really perfective of the other. And for this reason, as the spiritual good of my friend is always to be preferred before that which is temporal, I am resolved to found the one upon the other. I will always be ready, as oft as he stands in need, either of my advice, encouragement, or assistance, to do him all the kind offices I can in his worldly affairs, to promote his interest, vindicate his character from secret aspersions, and defend his person from open assaults: to be faithful and punctual in the performance of my promises to him, as well as in keeping the secrets he has entrusted me with. But all these things are to be done with a tender regard to the honour of God, and the duties of religion; so that the services I do him in his temporal concerns, must be still consistent with, mid subservient to, the spiritual interest and welfare of his immortal soul, in which I am principally obliged to manifest my

202

friendship towards him. If I see him wander out of the right way, I must immediately take care to advertise him of it, and use the best means I can to bring him back to it. Or if I know him to be guilty of any reigning vices, I must endeavour to convince him of the danger and malignity of them, and importune and persuade him to amend and forsake them. And lastly, I must be as constant in keeping my friend, as cautious in choosing him, still continuing the heat of my affections towards him, in the day of his affliction, as well as in the height of his prosperity.

These are the rules whereby I resolve to express my friendship unto others, and whereby I would have others to express their friendship unto me.

CONCERNING MY TALENTS.

HAVING so solemnly devoted myself to God, according to the covenant he hath made with me, and the duty I owe to him; not only what I am, and what I do, but likewise what I have, is still to be improved for him. And this I am bound to, not only upon a federal, but even a natural account; for whatsoever I have, I received from him, and therefore, all the reason in the world, whatsoever I have should be' improved for him. For, I look upon myself as having no other property in what I enjoy, than a servant hath in what he is entrusted with to improve for his master's use; thus, though I should have ten thousand pounds a year, I should have no more of my own, than if I had but two-pence in all the world. For it is only committed to my care for a season, to be employed and improved to the best advantage, and will be called for again at the grand audit, when I must answer for the use or abuse of it; so that, whatsoever in a civil sense I can call my own, that, in a spiritual sense, I must esteem as God's. And therefore it nearly concerns me to manage all the talents I am entrusted with as things I must give a strict account for at the day of judgment. As God bestows his mercies upon me, through the greatness of his love and affection, so I am to restore his mercies back again to him by the holiness of my life and conversation. In a word, whatever I receive from his bounty, I must, some way or other, lay out for his glory, accounting nothing my own, any further than as I improve it for God's sake and the spiritual comfort of my own soul.

In order to this, I shall make it my endeavour, by the blessing of God, to put in practice the following resolutions.

204

RESOLUTION I.

I am resolved, if possible, to redeem my time past by using a double diligence .fir the future, to employ and improve all the gifts and endowments, both of body and mind, to the glory and service of my great Creator.

TIME, health, and parts, are three precious talents, generally bestowed upon men, but seldom improved for God. To go no further than myself, how much time and health have I enjoyed, by God's grace? and how little of it have I laid out for his honour? On the contrary, how oft have I offended, affronted, and provoked him, even when he has been courting me with his favours, and daily pouring forth his benefits upon me? this, alas! is a sad truth, which whensoever I seriously reflect upon, I cannot but acknowledge the continuance of my life as the greatest instance of God's mercy and goodness, as well as the greatest motive to my gratitude and obedience. In a due sense, therefore, of the vanities and follies of my younger years, I desire to take shame to myself for what is past, mid do this morning humbly prostrate myself before the throne of grace, to implore God's pardon, and to make solemn promises and resolutions, for the future, to cast off the works of darkness, and to put on the armour of light; and not only so, but to redeem the precious minutes I have squandered away, by husbanding those that remain, to the best advantage. I will not trifle and sin away my time in the pleasures of sense, or the impertinencies of business, but shall always employ it in things that are necessary, useful, and proportion it to the weight and importance of the work or business I engage myself in; allotting such a part of it for this business, and such a part for that, so as to leave no intervals for unlawful or unnecessary actions, to thrust themselves in, and pollute my life and conversation.

205

For, since it has pleased God to favour me with the blessing of health, and I am not certain how soon I may be deprived of it, and thrown upon a bed of sickness, which may deprive me of the use of my reason, or make me incapable of any thing else, but grappling with my distemper; it highly concerns me to make a due use of this blessing, while I have it; to improve these parts and gifts that God has endowed me with, to the manifestation of his glory, the salvation of my soul, and the public good of the community whereof I am a member.

To these ends, it will be requisite for me frequently to consider with myself, which way my weak parts may be the most usefully employed, and to bend them to those studies and actions, which they are naturally the most inclined to, and delighted in, with the utmost vigour and application; more particularly in spiritual matters, to make use of all opportunities for the convincing others of God's love to them, and their sins against God; of their misery by nature, and happiness by Christ; and when the truth of God happens to be any way traduced or opposed, to he as valiant in the defence of it, as its enemies are violent in their assaults against it. And as I thus resolve to employ my inward gifts and faculties for the glory and service of God; so,

206

RESOLUTION II.

I am resolved, by the divine grace, to employ my riches, the outward blessings of Providence, to the same end; and to observe such a due medium in the dispensing of them, as to avoid prodigality on the one hand, and covetousness on the other.

THIS, without doubt, is a necessary resolution, but it is likewise very difficult to put in practice, without a careful observance of the following rules.

First, never to lavish out my substance, like the prodigal, in the revels of sin and vanity, but after a due provision for the necessities and conveniences of life, to lay up the overplus for acts of love and charity towards my indigent brethren. I must consider the uses and ends for which God has entrusted me with such and such possessions; that they were not given me for the pampering my body, the feeding my lusts, or puffing me up with pride and ambition; but for advancing his glory, and my own, and the public good. But why do I say given when, as I before observed, I have no property in the riches I possess; they are only lent me for a few years to be dispensed and distributed, as my great Lord and Master sees fit to appoint, viz. for the benefit of the poor and necessitous, which he has made his deputies to call for and receive his money at my hands. And this, indeed, is the best use I can put it to, for my own advantage, as well as theirs: for the money I bestow upon the poor, I give to God to lay up for me, and I have his infallible word and promise for it, that it shall be paid me again with unlimited interest out of his heavenly treasury, which is infinite, eternal, and inexhaustible. Hence it is, that whosoever I see any fit object of charity, methinks I hear the Most High say unto me, Give this poor brother so much of my stock, which thou hast in thy hand, and I will place it to thy account, as given to myself; and ‘look what thou layest out it shall be paid thee again.’

207

The second rule is, never to spend a penny, where it can be better spared; nor to spare it where it can be better spent. And this will oblige me, whosoever any occasion offers of laying out money, considerably to weigh the circumstances of it, and, according as the matter, upon mature deliberation, requires, I must not grudge to spend it: or, if at any time, I find more reason to spare, I must not dare to spend it; still remembering, that as I am strictly to account for the money God has given me, so I ought neither to be covetous in saving, or hoarding it up, nor profuse in throwing it away, without a just occasion. The main thing to be regarded, is the end I propose to myself in my expenses, whether it be really the glory of God, or my own carnal humour and appetite.

208

For instance, if I lay out my money in clothing my body, the question must be, whether I do this only for warmth and decency, or to gratify my pride and vanity? If the former, my money is better spent; if the latter, it is better spared than spent. Again, do I lay it out in eating and drinking? if this be only to satisfy the necessities of nature, and make my life more easy and comfortable, it is without doubt, very well spent; but if it be to feed my luxury and intemperance, it is much better spared; better for my soul, in keeping it from sin, and

better for my body, in preserving it from sickness; and this rule is the more strictly to be observed, because it is as great a fault in a servant not to lay out his master's money when he should, as to lay it out when he should not.

In order, therefore, to avoid both these extremes, there is a third rule to be observed under this resolution; and that is to keep a particular account of all my receipts and disbursements, to set down in a book every penny I receive at the hands of the Almighty, and every penny I lay out for his honour and service. By this means I shall be, in a manner, forced both to get my money lawfully, and to lay it out carefully: but how can I put that amongst the money I have received from God, which I have got by unlawful means? certainly, such money I may rather account as received from the devil for his use, than from God, for his. And so must I either lay every penny out for God, or otherwise I shall not know where to set it down, for I must set down nothing but what I lay out for his use; and if it be not for his use, with what face can I say it was? And, by this means also, when God shall be pleased to call me to an account for what I received from him, I may with comfort appear before him; and having improved the talents he had committed to my charge, I may be received into his heavenly kingdom with 'well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into thy master's joy.'

RESOLUTION III.

I am resolved by the grace of God, to improve the authority God gives me over others, to the suppression of vice, and the encouragement of virtue; and so for the exaltation of God's name on earth, and their souls in heaven.

THAT all power and authority hath its original from God, and that one creature is not over another, but by the providence and will of Him, who is over all; and so, by consequence, that all the authority we have over men is to be improved for God, is clear, not only from that question, ‘Who made thee to differ from another; and what hast thou, which thou didst not receive?’²⁰³ but likewise, and that more clearly, from that positive assertion, ‘the powers that be are ordained of God.’²⁰⁴ That, therefore, I may follow my commission, I must stick close to my present resolution, even in all the power God gives me to behave myself as one invested with that power from above, to restrain vice and encourage virtue, as oft as I have an opportunity so to do, always looking upon myself as one commissioned by him, and acting under him. For this reason, I must still endeavour to exercise my authority, as if the most high God was in my place in person as well as power. I must not follow the dictates of my own carnal reason, much less the humours of my own biased passion, but still keep to the acts which God himself hath made, either in the general statute book for all the world, the holy Scriptures, or in the particular laws and statutes of the nation wherein I live.

210

And questionless, if I discharge this duty as I ought, whatever sphere of authority I move in, I am capable of doing a great deal of good, not only by my power, but by my influence and example. For common experience teaches us, that even the inclinations and desires of those that are eminent for their quality or station, are more powerful than the very commands of God himself; especially among persons of an inferior rank, and more servile disposition, who are apt to be more wrought upon by the fear of present punishment, or the loss of some temporal advantage, than any thing that is future or spiritual. Hence it is, that all those whom God entrusteth with this precious talent, have a great advantage and opportunity in their hand, for the suppressing sin, and the exalting holiness in the world: a word from their mouths against whoredom, drunkenness, and the profanation of the Sabbath, or the like; yea, their very example and silent gestures being able to do more than the threatenings of almighty God, either pronounced by himself in his word, or by his ministers in his holy ordinances.

211

This, therefore, is my resolution, that whatsoever authority the most high God shall be pleased to put upon me, I will look upon it as my duty and always make it my endeavour, to demolish the kingdom of sin and Satan, and establish that of Christ and holiness in the hearts of all those to whom my commission extends; looking more at the duty God expects

203 [1 Cor. iv. 7.](#)

204 [Rom. xiii. 1.](#)

from me, than at the dignity he confers upon me. In a word, I will so exercise the power and authority God puts into my hands here, that when the particular circuit of my life is ended, and I shall be brought to the general assize to give an account of this among my other talents, I may give it up with joy; and so exchange my temporal authority upon earth, for an eternal crown of glory in heaven.

RESOLUTION IV.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to improve the affections God stirs up in others towards me, to the stirring up of their affections towards God.

IF the authority I have over others, then questionless the affection others have to me, is to be improved for God; and that because the affection they bear to me in a natural sense hath a kind of authority in me over them in a spiritual one. And this I gather from my own experience; for I find none to have a greater command over me, than they that manifest the greatest affections for me. Indeed, it is a truth generally agreed on, that a real and sincere esteem for any person is always attended with a fear of displeasing that person; and where there is fear in the subject, there will, doubtless, be authority in the object; because fear is the ground of authority, as love is, or ought to be, the ground of that fear. The greatest potentate, if not feared, will not be obeyed; if his subjects stand in no awe of him, he can never strike any awe upon them. Nor will that awe have its proper effects in curbing and restraining them from sin and disobedience, unless it proceeds from, and is joined with love.

212

T know the Scripture tells me, ‘There is no fear in love, but that perfect love casteth out fear.’²⁰⁵ But that is to be understood of our love to God, not to men, and that a perfect love too, such as can only be exercised in heaven. There I know our love will be consummate, without mixture, as well as without defect; there will be a perfect expression of love on both sides, and so no fear of displeasure on either. But this is a happiness which is not to be expected here on earth; so long as we are clothed with flesh and blood, we shall, in one degree or other, be still under the influence of our passions and affections. And therefore as there is no person we can love upon earth, but who may sometimes see occasion to be displeased with us: so he will always, upon this account, be feared by us. This I look upon as the chief occasion of one man’s having so much power and influence over another.

But how comes this under the notion of a talent received from God, and so to be improved for him? Why, because it is he, and he alone, that kindles and blows up the sparks of pure love and affection in us, and that by the breathings of his own Spirit. It was the Lord that gave Joseph favour in the sight of the ‘keeper of the prison’,²⁰⁶ And who brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the ‘prince of the eunuchs’.²⁰⁷ And so of all others in the world: for we are told elsewhere, that as ‘God fashioneth the hearts of men, so he turneth them which way soever he will.’ Insomuch that I can never see any express their love to me, but I must express my thankfulness to God for it; nor can I feel in myself any warmth of affection towards others, without considering it as a talent hid in my breast, which I am obliged in duty to improve for him by stirring up their affections unto him ‘whose affections

213

205 John, iv. 18.

206 Gen. xxxix. 21.

207 Dan. i. 9.

himself hath stirred up towards me. And this will be the more easy to effect, if I take care in the first place, to express the zeal and sincerity of my own love to God, by making him the chief object of my esteem and adoration; and manifest my aversion to the sins they are guilty of, by representing them as most loathsome and abominable, as well as most dangerous and damnable. For, wherever there is a true and cordial affection to any person, it is apt to bias those that are under the influence of it, to choose the same objects for their love or aversion, than such a person does, that is, to love what he loves, and to hate what he hates. This, therefore, is the first thing to be done, to stir up the affections of others to love and serve God.

Another way of my improving the affections of others to this end, is by setting them a good example; for commonly what a friend doth, be it good or bad, is pleasing to us, because we look not at the goodness of the thing that is done, but at the loveliness of the person that doth it. And if the vices of a friend seem amiable, how much more will his virtues shine? For this reason, therefore, whosoever I perceive any person to show a respect for, or affection to me, I shall always look upon it as an opportunity put into my hands to serve and glorify my great Creator, and shall look upon it as a call from heaven, as much as if I heard the Almighty say to me, I desire to have this person love me, and therefore have I made him to love thee: do thou but set before him an example of goodness and virtue, and his love to thy person shall induce and engage him to direct his actions according to it. This, therefore, is the rule that I fully resolve to guide myself by, with relation to those who are pleased to allow me a share in their esteem and affection, which I hope to improve to their advantage in the end; that as they love me, and I love them now, so we may all love God, and God love us to all eternity.

214

215

RESOLUTION V.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to improve every good thought to the producing of good affections in myself, and as good actions with respect to God.

WHATSOEVER comes from God, being a talent to be improved to him, I cannot but think good thoughts to be as precious talents, as it is possible a creature can be blessed with. But let me esteem them as I will, I am sure my Master will reckon them amongst the talents he entrusts me with, and for which he will call me to an account; and, therefore, I ought not to neglect them. The Scripture tells me, ‘I am not sufficient of myself to think any thing as of myself, but that my sufficiency is of God.’²⁰⁸ And if I be not sufficient to think any thing, much less am I able of myself to think of that which is good; forasmuch as to good thoughts there must always be supposed a special concurrence of God’s Spirit; whereas to other thoughts there is only the general concurrence of his presence. Seeing, therefore, they come from God, how must I lay them out for him? Why, by sublimating good thoughts unto good affections. Does God vouchsafe to send down into my heart a thought of himself? I am to send up this thought to him again, in the fiery chariot of love, desire, and joy. Doth he dart into my soul a thought of holiness and purity? I am to dwell and meditate upon it till it break out into a flame of love and affection for him. Doth he raise up in my spirit a thought of sin, and show me the ugliness and deformity of it? I must let it work its desired effect, by making it as loathsome and detestable as that thought represents it to be.

But good thoughts must not only be improved to produce good affections in my heart, but likewise good actions in my life. So that the thoughts of God should not only make me more taken with his beauty, but more active for his glory; and the thoughts of sin should not only damp my affection to it, but likewise deter and restrain me from the commission of it.

And thus every good thought that God puts into my heart, instead of slipping out, as it does with some others without regard, will be cherished and improved, to the producing of good actions: these actions will entitle me to the blessing of God, and that to the kingdom of glory.

216

208 2 Cor. iii. 5.

RESOLUTION VI.

I am resolved, by the grace of God, to improve every affliction God lays upon me, as an earnest or token of his affection towards me.

EVERY thing that flows from God to his servants, coming under the notion of talents, to be improved for himself, I am sure afflictions, as well as other mercies, must needs be reckoned amongst those talents God is pleased to vouchsafe. Indeed it is a talent, without which I should be apt to forget the improvement of all the rest; and which, if well improved, itself will ‘work out for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.’²⁰⁹ It is the non-improvement of an affliction that makes it a curse; whereas, if improved, it is as great a blessing as any God is pleased to scatter amongst the children of men. And therefore it is, that God most frequently entrusteth this precious talent with his own peculiar people: ‘You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I punish you for, your iniquities.’²¹⁰ Those that God knows the best, with them will he entrust the most, if not of other talents, yet he sure of this, which is so useful and necessary to bring us to the knowledge of ourselves and our Creator, that without it we should be apt to forget both.

217

It is this that shows us the folly and pride of presumption, as well as the vanity and emptiness of all worldly enjoyments; and deters us from incensing and provoking him, from whom all our happiness as well as our afflictions flow. Let, therefore, what crosses or calamities soever befall me, I am still resolved to bear them all, not only with a patient resignation to the divine will, but even to comfort and rejoice myself in them, as the greatest blessings. For instance, am I seized with pain and sickness? I shall look upon it as a message from God, sent on purpose to put me in mind of death, and to convince me of the necessity of being always prepared for it by a good life, which a state of uninterrupted health is apt to make us unmindful of. Do I sustain any losses or crosses? The true use of this is, to make me sensible of the fickleness and inconstancy of this world’s blessings, which we can no sooner cast our eye upon, but they immediately ‘take to themselves wings, and fly away from us.’ And so, all other afflictions God sees fit to lay upon me, may in like manner be, some way or other, improved for my happiness.

218

But, besides the particular improvements of particular chastisements, the general improvement of all is the increasing of my love and affection to that God, who brings these afflictions upon me. For how runs the mittimus, whereby he is pleased to send me to the dungeon of afflictions? ‘Deliver such a one to Satan to be buffeted’ in the flesh: ‘that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.’²¹¹ By this it appears, that the furnace of afflictions, which God is pleased at any time to throw me into, is not heated at the fire of

209 Cor. iv. 17.

210 Amos, iii. 2.

211 1 Cor. v. 5.

his wrath, but at the flames of his affection to me. The consideration whereof, as it should more inflame my love to him, so shall it likewise engage me to express a greater degree of gratitude towards him, when he singles me out, not only to suffer from him, but for him too. For this is an honour indeed peculiar to the saints of God, which if he should be pleased ever to prefer me to, I shall look upon it as upon other afflictions, to be improved for his glory, the good of others, and the everlasting comfort of my own soul.

Thus have I reckoned up the talents God hath, or may put into my hands, to be improved for his glory. May the same divine being that entrusteth me with them, and inspired me with these good resolutions concerning them, enable me, by his grace, to make a due use of them, and carefully to put in practice what I have thus religiously resolved upon.

There are some other mercies, which might be set down in the catalogue of talents, as the graces and motions of God's Holy Spirit, and the use of his holy ordinances, under the ministry of the gospel; but these being included and insisted on, under several of the foregoing heads, will not require a distinct consideration.

219

220

221

PRIVATE THOUGHTS
UPON A
CHRISTIAN LIFE;
OR,
NECESSARY DIRECTIONS FOR ITS BEGINNING AND PROGRESS UPON
EARTH,
IN ORDER TO ITS FINAL PERFECTION
IN THE
BEATIFIC VISION.

THOUGHTS

UPON A

CHRISTIAN LIFE.

222

223

THOUGHTS UPON CHRISTIAN EDUCATION.

IF the principles of the Christian religion were well rooted in the hearts of all mankind, what excellent fruit would they produce! the earth would put on another face, bearing some resemblance to heaven itself: idolatry, with all sorts of wickedness and vice, would be every where discountenanced and suppressed; for all would worship the one living and true God, and him only: there would be no more wars, nor rumours of wars; kingdom would not rise against kingdom, nor nation against nation; but all princes would be at peace with their neighbours, and their subjects at unity among themselves, striving about nothing but who should serve God best, and do most good in the world. Then piety, and justice, and charity, would revive and flourish again all the world over, and particularly in the church and kingdom to which we belong. Then the prayers would be read twice a-day in every parish as the law requires, and all people would heartily join together in offering them up to the almighty Creator of the world. Then all that are of riper years would, at least, every Lord's day, celebrate the memory of the death of Christ, by which their sins are expiated, and the most high God reconciled to them, and become their God and Father; and as all sorts of people would thus continually worship God in his own house, so wheresoever they are, they would do all they could to serve and honour him; 'whether they eat, or drink, or whatsoever they do,' they would 'do all to his glory.' And as for their fellow-servants, they would all love as brethren, and every one seek another's good as well as their own: 'whatsoever they would that men should do to them,' they would do the same to all other men. In short, all would then deny 'ungodliness and worldly lusts, and live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world,' and so walk hand and hand together in the 'narrow way that leads to everlasting life.' This would be the happy state of all mankind, if they were but well grounded in that religion which the eternal Son of God hath planted upon earth.

But not to speak of other people, we of this nation rarely find any such effect of this religion among ourselves; though it be as generally professed, and as clearly taught among us, as ever it was in any nation, there are but few that are ever the better for it; the most being here also as bad both in their principles and practices, as they which live in the darkest corners of the earth, where the light of the gospel never yet shined: though the kingdom in general be Christian, there are many heathens in it, people that never were christened; many that were once christened, and are now turned heathens again, living as 'without God in the world;' many that would still be thought Christians, and yet have apostatized so far as to lay aside both the sacraments which Christ ordained, and every thing else that can show them to be so: many that privily bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and so bring upon themselves swift destruction: many that follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the 'way of truth is evil-spoken of, and through covetousness,

224

225

with feigned words, make merchandise of men,' as St. Peter foretold.¹ 'Many who will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;' and so fulfil the prophecy of St. Paul.² And of those who still continue in the communion of the church, and in the outward profession of the true Christian faith, 'There are many, who although they profess to know God, yet in works they deny him, being abominable and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate.'³ Many did I say? I wish I could not say almost all; but, alas! it is too plain to be denied.

For, of that vast company of people that are called Christians in this kingdom, how few are they that live as becometh the gospel of Christ? that finish the work that God has given them to do, even glorify him in the world? How many that refuse or neglect to worship and serve him upon his own day? How few that do it upon any other day, when they have any thing else to do? How many that never receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper in their whole lives? How few that receive it above two or three times in the year, how often soever they are invited to it? How many are the proud, the passionate, the covetous, the intemperate, the incontinent, the unjust, the profane and impious, in comparison of the humble and meek, and liberal, and sober and modest, and righteous, and holy among us? The disproportion is so vastly great, that none but God himself can make the comparison; so little of Christianity is now to be found among Christians themselves: to our shame be it spoken.

226

It is indeed a matter of so much shame as well as grief, to all that have any regard for the honour of Christ their Saviour, that they cannot but be very solicitous to know how it comes to pass that his doctrine and precepts are so generally slighted and neglected as they are in our days? and how they may be observed better for the future than now they are? both which questions may be easily resolved; for we cannot wonder that of the many which profess the Christian religion, there are so few that live up to it, when we consider how few are duly instructed in the first principles of it.

The religion which Christ hath revealed to the world, is, by his grace and blessing, settled and established among us, so as to be made the religion of the kingdom in general; and therefore all that are born in it, are, or ought to be, according to his order or institution, soon after baptized, and 90 made his disciples, or Christians by profession. And the church takes security of those who thus bring a child to be baptized, that when it comes to be capable of it, it shall be instructed in the catechism which she for that purpose hath set forth, containing all the principles of that religion into which it was baptized. But notwithstanding

1 [2 Peter, ii. 1, 2, 3.](#)

2 [2 Tim. iv. 3.](#)

3 [Titus, i. 16.](#)

this hath been neglected for many years, whereby it is come to pass that the far greatest part of the people in this kingdom know little or nothing of the religion they profess, but only to profess it as the religion of the country where they live; they may perhaps be very zealous for it, as all people are for the religion in which they are born and bred, but take no care to frame their lives according to it, because they were never rightly informed about it; or, at least not soon enough, before error or sin hath got possession of them, which one or other of them commonly doth before they are aware of it; for they are always ‘as children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.’⁴ And whatsoever sin gets dominion over them, there it reigns and domineers in their mortal bodies, so that they obey it in the lusts thereof, in the spite of all that can be said to them out of God’s own word; for they are no way edified by any thing they hear, in that the foundation is not first laid, upon which they should build up themselves in that most holy faith that is preached to them. The word they hear, is a ‘seed that falls by the way-side,’ or ‘upon a rock,’ or else ‘among thorns,’ and so never comes to perfection; their hearts not being prepared beforehand and rightly disposed for it, by having the principles of the doctrine of Christ first infused into them.

227

This therefore being the great cause of that shameful decay of the Christian religion that is so visible among us, we can never expect to see it repaired, unless the great duty of catechising be revived, and the laws that are made about it, be strictly observed all the kingdom over; as mast certainly they ought to be, not only as they are the laws both of the church and state under which we live, but likewise for that they are grounded upon the word of God himself, who expressly commands the same thing by his apostle, saying, ‘Fathers provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.’

228

For here by nurture, we are to understand, as the Greek word παιδεία signifies, that discipline which parents ought to exercise over their children, to prevent their falling into, or continuing in any wicked course. And by the admonition of the Lord, is meant the catechising, or putting them in mind of the Lord Jesus Christ, and of what he would have them believe and do that they may be saved. For the original word, νουθεία, which we translate admonition, properly signifies catechising. (Κατηκίζειν νουθεῖν, *Heysch.*) And therefore to catechise or instruct children in the knowledge of God and our Lord Jesus Christ, is a duty here laid upon all parents by almighty God himself; and all that neglect to educate or bring up their children in the admonition of the Lord by catechising or teaching them the principles of his religion, they all live in a breach of plain law, a law made by the supreme Lawgiver of the world, and must accordingly answer for it at the last day.

Wherefore all that are sensible of the great account which they must give of all their actions, at that time, to the Judge of the whole world, cannot but make as much conscience

4 Eph. iv. 14.

of this as of any duty whatsoever, so as to use the utmost of their care and diligence, that their children may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and so be wise unto salvation. Neither is this any hard matter for those to do, who live in the communion of the church, having such a catechism or summary of the Christian religion drawn up to their hands, which is easy both for parents to teach, and for children to learn; and yet so full and comprehensive, that it contains all things necessary for any man to know in order to his being saved. As you may clearly see if you do but cast your eye upon the methods and contents of it; which may be all reduced to these five heads, *the baptismal vow, the apostles' creed, the ten commandments, the Lord's prayer*, and the doctrine of the sacraments ordained by our Lord Christ.

229

It begins where a child begins to be a Christian, and therefore hath a Christian name given him, even at his baptism, "wherein he was made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven." Which great privileges belong to all that are baptized, and to none else; none else being in the number of Christ's disciples: for our Lord Christ, a little before his ascension into heaven, left orders with his apostles, and in them with all that should succeed in his ministry of the church to the end of the world, to make all nations his disciples, by baptizing them "in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,"⁵ as the original words plainly import. And therefore as people of all nations are capable of being made his disciples; so none now are, or ever can be made so any other way, than by being baptized according to his order. But they who are not thus made his disciples by being baptized unto him, are not the members of Christ; and if they be not the members of Christ, they cannot be the children of God, nor have any right to the kingdom of heaven, that being promised only to such as believe and are baptized.⁶ And our Saviour himself elsewhere also saith, 'That except a man be born again of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.'⁷ Whereby we may perceive the great necessity of this sacrament, where it may be had, as our church observes, in her office for the ministration of it, to such as are of riper years.

230

It is to be further observed, that when our Saviour ordained baptism to be the means of admitting persons into his church, or the congregation of his disciples, lest we should think, as some have done, that he meant it only of those who are of riper years, he used the most general terms that could be invented, requiring that all nations should be baptized; and if all nations, then children also, which are a great, if not the greatest part of every nation. And accordingly his church hath always baptized children as well as adult persons: when any who are come to years of discretion, were willing and desirous to become Christ's dis-

5 Matt. xxviii. 19.

6 Mark, xvi. 16.

7 John, iii. 5.

ciples, that they might learn of him the way to heaven, they were made so by being baptized; and if they had children, they were also baptized at the same time with their parents; and so were the children which were afterwards born to them; they also were baptized soon after they were born: and that it is our Saviour's pleasure that children also should be brought into his church, appears likewise in that when his disciples rebuked those who brought children unto him, he was much displeased, and said unto them, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God.'⁸

231

But seeing they who are thus baptized according to the institution of Christ are thereby made his disciples, and in him the children of God, it is necessary they should then promise to believe and live from that time forward, according as he hath commanded; which promise therefore all that are grown up always use to make every one in his own person, and for that purpose were and ought to be catechised beforehand, and put in mind of what they were to promise when they were baptized; and therefore were called Catechumens. But children not being capable of making any such promise themselves, in their own persons, they were always admitted, and required to do it by their guardians; that is, by their godfathers and godmothers, which brought and offered them to be baptized; and are therefore obliged to take care that they be afterwards catechised or instructed in the principles of that religion into which they were admitted, and put in mind of the promise which they then made of framing their lives according to it.

This promise, therefore, which children make at their baptism by their sureties, and which is implied in the very nature of the sacrament, whether they have any sureties or no, consists of three general heads: First, "That they will renounce the devil, and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh."

Secondly, "That they will believe all the articles of the Christian faith."

Thirdly, "That they will keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of their life."

232

Which three things, under which the whole substance of the Christian religion is contained, being all promised by children when they are baptized into it, it is absolutely necessary that they be afterwards put in mind, so soon as they are capable of the promise, which they then made, and of the obligation which lies upon them to perform it: for otherwise it can never be expected that they should either do, or so much as know it; whereas the instructing them in this, the first part of the catechism, we prepare and dispose them for the understanding all the rest.

Particularly the apostles' creed, which is next taught them, containing all those articles of the Christian faith, which they promised to believe, and nothing else, nothing but what is grounded upon plain texts of Scripture, and hath always been believed by the whole

8 [Mark, x. 14.](#)

catholic church in all ages and places all the world over: here are none of those private opinions and controverted points which have so long disturbed the church, and serve only to perplex men's minds, and take them off from the more substantial and necessary duties of religion, as we have found by woeful experience, which our church hath taken all possible care to prevent, by inserting no other articles of faith into the catechism which her members are to learn, than what are contained in this creed received and approved of by the whole Christian world; and then acquainting them what they chiefly learn in it, even to "believe in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost," in whose name they were christened, and therefore must continue in this faith, or cease to be Christians.

233

The other thing which they, who are baptized, promise is, "That they will keep God's commandments," which therefore are next taught in the catechism, without any mixture of human inventions or constitutions: those ten commandments which the supreme Lawgiver himself proclaimed upon Mount Sinai, and afterwards wrote with his own finger upon two tables of stone. These they are all bound to learn, because they are bound to keep them all, as they will answer it at the last day, when all mankind shall be judged by them.

But no man can keep these commandments without God's special grace, which we have no ground to expect without praying to him for it. And therefore children are in the next place taught how to pray according to that form which Christ himself composed, and commanded us to say, whosoever we pray.⁹ And as he who believes all that is in the apostles' creed, believes all that he need believe, and he that keeps all the ten commandments, doth all that he need to do; so he that prays this prayer aright, prays for all things which he can have need of: so that in this short catechism, which children of five years old may learn, they are taught all that is needful for them, either to believe, or do, or pray for.

The last part of the catechism is concerning the two sacraments which Christ hath ordained in his church, as generally necessary to salvation; that is to say, baptism and the Lord's supper: both which our church hath there explained with such extraordinary prudence and caution, as to take in all that is necessary to be known of either of them without touching upon any of the disputes that have been raised about them, to the great prejudice of the Christian religion.

234

Seeing therefore this catechism is so full, that it contains all that any man needs to know, and yet so short, that a child may learn it: I do not see how parents may bring up their children in the 'nurture and admonition of the Lord,' better than by instructing them in it. I do not say by teaching them only to say it by rote, but by instructing them in it, so that they may understand, as soon and as far as they are capable, the true sense and meaning of all the words and phrases in every part of it; for which purpose it will be necessary to observe these rules.

⁹ Luke, xi. 2.

First, You must begin betime, before your children have got any ill habits, which may be easily prevented, but are not easily cured. When children are baptized, being ‘born again of water, and of the Spirit,’ as the guilt of their original sin is washed away in the ‘laver of regeneration,’ so that it will never be imputed to them, unless it break out afterwards in actual transgressions; so they receive also the Spirit of God to prevent all such eruptions, by enabling them to resist the ‘temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil,’ to believe and serve God according as they then promised; so far at least, that ‘sin shall not have dominion over them, that they should obey it in the lusts thereof, seeing now they are not under the law, but under the grace of Christ.’¹⁰ But that the seeds of grace which were then sown in their hearts, may not be lost, or stifled, but grow up to perfection, great care must be taken that they may be taught so soon as they are capable to discern between good and evil, to avoid the evil and do the good, and to believe and live as they promised, when they were endued with grace to do it. ‘Hast thou children?’ saith the son of Sirach, ‘instruct them, and bow down their neck from their youth.’ Give thy son no liberty in his youth, nor wink not at his follies. ‘Bow down his neck while he is young, and beat him on the sides while he is a child, lest he wax stubborn and be disobedient unto thee, and so bring sorrow to thine heart.’ Whereas ‘he that gathereth instruction from his youth, shall find wisdom till his old age.’¹¹ According to that of the wise man, ‘Train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it’¹² As ‘Timothy from a child had known the Holy Scriptures.’¹³ And that was the reason that he was so expert in them when he became a man: which therefore that your children may also he, the first thing they learn must be their catechism, where they are taught all the great truths and duties that are revealed in the Holy Scripture, as necessary to salvation.

235

But how can such persons do this, that cannot read, nor say the catechism themselves? This, I fear, is the case of too many among us. There are many who having not been taught to read when they were young, neglect or scorn to learn it afterwards, and so lose all the benefit and comfort which they might receive by reading the holy Scriptures: but this, I confess, is not so necessary, especially in our church, where the holy Scripture are so constantly read in public, that if people would as constantly come and hearken to them, they might be wise unto salvation, although they cannot read; as few heretofore could, at least in the primitive times, when notwithstanding they attained to the knowledge of God, and of their duty to him, as well as if they had been the greatest scholars in the world. But then considering that they could not read, they supplied that defect by attending more diligently

236

¹⁰ Rom. vi. 12, 14, 18.

¹¹ Eccl. viii. 23; xxx. 11, 12.

¹² Prov. xxii. 6.

¹³ 2 Tim. iii. 15.

to what they heard out of God's holy word, and laying it up in their hearts, so that they understood all the principles of the Christian religion, and were able to instruct their children in the same as well as if they could read. But this is not our case; for now there are many who can neither read, nor so much as say the catechism, having never learned it themselves, and therefore cannot possibly teach it their children. Such as the apostle speaks of, who 'when, for the time, they ought to be teachers, they have need that one teach them again, which be the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.'¹⁴ And what must such do? They certainly, as they tender their own good, must be doubly diligent in the use of all means that may tend to their edification and instruction; as they desire the good of their children, they must send them to school, or provide some other person to teach them; which, if the parents neglect to do, the godfathers and godmothers of every child should put them in mind of it, and see that the child be taught, so soon as he is able to learn, what a solemn vow, promise, and profession, he made them at his baptism. And, that he may know these things the better, they must call upon him to hear sermons; and chiefly they must provide that he may learn the creed, the Lord's prayer, and the ten commandments in the vulgar tongue, and all other things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health, as they are contained in the church catechism, and then to bring them to the bishop to be confirmed by him.

237

But for that purpose, when children have been taught the catechism, they must be sent to the minister or curate of the parish where they live, that he may examine and instruct them in it: examine them whether they can say it, and instruct them so as to understand it. For though the words be all as plain as they can well be made, yet the things signified by those words, are many of them so high, that it cannot be expected that children should reach and apprehend them without help, which therefore they must go to their minister for, whose duty and office it is to acquaint them with the full sense and meaning of every word, what is signified by it, and what ground they have to believe it is God's holy word. But to do this to any purpose requires more time than is commonly allowed for it in our days. And that is one great reason there are so few among us that are built up as they ought to be, 'in their most holy faith.' Many refuse or neglect to send their children to be catechised at all: and they who send them, send them so little, and for so little a time, that it is impossible they should be much the better for it; as many have found by experience; who, although in their childhood they were taught the catechism, and could say it readily, yet having not been sufficiently instructed in it, they afterwards forgot it again, and know no more than if they had never learned. I wish this be not the case of too many parents: wherefore, that this great work may be done effectually, so as to answer its end, as children should begin as soon as ever they are able to learn the catechism, and go on by degrees till they can say it perfectly

238

14 Heb. v. 12.

by heart; so when they can do that, they are still to continue to be instructed in it all along, till they understand it so well, as to be fit to receive the sacrament of the Lord's supper, which usually may be about sixteen or seventeen years of age, more or less, according to their several capacities. By this means, as they grow in years, they would grow also in grace, and 'in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,'¹⁵ This likewise would be a great encouragement to the minister to take pains with them, when they are such as can understand what he said, to them, and will continue under his care and conduct until they are settled and grounded in the faith, and have their senses exercised to discern between 'good and evil;' and so shall be every way qualified to serve God, and do their duty to him 'in that state of life to which he shall be pleased afterwards to call them,' upon earth, and then to go to heaven.

If this could once be brought about throughout the kingdom, that all children that are born and bred up in it, were thus fully instructed in the knowledge of Christ, and of that religion which he hath revealed to the world, till they are fit for the holy communion, and ready to engage in the affairs of the world, the next generation would be much better than this, and Christianity would then begin to flourish again, and appear in its native beauty and lustre. And verily, whatsoever some may think, such especially as were never catechised themselves, this is as great and necessary a duty as any that is required in all the Bible. For God himself by his apostle expressly commands all parents to bring up their children in the 'nurture and admonition of the Lord;' that is, as I have showed, to catechise or instruct them in the principles of the doctrine of our Lord Christ. And therefore they who do it not, live in the breach of a known law, yea, of many laws. There being many places in God's holy word, where the same thing is commanded in other terms by Almighty God himself, saying, 'These words which I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children.' And again, 'Therefore shall ye lay up these words in your heart, and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your head, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes, and ye shall teach them your children.'¹⁶ This is that which he commands also by the wise man, 'Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.'¹⁷ The word in the original which we translate train up, signifies also to dedicate or devote a child to the service of God, by instructing him how to do it, and exercising him continually in it; and therefore, in the margin of our Bibles, it is translated catechise a child; so that we have here both the necessity and usefulness of this duty; the necessity, in that it is commanded to train up, or catechise a child in the ways of God: and the usefulness, in that what a child is thus taught, will remain with him all his life long.

239

240

15 1 Pet. iii. 16.

16 Deut. vi. 7; xi. 18, 19; iv. 10.

17 Prov. xxii. 6.

Seeing therefore that God hath laid so strict a command upon all parents, to bring up their children in the knowledge of himself, and of their duty to him, they can expect no other, but that he should take particular notice whether they do it or not; and reward or punish them accordingly. As we see in Abraham, what a special kindness hath God for him on this account? ‘Shall I hide from him,’ saith the Lord, ‘that thing which I do? Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations upon earth shall be blessed in him.’ But why had he such an extraordinary favour for Abraham above all other men? God himself gives us the reason, saying, ‘For I know that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord.’¹⁸ This was the reason that Abraham was so much in favour, that he was called the ‘friend of God,’¹⁹

And how much God is displeased with parents neglecting to bring up their children in his true faith and fear, and suffering them to grow up and go on in a course of vice and profaneness, appears sufficiently from that severe judgment which he inflicted upon Eli and his whole house for it, saying to Samuel, ‘For I have told him, even Eli, that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth, because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. And therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli, That the iniquity of Eli’s house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever.’²⁰ The execution of which dreadful judgment is left upon record in the holy Scripture, as a standing monument and caution to all parents, to take heed how they educate their children.

241

Be sure the saints of God in all ages have taken as much care to bring up their children well, as to live well themselves; making as much conscience of this, as of any duty whatsoever which they owe to God. That the children which he hath given them, may answer his end in giving them; that they may not be insignificant ciphers in the world, or as fruitless trees that serve only to cumber the ground; but that they may serve and glorify God whilst they are upon the earth, so as to be ‘meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.’

And verily all parents would make this their continual care and study, if they minded either their own or their children’s good. Many complain, not without cause, that their children are disobedient and undutiful to them; but the cause is chiefly in themselves. When they have neglected their duty to their children, how can they expect their children should perform their duty to them? They were never taught it, how can they do it? If therefore they prove stubborn and obstinate, if they give themselves up to all manner of vice and wickedness; if instead of comfort they be a grief and trouble to their parents, their parents must blame themselves for it: and when they come to reflect upon it, their sin in neglecting their duty to God and their children in their education, will be a greater trouble to them than any their

242

18 Gen. xviii. 19.

19 Jam. ii. 23.

20 1 Sam. iii. 13, 14.

children can give them. Whereas when parents bring up their children in the ‘nurture and admonition of the Lord,’ if their children notwithstanding happen to miscarry afterwards, they have this to comfort them, that they did their duty, and have nothing to answer upon that account.

But what a mighty advantage would it be to the children themselves to be thus continually put in mind of their baptismal vow, the articles of our faith, the duties of religion, and what else is contained in the catechism, from their childhood all along till they come to be men or women? Their minds would be then filled with such divine truths, and with so great a sense of their duty, that there would be no room left for heresy or sin to enter, at least not so as to get possession, and exercise any dominion there. The first impressions that are made upon us are not soon worn out, but usually remain as long as we live. As the wise man observes, ‘Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.’²¹ When one hath been all along from his childhood brought up in the knowledge of God, and his holy will, it will stick by him, so as to be a constant check upon him, to keep him within the compass of his duty in all ordinary cases; and if any thing extraordinary happen to draw him aside, it will make him restless and uneasy, till he hath recovered himself, and got into the right way again; and so it will either keep him innocent, or make him penitent. In short, by the blessing of God attending, as it usually doth, this great duty when it is conscientiously performed, is the best means that parents can use, whereby to breed up their children for heaven, to make them fellow-citizens with saints, and of the household of God, both in this world and for ever.

243

Wherefore if we have any regard either to our own or to our children’s eternal welfare, let us set upon this duty in good earnest; let us bring up our children so long in the ‘nurture and admonition of the Lord,’ till they fully know him, and all that he would have them believe and do, that they may be saved. But we must be sure to teach them by our example as well as instructions; we must not tell them one thing, and do another ourselves; but show them how to keep the faith and laws of God, by keeping them ourselves before their eyes, all the while we live together upon earth: that when we are all got one after another, out of this troublesome and naughty world, we and our children may at last meet together in heaven, and there praise and glorify almighty God, we for them, and they for us, and all for his grace and truth in Jesus Christ our Lord.

After this general instruction in the principles of our holy religion, it will be necessary, as soon as our young Christian is capable of it, to inform him more particularly in the nature of God, and the great mystery of the Trinity, unto which we are all baptized, which therefore shall be my next subject.

244

21 Prov. xxii. 6.

THOUGHTS UPON THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

THOUGH religion in general be a thing that all men naturally agree in, yet there is nothing, I think, that men differ so much about, as about the particular acts and exercise of it: for all nations in the world have some religion; but there are scarce two amongst them all that have the same, yea, in one and the same nation too there are divers modes of religion professed and practised. No nation or country in the world, but will afford us instances of this; and our own, I think, as many as any other whatsoever. For could we but cast our eyes into the several corners of this land, at this very moment, what variety might we observe in those acts which the several parties amongst us account to be religious! Some we should see sitting silently for a while together, without either speaking, or hearing a word spoken, until at length up starts a man or a woman, or some such thing, and entertains them with a discourse made up of censure and malice, blasphemy and nonsense; and this is all the religion they pretend to. Others we should find crowded together in several corners, sometimes praying, sometimes discoursing as it were, sometimes arguing the case with almighty God, and acquainting him with what happens in the world, and that with as much confidence and malapertness, as if he was their fellow-creature, and then very gravely walk home and please themselves with a vain conceit that they are more religious than their neighbours. Another sort of people there are amongst us, who are as superstitious as the former were slovenly and irreverent in their devotions: for these having been sprinkled with a little holy water, and performed their obeisance to a crucifix or picture, presently fall a pattering over Ave Marius and Pater Nosters to themselves, as fast as they can; whilst the priest in the mean while says something too, but the people generally do not know what it is, nor indeed what themselves-say, it being all in an unknown tongue. But, howsoever, though they know not what they say, they think that God doth, and therefore satisfy themselves that they have said something, though they know not what, and think that God is well pleased with what they have done, because themselves are so.

Others there are, and by the blessing of God, far more than all the rest, in this nation who present themselves before the great Creator and possessor of the world, in that solemn and reverent manner which the constitutions of our church direct, humbly confessing their manifold sins against God, begging mercy and pardon from him, imploring his favour, and praising his name for all the expressions of his undeserved love to mankind: and all this in our vulgar tongue, that we all understand, and so perform a reasonable service unto God.

And verily, if we consider the institution itself of that religious worship which we thus perform, it is certainly the best that ever was prescribed by any church, as being most consonant to the general rules of devotion laid down in the Scriptures; as also most conformable to the discipline and practice of the primitive church. But we must not think that we serve God aright, because we be present with them that do so. I do not doubt but that there are

245

246

many amongst us who sincerely endeavour to worship God, whosoever they present themselves before him in public, I wish that all of us would do so. But we must still remember, that we should serve the Lord elsewhere as well as at church, and on other days as well as upon the Lord's-day. And that if we would be truly religious, our whole man must be devoted to the service of God, yea, and our whole time too. We must not think that it is enough to do something, but we must do all things that are required of us; which notwithstanding we can never do, unless we know both that God whom we ought to serve, and that service which we ought to perform unto him. And therefore David directs his son to the right and only way to true religion, saying, ‘And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy fathers, and serve him with a perfect heart and a willing mind:’²² which words, did we apply them to ourselves, would, by the blessing of God, put us upon sincere endeavours after real and universal obedience to all the commands of God, and persuade us not to content ourselves with vain pretences to, and professions of religion, as most do; but strive to live up unto our profession, and carry and behave ourselves so as becometh those who desire to be religious, and to serve God in good earnest; which that we may do, let us observe the rule and method which David here prescribes to his son; first, to know God, and then to serve him with a perfect heart and a willing mind.

247

I shall not trouble the reader with any critical division of the words, for they naturally divide themselves into two parts.

First, That we should know, and then that we should ‘serve God with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind.’

I shall begin with the first, not only because it is first placed, but because it necessarily must precede the second; it being impossible for us to serve God aright unless we know him: for without this, all our services will be but like the altar which the Athenians dedicated ‘To the unknown God.’ By which inscriptions they manifested to the world, that they knew that they ought to serve some God, but they knew not that God whom they ought to serve. But that we may so know him as to serve him aright, I shall first show what it is of God which we must know in order to our serving him aright.

First, therefore, he that would serve God aright, must believe and know that he is;²³ that is, that there is such a supreme and all-glorious Being in and over the world that we call God, that made, preserves, governs, and disposes of every thing in the world, as seemeth best to him; and that it is not only probable, that there is such a one, but that it is the most certain and necessary truth in the world; without which there would be no such thing as truth or certainty. For, indeed, if God was not, nothing could be, he alone being the basis

248

22 1 Chron. xxviii. 9.

23 Heb. xi. 6.

and foundation of all being in the world, yea, and of all motion too.²⁴ And therefore, ‘every thing that lives, every thing that moves, nay, every thing that is,’ argues God to be; which, therefore, is the first great truth, upon which all the rest depend; without which nothing would be true, much less would our services be so: so that the first thing to be done in order to our serving God, is to ‘know, and believe that he is,’ and that he ought to be served and adored by us.

Secondly, it is necessary to know his essence too, as well as his existence; what, as well as that he is; what he is in himself, and what he is to us; that in himself he is, in and of himself, the source of his wisdom, the abyss of all power, the ocean of all goodness, the fountain of all happiness, the principle of all motion, and the centre, yea, perfection of all perfections in the world; whose nature or essence is so pure, so glorious, so immense, so infinite, so eternal, so every way perfect, transcendent, and incomprehensible, that the more we think of him, the more we contemplate upon him, the more we praise and admire him, the more we may. And the highest apprehensions that we can have of him, is still to apprehend him infinitely higher than all our apprehensions of him. And therefore, that man best knows God, that knows him to be beyond his knowledge, and that knows he can never know him enough.

But we must know too what he is to us, even the author and giver of every good thing we have, and who in himself is whatsoever we can desire to make us happy; and therefore it is, that in the covenant of grace, when he would assure us that we shall have all things that we can enjoy, he only promises to be ‘our God,’²⁵ which is as much as we can desire, and indeed as himself can promise; for in promising himself, he hath promised whatsoever he is, whatsoever he hath, whatsoever he doth, nay, whatsoever he can do, as God. And thus are we to look upon God as the only object of all true happiness, and the only centre wherein all the desires and inclinations of our souls can rest.

249

Thirdly, it is necessary also to know the several attributes and perfections which he hath revealed of himself in Scripture; that he is so wise as to know whatsoever can be known; so powerful as to do whatsoever can be done; so great and glorious in himself, that we have all just cause to fear him; so kind and gracious in his Son, that it is our duty also to trust in him; so true, that whatsoever he says is true, because he saith it; so good, that whatsoever he doth is good, because he doth it; so just, as to punish every sin that is committed, and yet so merciful as to pardon every sinner that repenteth; that he is pure without mixture, infinite without bounds, eternal without beginning, everlasting without end, and every way perfect without comparison.

24 [Acts, xviii. 28.](#)

25 [Heb. viii. 10.](#)

Fourthly, We must know also the works of God, what he hath done, wherein he hath manifested himself to us. But what hath God done? Or rather, what hath he not done? It was he that raised this stately fabric of the world we live in, out of the womb of nothing. It was he that extracted light out of darkness, beauty and perfection out of a confused chaos. It was he that bedecked the glorious canopy of heaven with those glittering spangles, the stars. It was he that commanded the sun to run its course by day, and the moon to ride her circuit by night about the world, to show the inhabitants thereof the glory of their all-glorious Maker. It was he that hung the earth upon nothing, and spread upon the surface of it a curious carpet, embroidered with all manner, not of painted, but real flowers, and plants, and trees. It was he that first produced all things out of nothing; and it is he that still preserves all things in their being. It is he that ordereth the affairs of kingdoms, manageth the intrigues of state, directeth the events of wars, and disposes of every particular person as himself sees good. In a word, whatsoever was ever made in ‘heaven above’ or in ‘earth beneath,’ it is he that made it; and whatsoever is still done in ‘heaven above,’ or ‘in earth beneath,’ it is he that doth it; so that nothing ever was, or is, or ever will be, or can be done, but what is done by him, as the first and universal cause of all things.

250

Fifthly, It is necessary also to know, so as to believe, that though there is but one God, yet there are three persons, all and every one of which is that one God. I do not say it is necessary to understand or comprehend this mystery, for that we cannot do; but we are not therefore the less to believe it, because we cannot understand it: for there are many other things in divinity; yea, many things in natural philosophy, and in geometry itself, which we cannot understand, and yet for all that, both know and believe them to be true. But how much more cause have we to believe this, which God himself hath asserted of himself? nay, and besides that, we have the same obligations to serve and honour every person, as we have to serve and honour any one person in the sacred Trinity; our Saviour himself hath expressly told us, ‘That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.’²⁶ But that we cannot do, unless we believe the Son to be God as well as the Father; and by consequence, unless we acknowledge this fundamental article of our Christian faith, into which we were all baptized.

251

Secondly, We must consider what kind of knowledge we ought to have of God, in reference to our serving him aright.

For we must not think that it is enough to know in general that there is a God, and that he is wise and powerful, great and glorious, true and faithful, good and gracious; these things a man may know in general, so as to be able to discourse of them, and dispute for them too, and yet come short of that knowledge which is requisite to our true serving of God: which should be such a knowledge as will not only swim in the brain, but sink down into the heart;

26 John, v. 23.

whereby a man is possessed with a due sense of those things he knows, so that he doth not only know, but in a manner feel them to be so. Thus David, who, in the text, calls upon his son to ‘know the God of his fathers,’ intimates elsewhere what knowledge he means: saying, ‘Oh taste and see that the Lord is good.’²⁷ Where we may observe, how he requires our spiritual senses to be employed in our knowledge of God, so as to see that he is good, yea, and taste it too; that is, feel and experience it in ourselves; which though it may seem a paradox to many of us, yet there is none of us, but may find it to be a real truth, and attain unto it, if we be but careful and constant in our meditations upon God, and sincere in performing our devotions to him, for by these means our notions of God will be refined, our conceptions cleared, and our affections, by consequence, so moved towards him, that we shall taste and experience in ourselves, as well as know from others, that he is good, and that all perfections are concentrated in him.

262

But this practical and experimental knowledge of God doth necessarily presuppose the other, or the general knowledge of him, so as to be acquainted with the several expressions which God in Scripture hath made use of, whereby to reveal himself and his perfections to us; as when he is pleased to call himself the almighty God, the all-wise and infinite, the just and gracious God, and the like; or to say of himself, ‘I am that I am,’ that is, in and of myself eternal. Unless we first know that these and such like expressions belong to God, and what is the true meaning and purport of them, it is impossible for us to arrive at that knowledge of him, which is necessary to our serving him aright.

And I come to the last thing to be considered here concerning the knowledge of God, even that it is necessary to our serving him; so that none can serve him that does not first know him, and therefore that the method, as well as matter of David’s advice is here observable: ‘Know thou the God of thy fathers, and serve him;’ or, first know him, and then serve him ‘with a perfect heart and a willing mind.’

253

And verily one would think that this is a truth so clear, so evident of itself, that it needs no proof or demonstration; for how is it possible for us to know how to serve God, unless we first know that God whom we ought to serve? for all our services unto God should be both proper to his nature, and suitable to his perfections; and therefore, unless I first know his nature and perfections, how can I adjust my services to them? As for example, I am to fear his greatness, and trust on his mercy, and rejoice in his goodness, and desire his favour: but how can I do this, unless I know that he is thus great and merciful, good and favourable?

Moreover, as a man cannot serve God when he hath a mind to do it, so neither will he have a mind or heart to serve him unless he first knows him. For the motions of the will are always regulated by the ultimate dictates of the practical understanding; so that a man chooses or refuses, loves or hates, desires or abhors, according as he knows any object that

27 Psalm xxxiv. 8.

is presented to him to be good or evil. And therefore how can I choose God as my chiefest good, unless I first know him to be so; or love him as I ought, above all things, unless I first know him to be better than all things; or perform any true service to him, unless I first know him to be such a one, as deserves to have true service performed unto him?

Nay, Lastly, nothing that we can do can be accepted as a service to God, unless it be both grounded upon, and directed by a right knowledge of him. God would not accept of blind sacrifices under the law, much less will he accept of blind services now under the gospel; and therefore he expects and requires now, that whatsoever we do, either to or for him, be a λογικὴ λατρεία, ‘a reasonable service.’²⁸ That our souls as well as bodies. yea, and the rational as well as sensitive part be employed in all the services which we perform to him; which certainly cannot be, unless we first know him; so that there is an indispensable connexion betwixt our knowing and serving God; it being as impossible for any man to serve him, that doth not first know him, as it is to know him aright, and not to serve him.

254

But however indispensable this connexion be in its own nature, the church of Rome can make a shift to dispense with it; yea, so far as to assert that “ignorance is the mother of devotion.” But you must excuse them, for they do not mean by devotion, as we do, the real serving of God, but only the performing of some outward services to him. And such a kind of devotion, I confess, ignorance may be the mother of: but a man must be grossly ignorant that thinks this to be devotion, which is but a piece of pageantry, a mocking instead of serving God. And, for my part, I cannot but tremble to think what a dismal, what a dreadful account the heads of that church must hereafter give, for daring to keep the people in so much ignorance as they do; so as to render them incapable of serving God, that so they may be the more ready to serve the church; that is, the interests and designs of the court of Rome.

But let them look to that; whilst we, in the mean while study to know God before all things else, considering,

First, God therefore made us that we might know him, and that we might know that he made us. And therefore it is that he hath made rational creatures capable of reflecting upon him that made us so: neither did he only make us at first, but he still preserves us; we feed daily at his table, and live upon his bounty. And the very beasts that any of us keep, know those that keep them; and shall we be more brutish than brutes themselves, and not know him that keeps and maintains us? Oh! how justly may God then call ‘heaven and earth to witness against us,’²⁹ as he did once against his people Israel.

256

Secondly, There is none of us but have attained to knowledge in other things: some of us have searched into arts and sciences, others are acquainted with several languages; none of us but are, or would be expert in the affairs of this world, and understand the mysteries

28 Rom. xii. 1.

29 Isa. i. 2, 3, 4.

of our several trades and callings: what, and shall he alone, by whom we know other things, be himself unknown to us? What is, if this be not, a just cause, wherefore God should infatuate and deprive us of all our knowledge in other things? seeing we labour more to know them, than him from whom we receive our knowledge.

Thirdly, Ignorance of God, is itself one of the greatest sins that we can be guilty of, and which God is most angry for. And God himself imputes the destruction of his people, to the ‘want of knowledge.’³⁰ Nay, and it is that sin too that makes way for all the rest. For what is the reason that many so frequently blaspheme God’s name, slight his service, transgress his laws, and incense his wrath against them, but merely because they do not know him, how great, how terrible a God he is? For did they but thus rightly know him, they could not but guard against the thoughts of doing any thing that is offensive to him; and therefore the true knowledge of God would be the best security, and the most sovereign antidote in the world against the infection of sin, and the prevalency of temptations over us: neither would it only preserve us from sin, but put us upon duty and service, and direct us also in the performance of it. Insomuch that the hardest duty will be easy to one that knows God; the easiest will be hard to one that knows him not. Hard did I say? yea, and impossible too, for although a man may know God, and yet not serve him, it is impossible that any man should serve God unless he knows him; knowledge itself being both the first duty that we owe to God, and the foundation of all the rest.

256

And therefore, to conclude, if any desire to perform the vow they made in their baptism, to love and fear, to honour and obey the eternal God that made them; if any desire to be Christians indeed, and holy in all manner of conversation; if any desire to trust on the promises, and observe the precepts of the great Creator and Possessor of the world, to live above the snares of death, and to antedate the joys of heaven; if any desire to live the life, and to die the death of the righteous, to serve God here so as to enjoy him hereafter; let all such but study the Scriptures, and frequent the public ordinances; be constant and sincere in prayer and meditation, neglecting no opportunity of acquainting themselves with God, but making use of all means possible to get their hearts possessed with a reverential apprehension of God’s greatness and glory, and with a due sense of his goodness and perfections, and their work will soon be done; for if they thus know God they will serve him too with a perfect heart and a willing mind.

257

We have seen how we ought to know God; and we are now to consider how we ought to serve him; without which, indeed, our knowledge of him will avail us nothing. For, as the apostle argues, ‘Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.’³¹ So here: though we should have the

30 Hos. iv. 4, 6.

31 1 Cor. xiii. 1.

highest notions and speculations in divinity, that men or angels ever had; though we should understand the highest mysteries in religion, and dive into the profoundest secrets of Christian philosophy; though we should excel the greatest schoolmen, and the most learned doctors that ever lived; and were able to baffle heresies, dispute error and schism out of the Christian church, and evince the truth of the articles of our faith, by more than mathematical demonstrations; yet, if after all this, our knowledge be only notional, not moving our affections, nor putting us upon the practice of what we know, ‘it is but as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal: ‘it may make a noise in the world, and get us applause among men, but it will stand us in no stead at all before the eternal God; yea, it will rise up in judgment against us another day, and sink us lower into the abyss of torments. And therefore, though men may, God doth not look upon this as the true knowledge of himself. Neither can any one be properly said to know God, that doth not serve him with a perfect heart and a willing mind. And therefore, having discoursed of that knowledge which is necessary to our serving God, I shall now endeavour to show, how we ought to serve God according to our knowledge.

258

In speaking unto which, I must beg the reader’s most serious and Christian attention, as to a matter which concerns our lives; yea, our eternal lives in another world. I hope there are none of those that pretend to instruct, so brutish and atheistical, as not to desire to serve God: none so proud and self-conceited, as to think that they serve him well enough already, or at least know how to do it. I write only to such as want to be instructed; read books of practical religion with no other design but to serve God, and to learn how to serve him better. And if this be our only design, as I hope it is, let us manifest it to the world, and to our consciences, by attending to, and fixing what we read upon our own hearts. For I may venture to say, that this is the noblest and most necessary subject that I can write, or any one can read of; and that, which if seriously weighed, rightly considered, and truly practised, will most certainly bring us to the highest happiness which our natures are capable of, or our persons were at first designed for.

Now, for our clear proceeding in a matter of great importance, we will first consider what it is to serve God? A question very necessary to be treated of and resolved, because of the general mistakes that are in the world about it: many people fancying the service of God to consist in some few particular acts; as in saying their prayers, reading the Scriptures, going to church, giving an alms now and then to the poor; especially if they be but zealous and resolute in the defence of the party or faction they are of, so as to promote it to the highest of their parts, estates, or power: then they think they do God good service, and that this is all he requires of them. Others think they serve God by serving of his creatures, as in praying to saints, bowing to images, and falling down before the eucharist when it is carried in procession: nay, many there are, who think they serve God when they dishonour him, wresting his Scriptures, corrupting his doctrine, opposing his vicegerents, seducing his people and servants unto error, and all for the promoting of some temporal interests, or groundless

259

opinions. But we must know that the service of God is a thing of an higher nature, and nobler stamp than such silly mortals would persuade us it is; consisting in nothing less than,

1. In devoting of ourselves, and all we have, or are, or do, unto the honour of the eternal God; resigning our hearts wholly to him, and subduing all our passions and affections before him. For seeing we were wholly made by him, and wholly depend upon him, if we would serve God at all, we must serve him with all we are; every faculty of our souls and member of our bodies employing themselves in those services which he set them, so as to live as none of our own, but as wholly God's: his by creation, it was he that made us; his by preservation, it is he that maintains us; and his by redemption, it is he that hath purchased us with his own most precious blood: and therefore being thus bought with a price, we 'should glorify God both in our souls and bodies, which are his.'³²

And as we are to serve him with all we are, so also with all we have. 'Honour the Lord with all thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase.'³³ Whatsoever we have we receive from his bounty, and therefore whatsoever we have should employ for his glory: our parts, our gifts, our estates, our power, our time; whatsoever we call ours, is his in our hands, and therefore to be improved, not for ourselves, but him; as our Saviour shows in the parable of the talents, which the master of the house distributed amongst his servants; 'to some he gave one, to some five, to others ten,' that every one might employ his proportion to his master's use; neither 'squandering it away' nor yet 'laying it up in a napkin.' It is God that is the grand master and possessor of the world, who parcels it out amongst his creatures, as himself sees good, but wheresoever he entrusteth any thing, he expects the improvement of it for himself. And so, I suppose, doth every one of us from such servants as we keep; we expect that what we put into their hands be laid out, not for themselves, but for us; and that they spend their time in our service, not their own; and if they do otherways, none of us but will say, they do not serve us but themselves. How then can we expect that God will look upon us as serving him, when we do not do so much for him as we expect from our own servants, though our fellow-creatures? Or how can we think that we serve him as we ought, unless we serve him as much as we can? Or that God should look upon us as his servants, unless we employ and improve whatsoever we have, not for our own pleasure, profit, or applause, but for his honour and glory, from whom we did receive it? Let us remember our Saviour's words, 'Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.'³⁴

2. Hence the serving of God consisteth also in the performing of sincere and universal obedience to all his laws and commands, which is but the natural consequent of the former:

260

261

32 1 Cor. vi. 20.

33 Prov. iii. 9.

34 Matt. v. 16.

for if our whole man, both soul and body, and whatsoever we have, or are, ought to be devoted to his glory, it must needs follow, that whatsoever we do should be conformable to his precepts; which also is no more than every one of us expects from our servants: for those whom we have covenanted with to be our servants, and whom we keep upon that very account, that they may serve us, we all expect that they should obey all our commands, and do whatsoever in justice and by our covenants we can enjoin them. But how much more then must we ourselves be obliged to obey all the laws and precepts of him that made us, whose creatures we are, and whose servants, by consequence, we ought to be?

I say, all his laws and precepts; for we must not think to pick and choose, to do some things, and leave other things undone: for we should take it ill if our servants should serve us so: if when we send them upon several businesses, they should mind one of them, and neglect all the other, we should questionless look upon them as very idle and careless servants: but let us consider and bethink ourselves, whether we have not served our master and eternal God, as bad as our servants have or can serve us. He hath given us several laws to observe, and hath set us several works to do. and we perhaps can make a shift to do something that is required of us; but never think of the other, and perhaps the principal things too that he expects from us.

262

Just as if when Moses had broke the two tables of stone, whereon the ten commandments were written, one man should have come and snatched away one piece, a second run away with another piece, and a third with another, until at length ten several persons had gotten ten several pieces whereon the ten commandments were severally written; and when they had done so, every one of them should have striven to keep the law that was written on his own piece, never minding what was written in the others. Do you think that such persons as these are, could he reputed the servants of God, and to observe his laws, when they minded only one particular branch or piece of them? the case is our own; we hearing of several laws and commands, which the most high God hath set us, get some one of them by the end, and run away with that, as if we were not concerned in any of the rest. But let us still remember, that the same finger that wrote one of the commands, wrote all the other too. And therefore he that doth not observe all as well as one, cannot properly be said to observe any at all. Neither indeed doth he serve God in any thing: for though he may do something that God requires, yet it is plain, that he doth not therefore do it because God requires it; for if he did so, he would do all things else too that God requires. And therefore such a person doth not serve God at all in what he doth; no, he serves himself rather than God, in that he doth it not in obedience to God, but with respect to himself, as to get himself a name and credit among men, or perhaps to satisfy his troublesome conscience, which would not let him be at quiet unless he did it.

263

But now one that would serve God indeed, hath ‘respect to all his commandments,’³⁵ ‘and walks in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless,’³⁶ as Zacharias and Elizabeth are said to have done. And thus whosoever would serve the Lord in any thing must serve him in all things that he requireth. And this is that which David means in this advice to his son, saying, ‘Know thou the God of thy fathers, and serve him:’ that is, observe and do whatsoever he enjoins, and that too ‘with a perfect heart and a willing mind.’

And so I come to the second thing to be considered here: that is, the manner how we ought to serve God, ‘even with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind.’

First, ‘With a perfect heart;’ that is, with integrity and sincerity of heart, not from any by-ends or sinister designs, but out of pure obedience to the laws of God, as he is the sovereign of heaven and earth, and in Christ, ‘our Lord and our God.’ A thing much to be observed in all our services: without which, indeed, they are no services at all. Insomuch that should we pray our tongues to the stumps, and fast our bodies into skeletons; should we fill the air with sighs, and the sea with tears for our sin; should we spend all our time in hearing of sermons, and our whole estates in relieving the poor; should we hazard our lives, yea, give our bodies to be burnt for religion, yet nothing of all this would be accepted as a service unto God, unless it be performed with a sincere obedience to his laws, and with a single eye, aiming at nothing but his glory, which ought to be the ultimate end of all our actions.³⁷

264

Secondly, We must not only serve God ‘with a perfect heart,’ but with a ‘willing mind,’ or more properly, with a willing soul; that is, our will and all the affections of our souls should be carried after, and exercised in the service of almighty God. Our desires are to be inflamed towards it, our love fixed upon it, and our delight placed in it. Thus the Israelites are said to have ‘sought the Lord with their whole desire.’³⁸ And we are commanded to ‘love the Lord our God,’ and so to ‘serve him with all our heart, and with all our soul.’³⁹ Yea, we are to ‘delight to do the will of God,’⁴⁰ as our Saviour did, saying, ‘It is my meat to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.’⁴¹ Thus we are so to esteem the service of God above our necessary food, pleasing ourselves in pleasing him, and so make our service not only our business, but our recreation too; and whosoever doth not so, whatsoever he

35 Psal. cxix. 6.

36 Luke, i. 6.

37 1 Cor. x. 31.

38 2 Chron. xv. 15.

39 Deut. xi. 13.

40 Psalm xl. 3.

41 John, iv. 34.

doth for God, he cannot be said to serve him, because he doth it against his will, and against the bent and inclination of his soul. And therefore, though as to the outward act he may do that which God commands, yet inwardly he doth it not, because his soul is still averse from it, by which means it ceaseth to be the ‘service of God;’ because it is not performed by the whole man, even soul and body, both which are necessarily required in our performance of real service to him that made them both.

265

Thirdly, What is the reason why we ought to serve God so? Because ‘he searcheth the heart, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts:’ that is, he is thoroughly acquainted with every thought in our hearts, and with every motion and inclination of our souls infinitely better than ourselves are. And therefore it is vain for us to think to put him off with outward and formal, instead of inward and real service: for he doth not only see what we do, but knows too what we think while we are doing of it: and doth not only observe the matter of our actions, but the manner also of our performing them: it being his great prerogative to ‘search the heart, and to try the reins, and to have all things naked and open unto him,’⁴² so that he seeth what the soul doth within doors, in the secret closets of the heart, as clearly as what it doth with out in the open streets of the world: every affection of the soul being as manifest unto him, as the actions of the body are; and therefore hypocrisy is the most foolish and ridiculous sin imaginable, making as if we could cheat and deceive God, and hide our sins from the all-seeing eyes of omniscience itself, or make God believe that we are holy, because we appear to be so to men.

But to bring this matter more closely to ourselves: we have been all at church, perhaps, performing our service and devotions to him that made us; it is true, as to our outward appearance, there hath been no great difference betwixt us, we have been equally present at these public ordinances, and we do not know but one hath prayed and heard the word of God both read and preached as well as another; so that seemingly our services are all alike as to us: but are they so to God too? That I much question: for he hath taken especial notice all along, not only of the outward gestures of our bodies, but likewise of the inward behaviour of our hearts and souls before him; and therefore, as I hope he hath seen many of us serving him with a ‘perfect heart and a willing mind;’ so, I fear he hath found too many of us tardy, ‘coming before him as his people come, and sitting before him as his people sit,’ while our hearts in the mean time have been about our covetousness; and hath plainly seen, though our bodies have been at church, our souls have been elsewhere, thinking upon our relations, or estates, or something or other, besides what our thoughts should have been employed about in so solemn a duty as the public worship. But know this, ‘O vain man, whosoever thou art, that God will not be mocked;’ and though thou hast not seen, or perhaps so much as thought of him, he hath seen thee and thy thoughts too; yea, at this very moment looks

266

42 Heb. iv. 13.

upon thee. And what wilt thou answer him, the great Judge of the whole world, when he shall tell thee to thy face, and call his omniscience to witness, that he saw thee at this, as at other times, play the hypocrite with him, making as if thou servest him, when thou servest him not; and instead of serving him ‘with a perfect heart and a willing mind,’ servest him in neither heart nor mind. Let us all remember this when we approach God’s house, and also bethink ourselves afterwards, whether we have not been guilty of this sin! if we have, we may be sure God knows it, and we shall know it another day. But to prevent what justly may be our doom, let us repent of our former neglects in this kind; and, for the future, whosoever we are serving God, let us still look upon him as looking upon us, and fix in our hearts this one thing, ‘That God knows all things in the world.’ And therefore let us not think to put God off with such careless and perfunctory services as heretofore too many of us have done; but if we desire to serve him at all, let us serve him ‘with a perfect heart and a willing mind.’

267

Thus I have endeavoured to show both what it is to serve God, and how we ought to do it: now let us not think it sufficient that we know how to serve God, unless we serve him according to our knowledge. Let us remember our Saviour’s words, ‘If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.’⁴³ Which happiness, that all who read this may attain unto, let me advise them, ‘in the name of the eternal God that made them,’ to renounce and forsake their former masters, sin, Satan, and the world, whoever may have hitherto been enslaved by them, and now dedicate themselves wholly to the service of him that made them for that very purpose that they may serve him; yea, and who hath composed our natures so, that the highest happiness we are capable of, consists in our serving him; and therefore let us not think, that he calls upon us to serve him, because he wants our service: no, be it known unto all, that he is infinitely happy in the enjoyment of his own perfections, and needs not the services of such poor silly mortals as we are, who have nothing but what we receive from him: and therefore he doth not call upon us to serve him because he cannot be happy without us, but because we cannot be happy without him: not because he wants our service, but because we want it; it being impossible for us to be happy, unless we be holy; or to enjoy God, unless we serve him.

268

Wherefore all ye that desire to go to heaven, to have him that made you reconciled to you, and smile upon you; or that desire to be really and truly happy; set upon the work which God sent you into the world about, put it not off any longer, make no more vain excuses, but from this day forward, let the service of God be your daily, your continual employment and pleasure: study and contrive each day how to advance his glory and interest in the world, and how you may walk more strictly, more circumspectly, more conformably to his laws than ever. But whatsoever service you perform unto him, be sure to do it with a perfect heart

43 John, xiii. 17.

and a willing mind.' Think not to put him off with fancy instead of faith, or with outward performances instead of real duties; but remember that he 'searcheth the hearts, and trieth the reins of the sons of men,' and observes the inward motions of the soul, as well as the outward actions of the life: and therefore wheresoever you are, whatsoever you do, still be-think yourselves, that he that made you, still looks upon you; taking notice not only of the matter of the actions which you perform, but also of the manner of your performing them; and therefore be sure to have a special care in all your services for or unto God, that your 'hearts be sincere before him, and your minds inclined to him,' that so you 'may serve him with a perfect heart, and a willing mind.'

269

But to conclude; whoever ye are that read this discourse, I have shown you the 'things that belong unto your everlasting peace,' have acquainted you with the method and manner of your serving God in time, in order to your enjoyment of him to eternity. How you are affected with what you have read, and whether you be resolved to practise it, yea, or no, it is only the eternal God that knows. But this I know, that if you will not be persuaded to serve God, yea, and to serve him too 'with a perfect heart and a willing mind,' you will one day wish you had, but then it will be too late. And therefore if you will put it to the venture, go on still, and with the unprofitable servant, 'hide your talents in a napkin,' or lavish them out in the revels of sin, and vanity; let thy belly be still thy god, and the world thy lord; serve thyself or Satan, instead of the 'living God,' but know that for this, 'God will bring thee into judgment;' after which, expect nothing else but to be overwhelmed with horror and confusion to eternity.

Whereas on the other side, such amongst you as shall sincerely endeavour from henceforth to serve 'God with a perfect heart and a willing mind,' I dare, I do assure them in the name of God, 'their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord:' for God suffers not his enemies to go unpunished, nor his servants unrewarded.

And therefore go on with joy and triumph in the service of so great and so good a master, and devote yourselves wholly to his service, and employ your talents faithfully for his glory. Remember the time is but short; and Christ himself will receive you into eternal glory, saying, 'Well done, good and faithful servant.'

270

END OF VOL. I.

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Indexes

Index of Scripture References

Genesis

3:15 14:19 18:19 22:18 39:21 49:10 49:10

Exodus

12:14 12:46 16:4 16:13 20:7

Leviticus

17:11 18:5 19:12 25:8

Numbers

9:12

Deuteronomy

4:5 5:11 6:7 7:6 8:15 10:14 11:13 14:2 14:21

1 Samuel

3:13 3:14

2 Samuel

7:17

1 Kings

17:6 17:6

1 Chronicles

28:9 29:11

2 Chronicles

15:15 36:22 36:23

Ezra

1:3 1:5 3:12 6:1-22 7:1-28

Job

19:25 19:26 19:27 27:3 27:4

Psalms

10:1 16:10 18:26 19:6 19:113 22:8 22:16 22:18 34:8 34:20 39:1 40:3 41:9 68:18

69:21 84:11

Proverbs

3:9 3:9 4:23 10:19 15:8 16:4 19:11 21:4 22:6 22:6 23:26

Ecclesiastes

5:3 5:6 7:9 8:23 12:7

Isaiah

1:2 1:3 1:4 6:9 7:14 7:14 9:1 9:2 9:6 9:6 11:1 26:19 35:5 35:6 40:3 45:24 53:3

53:5 53:5 53:10 53:12

Jeremiah

31:33 31:33 33:16

Daniel

1:9 3:23 6:22 9:24 9:25 12:2

Hosea

4:4 4:6 11:1

Amos

3:2

Jonah

2:10

Micah

5:2

Habakkuk

1:8

Haggai

2:7 2:9 2:9

Zechariah

9:9 11:12 11:13 12:10 13:7 13:7

Malachi

2:2 3:1

Matthew

1:1 1:18 2:1 2:1 2:19 2:20 3:1 3:2 3:17 4:12 4:23 4:23 5:16 7:14 8:20 12:36
13:13 13:49 20:28 21:6 21:9 22:31 22:32 24:31 25:31 25:32 25:33 26:15 26:47
27:26 27:34 27:35 27:38 27:42 27:43 27:48 28:6 28:9 28:16 28:17 28:18
28:19 28:19 28:19 28:20

Mark

4:12 7:21 7:22 10:14 15:1 15:19 15:24 15:27 15:42 16:14 16:16 16:19

Luke

1:5 1:6 1:35 11:2 13:24 19:45 19:47 22:6 22:44 23:33 24:6 24:13 24:14 24:15
24:34 24:43 24:51

John

3:5 4:18 4:34 5:22 5:23 8:44 9:1 12:14 13:17 15:8 16:7 16:13 17:3 19:23 19:33
19:36 20:19 20:27

Acts

2:8 2:38 2:39 2:39 3:6 3:7 5:12 5:15 5:16 10:47 12:7 12:8 12:9 12:10 16:15
16:33 17:31 18:28 26:25

Romans

3:31 6:12 6:14 6:18 7:15 8:28 8:32 12:1 13:1 13:1 13:2 13:7 14:23

1 Corinthians

1:30 2:14 4:7 5:5 6:20 6:20 7:14 7:14 10:31 10:31 10:31 11:29 13:1 13:12 15:6
15:8 15:22 15:52

2 Corinthians

1:18 1:20 1:23 3:5 5:1 5:21 5:21 5:21 15

Ephesians

4:14 4:26 4:29 5:25 5:28 5:33 6:5 6:5 6:6 6:6 6:7 6:7

Philippians

2:13 3:19

Colossians

3:5 3:19 3:22

1 Thessalonians

4:16

1 Timothy

2:1 2:2

2 Timothy

1:10 3:15 4:3

Titus

1:16 2:9 2:9

Hebrews

4:13 4:14 5:12 7:22 7:26 7:27 8:10 8:10 8:10 11:1 11:6 11:6 12:6

James

1:20 2:23 2:26 3:6 3:8 5:20

1 Peter

3:16

2 Peter

2:1 2:2 2:3

1 John

1:9 2:1 5:7 5:28 5:29

Index of Greek Words and Phrases

Κατηκίζειν νουθεῖν: [177](#)

λογική λατρεία: [191](#)

νουθεσία: [177](#)

παιδεία: [177](#)

Index of Latin Words and Phrases

Video meliora, proboque; deteriora sequor: [71](#)

ad extra: [58](#)

ignis fatuus: [117](#)

substantia cogitans: [112](#)

Index of Pages of the Print Edition

i ii iii iv v vi vii viii ix x xi xii xiii xiv xv xvi xvii xviii xix xx xxi xxii xxiii xxiv xxv xxvi xxvii
xxviii xxix xxx xxxi xxxii xxxiii xxxiv xxxv xxxvi xxxvii xxxviii xxxix xl xli xlII xlIII xlIV xlV xlVI xlVII
xlVIII xlIX l liI liII liIV liV lVI lVI lVII lVIII lVII
26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 54 54 55 56
56 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87
88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100 101 102 103 104 105 106 107 108 109 110 111 112 113
114 115 116 117 118 119 120 121 122 123 124 125 126 127 129 130 131 132 133 134 135 136 137
138 139 140 141 142 143 144 145 146 147 148 149 150 151 152 153 154 155 156 157 158 159 160
161 162 163 164 165 166 167 168 169 170 171 172 173 174 175 176 177 178 179 180 181 182 183
184 185 186 187 188 189 190 191 192 193 194 195 196 197 198 199 200 201 202 203 204 205 206
207 208 209 210 211 212 213 214 215 216 217 218 219 220 221 222 223 224 225 226 227 228 229
230 231 232 233 234 235 236 237 238 239 240 241 242 243 244 245 246 247 248 249 250 251 262
253 254 256 256 257 258 259 260 261 262 263 264 265 266 267 268 269 270