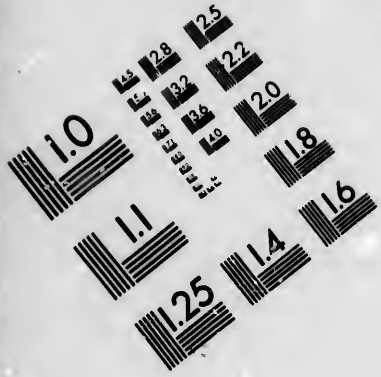

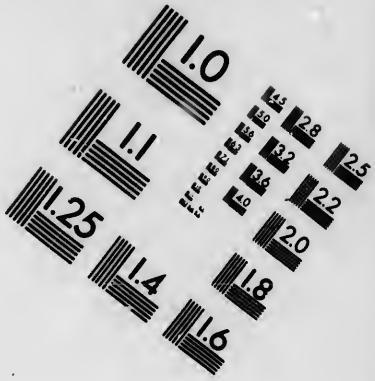

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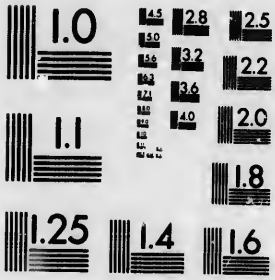

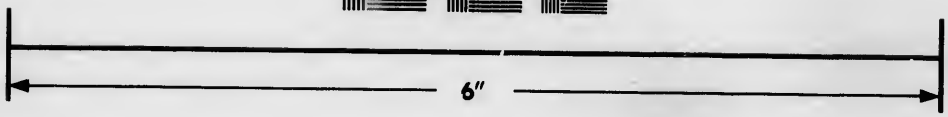

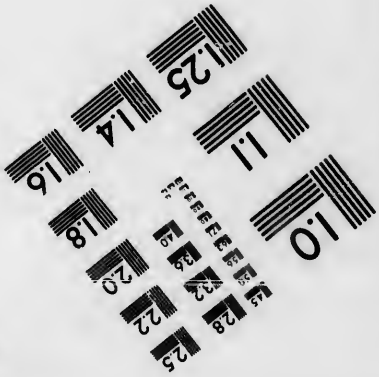

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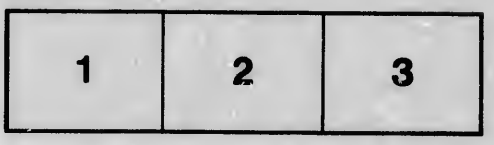

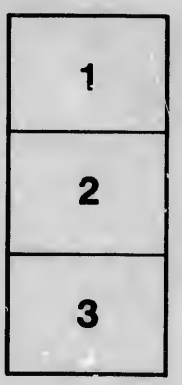

THE

Saints Spiritual

SAINT'S SPIRITUAL DELIGHT,

AND

A CHRISTIAN ON THE MOUNT.

BY REV. THOMAS WATSON.

A.D. 1657.

PRESCOTT, C.W.:
PRINTED AT THE "EVANGELIZER" OFFICE.
1862.

N.B.—In this edition the obsolete expressions are either omitted or altered for others of the same meaning.

CONTENTS.

THE SAINT'S SPIRITUAL DELIGHT.

A CHRISTIAN ON THE MOUNT.

THE

EPISTLE DEDICATORY.

TO

MY LOVING FRIENDS,

THE ALDERMEN, THE ESQUIRES, AND THE REST OF THE INHABITANTS

OF THE

PARISH OF STEPHEN'S WALBROOK, IN THE CITY OF LONDON.

HONOURED, AND BELOVED,

MY heart's desire for you is, that you may be saved. It hath been a long time in my thoughts, after the many signal demonstrations of your love to me, to show my gratefulness in return; such as I have, give I you. I do here dedicate this manual to you, as a standing testimonial of that real respect, and zealous affection which I bear towards you.

The subject of it you will find to be a christian's delight and meditation in God's law. I have purposely for your sakes laid down several heads, or particulars, for your meditations to dilate and run upon, as the attributes, the promises, the love of Christ, &c. If he who by often looking on a ring with a death's head, at last grew sober, who knows but by often meditating on these things your hearts may be brought into a more serious and heavenly frame?

Meditation is a holy kind of usury; it is putting out sermons to use, which brings in no small profit at the year's end. Meditation is a duty which carries meat in the mouth

of it; "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, while I meditate on thee," Psal. lxiii. 5, 6.

There is little written, so far as I know, upon this subject. Most discourses of this nature digress into ejaculations. I have, with the help of God, cut out my way though the rock, not finding any path that others had gone in before me; so that I have not offered that to you which cost me nothing. For the style of it, it is plain; but truth, when it is in the plainest dress, is most comely. The star shines brightest in its native lustre. Divinity hath so much intrinsical beauty, that it needs no art of wit or fancy to set it off. Who goes to embroider a pearl? or paint over gold? this would but debase and eclipse it; it is a sign of a wanton christian to look most at the fringing and garnishing of a truth. I wish it be not the sin of many in this city; they like the dressing, but loath the food. The blue flowers which grow among the corn make a fine show, and are pleasing to the eye, yet are prejudicial to the harvest. Rhetorical flourishes may please the fancies of men, but I much question whether they will not lessen Christ's spiritual harvest at the end of the world. When men preach rather words than matter, they catch people's ears, not their souls; they do but court, not convert. If the patient's wound bleeds, nay rankles, it is better for him to have a deep incision made in the flesh, than to bind it about with silk, or dress it with aromatic ointments.

True it is, ministers ought to clothe the truths they preach in decent expressions to preserve them from contempt; though they must come in plainness of speech, not in rudeness of speech. But, let them take heed, lest, with their affected new-coined phrases, unsuitable to that gravity the apostle speaks of, Tit. ii. 7, they adulterate and corrupt the simplicity of the word; like some kinds of sauces and compounds which take away the natural taste and savour of the meat. As for you, my friends, I hope the Lord hath given, (at least some of you,) a spiritual palate, to relish and thirst after the sincere milk of the word, 1 Pet. ii. 2. A savoury heart is for wholesome doctrine. How glad should I be, dear friends, if I might either by preaching, or writing, become savingly instrumental for your good, and before I die, might

help to make up a happy marriage between Christ and you, 2 Cor. xi. 2. I bless God that I see some of you walking in the truth, 2 John 4. when so many in the world are marching apace towards hell. But O that I might see an increase of holiness among you, that more converts might be brought in, and as so many jewels, make the crown of Christ shine the brighter! Do not hearken to the syren songs of the world: the sins you commit in haste, you will repent at leisure. Sugared poisons go down pleasantly, but afterwards they wring and torment the body.

Let me earnestly beseech you to put a bill of divorce into the hand of your sins; let not error gangrene, lust burn, malice boil, pride swell, intemperance overflow, covetousness root in any of your souls. Purge out the old leaven; and, as ever you expect to go to the new Jerusalem when you die, become new creatures while you live.

Rest not in baptismal privileges: all are not Israel which are of Israel, Rom. ix. 6. what is a man the better to have Christ's name upon him, if he still retain Satan's image?—What is he advantaged to have the oracles of God, and want the Spirit of God? Think not that an empty profession will save; millions will be sent to hell in Christ's livery, Matt. vii. 22,—viii. 12. O labour to "know the grace of God in truth!" Col. i. 6.

The Lord hat[illegible] much cost and charges with you to bring you near [illegible] let not God be a loser by you. Pindar saith, it was [illegible] of the people in ancient times, that Jupiter rained dow[illegible] upon the city of Rhodes; give me leave to apply it to you: God hath rained down golden showers upon you. What mercies hath he enriched you with! what talents hath he intrusted you with! your estate is a talent, your health (in these sickly times especially) is a talent, your sanctuary blessings are talents, every motion of the Spirit, every opportunity for heaven is a talent, and nothing more sure than that you will be called to an account shortly, Matt. xxv. 19, 20. Now if you have let your talents lie rusting, and done no good with them, the hiding your talents will not hide your sin; expect a heavy doom. Think not these things impertinencies. Be not so evil, as to be too good to be advised.

I confess myself, with Ignatius, the least of all that labour in God's vineyard, but though I am with you in weakness, yet, as the apostle saith, "in much trembling," I Cor. ii. 3. I tremble to think how sad it will be, if any of you shall perish in these days of the gospel, though you have been placed under a trumpet, less shrill and powerful. It shall be my prayer for you all, that you may be fruit-bearing trees, that when the great vine-dresser shall remove you hence by death, he may transplant you into the celestial paradise.

Be pleased to accept of these few notes which, some years since, you did seem to hear with much affection: I shall only desire two things of you; that you would thoroughly peruse them, and then copy them out in your daily practice. Get up into your tower of meditation, and look often, with Moses, upon him who is invisible, Heb. xi. 27. But I will not hold you any longer. I remember St. Paul in the close of his Epistle, craves the Thessalonians' prayers, 1 Thes. v. 25. and so shall I end my epistle begging a contribution of your prayers for me, that the Lord would give me strength of Heaven to do the work of Heaven; that he would help me to take heed to myself and my doctrine; that he would make me, not only faithful, but successful in my ministry among you: that so, "when the chief Shepherd shall appear I may receive a crown of glory which fadeth not away," I Pet. v. 4. I shall not further enlarge, unless in my affections towards you.

"Now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus that great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight," Heb. xiii. 20, 21. which shall be the earnest prayer of him, who is,

Your friend and servant,
for Jesus sake,
THOMAS WATSON.

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THE

EPISTLE TO THE READER.

CHRISTIAN READER,

THERE are some exercises of religion which stand only in a form of godliness, when men draw near with their mouth and honour God with their lips, and bestow a little bodily exercise and attendance upon him, when in the mean time their hearts are far from him, running after other objects, Isa. xxix. 13; Ezek. xxxiii. 31. Other duties there are which are more spiritual, and wherein the life and power of godliness doth consist. Among these, that of heavenly meditation is one, when, (as the apostle saith of the blessed angels, 1 Pet. i. 12.) the heart desires to look into the mysteries of salvation.

Ever since the fall of Adam, sinful men have had the disposition of Adam, to fly away and to hide from the presence of the Lord. Natural men are without God in the world: he is not in all their thoughts, they could be well enough content to have him "cease from before them," Isa. xxx. 11. He is every where else to be found, only shut out of the hearts of wicked men.

The heart never willingly fixeth on God, till he be the treasure of it; for where a man's treasure is, there will his heart be also. It cannot easily meditate, but where it doth delight, Psal. cxix. 97. Love is the weight of the soul; it readily moves to the object which it loves. Mary will not away from the empty sepulchre, where a little before her Lord had lain. Every good man is of David's mind, Psal. xvi. 8. to set the Lord always before him, that he may be in his fear all the day long.

There is nothing of a more unstable and roving temper than the mind of man. Some have prescribed the study of mathematics to fix the volatile agility thereof; but certainly the more serious, the more settled the soul is. Nothing,

therefore, will so balance and compose it, as true holiness, which doth of all other things make it the most serious, the most willing "to acquaint itself with God, that it may be at peace," Job xxii. 21. He is the rest of the soul. The more it knows of him, the more desirous it is to stay with him that it may know more. The more it tasteth of his favour, the more it longeth after his glory, as Moses did, Exod. xxxiii. 17, 18. What the philosopher saith of all knowledge, is indeed true only of the knowledge of God and Christ, that it is *quies intellectus*. And therefore our Saviour calleth it eternal life, John xvii. 3. in which alone the soul doth rest.

Now one excellent means of fixing the heart on God, is meditation, whereby a man calls together "all that is within him to bless his name," Psal. ciii. 1. Meditation is the wing of the soul which carrieth the affections thereof to things above. By this, as Moses, it goeth up to the top of Pisgah to take a view of the promised land. It is, as Clemens Alexandrinus saith of prayer, a conversing with God; as Chrysostom saith of faith, so may we of meditation. It makes God, and Christ, and precepts, and promises ours, by giving us a fuller possession of them. Hereby we hold fast the things which we have learned; we awaken our faith, inflame our love, strengthen our hope, revive our desires, increase our joys in God; we furnish our hearts, and fill our mouths with materials of prayer; we loosen our affections from the world; we acquaint ourselves beforehand with those glories which we yet but hope for, and get some knowledge of that love of Christ which passeth knowledge. Meditation is the palate of the soul whereby we taste the goodness of God; the eye of the soul whereby we view the beauties of holiness; whereby our spiritual senses are exercised, Acts xxiv. 16; Heb. v. 14. It is the key to the wine-cellar, to the banqueting-house, to the garden of spices, which letteth us in unto Him whom our soul loveth. It is the arm whereby we embrace the promises at a distance, and bring Christ and our souls together.

Though some learned men of former times have written some few things upon this subject, yet of our age, and in our language, I do not remember any who have purposely

handled it, but our christian Seneca, the learned and reverend bishop Hall, which being one small tract in the midst of a voluminous work, may haply not be in every man's hand to peruse. The necessity, excellency, and usefulness of this christian duty, the reverend author of this book hath elegantly described, which is therefore worthy the perusal of such as desire to acquaint and furnish themselves with so excellent a part of christian skill, whereby time may be redeemed and improved unto the prepossession of eternity. The Lord so fill us with the love of him, and with all the fulness of God, that we may be able continually to say, "My heart is fixed O Lord, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise."

Thine in the Lord,

EDW. REYNOLDS.*

From my study at Lawr. Jury,
Nov. 7. 1657.

* Afterwards bishop of Norwich.

THE

SAINT'S SPIRITUAL DELIGHT.

BUT HIS DELIGHT IS IN THE LAW OF THE LORD.
PSALMS I. 2.

CHAPTER I.—*Showing that Negative Goodness is but a broken Title to Heaven.*

As the book of the Canticles is called the Song of Songs by an Hebraism, it being the most excellent, so this psalm may not unfitly be entitled, the Psalm of Psalms, for it contains in it the very pith and quintessence of christianity. What Jerome saith of St. Paul's epistles, the same may I say of this psalm; it is short as to the composure, but full of length and strength as to the matter. This psalm carries blessedness in the frontispiece; it begins where we all hope to end: it may well be called a Christian's Guide, for it discovers the quicksands where the wicked sink down in perdition, ver. 1. and the firm ground on which the saints tread to glory, ver. 2. The text is an epitome and briviary of religion, "But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night." Every word hath its emphasis; I begin with the first word "But." This "But" is full of spiritual wine, we will broach and taste a little, then proceed.

"But." This is a term of opposition. The godly man is described,

1. By way of negation, in three particulars. 1. "He walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly;" he is none of the council; he neither gives bad counsel nor takes it. 2. "He standeth not in the way of sinners." He will not stand among those who "shall not be able to stand in the judgment," ver. 5. 3. "He sitteth not in the seat of the scornful." Let it

be a chair of state, he will not sit in it, he knows it will prove very uneasy at last.

The word sitting implies, 1. A habit in sin,—"Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother," Psal. l. 20. 2. Sitting implies familiarity with sinners—"I have not sat with vain persons," Psal. xxvi. 4. that is, I do not haunt their company. The godly man shakes off all intimacy with the wicked. He may traffic with them, not associate: he may be civil to them, as neighbours, but not twist into a cord of friendship: diamonds and stones may lie together, but they will not solder and cement.

II. The godly man is described by way of position, or rather opposition: "But his delight is in the law of the Lord." From this word "But" observe, that negative goodness is not sufficient to entitle us to heaven. To be no scorner, is good, but it is not enough. There are some in the world whose religion runs all upon negatives; they are not drunkards, they are not swearers, and for this they bless themselves. See how that pharisee vapours, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers," &c. Luke xviii. 11. Alas, the not being scandalous will no more make a good christian than a cipher will make a sum. The godly man goes further, "he sits not in the seat of the scorner; but his delight is in the law of the Lord." We are bid, not only to "cease from evil, but to do good," Psal. xxxiv. 14. It will be a poor plea at last, Lord, I kept myself from being spotted with gross sin; I did no hurt. But what good is there in thee? It is not enough for the servant of the vineyard, that he doth no hurt there, he doth not break the trees, or destroy the hedges; if he doth not work in the vineyard, he loseth his pay; it is not enough for us to say at the last day, we have done no hurt, we have lived in no gross sin; but what good have we done in the vineyard? where is the grace we have gotten? If we cannot show this, we shall lose our pay, and miss of salvation.

Do not content yourselves with the negative part of religion; many build their hopes for heaven upon this cracked foundation, they are given to no vice, none can charge them with any foul miscarriages, and these are their letters of credence to show; to such persons I say three things.

1. You may not be outwardly bad, and yet not inwardly good. You may be as far from grace as from vice; though none can say your eye is black, yet your soul may be dyed black. Though your hands be not working iniquity, your heads may be plotting it. Though you do not hang out your bush,* yet you may secretly vend your commodity; a tree may be full of vermin, yet the fair leaves may cover them that they are not seen; so the fair leaves of civility may hide you from the eye of man, but God sees the vermin of pride, unbelief, covetousness in your heart: "Ye are they," saith Christ, "that justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts," Luke xvi. 15. A man may not be morally evil, yet not spiritually good. He may be free from gross enormity, yet full of secret enmity against God; like the snake, which though it be of a fine colour, yet hath its sting.

2. If you are only negatively good, God makes no reckoning of you; you are as so many ciphers in God's arithmetic, and he writes down no ciphers in the book of life. Take a piece of brass, though it be not such bad metal as lead or iron, yet not being so good as silver, there is little reckoning made of it, it will not pass for current coin; though thou art not profane, yet not being of the right metal, wanting the stamp of holiness upon thee, thou wilt never pass current, God slights thee, thou art but a brass christian.

3. A man may go to hell for not doing good, as well as for doing evil; he that bears not good fruit is as fuel for hell, as well as he that bears bad. "Every tree which beareth not good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire," Matt. iii. 10. One may as well die with not eating food, as with poison; a ground may be spoiled for want of good seed as well as with having tares sown in it; they that were not active in works of charity, were sadly sentenced: "Depart from me ye cursed, &c. for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat," Matt. xxv. 41, 42. It is not said ye took away my meat from me, but, "ye gave me no meat." Why were the foolish virgins shut out? They had done no hurt, they had not broken their lamps; but they "took no oil with their lamps," Matt. xxv. 3. Their wanting oil was the indictment; there-

* A plan formerly adopted to invite customers.

fore let not any man build his hope for heaven upon negatives. This is building upon the sand; the sand is bad to build on; it will not cement; but suppose a man should finish a house upon it what is the issue? the flood comes, namely, persecution, and the force of this flood will drive away the sand and make the house fall; and the wind blows: the breath of the Lord, as a mighty wind, will blow such a sandy building into hell. Be afraid, then, to rest in the negative part of religion; launch forth further, be eminently holy. So I come to the next words, but "his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night."

Ch. II.—*What is meant by the law of God, what by Delight in the Law, and the Proposition resulting.*

The words give us a twofold description of a godly man.

First, he delights in God's law.

Secondly, he meditates in God's law.

I begin with the first, "His delight in the law of the Lord." The great God hath grafted the affection of delight in every creature; it hath by the instinct of nature something to delight itself in. Now the true saint, not by intuition, but divine inspiration, makes the law of God his delight. This is the badge of a christian, "His delight is in the law of the Lord." A man may work in his trade, and not delight in it, either because of the difficulty of the work, or the smallness of his wages; but a godly man serves God with delight; it is his meat and drink to do his will.

For the explication of the words, it will be inquired,

1. What is meant by "the law of the Lord." This word, "Law," may be taken either more strictly or more largely. 1. More strictly;—for the decalogue or ten commandments. 2. More largely;—for the whole written word of God;—for those truths which are deduced from the word, and concentre in it;—for the whole business of religion which is the counterpart of God's law, and agrees with it as the transcript with the original. The word is a setting forth, and religion is a showing forth of God's law. I shall take this word in its full latitude and extent.

2. What is meant by delight in God's law. The Hebrew and Septuagint both render it, his will is in the law of the Lord; and that which is voluntary is delightful; a gracious heart serves God from a principle of ingeniousness; he makes God's law not only his task, but his recreation; upon this scripture-stock I shall graft this proposition.

Doctrine. That a child of God, though he cannot serve the Lord perfectly, yet he serves him willingly; his will is in the law of the Lord; he is not a pressed soldier, but a volunteer; by the beating of this pulse we may judge whether there be spiritual life in us, or no. David professes that God's law was his delight, Psal. cxix. 77. He had his crown to delight in, he had his music to cheer him, but the love he had to God's law did drown all other delights; as the joy of harvest and vintage exceeds the joy of gleaning. "I delight in the law of God," saith St. Paul, "in the inner man," Rom. vii. 22. The Greek word is, I take pleasure; the law of God is my recreation, and it was a heart delight, it was in the inner man; a wicked man may have joy in the face, 2 Cor. v. 12. like honey-dew, that wets the leaf; but the wine of God's Spirit cheers the heart; Paul delighted in the law, in the inner man.

Ch. III.—*Whence the Saint's Spiritual Delight springeth.*

The saint's delight in the law of God proceeds, 1. From soundness of judgment. The mind apprehends a beauty in God's law; now the judgment draws the affections, like so many orbs, after it; "the law of God is perfect." Psal. xix. 7. it needs not be eked out with traditions. The Hebrew word for perfect, seems to allude to a perfect, entire body, that wants none of the members or lineaments; God's law must needs be perfect, for it is able to make us wise to salvation, 2 Tim. iii. 15. The Septuagint renders it, the law of God is pure, like beauty that hath no stain, or wine that is clarified and refined. The soul that looks into this law, seeing so much lustre and perfection, cannot but delight in it; the middle lamp of the sanctuary being lighted from the fire of the altar, gave light to all the other lamps: so the judgment being lighted from the word, it sets on fire the lamps of the affections.

2. This holy delight arises from the predominance of grace. When grace comes with authority and majesty upon the heart, it fills it with delight. Naturally we have no delight in God; "Therefore they say unto God depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways," Job xxi. 14. nay, there is not only a dislike, but an antipathy. Sinners are called haters of God, Rom. i. 30, but when grace comes into the heart, oh what a change is there! Grace preponderates, it files off the rebellion of the will, it makes a man of another spirit, Num. xiv. 24. It turns the lion-like fierceness into a dove-like sweetness, it changes hatred into delight; grace puts a new bias into the will, it works a willingness and cheerfulness in God's service. "Thy people shall be a willing people in the day of thy power" Psal. cx. 3.

3. This holy delight in religion is from the sweetness of the end. Well may we with cheerfulness let down the net of our endeavour when we have so excellent a draught. Heaven at the end of duty causes delight in the way of duty.

Ch. IV.—*Showing a characteristical Difference between a Child of God and a Hypocrite.*

A discriminating difference is shown between a child of God and a hypocrite, the one serves God from a principle of delight, the other doth not. "The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver," Psal. cxix. 72. With what delight doth a covetous man tell over his thousands! but God's law was better to David than thousands; a child of God looks upon the service of God, not only as his duty, but his privilege. A gracious heart loves every thing that hath the stamp of God upon it. The word is his delight—"Thy words were found and I did eat them, and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart," Jer. xv. 16. The Sabbath is his delight—"If thou turn away thy foot from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the sabbath a delight," Isa. lviii. 13. Prayer is his delight—"I will make them joyful in my house of prayer," Isa. lvi. 7. Hearing is his delight—"Who are these that fly as doves to their windows? Isa. lx. 8. The gracious soul flies

as a dove to an ordinance, upon the wings of delight. The sacrament is his delight. On this day the Lord makes "a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined," Isa. xxv. 6. A sacrament day is a soul-festival day; here Christ takes the soul into his banqueting-house, and "displays the banner of love over it," Cant. ii. 4. Here are heavenly delicacies set before us. Christ gives us his body and blood. This is angels' food, this is the heavenly nectar, here is a cup perfumed with thy divine nature; here is wine spiced with the love of God. The Jews at their feasts poured ointment upon their guests; here Christ pours the oil of gladness into the heart. This is the king's bath where we wash and are cleansed of our leprosy: the withered soul, after the receiving this blessed eucharist, hath been like a watered garden, Isa. lviii. 11, or like Egyptian fields, after the overflowing of the Nile, fruitful and flourishing; and do you wonder that a child of God delights in holy things? he must needs be a volunteer in religion.

But it is not thus with a hypocrite; he may be forced to do that which is good, but not to will that which is good; he doth not serve God with delight. "Will he delight himself in the Almighty?" Job xxvii. 10. That he hath none of his complacency and delight, appears thus, because he serves God grudgingly; he brings his sacrifice with a wicked mind, Prov. xxi. 27. Such a one was Cain: it was long before he brought his offering, Gen. iv. 3, it was not the first-fruits; and when he did bring it, it was grudgingly; it was not a free-will offering, Deut. xvi. 10. It is probable it was the custom of his father's family to sacrifice; and perhaps conscience might check him for forbearing so long; at last the offering is brought, but how? as a task rather than a duty; as a mulct or fine rather than a sacrifice. Cain brought his offering, but not himself. What Seneca saith of a gift, I may say of a sacrifice—it is not gold and silver makes a gift, but a willing mind; if this be wanting, the gold is only parted with, not given: so, it is not prayer and hearing makes a sacrifice, but it is a willing mind. Cain's was not an offering, but a tax; not worship, but penance.

CH. V.—*Two Cases of Conscience resolved.*

But here are two cases to be put.

Case 1. Whether a regenerate person may not serve God with weariness?

Ans. 1. Yes; but this delight in God is not wholly extinct. This lassitude and weariness in a child of God may arise from the in-being of corruption, Rom. vii. 24. It is not from the grace that is in him, but the sin; as Peter's sinking on the water was not from his faith but his fear; yet I say still a regenerate person's will is for God, Rom. vii. 15. Paul found sometimes an indisposition to good, Rom. vii. 23, yet at the same time he professes a complacency in God, "I delight in the law of God, in the inner man," ver. 22. One may delight in music, or any recreation, yet through weariness of body be for the present dull and indisposed; a christian may love God's law, though sometimes the clog of the flesh weighing him down, he finds his former vigour and agility remitted.

Ans. 2. This faintness and weariness in a regenerate person is not habitual; it is not his constant temper. When the water ebbs a while it is low water, but there soon a spring-tide again; it is sometimes low water in a christians's soul, he finds an indisposition and irksomeness to that which is good; but within a while there is a spring-tide of affection, and the soul is carried full sail in holy duties. It is with a christian as with a man who is distempered; when he is sick he does not take that delight in his food as formerly; nay, sometimes the very sight of it offends, but when he is well he takes his meat again with delight and appetite; so, when the soul is distempered through sadness and melancholy, it finds not such delight in the word and prayer as formerly; but when it returns to its healthful temper again, now it hath the same delight and cheerfulness in God's service as before.

Ans. 3. This weariness in a regenerate person is involuntary; he is troubled at it; he doth not hug his disease, but mourns under it. He is weary of his weariness. When he finds a heaviness in duty, he goes heavily under that heaviness; he prays, weeps, wrestles, uses all means to regain that alacrity in God's service which he was wont to have. David,

when his chariot wheels were pulled off, and he did drive on heavily in religion, how oft did he pray for quickening grace! Psal. cxix. 25, 37, 40, 88. When the saints have found their hearts fainting, their affections flagging, and a strange kind of lethargy seizing on them, they never leave till they have recovered themselves, and are arrived at such freedom and delight in God as they were once sensible of.

Case 2. Whether a hypocrite may not serve God with delight? I answer, he may; Herod heard John Baptist gladly, Mark vi. 20. and those who fasted for strife and debate, "did delight to know God's ways," Isa. lviii. 2. A hypocrite may, out of some flashy hopes of heaven, show a delight in goodness; but yet it is not such a delight as is found in the regenerate, for his delight is carnal. A man may be carnal while he is doing spiritual things. It is not the holiness and strictness in religion that the hypocrite delights in, but something else; he delights in prayer, but it is rather the showing of gifts he looks at, than the exercise of grace. He delights in hearing, but it is not the spirituality of the word he delights in; not the Savour of knowledge, 2 Cor. ii. 14. but the lustre. When he goes to the word preached, it is that he may rather feast his fancy than improve his heart; as if a man should go to an apothecary's shop for a pill, only to see the gilding of it, not for the operative virtue. The hypocrite goes to the word to see what gilding is in a sermon, and what may delight the intellect. Hypocrites come to the word as one comes into a garden to pluck some fine flower to smell to, not as a child comes to the breast for nutriment; this is rather curiosity than piety. Such were those; "thou art to them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument," Ezek. xxxiii. 32. The prophet being eloquent, and having a pleasing delivery, they were much taken with it, and it was as sweet to them as a fit of music; but it was not the spirituality of the matter they so well liked, as the melody of the voice. It was a sharp yet seasonable reproof of Chrysostom to his auditory, "This is that which is like to undo your souls, you hear your ministers as so many minstrels, to please the ear, not to pierce the conscience." You see a hypocrite's delight in religion is carnal; it is not "the being nourished up in the words of

faith," 1 Tim. iv. 6. which he minds: but the eloquence of speech, the rareness of notion, the quickness of fancy, the smoothness of style: he strives only to pluck from the tree of knowledge. Alas, poor man, thou mayest have the starlight of knowledge, and yet it may be night in thy soul.

Ch. VI.—*Trial of a Christian's Delight in God.*

Let this put us upon a holy scrutiny and trial, whether we have this delight in religion? It is life or death as we answer this.

Quest. How may this spiritual delight be known?

Ans. 1. He that delights in God's law is often thinking of it; what a man delights in, his thoughts are still running upon; he that delights in money, his mind is taken up with it; therefore the covetous man is said to mind earthly things, Phil. iii. 19. Thus if there be a delight in the things of God, the mind will be still musing upon them. Oh what a rare treasure is the word of God! it is the field where the pearl of price is hid; how precious are the promises! they are the conduit that holds the water of life; they are like those two olive branches, "which through the two golden pipes did empty the golden oil out of themselves," Zech. iv. 12. These seal up pardon, adoption, glory: "O Lord, by these things men live," Isa. xxxviii. 16. Where there is a delight in the law of God, the mind is wholly busied about it.

2. If we delight in religion, there is nothing can keep us from it, but we shall be conversant in word, prayer, sacraments. He that loves gold will trade for it. The merchant will compass sea and land to make money his proselyte.—Men will not be kept from their fairs. If there be a delight in holy things, we shall not be detained from an ordinance, for there we are trafficking for salvation. If a man were hungry he would not stay from the market for the aching of his finger. The ordinances are a gospel market, and those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, will not for every slight occasion stay away. "I was glad when they said, come let us go up to the house of the Lord," Psal. cxxii. 1. Thou who art glad when the devil helps thee with an excuse to absent thyself from the house of the Lord, art far from this holy delight.

3. Those who delight in religion are often speaking of it; "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another," Mal. iii. 16. Where there is grace infused, it will be diffused. "The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious," Eccl. xii. 11. David, delighting in God's testimonies, "would speak of them before kings," Psal. cxix. 46. The spouse delighting in her beloved, could not conceal her love, but breaks forth into most pathetical, and no less elegant expressions: "My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand, his head is as the most fine gold," &c. The disciples whose hearts were upon Christ, made him the whole subject of their discourse as they were going to Emmaus, Luke xxiv. 19.—The primitive christians, who were fired with love to God, did speak so much of heaven, and the kingdom prepared, that the emperor suspected they meant to take his kingdom from him. Words are the looking-glass of the mind, they show what is in the heart. Where there is spiritual delight, like new wine, it will have vent; grace is poured into thy lips, Psal. xlv. 2. a man that is of the earth speaketh of the earth, John iii. 31. He can hardly speak three words, but two of them are about earth. His mouth, like the fish in the gospel, is full of gold, Matt. xvii. 27. So where there is a delight in God, "our tongues will be as the pen of a ready writer," Psal. xlv. 1. This is a scripture touch-stone to try men's hearts by. Alas, it shows how little they delight in God, because they are possessed with a dumb devil; they speak not the language of Canaan.

4. He that delights in God, will give him the best in every service. Him whom we love best, shall have of the best. The spouse delighting in Christ, will give him of her pleasant fruits, Cant. vii. 13, and if she hath a cup of spiced wine, and full of the juice of the pomegranate, he must drink of it, Cant. viii. 2. He that delights in God gives him the strength of his affections, the cream of his duties, Matthew xxii. 37, if he hath anything better than other, God shall have it. Hypocrites care not what they put God off with; they offer that to the Lord which costs them nothing, 2 Sam. xxiv. 24, a prayer that costs them no wrestling, no pouring out of the soul, 1 Sam. i. 15, they put no cost in their services. Cain brought of the fruit of the ground, Gen. iv. 3.

It is observable, the Holy Ghost doth not mention anything that might commend, or set off Cain's sacrifice. When he comes to speak of Abel's, he se's an emphasis upon it. "Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof," ver. 4, but when he speaks of Cain, he only saith, "he brought of the fruit of the ground." Some sorry thing, perhaps, pulled out of a ditch. God who is best, will be served with the best. Domitian would not have his statue carved in wood or iron but in gold. God will have the best of our best things, golden services. He who delights in God, gives him the fat of the offering, Lev. iii. 3, the purest of his love, the hottest of his zeal; and when he hath done all, he grieves he can do no more, he blushes to see such an infinite disproportion between Deity and duty.

5. He that delights in God, doth not much delight in anything else. The world appears in an eclipse. Paul delighted in the law of God, in the inner man, and how was he crucified to the world! Gal. vi. 14. It is not absolutely unlawful to delight in the things of the world, "Thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the Lord thy God hath given thee, Deut. xxvi. 11. None may better take the comfort of these things than believers, for they have the best right to them, they hold all *in capite;** and they have the dew of a blessing distilled. "Take two talents, said Naaman to Gehazi," 2 Kings v. 23, so saith God to a believer, take two talents, take thy outward comforts, and take my love with with them; but the children of God, though they are thankful for outward mercies, which is the yearly rent they sit at, yet they are not much taken with these things; they use them only as a convenience for their passage; they know they need them as a staff to walk with, but when they shall sit down in the kingdom of heaven, and rest themselves, they shall have no use of this Jacob's staff. Believers do not much pass for these things which are still passing, 1 John ii. 17. Their delight is chiefly in God and his law; and is it thus? have we this low opinion of all undermoon comforts? is the price fallen? The astronomer saith, if it were possible for a man to be lifted up as high as the moon, the earth would

* By an authority which cannot be questioned.—A tenure held immediately from the king.

seem to him but as a little point. If we could be lifted to heaven in our affections, all earthly delights would seem as nothing. When the woman of Samaria had met with Christ, down goes the pitcher, John iv. 28, she leaves that behind. He who delights in God, as having tasted the sweetness in him, doth not much mind the pitcher, he leaves the world behind.

6. True delight is constant. Hypocrites have their pangs of desire, and flashes of joy, which are soon over. The Jews rejoiced in John's light for a season, John v. 35. Unsound hearts may delight in the law of the Lord for a season; but they will quickly change their note, "What a weariness is it to serve the Lord!" True delight, like the fire of the altar, never goes out; affliction cannot extirpate it. "Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me, yet thy commandments are my delights." Psal. cxix. 143.

Ch. VII.—*A Persuasive to this holy Delight in Religion.*

Let me persuade Christians to labour for this holy delight. Think upon the text, "Let your delight be in the law of the Lord:" and that I may the better enforce the exhortation, I shall lay before you several weighty considerations.

I. There is that in the law of God which may cause delight; as will appear in two things. There is in it, 1. Truth. 2. Goodness. 1. Truth; the law of God is a series of truth, "Thy word is true from the beginning," Psal. cxix. 160. The two testaments are the two lips by which the God of truth hath spoken to us. Here is a firm basis for faith. 2. Goodness; "Thou gavest them true laws, good statutes," Neh. ix. 13. Here is truth and goodness, the one adequate to the understanding, the other to the will. Now this goodness and excellency of the law of God shines forth in nine particulars.

1. This blessed law of God is a letter sent to us from heaven, indited by the Holy Ghost, and sealed with the blood of Christ. See some passages in the letter; "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee," Isa. lxii. 5, and "I will betroth thee unto me for ever

in righteousness and in loving-kindness, and in mercies," Hosea ii. 19. Is it not delightful reading over this letter?

2. The law of God is a light "that shines in a dark place," 2 Pet. i. 19. It is our pole-star to guide us to heaven; it was David's candle and lantern to walk with, Ps. cxix. 105. Now light is sweet, Eccl. xi. 7, it is sad to want this light; those heathens who have not the knowledge of God's law, must needs stumble to hell in the dark. Jerome brings in Tully with his oratory, and Aristotle with his syllogisms, crying out in hell: they that leave the light of the word, following the light within them, as some speak, prefer the shining of the glow-worm before the sun.

3. The law of God is a spiritual glass to dress our souls by. David often looked at himself in this glass, and got much wisdom; "Through thy precepts I get understanding," Psal. cxix. 104. This glass both shows us our spots, and takes them away; it may be compared to the laver which was made of the women's looking-glasses, Exod. xxxviii. 8, it was both a glass and a laver; a glass to look in, and a laver to wash in; so the law of God is a glass to show us our faces, and a laver to wash away our spots.

4. This law of God contains in it our evidences for heaven. Would we know whether we are heirs of the promise, whether our names are written in heaven, we must find it in this law book: "He hath chosen us to salvation through sanctification," 2 Thess. ii. 13. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren," 1 John iii. 14. And is it not comfortable reading over our evidences?

5. The law of God is a place of ammunition, out of which we must fetch our spiritual artillery to fight against Satan. It may be compared to the "Tower of David, builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers: all shields of mighty men," Cant. iv. 4. It is called the "sword of the Spirit," Eph. vi. 17. It is observable when the devil tempted our Saviour, he ran to Scripture for armour. "it is written;" three times Christ wounded the serpent with this sword, Matt. iv. 4, &c. Is it not good having our armour about us when the enemy is in the field?

6. The law of God is our spiritual medicine-book, or book of receipts. Basil compares the Word of God to an apothecary's shop which hath its panpharmacon;* when there is any disease growing in the soul, here is a recipe to take. If we find ourselves dead in duty, here is a recipe, "Thy Word hath quickened me," Psal. cxix. 50; if our hearts be hard, here is a recipe, "Is not my word as fire?" Jer. xxiii. 29. This is able to melt the rock into tenderness. If we grow proud, here is a recipe, "God resisteth the proud," 1 Pet. v. 5. If there be any fresh guilt contracted, here we have a sovereign medicine to take, "Sanctify them through thy truth," John xvii. 17. The law of God is like a medicinal garden, where we may walk and gather any herb to expel the poison of sin.

7. The law of God is a divine treasury to enrich us; here are the riches of knowledge, and the riches of assurance to be found, Col. ii. 2. In this law of God are scattered many truths, as precious diamonds to adorn the hidden man of the heart. David took the law of God as his heritage, Psalm cxix. 111. In this blessed mine is hid the true pearl; here we dig till we find heaven.

8. The law of God is our cordial in fainting times; and it is a strong cordial; "That we might have a strong consolation," Heb. vi. 18. Those are strong consolations indeed that can sweeten affliction, that can turn water into wine, can stand against the fiery trial. "This is my comfort in my affliction, for thy word hath quickened me," Psal. cxix. 50. The comforts of the world are weak consolations; a man hath comfort in health, but let sickness come, where is his comfort then? he hath comfort in an estate, but let poverty come, where is his comfort then? These are weak consolations, they cannot bear up against trouble; but the comforts of the word are strong consolations, they can sweeten the waters of Marah. Let sickness come, the comforts of the word can allay and support it; "the inhabitant of the land shall not say I am sick," Isa. xxxiii. 24. Let death come, a christian can outbrave it; "O death, where is thy sting?" 1 Cor. xv. 55. And is it not comfortable to have such a medicine lying by, as can expel the venom of death?

* A book containing an account of remedies for all diseases.

9. The law of God is manna; a heavenly manna that suits itself to every christian's palate. What doth the soul desire? is it quickening? strengthening? he may find all in this Manna.

II. Delight in religion crowns all our services. Therefore David counsels his son Solomon, not only to serve God, but to serve him "with a willing mind," 1 Chron. xxviii. 9.—Delight in duty is better than duty itself; as it is worse for a man to delight in sin than to commit it, because there is more of the will in the sin: so delight in duty is to be preferred before duty: "Oh how love I thy law!" Psal. cxix. 97. It is not how much we *do*, but how much we *love*; hypocrites may obey God's law, but the saints love his law; this carries away the garland.

III. Delight in spiritual things evidences grace; it is a sign we have received the spirit of adoption. An ingenuous child delights to obey his father; he that is born of God is ennobled by grace, and acts from a principle of ingenuousness; grace alters the bias of the heart, and makes it of unwilling, willing. The spirit of grace is called a free spirit, Psal. li. 12, not only because it works freely, but because it makes the heart free and cheerful in obedience; a gracious heart does not act by pure constraint, but by free consent.

IV. Delight in religion will make the business of religion more easy to us. Delight makes every thing easy; there is nothing hard to a willing mind; delight turns religion into recreation; it is like fire to the sacrifice, like oil to the wheels, like wind to the sails it carries us full sail in duty. He that delights in God's way, will never complain of the ruggedness of the way; a child who is going to his father's house, does not complain of a bad way. A christian is going to heaven in the way of duty; every prayer, every sacrament, he is a step nearer his Father's house; surely he is so full of joy that he is going home, that he will not complain of a bad way. Get then this holy delight. Beloved, we have not many miles to go, death will shorten our way, let delight sweeten it.

V. All the duties in religion are for our good. We shall have the benefit; "If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself," Prov. ix. 12. God hath twisted his glory and our

good together. "I gave them my statutes, which if a man do, he shall even live in them," Ezek. xx. 11. There is nothing the Lord requires, but it tends to self-preservation. God bids us read his word, and why? this word is his will and testament wherein he makes over a fair estate to be settled upon us, Col. i. 12. "And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life," 1 John ii. 25. He bids us pray, and this duty carries meat in the mouth of it; "This is the confidence we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us," 1 John v. 14. Ask what you will, he will sign your petitions. If you had a friend who should say, Come to me when you will, I will furnish you with money, would you not delight to visit that friend? God will give to more than half the kingdom, and shall we not delight in prayer? God bids us believe, and there is a honey-comb to be found in this precept, "Believe, and you shall be saved." Salvation is the crown that is set upon the head of faith. Well may the apostle say, "His commandments are not grievous." O then, if religion be so beneficial, if there be such gold to be dug out of this mine, it may make us delight in the ways of God. What will tempt, if not self-interest?

VI. How did Christ delight in the work of our redemption! "Lo, I come, I delight to do thy will, O my God," Psal. xl. 7, 8. It is by expositors agreed that it is spoken mystically of Christ; when he came into the world to sacrifice his life for us, it was a free-will offering. "I have a baptism to be baptized with," Luke xii. 50. Christ was to be, as it were, baptized in his own blood, and how did he thirst for that time! "How am I straitened till it be accomplished!" Did Christ so delight in the work of our redemption, and shall not we delight in his service? Did he suffer willingly, and do we pray unwillingly? Did he so cheerfully lay down his life for us, and shall not we give up our lives to him? Certainly if any thing could make Christ repent of shedding his blood, it would be this, to see Christians come off so hardly in duty, bringing it rather as a penance than a sacrifice.

VII. Delight in God's service makes us resemble the angels in heaven. They serve God with cheerfulness; as

soon as God speaks the word, they are ambitious to obey.—How are they ravished with delight while they are praising God! In heaven we shall be as the angels; spiritual delight would make us like them here; to serve God by constraint, is to be like the devil; all the devils in hell obey God, but it is against their will, they yield a passive obedience; but service which comes off with delight is angelical. This is what we pray for, that "God's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven;" is it not done with delight there?

VIII. This delight in God's law will not cause a surfeit. Carnal objects often cause a loathing and nauseating; we soon grow weary of our delights; hence it is we change from one sense to another; from colours to music, from music to smell, &c. Too much pleasure is a pain; but spiritual objects do not cloy or tire the soul; the more we study in the law of God, still the more delight we find. And in this respect David might say, the words of God's mouth were "sweeter to his taste than honey," Psal. cxix. 103. because one may soon surfeit upon honey, but he can never surfeit with the word of God. He that hath once, with Jeremiah, "found the word and eaten it," Jer. xv. 16. will not be cloyed with it; there is such savouriness in the word, that a christian cries out, "Lord, evermore give me this bread," John vi. 34. There is such sweetness in communion with God, that the soul saith, "O that it might be always thus! O that what I now feel I might ever feel!" He that delights in God, doth not complain he hath too much of God, but rather too little: he opens and spreads the sails of his soul to take in more of those heavenly gales, he longs for that time when he shall be ever delighting himself in the sweet and blessed vision of God.

IX. Without this holy delight we weary ourselves, and we weary God too; "Will ye weary my God also?" Isa. vii, 13. Our delighting in God would make him delight in us; but when we begin to say, "What a weariness is it" to serve the Lord, Mal. i. 13. God is as weary as we are; he is even sick of such services. When duties are a burden to us, they are a burden to God, and what should we do with them? when a man is weary of a burden, he will cast it off. Let all this quicken delight in God's service.

Ch. VIII.—*Showing how a Christian may arrive at this Delight in God's Law.*

For the attaining this blessed delight in the law of God, three things are requisite.

Direction 1. Set a high estimate upon the word; what the judgment prizes, the affections embrace; he that values gold, will delight in it; we are apt, through a principle of atheism, to entertain slight thoughts of religion, therefore our affections are so slight. David prized God's statutes at a high rate; "More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine," Psal. xix. 10. and hence grew that enflamed love to them; "I will delight myself in thy statutes." Psal. cxix. 16.

2. Pray for a spiritual heart; an earthly heart will not delight in spiritual mysteries; the earth puts out the fire.—Earthliness destroys holy delight; get a spiritual palate, that you may relish the sweetness of the word. He that tastes the sweetness of honey, will delight in it. "If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious," 1 Pet. ii. 3. It is not enough to hear a sermon, but you must taste a sermon; it is not enough to read a promise, but you must taste a promise; when you have obtained this spiritual palate, then God's word will be to you "the joy and rejoicing of your heart," Jer. xv. 16.

3. If you would delight in the law of God, purge out the delight of sin; sin will poison this spiritual delight. If you would have God's law sweet, let not "wickedness be sweet in your mouth," Job xx. 12. When sin is your burden, Christ will be your delight.

Ch. IX.—*Holy Delight should cause Thankfulness.*

What cause have they to be thankful who can find this spiritual delight in God! How did David bless God that he gave the people hearts to offer so cheerfully to the building of the temple; "Who am I and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort?" 1 Chron. xxix. 14. Their willingness was more than their offering; so should a Christian say, Lord, when there are so many

prest soldiers, who am I, that I should offer so willingly? Who am I, that I should have thy free Spirit, and should serve thee rather out of choice than constraint? It is a great blessing to have this promptitude and alacrity in God's service; delight animates to duty; now we act to purpose in religion. Christians are never drawn so powerfully and sweetly, as when the chain of delight is fastened to their heart. Without this all is lost; our praying and hearing is like water spilt upon the ground: it loses both its beauty and reward. Then bless God, Christian, who hath oiled the wheels of thy soul with delight, and now thou canst "run and not be weary." For thy comfort, be assured thou shalt not want any thing thy heart can desire, "Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." Psal. xxxvii. 4.

A

CHRISTIAN ON THE MOUNT;

OR,

A TREATISE

CONCERNING

MEDITATION.

AND IN HIS LAW DOTH HE MEDITATE DAY AND NIGHT.
PSALMS I. 2.

Having led you through the chamber of delight, I will now bring you into the withdrawing room of meditation. "In his law doth he meditate day and night."

CHAPTER I.—*The opening of the words, and the proposition asserted.*

Grace produces delight in God, and delight produces meditation. A duty wherein consists the essentials of religion, and which nourishes the very life-blood of it; and that the psalmist may show how much the godly man is habituated and inured to this blessed work of meditation, he subjoins, "In his law doth he meditate day and night." Not but that there may be sometimes intermission: God allows time for our calling, he grants some relaxation; but when it is said, the godly man meditates day and night, the meaning is, fre-

quently, he is much conversant in the duty. It is a command of God to pray without ceasing, 1 Thess. v. 17. The meaning is, not that we should be always praying, as the Euchites held, but that we should every day set some time apart for prayer; so Drusius and others interpret it. We read in the old law of the continual sacrifice. Numb. xxviii. 24, not that the people of Israel did nothing else but sacrifice, but because they had their stated hours; every morning and evening they offered, therefore it was called the continual sacrifice, thus the godly man is said to meditate day and night, that is, he is often at this work, he is no stranger to meditation.

Doctrine. The proposition that results out of the text is this, that a good christian is a meditating christian. "I will meditate in thy precepts," Ps. cxix 15. "Meditate upon these things," 1 Tim. iv. 15. Meditation is the chewing upon the truths we have heard: the beasts in the old law that did not chew the cud, were unclean; the christian that doth not by meditation chew the cud, is to be accounted unclean. Meditation is like the watering of the seed, it makes the fruits of grace flourish.

For the illustration of the point, there are several things to be discussed.

1. I shall show you what meditation is.
2. That meditation is a duty.
3. The difference between meditation and memory.
4. The difference between meditation and study.
5. The subject of meditation.
6. The necessity of meditation.

Ch. II.—*Showing the Nature of Meditation.*

If it be inquired what meditation is, I answer, meditation is the soul's retiring by itself, that by a serious and solemn thinking upon God, the heart may be raised up to heavenly affections. This description hath three branches

1. Meditation is the soul's retiring by itself; a christian, when he goes to meditate, must lock up himself from the world. The world spoils meditation; "Christ went apart into the mount to pray," Matt xiv. 23. so, go apart when you

are to meditate; "Isaac went out to meditate in the field," Gen. xxiv. 63, he sequestered and retired himself that he might take a walk with God by meditation. Zaccheus had a mind to see Christ, and he got out of the crowd. "He ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore-tree to see him," Luke xix. 3, 4, so, when we would see God, we must get out of the crowd of worldly business; we must climb up into the tree by retiredness of meditation, and there we shall have the best prospect of heaven. The world's music will either play us asleep, or distract us in our meditations. When a mote is got into the eye, it hinders the sight; when worldly thoughts, as motes, are got into the mind, which is the eye of the soul, it cannot look up so steadfastly to heaven by contemplation. Therefore, as when Abraham went to sacrifice "he left his servant and the ass at the bottom of the hill," Gen. xxii. 5. So, when a christian is going up the hill of meditation, he should leave all secular cares at the bottom of the hill, that he may be alone, and take a turn in heaven. If the wings of the bird are full of lime, she cannot fly: meditation is the wing of the soul; when a christian is belimed with earth, he cannot fly to God upon this wing. St. Bernard when he came to the church door, used to say, Stay here all my worldly thoughts, that I may converse with God in the temple; so say to thyself, I am going now to meditate, O all ye vain thoughts stay behind, come not near! When thou art going up the mount of meditation, take heed the world doth not follow thee, and throw thee down from the top of this pinnacle. This is the first thing, the soul's retiring by itself; lock and bolt the door against the world.

2. The next thing in meditation, is, a serious and solemn thinking upon God. The Hebrew word to meditate, signifies with intenseness to recollect and gather together the thoughts. Meditation is not a cursory work, to have a few transient thoughts of religion; like the dogs of Nilus that lap and away; but there must be in meditation a fixing the heart upon the object, a steeping the thoughts. Carnal christians are like quicksilver which cannot be made to fix; their thoughts are roving up and down, and will not fix; like the bird that hops from one bough to another, and stays nowhere. David was a man fit to meditate, "O God, my heart is fixed," Psal.

cviii. 1. In meditation there must be a staying of the thoughts upon the object; a man that rides post through a town or village, minds nothing; but an artist or limner that is looking on a curious piece, views the whole draught and portraiture of it, he observes the symmetry and proportion, he minds every shadow and colour. A carnal, flitting christian is like the traveller, his thoughts ride post, he minds nothing of God; a wise christian is like the artist, he views with seriousness, and ponders the things of religion; "But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in heart." Luke ii. 19.

3. The next thing in meditation, is, the raising of the heart to holy affections. A christian enters into meditation, as a man enters into the bath, that he may be healed. Meditation heals the soul of its deadness and earthliness; but more of this afterwards.

Ch. III.—*Proving Meditation to be a Duty.*

Meditation is the duty of every christian, and there is no disputing our duty. Meditation is a duty, 1. Imposed. 2. Opposed.

1. Meditation is a duty imposed; it is not arbitrary. The same God who hath bid us believe, hath bid us meditate; "This book of the law shall not depart out of my mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night," Josh. i. 8. These words, though spoken to the person of Joshua, yet they concern every one; as the promise made to Joshua concerned all believers, Josh. i. 5, compared with Heb. xiii. 5, so this precept made to the person of Joshua, thou shalt meditate in this book of the law, takes in all christians.

It is the part of a hypocrite to enlarge the promise, and to straiten the precept; thou shalt meditate in this book of the law; the word *thou* is indefinite, and reaches every christian; as God's word directs, so his will must enforce obedience.

2. Meditation is a duty opposed. We may conclude it is a good duty, because it is against the stream of corrupt nature; as was said, "You may know that religion is right which Nero persecutes;" so you may know that is a good duty which the heart opposes. We shall find naturally a strange averseness from meditaition. We are swift to hear,

but slow to meditate. To think of the world, if it were all day long, is delightful; but as for holy meditation, how doth the heart wrangle and quarrel with this duty; it is doing of penance; now truly, there needs no other reason to prove a duty to be good, than the reluctance of a carnal heart. To instance in the duty of self-denial; "Let a man deny himself," Matt. xvi. 24. Self-denial is as necessary as heaven, but what disputes are raised in the heart against it! What! to deny my reason, and become a fool that I may be wise, nay, not only to deny my reason, but my righteousnss! What! to cast it overboard, and swim to heaven upon the plank of Christ's merits! This is such a duty that the heart doth naturally oppose, and enter its dissent against. This is an argument to prove the duty of self-denial good; just so it is with this duty of meditation; the secret antipathy the heart hath against it, shows it to be good; and this is reason enough to enforce meditation.

Ch. IV.—*Showing how Meditation differs from Memory.*

The memory, a glorious faculty, which Aristotle calls the soul's scribe, sits and pens all things that are done. Whatsoever we read or hear, the memory registers; therefore, God doth all his works of wonder that they may be had in remembrance. There seems to be some analogy and resemblance between meditation and memory. But I conceive there is a double difference.

1. The meditation of a thing hath more sweetness in it than the bare remembrance. The memory is the chest or cupboard to lock up a truth, meditation is the palate to feed on it; the memory is like the ark in which the manna was laid up, meditation is like Israel's eating of manna. When David began to meditate on God, it was "sweet to him as marrow," Psal. lxiii. 5, 6. There is as much difference between a truth remembered, and a truth meditated on, as between a cordial in a glass, and a cordial drunk down.

2. The remembrance of a truth without the serious meditation of it, will but create matter of sorrow another day. What comfort can it be to a man when he comes to die, to think that he remembered many excellent notions about

Christ, but never had the grace so to meditate on them, as to be transformed into them? A sermon remembered, but not meditated on, will only serve to increase our condemnation.

Ch. V.—*Showing how Meditation differs from Study.*

The student's life looks like meditation, but doth vary from it. Meditation and study differ three ways.

1. They differ in their nature. Study is a work of the brain, meditation of the heart; study sets the invention on work, meditation sets the affection on work.

2. They differ in their design. The design of study is notion, the design of meditation is piety: the design of study is the finding out of a truth; the design of meditation is the spiritual improvement of a truth; the one searcheth for the vein of gold, the other digs out the gold.

3. They differ in the issue and result. Study leaves a man never a whit the better; it is like a winter sun that hath little warmth and influence: meditation leaves one in a more holy frame; it melts the heart when it is frozen, and makes it drop into tears of love.

Ch. VI.—*Showing the Subject of Meditation.*

The fourth particular to be discussed is the subject-matter of meditation; what a Christian should meditate upon. I am now entered on a large field, but I shall only glance at things; I shall but do as the disciples, pluck some ears of corn as I pass along.

Some may say, Alas, I am so barren I know not what to meditate upon. To help Christians therefore in this blessed work, I shall show you some choice select matter for meditation. There are fifteen things in the law of God which we should principally meditate upon.

First. Meditate on God's attributes. The attributes of God are the several beams by which the divine nature shines forth to us; and there are six special attributes which we should fix our meditations upon.

I. Meditate upon God's Omniscience. His eye is continually upon us; he hath a window opens into the conscience;

our thoughts are unveiled before him. He can tell the words we speak "in our bed-chamber," 2 Kings vi. 12. He is described with seven eyes, to show his Omniscience, Rev. v. 6. "Thou numberest my steps," Job xiv. 16. The Hebrew word signifies to take an exact account. God is said to number our steps, when he makes a curious and critical observation of our actions. God sets down every passage of our lives, and keeps as it were a day-book of all we do, and enters it down into the book. Meditate much on this Omniscience.

The meditation of God's Omniscience would have these effects.

1. It would be as a curb to check and restrain us from sin. Will the thief steal when the judge looks on?

2. The meditation of God's omniscience would be a good means to make the heart sincere. God hath set a window at every man's breast: "Doth not he see all my ways?" Job xxxi. 4. If I harbour proud, malicious thoughts, if I look at my own interest more than Christ's, if I dissemble in my repentance, the God of heaven takes notice. The meditation of this omniscience would make a Christian sincere, both in his actions and aims. One cannot be a hypocrite, but he must be a fool.

II. Meditate on the holiness of God. Holiness is the embroidered robe God wears; it is the glory of the Godhead, "Glorious in holiness," Exod. xv. 11, it is the most orient pearl of the crown of heaven. God is the exemplar and pattern of holiness. It is primarily and originally in God as light in the sun; you may as well separate weight from lead, or heat from fire, as holiness from the divine nature. God's holiness is that whereby his heart riseth against any sin, as being most diametrically opposite to his essence: "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," Hab. i. 13. Meditate much on this attribute.

The meditation of God's holiness would have this effect; it would be a means to transform us into the similitude and likeness of God. God never loves us till we are like him. While, by meditation, we are looking upon the beams of holiness, which are gloriously transparent in God, we shall grow like him, and be holy as he is holy. Holiness is a beautiful thing, Psal. cx. 3. It puts a kind of angelical

brightness upon us; it is the only coin that will pass current in heaven. By frequent meditation on this attribute, we are changed into God's image.

III. Meditate on the wisdom of God. He is called "the only wise God," 1 Tim. i. 17. His wisdom shines forth in the works of providence; he sits at the helm, guiding all things regularly and harmoniously; he brings light out of darkness; he can strike a straight stroke with a crooked stick; he can make use of the injustice of men to do that which is just; he is infinitely wise; he breaks us by afflictions, and upon these broken pieces of the ship, brings us safe to shore. Meditate on the wisdom of God.

The meditation of God's wisdom would sweetly calm our hearts. 1. When we see things go cross in public, the wise God holds the reins of government in his hand; and let who will rule, God overrules; he knows how to turn all to good; his work will be beautiful in its season. 2. When things go ill with us in our private concerns, the meditation of God's wisdom would rock our hearts quiet. The wise God hath set me in this condition, and whether health or sickness, wisdom will order it for the best. God will make a medicine of poison; all things shall be useful to me; either the Lord will expel some sin, or exercise some grace. The meditation of this would silence murmuring.

IV. Meditate on the power of God. This power is visible in the creation. "He hangs the earth upon nothing," Job xxvi. 7. What cannot that God do who can create; nothing can stand before a creating power; he needs no pre-existent matter to work upon; he needs no instruments to work with, he can work without tools; he it is before whom the angels veil their faces, and the kings of the earth cast their crowns. He it is that "removes the earth out of her place," Job ix. 6. An earthquake makes the earth tremble upon her pillars; but God can shake it out of its place. God can with a word unpin the wheels, and break the axletree of the creation. He can suspend natural agents, stop the lion's mouth, cause the sun to stand still, make the fire not burn. Xerxes, the Persian monarch, threw fetters into the sea, as if he would have chained up the unruly waters; but when God commands, "the winds and sea obey him," Matt. viii. 27. If he speak

the word, an army of stars appear, Judg. v. 20. If he stamp with his foot, a host of angels are presently in battle array; if he lift up an ensign, and doth but hiss, his very enemies shall be up in arms to revenge his quarrel, Isa. v. 26. Who would provoke this God! "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," Heb. x. 31; as a lion "he tears in pieces the adversaries," Psal. l. 22. O meditate on this power of God!

The meditation of God's power would be a great stay to faith. A Christian's faith may anchor safely upon the rock of God's power. It was Samson's riddle, "Out of the strong came forth sweetness," Judg. xiv. 14. While we are meditating on the power of God, out of this strong comes forth sweetness. Is the church of God low? he can "create Jerusalem a praise," Isa. lxv. 18. Is thy corruption strong? God can break the head of this leviathan. Is the heart hard, is there a stone there? God can dissolve it. "The Almighty makes my heart soft," Job xxiii. 16; faith triumphs in the power of God: out of this strong comes forth sweetness. Abraham meditating on God's power, did not stagger through unbelief, Rom. iv. 20. He knew God could perform his promise, even contrary to the usual course of nature.

V. Meditate upon the mercy of God. Mercy is an innate disposition in God to do good, as the sun hath an innate property to shine: "Thou Lord art good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy to all them that call upon thee," Psal. lxxxvi. 5. God's mercy is so sweet, that it makes all his other attributes sweet. Holiness without mercy, and justice without mercy, were dreadful. Though the children of God are under some clouds of affliction, yet the sun of mercy is never quite out of sight. God's justice reaches to the clouds; his mercy reaches above the clouds. How slow is God to anger! He was longer in destroying Jericho, than in making the world: he made the world in six days; but he was seven days in demolishing the walls of Jericho. How many warning pieces did God shoot against Jerusalem, before he shot off his destroying piece! Justice goes a foot-pace, Gen. xviii. 21, mercy hath wings, Psal. lvii. 1; the sword of justice often lies a long time in the scabbard, and rusts, till sin draws it out and whets it against a nation. God's justice is

like the widow's oil, which ran a while, and ceased, 2 Kings iv. 6. God's mercy is like Aaron's oil, which rested not on his head, but ran down to the skirts of his garment, Psalm cxxxiii. 2. So the golden oil of God's mercy doth not rest upon the head of a good parent, but is poured on his children, and so runs down, "to the third and fourth generation," even the borders of a religious seed. Often meditate upon the mercy of God.

The meditation of mercy would be a powerful loadstone to draw sinners to God by repentance, Rom ii. 4. It would be as a cork to the net to keep the heart from sinking in despair. Behold a city of refuge to fly to; "God is the Father of mercies," 2 Cor. i. 3. mercy doth as naturally issue from him, as the child from the parent. God "delights in mercy," Micah vii. 18. Mercy finds out the worst sinner; mercy comes not only with salvation in its hand, but with healing under its wings.

The meditation of God's mercy would melt a sinner into tears. A prisoner reading a pardon sent him from the king, fell a weeping, and burst out into these words: "A pardon hath done that which death could not do; it hath made my heart relent."

VI. Meditate upon the truth of God. Mercy makes the promise, and truth performs it: "I will not suffer my faithfulness to fail," Psal. lxxxix. 33. God can as well deny himself as his word. He is "abundant in truth," Exod. xxxiv. 6. What is that? If God hath made a promise of mercy to his people, he will be so far from coming short of his word, that he will be better than his word. God often doth more than he hath said, never less; he often shoots beyond the mark of the promise he hath set, never short of it. He is abundant in truth. God may sometimes delay a promise, he will not deny it. The promise may lie a long time as seed hid under ground; but it is all the while ripening. The promise of Israel's deliverance lay four hundred and thirty years hid under ground; but when the time was come, the promise did not go a day beyond its reckoning, Exod. xii. 41. "The strength of Israel will not lie," 1 Sam. xv. 29.—Meditate on the truth of God.

The meditation of God's truth would, 1. Be a pillar of

support for faith. The world hangs upon God's power, and faith hangs upon his truth. 2. The meditation of God's truth would make us ambitious to imitate him. We should be true in our words, true in our dealings. Pythagoras being asked, "What did make men like God?" answered, "When they speak truth."

Second. Meditate upon the promises of God. The promises are flowers growing in the paradise of scripture; meditation, like the bee, sucks out the sweetness of them. The promises are of no use or comfort to us, till they are meditated upon. For as the roses hanging in the garden may give a fragrant perfume, yet their sweet water is distilled only by fire; so the promises are sweet in reading over, but the water of these roses, the spirit and quintessence of the promises, are distilled into the soul only by meditation. The incense, when it is pounded and beaten, smells sweetest. Meditating on a promise, like the beating of the incense, makes it most odoriferous and pleasant. The promises may be compared to a golden mine, which then only enricheth when the gold is dug out: by holy meditation we dig out that spiritual gold which lies hid in the mine of the promise, and so we come to be enriched. Cardan saith, there is no precious stone but hath some hidden virtue in it. They are called precious promises, 2 Pet. i. 4. When they are applied by meditation, then their virtue appears, and they become precious indeed. There are three sorts of promises, which we could chiefly meditate upon.

I. Promises of remission: "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins," Isaiah xliii. 25. Whereas the poor sinner may say, Alas! I am deep in arrears with God; I fear I have not filled his bottle with my tears, but I have filled his book with my debts. Well, but meditate on his promise, "I am he that blotteth out," &c. The word there in the original to blot out, is a metaphor alluding to a merchant, who, when his debtor hath paid him, blots out the debt, and gives him an acquittance. So saith God, I will blot out your sin, I will cross the debt-book. Ah, but may the poor soul say, it may be a great while first; I may be a long time under the convulsions of conscience; I may even pine away,

and "my life draw nigh to the grave," lxxxviii. 9. No, in the Hebrew it is, "I am blotting out thy transgressions." I have taken my pen, and am crossing out thy score. Oh, but may the sinner say, there is no reason God should do this for me. Well, but acts of grace do not go by reason: I will blot out thy sins "for my name's sake." Oh, but saith the sinner, Will not the Lord call my sins again to remembrance? No, he promiseth an act of oblivion; I will not upbraid thee with thy sins, or sue thee with a bond that is cancelled, "I will remember thy sins no more." Here is a sweet promise to meditate upon; it is a hive full of the honey of the gospel.

II. Meditate upon promises of sanctification. The earth is not so apt to be overgrown with weeds and thorns, as the heart is to be overgrown with lusts: now, God hath made many promises of healing, Hos. xiv. 4, and purging, Jer. xxxiii. 8, promises of sending his Spirit, Isa. xliv. 3, which, for its sanctifying nature, is compared sometimes to water which cleanseth the vessel; sometimes to wind, which is the fan to winnow and purify the air; sometimes to fire, which doth refine the metals. Meditate often on that promise, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow," Isa. i. 18. Scarlet is so deep a dye, that all the art of man cannot take it out; but behold here a promise, God will lay the soul a whitening: he will make of a scarlet sinner a milk white saint. By virtue of this refining and consecrating work, a christian is made partaker of the divine nature, 2 Pet. i. 4, he hath a fitness to have communion with God for ever. Meditate much on this promise.

III. Meditate upon promises of remuneration: "The heaven of rest," Heb. iv. 9. "The beatifical sight of God," Matt. v. 8. The glorious mansions, John xiv. 2. Meditation on these promises will keep us from fainting under our sins and sorrows.

Third. Meditate upon the love of Christ. Christ is full of love, as he is of merit. What was it but love, that he should save us, and not the angels? Among the rarities of the loadstone, this is not the least, that leaving the gold and pearl, it should draw iron to it, which is a baser kind of metal; thus that Christ should leave the angels, those more noble spirits, the gold and pearl, and draw mankind to him, how

doth this proclaim his love! Love was the wing on which he fled to take our nature on him. 1. How transcendent is Christ's love to the saints! The apostle calls it a love "that passeth knowledge," Eph. iii. 19. It is such a love as God the Father bears to Christ; the same for quality, though not equality: "As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you," John xv. 9. A believer's heart is the garden where Christ hath planted this sweet flower of his love. It is the channel through which the golden stream of his affection runs. 2. How distinguishing is Christ's love. "Not many wise, not many noble are called," 1 Cor. i. 26. In the old law, God passed by the lion and the eagle, and took the dove for sacrifice: that God should pass by so many of birth and parts, and that the lot of free grace should fall upon thee, oh the depth of divine love! 3. How invincible is the love of Christ! "It is strong as death," Cant. viii. 6. Death might take away his life, not his love; and as death could not wholly quench that divine flame of love, so neither could sin. The church had her infirmities, her sleepy fits, Cant. v. 2. but though blacked and sullied, yet still a dove. Christ could see the faith, and overlook the failing. He who drew Alexander while there was a scar upon his face, drew him with his finger upon the scar: Christ puts the finger of mercy upon the scars of the saints; he will not throw away his pearls for every speck of dirt. And, what makes this love of Christ the more stupendous, there was nothing in us to excite or draw forth his love. He did not love us because we were worthy; but, by loving us, he made us worthy. 4. How immutable is Christ's love! "Having loved his own, he loved them to the end," John xiii. 1. The saints are like letters of gold engraven upon Christ's heart, which cannot be razed out. Meditate much upon the love of Christ.

The serious meditation of the love of Christ,

I. Would make us love him again. "Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burnt?" Prov. vi. 28. Who can tread, by meditation, upon these hot coals of Christ's love, and his heart not burn in love to him!

II. The meditation of Christ's love would cause our eyes to flow with tears for our gospel unkindnesses. Oh that we should sin against so sweet a Saviour! Had we none to

abuse but our friend? had we nothing to kick against but love? did not Christ suffer enough upon the cross, but must we needs make him suffer more? do we give him more gall and vinegar to drink? Oh, if any thing can dissolve the heart into mourning, it is ingratitude and unkindness offered to Christ! When Peter thought of Christ's love to him, Christ could deny Peter nothing; yet that he should deny Christ, this made his eyes water: "Peter went out and wept bitterly,' Matt. xxvi. 75.

III. The meditation of Christ's love would make us love our enemies. Jesus Christ showed love to his enemies. We read of "the fire licking up the water," 1 Kings xviii. 38.—It is usual for water to quench the fire, but for fire to dry up and consume the water, which was not capable of burning, this was miraculous! Such a miracle did Christ show; his love did burn where there was no fit matter to work upon; nothing but sin and enmity; he loved his enemies; the fire of his love did consume and lick up the water of their sins. He prayed for his enemies, "Father forgive them." He shed tears for those who shed his blood. Those who gave him gall and vinegar to drink, to them he gave his blood to drink. The meditation of this love would melt our hearts in love to our enemies. Austin saith, Christ made a pulpit of the cross, and the great lesson he taught christians was, to love their enemies.

IV. The meditation of Christ's love would be a means to support us, in case of his absence. Sometimes he is pleased to withdraw himself, Cant. v. 6. yet, when we consider how entire and immutable his love is, John xiii. 1. it will make us wait with patience till he sweetly manifests himself to us. He is love, 1 John iv. 16. and he cannot forsake his people over long. He may take his leave, not his last farewell, Micah vii. 19. The sun may be gone awhile from us, but in due time it returns. The meditation of Christ's love, may make us wait for the return of this Sun of righteousness. "For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come," Heb. x. 37. He is truth, therefore he shall come? he is love, therefore he will come.

Fourth. Meditate upon sin.

I. Meditate on the guilt of sin. We are in Adam as in

a common head, or root; and he sinning, we become guilty; "in whom all have sinned," Rom. v. 12. by his treason our blood is tainted, and this guilt bringeth shame with it, Rom. vi. 21.

II. Meditate upon the defiling nature of sin: not only is the guilt of Adam's sin imputed; but the poison of his nature is disseminated to us. Our virgin nature is defiled, the heart is spotted, 1 Kings viii. 38. how then can the actions be pure? If the water be foul in the well, it cannot be clean in the bucket. "We are all as an unclean thing," Isa. lxiv. 6. We are like a patient under the physician's hand, who hath no sound part in him, his head bruised, his liver swelled, his lungs perished, his blood inflamed, his feet gangrened. Thus it is with us before grace comes: in the mind darkness; in the memory slipperiness; in the heart hardness; in the will stubbornness; "from the sole of the foot, to the crown of the head, there is no soundness; but wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores," Isa. i. 6. A sinner befilthied with sin, is no better than a devil in man's shape. Also what is sadly to be laid to heart, is the adherency of this sin. Sin is naturalized to us; the apostle calls it an encompassing sin, Heb. xii. 1. a sin that will not easily be cast off. A man may as well shake off the skin of his body, as the sin of his soul; it sticks fast as the ivy to the wall. There is no shaking off this viper till death. O often meditate on this contagion of sin. How strong is that poison, a drop whereof is able to poison a whole sea! how venomous and malignant was that apple, a taste whereof poisoned all mankind! Meditate seriously on this. The meditation of sin would make the plumes of pride fall; if our knowledge makes us proud, we have sin enough to make us humble.—The best saint alive who is taken out of the grave of sin, yet hath the smell of the grave-clothes still upon him.

III. Meditate upon the curse of sin. "Cursed be every one that continues not in all things written in the book of the law," Gal. iii. 10. This curse is like a blast upon fruit, which keeps it from thriving; sin is not only a defiling, but a damning thing. It is not only a spot in the face, but a stab in the heart. Sin betrays us into the devil's hands, writes like Draco, writes all his laws in blood. Sin binds us over to the

wrath of God, and then what are all our earthly enjoyments but like Damaris's banquets, with a sword hanging over the head? Sin brings forth the "roll written with curses" against the sinner, Zech. v. and it is a "flying roll," ver. 2. it comes swiftly, if mercy doth not stop it. "Ye are cursed with a curse," Mal. iii. 9. Thus it is till the entail of this curse be cut off by Christ. O meditate upon this curse due to sin.

The meditation of this curse would make us afraid, 1. Of retaining sin. When Micah had stolen his mother's money, and heard her curse him, he durst not keep it any longer, but restores it, Judg. xvii. 2. He was afraid of his mother's curse; what then is God's curse! 2. The meditation of this curse would make us afraid of entertaining sin. We would not willingly entertain one in our house, who had the plague. Sin brings a curse along with it, which is the plague of God that cleaves to a sinner. Sin is like the water of jealousy, which made "the belly to swell, and the thigh to rot," Numb. v. 22. The meditation of this would make us fly from sin. While we sit under the shadow of this bramble, fire will come out of the bramble eternally to devour us, Judg. ix. 15.

Fifth. Meditate upon the vanity of the creature. When you have sifted out the finest flour that the creature doth afford, you will find something either to dissatisfy, or nauseate. The best wine hath its froth, the sweetest rose its prickles, and the purest comforts their dregs; the creature cannot be said to be full, unless of vanity; as a bladder may be filled with wind. "In the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits," Job xx. 22. They who think to find happiness here, are sure to be deceived. Meditate on this vanity. The world is like a looking-glass which represe[illegible] [illegible]at face which is not really in it.

I. The meditation of this vanity would be like the digging about the roots of a tree, to loosen it from the earth; it would much loosen our hearts from the world, and be an excellent preservative against a surfeit. Let a Christian think thus with himself, Why am I so serious about vanity? if the whole earth were changed into a globe of gold, it could not fill my heart.

II. The meditation of the creature's vanity would make us look after more solid comforts; the favour of God, the blood of Christ, the influences of the Spirit. When I see the life which I fetch from the cistern is vain, I will go the more to the spring-head: in Christ there is an inexhaustible treasury. When a man finds the bough begin to break, he lets go the bough, and catches hold on the main-tree; so when we find the creature to be but a rotten bough, then by faith we shall catch hold on Christ the tree of life, Rev. ii. 7. The creature is but a reed; God is the rock of ages.

Sixth. Meditate upon the excellency of grace. Grace is, 1. Precious in itself, 2 Pet. i. 1; precious faith. Grace is precious in its original; it comes from above, James iii. 17; and in its nature; it is the seed of God, 1 John iii. 9. Grace is the spiritual enamel and embroidery of the soul; it is the very signature and engraving of the Holy Ghost. Grace doth not lose its colour: it is such a commodity, that the longer we keep it, the better it is, it changeth into glory. 2. As grace is precious in itself, so it makes us precious to God, as a rich diamond adorns them that wear it: "Since thou wert precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable," Isa. xliii. 4. The saints who are invested with grace are God's jewels, Mal. iii. 17, though sullied with reproach, though besmeared with blood, yet jewels; all the world besides is but lumber. These are the jewels, and heaven is the golden cabinet where they shall be locked up safe. A gracious man is the glory of the age he lives in, like Melancthon, who was called the phœnix of Germany. So illustrious in God's eye is a soul bespangled with grace, that he doth not think the world worthy of him: "Of whom the world was not worthy," Heb. xi. 38. Therefore God calls for his people home so fast, because they are too good to live in the world: "The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour," Prov. xii. 26.

Grace is the best blessing; it hath a transcendency above all things else; there are two things sparkle much in our eyes: but grace infinitely outshines both; 1. Gold. The sun doth not shine so bright in our eyes as gold; it is the mirror of beauty; "money answers all things," Eccl. x. 19, but grace weighs heavier than gold: gold draws the heart *from* God;

grace draws the heart *to* God. Gold doth but enrich the mortal part; grace the angelical. Gold perisheth, 1 Pet. i. 7; grace perseveres. The rose, the fuller it is blown, the sooner it sheds; an emblem of all things besides grace. 2. Gifts. These are nature's pride. Gifts and parts, like Rachel, are fair to look upon, but grace excels. I had rather be holy than eloquent. A heart full of grace is better than a head full of notions. Gifts commend no man to God. It is not the paring of the apple we esteem, though of a vermilion colour, but the fruit. We judge not the better of a horse for his trappings and ornaments, unless he have good mettle. What are the most glorious parts, if there be not the metal of grace in the heart? Gifts may be bestowed upon one for the good of others; but grace is bestowed for a man's own eternal advantage. God may send away reprobates with gifts, as Abraham did the sons of the concubines, Gen. xxv. 6, but he entails the inheritance only upon grace. O, often meditate upon the excellency of grace!

The musing on the beauty of grace would,

1. Make us fall in love with it. He that meditates on the worth of a diamond, grows in love with it. Damascen calls the graces of the spirit the very characters and impressions of the divine nature. Grace is that flower of delight, which, like the vine in the parable, "cheers the heart of God and man," Judg. ix. 13.

2. The meditation of the excellency of grace would make us earnest in the pursuit after it. We dig for gold in the mine, we labour for it in the furnace: did we meditate on the worth of grace, we would dig in the mine of ordinances for it; what labour and wrestling in prayer! we should put on a modest boldness, and not take a denial. "What wilt thou give me," saith Abraham, "seeing I go childless?" Gen. xv. 2. So would the soul say, Lord, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go graceless; who will give me to drink of the "water of the well of life!"

III. The meditation of the excellency of grace would make us endeavour to be instrumental to convey grace to others. Is grace so transcendently precious, and have I a child who wants grace? O that I might be a means to convey this treasure into his soul! I have read of a rich Flor-

entine, who being about to die, called all his sons together, and used these words to them, "It much rejoiceth me, now upon my deathbed, that I shall leave you all wealthy:" but a parent's ambition should be rather to convey sanctity, that he may say, O my children, it rejoiceth me that I shall leave you gracious; it comforts me that, before I die, I shall see Jesus Christ live in you.

Seventh. Meditate upon thy spiritual estate. Enter into a serious meditation on the state of your souls; while you are meditating on other things, do not forget yourselves: the great work lies at home. It was Solomon's advice, "know the state of thy flock," Prov. xxvii. 23, much more know the state of thy soul: for want of this meditation, men are like travellers, skilled in other countries, but ignorant of their own: so they know other things, but know not how it goes with their souls, whether they are in a good or bad state. There are few who, by holy meditation, enter within themselves. There are two reasons why so few meditate upon the state of their souls.

I. Self-guiltiness. Men are loth to look into their hearts by meditation, lest they should find that which would trouble them. The cup is in their sack. Most are herein like tradesmen, who being ready to sink in their estates, are loth to look into their books of account, lest they should find their estate low; but hadst thou not better enter into thy heart by meditation, than God should in a sad manner enter into judgment with thee?

II. Presumption. Men hope all is well; men will not take their land upon trust, but will have it surveyed; yet they will take their spiritual estate upon trust, without any surveying. They are confident their case is good, Prov. xiv. 16. It is a thing not to be disputed of, and this confidence is but conceit. The foolish virgins, though they had no oil in their lamps, yet how confident were they! "They came knocking;" it was a peremptory knock, they doubted not of admittance: so many are not sure of their salvation, but secure; they presume all is well, never seriously meditating whether they have oil or not. O Christian, meditate about thy soul: see how the case stands between God and thee. Do as merchants: cast up thy estate, that thou mayest see what thou

art worth; see if thou art rich towards God, Luke xii. 21. Meditate about three things. 1. About thy debts: see if thy debts be paid or not; that is, thy sins pardoned: see if there be no arrears, no sin in thy soul unrepented of. 2. Meditate about thy will: see if thy will be made yet. Hast thou resigned up all the interest in thyself? Hast thou given up thy love to God? Hast thou given up thy will? This is to make thy will: meditate about the will; make thy spiritual will in the time of health. If thou puttest off the making of thy will till death, it may be invalid; perhaps God will not accept of thy soul then. 3. Meditate about thy evidences. These evidences are the graces of the Spirit; see whether thou hast any evidences. What desires hast thou after Christ? what faith? see whether there be no flaw in thy evidences; are thy desires true? dost thou as well desire heavenly principles, as heavenly privileges? O meditate seriously upon your evidences!

To sift our hearts thus by meditation, is very necessary. If we find our estate is not sound, the mistake is discovered, and the danger prevented: if it be sound, we shall have the comfort of it. What gladness was it to Hezekiah, when he could say, "Remember now, O Lord, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight," Isaiah xxxviii. 3. So, what unspeakable comfort will it be, when a Christian, upon a serious meditation and review of his spiritual condition, can say, I have something to show for heaven; "I know I am passed from death to life," 1 John iii. 14, and, as a holy man once said, "I am Christ's, and the devil hath nothing to do with me."

Eighth. Meditate upon the small number of them that shall be saved. "But few are chosen," Matt. xx. 16; among the millions in Rome, there are but few senators; and among the swarms of people in the world, there are but few believers. We read of four sorts of ground in the parable, and but one good ground, Matt. xiii. How few in the world know Christ! how few believe in him! Who hath believed our report? Isa. liii. 1. How few strike sail to Christ's sceptre! Luke xix. 14. The heathen idolaters and Mahometans possess almost all Asia and Africa; in many parts of the world the

devil is worshipped; Satan takes up most climates and hearts. How many formalists are there in the world! "having a form of godliness," 2 Tim. iii. 5; like wool that receives a slight tincture, not a deep dye, whose religion is a paint, which a storm of persecution will wash off, not an engraving. These look like Christ's doves, but are the serpent's brood. They hate God's image, like the panther, that hates the picture of a man.

O often meditate on the small number of them that shall be saved. The meditation of this, would, 1. Keep us from marching along with the multitude. "Thou shalt not follow a multitude," Exod. xxiii. 2. The multitude usually goes wrong: most men walk "after the course of the world," Eph. ii. 2; that is, the lusts of their hearts, and the fashions of the times. They march after the prince of the air. The meditation of this would make us turn out of the common road.

2. Meditation on the fewness of them that shall be saved, would make us walk tremblingly. Few find the way; and when they have found it, few walk in the way. The thoughts of this would work holy fear, Heb. iv. 1; not a despairing fear, but a jealous and cautious fear. This fear the eminent saints of God have had. Austin saith of himself, he knocked at heaven's gate with a trembling hand. This fear is joined with hope. "The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy," Psal. cxlvii. 11. A child of God fears, because the gate is strait; but hopes, because the gate is open.

3. Meditation on the small number of them that shall be saved, would be a whetstone to industry. It would put us upon working out our salvation; if there are so few that shall be crowned, it would make us the swifter in the race. This meditation would be an alarm to sleepy Christians.

Ninth. Meditate upon final apostacy. Think what a sad thing it is to begin in religion to build, and not be able to finish, Luke xiv. 30. Joash was good while his uncle Jehoiada lived; but after he died, Joash grew wicked, and all his religion was buried in his uncle's grave. We live in the fall of the leaf; how many are fallen to damnable heresies! 2 Pet. ii. 1. Meditate seriously on that scripture, "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the

heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance," Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6. A man may be enlightened, and that from a double lamp—the word and Spirit; but these beams, though they are irradiating, yet are not penetrating. It is possible he may have a taste of the heavenly gift; he may taste but not concoct; as one saith, a cook may taste the meat he dresseth, but not be nourished by it. This taste may not only illuminate, but refresh; it may carry some sweetness in it, there may be a kind of delight in spiritual things: thus far a man may go and yet fall away finally. Now this will be very sad, it being such a God-affronting, and Christ-reproaching sin; "Know therefore it is an evil and bitter thing that thou hast forsaken the Lord," Jer. ii. 19. Meditate upon final relapses.

Meditation upon apostacy would make us earnest in prayer to God, 1. For soundness of heart, "Make my heart sound in thy statutes," Psal. cxix. 80. Lord, let me not be an alchemy Christian; work a thorough work of grace upon me; though I am not washed perfectly, let me be washed thoroughly, Psal, li. 2. That which begins in hypocrisy, ends in apostacy. 2. Meditation upon the final falling away of hypocrites would make us earnest in prayer for perseverance. "Hold up my goings in thy paths that my footsteps slip not," Psal. xvii. 5. Lord, hold me up that I may hold out. Thou hast set the crown at the end of the race, let me run the race, that I may wear the crown; it was Beza's prayer, and let it be ours, Lord perfect what thou hast begun in me, that I may not suffer shipwreck when I am almost at the haven.

Tenth. Meditate upon death. We say we must all die, but who is he that meditates seriously upon it? Meditate, 1. On the certainty of death; "it is appointed for all once to die," Heb. ix. 27. There is a statute out. 2. Meditate upon the proximity of death; it is near to us.—We are almost setting our feet upon the dark entry of death. The poets painted time with wings; it not only rides post, but flies, and carries us upon its wings. The race is short between the cradle and the grave: the sentence of death is already passed;

"to dust thou shalt return," Gen. iii. 19; so that our life is but a short reprieval from death which is granted to a condemned man; "Mine age is as nothing," Psal. xxxix. 5; nay, if it were possible to take something out of nothing, our life is less than nothing, reckoned with eternity. 3. Meditate upon the uncertainty of the time. We have no lease, but may be turned out at the next hour; there are so many casualties, that it is a wonder if life be not cut off by untimely death. How soon may God send us a lease of ejectment! Our grave may be digged before night. To-day we may lie upon a pillow of down, to-morrow we may be laid upon a pillow of dust. To-day the sermon bell goes, to-morrow our passing bell may go. 4. Think seriously, that to die is to be but once done, and after death there is nothing to be done. If thou diest in thine impenitency there is no repenting in the grave. If thou leavest thy work at death half done, there is no finishing it in the grave; "There is no work, nor device, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest," Eccl. ix. 10. If a garrison surrender at the first summons, there is mercy; but if it stay till the red flag be hung out, and the garrison is stormed, there is no mercy then. Now it is a day of grace, and God holds forth the white flag of mercy to the penitent; if we stay till God hold forth the red flag, and storm us by death! then there is no mercy. There is nothing to be done for our souls after death. O meditate on death! It is reported of Zeleucus, that the first piece of household stuff he brought to Babylon, was a tombstone: think often of your tombstone. The meditation on death would work these admirable effects.

1. Meditation upon death would pull down the plumes of pride. Thou art but dust animated; shall dust and ashes be proud? Thou hast a grassy body, Isa. xl. 6, and shall shortly be mowed down; "I have said ye are gods," Psal. lxxxii. 6; but lest they should grow proud, he adds a corrective, "ye shall die like men," ver. 7; ye are dying gods.

2. Meditation upon death would be a means to give a death's wound to sin. There is no stronger antidote against sin, saith Austin, than frequent meditation upon death; am I now sinning, and to-morrow may be dying; what if death should take me doing the devil's work, would it not send me

to him to receive double pay? carry the thoughts of death as a table-book always about thee, and when sin tempts, pull out this table-book, and read in it, and you shall see sin will vanish. We should look upon sin in two glasses, the glass of Christ's blood, and the glass of death.

3. Meditation upon death would be a bridle for intemperance; shall I pamper that body which must lie down in the house of rottenness? Our Saviour at a feast breaks forth into mention of his burial, Matt. xxvi. 12. Feeding upon the thoughts of death would be an excellent preservative against a surfeit.

4. Meditation upon death would make us husband time better, and crowd up much work in a little room. Many meet in taverns to drive away time; the apostle bids us redeem it; "Redeeming the time," Eph. v. 16. Our life should be like jewels; though little in bulk, yet great in worth. Some die young, yet with grey hairs upon them; we must be like grass of the field, useful; not like grass of the house-top, which withers before it be grown up, Psal. cxxix. 6. To live and not be serviceable, is not life but time.

5. Meditation upon death would make us lay in provision against such a time. It would spur us on in the pursuit after holiness. Death is the great plunderer, it will shortly plunder us of all our outside comforts; our feathers of beauty and honour must be laid in the dust, but death cannot plunder us of our graces. The commonwealth of Venice, in their armoury have this inscription, "Happy is he that in time of peace thinks of war." He that often meditates on death, will make preparation against its coming.

Eleventh. Meditate on the day of judgment. "God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world."—Acts xvii. 31. Meditate, 1. Upon the solemnity of this trial, The trumpet shall sound to summon all the world before the judge, 1 Thess. iv. 16. and Jesus Christ shall "come in the glory of his Father, with all his holy angels," Matt. xvi. 27. 2. Meditate upon the universality of this trial; "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ," 2 Cor. v. 10. Kings and nobles, all must come to the bar, there is no exemption. I have read of a wicked king, who on his death-

bed fell a weeping; his brother asked him why he wept?—"To think," saith he, "that I, who have judged others, am now going to be judged myself." 3. Meditate on the impartiality of the trial; Christ will do justice; "He will judge the world in righteousness," Acts xvii. 31. There are no bribes taken in this court; no relations take place here. The Thebans pictured their judges blind, and without hands; blind, that they might not respect persons; without hands, that they might take no bribes. Christ's sceptre is a "sceptre of righteousness," Heb. i. 8; it is not nearness of blood avails; nor will he be bribed with a tear. 4. Meditate upon the exactness of the trial; it will be very critical; "He will thoroughly purge his floor," Matt. iii. 12; not a grace, or a sin, but Christ's fan will discover it; he will judge the heart as well as the fact. 5. Meditate upon the issue and consequence of this trial. There will be a discrimination made. He will separate the good from the bad, Matt. xxv. 32. The wheat and chaff may both grow together, but they shall not lie together.

Meditate often upon this court of judicature, from whence is no appeal. Feathers swim upon the water, but gold sinks in it; light, feathery Christians float in vanity, they mind not the day of judgment, but serious spirits sink deep into the meditation of it. Most men put far away from them the evil day, Amos vi. 3. They report of the Italians, that in a great thunder-storm they used to ring their bells, and shoot off their cannons, that the sound of their bells and the roaring of their cannons might drown the noise of the thunder; so the devil delights men with the music of the world, that the noise of this should drown the noise of the day of judgment, and make them forget the sound of the last trump. Most men are guilty, therefore they do not love to hear of the assizes. When Paul preached of judgment, Felix trembled, Acts xxiv. 25; he had a bad conscience: Josephus tells us of Felix, that he was a wicked man: the woman that lived with him (Drusilla by name) he had enticed away from her husband, and when he heard of judgment, he fell a trembling. O, I beseech you, meditate upon this last and solemn day! While others are thinking how they may get riches, let us bethink ourselves how we may abide the day of Christ's coming.

Meditation on the day of judgment, 1. Would make us scan all our actions; Christ will come with his fan and his sieve: will this action of mine abide the test at that great day?

2. Meditation on the last day would make us labour to approve our hearts to God, the great judge and umpire of the world. It is no matter what men think of us, but what is our Judge's opinion of us? to him we must stand or fall. The meditation of the day of judgment would make us endeavour to be like Moses, who was fair to God, as the original hath it, Acts vii. 20. The galaxy, or milky way, as the astronomers call it, is a bright circle in the heavens containing many stars, but they are so small that they have no name, nor are they taken cognizance of by the astronomers. Give me leave to apply it; possibly others may take no notice of us; we are so small as to have no name in the world, yet if we are true stars, and can approve our hearts to God, we shall hold up our heads with boldness, when we come to stand before our Judge.

3. Meditation on the day of judgment would make us labour after an interest in Christ. There is no standing *before* Christ, but by being *in* Christ. If Christ be thine, then all is well; no matter what is charged, if all be discharged, Rom. viii. 33, 34. There is no way in the world to stand in the day of judgment, but by making a party; make Christ thy friend, and then thy Judge will be thy advocate, 1 John ii. 1.

4. Meditation on the day of judgment would make Christians less censorious; they would not reprobate others so fast; who art thou that judgest another? dost thou take Christ's sceptre into thy hand? darest thou sit in judgment upon thy brother? perhaps when the critical day comes, he may be found gold, and thou chaff. It is true, we may judge men's way, but not their persons, Rom. xiv. 10; but why dost thou judge thy brother? we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ.

5. Meditation on the day of judgment would yield much comfort to a Christian, and that in two cases.

(1.) In case of weakness of grace; a poor Christian when he sees his grace so defective, is ready to be discouraged, but at the day of judgment, if Christ find but a drachm of sin-

cerity, it shall be accepted; if thine be true gold, though it may be light, Christ will put his merits into the scales, and make it pass current. If thou hast no sin of allowance, thou shalt have grains of allowance. I may allude to that passage in Amos ix. 9: "Yet shall not the least grain fall to the earth." He that hath but a grain of grace, not the least grain shall fall to hell.

(2.) In case of censures and slanders. The saints go here through strange reports, 2 Cor. vi. 8. There is no walking in the world now-a-days, let us tread never so warily, without catching some specks of dirt. John Baptist's head in a charger is a common dish in this age, it is ordinary to bring in a saint beheaded of his good name; but at the day of judgment, Christ will unload his people of all their calumnies and reproaches; he will at that day wash his spouse so white, that she shall not only be guiltless but spotless, her black spots of reproach shall be taken away, "he will present his church glorious, not having spot or wrinkle," Eph. v. 27.

Twelfth, Meditate upon hell.

I. Meditate upon the pain of loss; "and the door was shut," Matt. xxv. 10. To have Christ's face veiled over, and a perpetual eclipse and midnight in the soul; to be cast out of God's presence, in whose presence is fulness of joy, this doth aggravate and embitter the condition of the damned; it is like mingling gall with wormwood.

II. Meditate upon the pain of sense; the Photinians hold there is no hell, but they speak in a dream; "The wicked shall be turned into hell," Psal. ix. 17. And here meditate on two things,

1. The place of hell. 2. The company.

1. Meditate on the place of hell. It is called "a place of torment," Luke xvi. 28. There are two things especially in hell to torment.

(1.) Fire, Rev. xx. 15. It is called a lake of burning fire. Austin, Peter Lombard, Gregory the Great, say, this fire of hell is a material fire, though they say it is infinitely hotter than any culinary fire; that is but painted fire to this. I wish none of us may know what kind of fire it is; but I rather think the fire of hell is partly material, and partly spiritual; the material fire is to work upon the body, the

spiritual to torture the soul. This is the wrath of God, which is both fire and bellows; "Who knoweth the power of thine anger?" Psal. xc. 11.

But it may be objected, If there be any material fire in hell, it will consume the bodies there. I answer, It shall burn without consuming, as Moses' bush did, Exod. iii. 2. The power of God silenceth all disputes. If God, by his infinite power, could make the fire of the three children not to consume, cannot he make the fire of hell burn and not consume? Austin tells of a strange salt in Sicily, which, if it be put in the fire, swims: that God who can make salt, contrary to its nature, swim in the fire, can make the bodies of the damned not consume in the fire.

(2.) The worm, Mark xix. 44. "Where the worm never dies." Homer, in his Odyssey, feigns, that Titius's liver was gnawn by two vultures in hell. This never-dying worm which Christ speaks of, is the gnawing of a guilty conscience. Melancthon calls it a hellish fury; they that will not hear conscience preaching, shall feel conscience gnawing; and so great is the extremity of these two, the fire which burns, and the worm which bites, that there will follow "gnashing of teeth," Matt. viii. 12; the damned will gnash their teeth for horror and anguish. That must needs be sad cheer, as Latimer saith, where weeping is served in for the first course, and gnashing of teeth for the second; to endure this will be intolerable, to avoid it will be impossible.

2. Meditate of the company in hell, the devil and his angels, Matt. xxv. 41. Job complains he was a companion to owls, chap. xxx. 29. What will it be to be a companion to devils! Consider, 1. Their ghastly deformity; they make hell look blacker. 2. Their deadly antipathy; they are fired with rage against mankind; first they become tempters, then tormentors.

Meditate much on hell. Let us go into hell by contemplation, that we may not go into hell by condemnation. How restless is the condition of the damned! The ancients feign of Endymion, that he got leave of Jupiter always to sleep. What would the damned in hell give for such a license! in their pains is neither intermission nor mitigation.

Serious meditation on hell, would make us,

1. Fear sin as hell. Sin is hell's fuel. Sin, like Samson's foxes, Judg. xv. 5, carries devouring fire in the tail of it.

2. Meditation on hell would cause rejoicing in a child of God. The saint's fear of hell is like the two Marys' fear, "They departed from the sepulchre with fear and great joy," Matt. xxviii. 8. A believer may fear to think of the place of torment, but rejoice to think he shall not come into this place. When a man stands upon a high rock, he trembles to look down into the sea, yet he rejoiceth that he is not there struggling with the waves. A child of God, when he thinks of hell, rejoiceth with trembling. A prison is not made for the king's sons to be put in. A great naturalist observes, that nothing will so soon quench fire as salt and blood. Whether it be so or not, sure I am, the salt brinish tears of repentance, and the blood of Christ, will quench the fire of hell to a believer. Christ himself hath felt the pains of hell for you. The Lamb of God being roasted in the fire of God's wrath, by this burnt-offering the Lord is now appeased towards his people. O how may the godly rejoice! "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ," Rom. viii. 1. When the Son of God was in the furnace, Dan. iii. 25, the fire did the three children no hurt; so Christ being for a time in the fiery furnace of God's wrath, that fire can do a believer no hurt. The saints have the garment of Christ's righteousness upon them, and the fire of hell can never singe this garment.

Thirteenth. Meditate upon heaven. From the mount of meditation, as from Mount Nebo, we may take a view and prospect of the land of promise. Christ hath taken possession of heaven in the name of all believers; "Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus," Heb. vi. 20. Heaven must needs be a glorious city, which hath God both for its builder and inhabitant. Heaven is the extract and quintessence of all blessedness. There the saints shall have their wish. Austin wished that he might have seen three things before he died, Rome in its glory, Paul in the pulpit, and Christ in the flesh. But the saints shall see a better sight; they shall see, not Rome, but heaven in its glory; they shall see Paul, not in the pulpit, but on the throne, and shall sit with him; they shall see Christ's flesh, not veiled over with

infirmities and disgraces, but in its spiritual embroidery; not a crucified, but a glorified body. They shall "behold the King in His beauty," Isa. xxxiii. 17. What a glorious place will this be! In heaven "God will be all in all," 1 Cor. xv. 28. Beauty to the eye, music to the ears, joy to the heart; and this he will be to the poorest saint, as well as the richest. O Christian, who art now at thy hard labour, perhaps following the plough, thou shalt sit on the throne of glory, Rev. iii. 21. Quintus Curtius writes of one who was digging in his garden, and on a sudden was made king, and a purple garment, richly embroidered with gold, put upon him: so shall it be done to the poorest believer; he shall be taken from his labouring work, and set at the right hand of God, having the crown of righteousness upon his head.

Meditate often on this Jerusalem above.

Meditation on heaven would,

1. Excite and quicken obedience. It would put spurs to our sluggish hearts, and make us "abound in the work of God, knowing that our labour is not in vain in the Lord," 1 Cor. xv. 58. The weight of glory would not hinder us in our race, but cause us to run the faster: this weight would add wings to duty.

2. Meditation on heaven would make us strive after heart purity; because only the "pure in heart shall see God," Matt. v. 8. It is only a clear eye that can look upon a bright transparent object.

3. Meditation on heaven would be a pillar of support under our sufferings; heaven will make amends for all. One hour's abode in heaven will make us forget all our sorrows. The sun dries up the water; one beam of God's glorious face will dry up all our tears.

Fourteenth. Meditate on eternity. Some of the ancients have compared eternity to an intellectual sphere, whose centre is everywhere, and circumference nowhere. Eternity to the godly is a day which hath no sun-setting, and to the wicked a night which hath no sun-rising. Eternity is a gulf which may swallow up all our thoughts. Meditate on that Scripture, Matt. xxv. 46. "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."

I. Meditate upon eternal punishment. The bitter cup

out of which the damned drink, shall never pass away from them. The sinner and the furnace shall never be parted. God's vial's of wrath will be always dropping upon a wicked man. When you have reckoned up so many myriads and millions of years, nay, ages, as have passed the bounds of all arithmetic, eternity is not yet begun. This word *ever* breaks the heart: if the tree fall hell-ward, so it lies to all eternity. Now is the time of God's long-suffering, 2 Pet. iii. 9; after death will be the time of the sinner's suffering long, when he shall "suffer the vengeance of eternal fire," Jude 7.

II. Meditate upon life eternal. The soul that is once landed on the heavenly shore, is past all storms. The glorified soul shall be for ever bathing itself in the rivers of pleasure, Psal. xvi. 11. This is that which makes heaven to be heaven, "We shall be ever with the Lord," 1 Thess. iv. 17. Austin saith, "Lord, I am content to suffer any pains and torments in this world, if I might see thy face one day;" but alas! were it only for a day, then to be ejected heaven, it would rather be an aggravation of misery; but this word, ever with the Lord, is very accumulative, and makes up the garland of glory; a state of eternity is a state of security.

Meditation on eternity would, 1. Make us very serious in what we do. Zeuxes being asked, why he was so long about a picture, answered, I paint for eternity. The thoughts of an irreversible condition after this life, would make us pray and hear as for eternity.

2. Meditation on eternity, would make us overlook present things, as flitting and fading. What is the world to him that hath eternity in his eye? it is but the smallest part of a point, which, as the mathematicians say, is just nothing. He that thinks of eternity will despise "the pleasures of sin for a season."

3. Meditation on eternity would be a means to keep us from envying the prosperity of the wicked. Here they ruffle it in their silks, but what is this to eternity? As long as there is such a thing as eternity, God hath time enough to reckon with all his enemies.

Fifteenth. Meditate upon your experiences. The last subject of meditation is your experiences. Look over your receipts.

I. Hath not God provided liberally for you, and vouchsafed you those mercies which He hath denied to others, who are better than you? Here is an experience, "The God who hath fed me all my days," Gen. xlviii. 15. Thou never feedest, but mercy carves for thee; thou never goest to bed, but mercy draws the curtain, and sets a guard of angels about thee. Whatever thou hast is out of the exchequer of free grace. Here is an experience to meditate upon.

II. Hath not God prevented many dangers, hath he not kept watch and ward about you? 1. What temporal dangers hath God screened off? thy neighbour's house on fire, and it hath not kindled in thy dwelling. Another infected, thou art free; behold the golden feathers of protection covering thee. 2. What spiritual dangers hath God prevented! when others have been poisoned with error, thou hast been preserved. God hath sounded a retreat to thee; thou hast heard "a voice behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk in it," Isa. xxx. 21. When thou hast enlisted thyself, and taken pay on the devil's side, that God should "pluck thee as a brand out of the fire," that he should turn thy heart, and now thou espousest Christ's quarrel against sin. Behold preventing grace! Here is an experience to meditate upon.

III. Hath not God spared you a long time? whence is it that others are struck dead in the act of sin, as Ananias and Sapphira, Acts v. 5, 10; and you are preserved as a monument of patience? Here is an experience. God hath done more for you than for the angels; he never waited for their repentance, but he hath waited for you year after year, Isa. xxx. 18. Therefore "will the Lord wait that he may be gracious." He hath not only knocked at your heart in the ministry of the word, but He hath waited at the door. How long hath his Spirit striven with you! like an importunate suitor, that hath many denials, yet will not give over the suit. Methinks I see justice with a sword in its hand ready to strike, and mercy steps in for the sinner, "Lord, have patience with him a while longer." Methinks I hear the angels say to God, as the king of Israel once said to the prophet Elisha, "Shall I smite them? shall I smite them?" 2 Kings vi. 21. So methinks I hear the angels say, Shall we take off the head of such a drunkard, swearer, blasphemer? and mercy seems

to answer as the vine-dresser, "Let him alone this year," Luke xiii. 8. See if he will repent. Is not here an experience worth meditating upon? Mercy turns justice into a rainbow; the rainbow is a bow indeed, but hath no arrow in it; that justice hath been like the rainbow without an arrow, that it hath not shot thee to death. Here is a receipt of patience to read over and meditate upon.

IV. Hath not God often come in with assisting grace? When he hath bid thee mortify such a lust, and thou hast said as Jehoshaphat, "I have no might against this great army," 2 Chron. xx. 12, then God hath come in with auxiliary forces; "his grace hath been sufficient." When God hath bid thee pray for such a mercy, and thou hast found thyself very unfit; thy heart was at first dead and flat, all on a sudden thou art carried above thine own strength; thy tears drop, thy love flames; God hath come in with assisting grace. If the heart burn in prayer, God hath struck fire. The Spirit hath been tuning thy soul, and now thou makest sweet melody in prayer. Here is an experience to meditate upon.

V. Hath not God vanquished Satan for you? When the devil hath tempted to infidelity, to self-murder, when he would make you believe either that your graces were but a fiction, or God's promise but a counterfeit bond; now that you have not been foiled by the tempter, it is God who hath kept the garrison of your heart, else his fiery darts would have entered. Here is an experience to meditate upon.

VI. Have you not had many signal deliverances? When you have been even at the gates of death, God hath miraculously restored you, and renewed your strength as the eagle; may not you write that writing which Hezekiah did? "The writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick and was recovered of his sickness," Isa. xxxviii. 9. You thought the sun of your life was quite setting; but God made this sun return back many degress. Here is an experience for meditation to feed upon. When you have been imprisoned, your foot taken in the snare, and the Lord hath broken the snare, nay, hath made those to break it who were the instruments of laying it: behold an experience; O let us often revolve in mind our experiences! If a man had

medicinal receipts by him, he would be often looking over them. You that have rare receipts of mercy by you, be often, by meditation, looking over your receipts.

Meditation on our experiences would,

1. Raise us to thankfulness. Considering that God hath set a hedge of providence about us, he hath strewed our way with roses, this would make us take the harp and viol, and praise the Lord, and not only praise, but record, 1 Chron. xvi. 4. The meditating christian keeps a register or chronicle of God's mercies, that the memory of them doth not decay. God would have the manna kept in the ark many hundred years, that the remembrance of that miracle might be preserved; a meditating soul takes care that the spiritual manna of an experience be kept safe.

2. Meditation on our experiences would engage our hearts to God in obedience. Mercy would be a needle to sew us to him. We would cry out as Bernard, "I have, Lord, two mites, a soul and a body, and I give them both to thee."

3. Meditation on our experiences would serve to convince us that God is no hard master; we might bring in our experiences as a sufficient confutation of that slander. When we have been falling, hath not God taken us by the hand? "When I said my foot slippeth, thy goodness, O Lord, held me up." Psal. xciv. 18. How often hath God held our head and heart when we have been fainting! and is he a hard master? Is there any master besides God who will wait upon his servants? Christians, summon in your experiences. What vails* have you had! Psal. xix. 11, what inward serenity and peace, which neither the world can give, nor death can take away! A christian's own experiences may plead for God against such as desire rather to censure his ways, than to try them, and to cavil at them, than to walk in them.

4. Meditation on our experiences would make us communicative to others. We should be willing to tell our children and acquaintance "what God hath done for our souls," Psal. xliv. 1. At such a time we were brought low, and God raised us; at such a time in desertion, and God brought a promise to remembrance which dropt in comfort. Medita-

* Perquisites and presents given to servants.

tion on God's gracious dealing with us would make us transmit and propagate our experience to others, that the mercies of God shown to us may bear a plentiful crop of praise, when we are dead and gone.

CH. VII.—*Showing the necessity of Meditation.*

It is not enough to carry the book of God's law about us, but we must meditate in it. The necessity of meditation will appear in three particulars.

I. The end why God hath given us his word written and preached, is not only to know it, but that we should meditate in it. The word is a letter of the great God written to us; now we must not run it over in haste, but meditate upon God's wisdom in inditing, and his love in sending it to us. Why doth the physician give his patient a receipt; is it that he should only read it over and know the receipt, or that he should apply it? the end why God communicates his gospel receipts to us is, that we should apply them by fruitful meditation. Would God, think we, ever have been at the pains of writing his law with his own finger, only that we should have the theory and notion of it? is it not that we should meditate in it? Would he ever have been at the cost to send abroad his ministers into the world, to furnish them with gifts, Eph. iv. 11, 12, and must they for the work of Christ be nigh unto death, Phil. ii. 30, that christians should only have an empty knowledge of the truths published? Is it only speculation, or meditation that God aims at?

II. The necessity of meditation appears in this, because without it we can never be good christians; a christian without meditation is like a soldier without arms, or a workman without tools.

II. Without meditation the truths of God will not stay with us; the heart is hard, and the memory slippery, and without meditation all is lost; meditation imprints and fastens a truth in the mind, it is like the selvedge which keeps the cloth from raveling. Serious meditation is like the engraving of letters in gold or marble, which endure; without this all our preaching to you is but like writing in sand, like pouring water into a sieve, like throwing a bur upon a crystal,

which glides off and does not stay. Reading and hearing without meditation is like weak physic which will not work; want of meditation hath made so many sermons in this age to miscarry.

2. Without meditation the truths which we know will never affect our hearts; "These words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart." Deut. vi. 6. How can the word be in the heart, unless it be wrought in by meditation? as a hammer drives a nail to the head, so meditation drives a truth to the heart. It is not the taking in of food, but the stomach's concocting it, which makes it turn to blood and spirits; so it is not the taking in of a truth at the ear, but the meditating on it, which is the concoction of it in the mind, makes it nourish. Without meditation the word preached may increase notion, not affection. There is as much difference between the knowledge of a truth and the meditation on a truth, as there is between the light of a torch, and the light of the sun. Set up a lamp or torch in the garden, and it hath no influence: the sun hath a sweet influence, it makes the plants grow, and the herbs flourish: so knowledge is but like a torch lighted in the understanding, which hath little or no influence, it makes not a man the better; but meditation is like the shining of the sun, it operates upon the affections, it warms the heart and makes it more holy. Meditation gives life to a truth. There are many truths that lie, as it were, in the heart dead, which when we meditate upon, they begin to have life and heat in them. Meditation on a truth is like rubbing a man in a swoon; it fetcheth life. It is meditation makes a christian.

III. Without meditation we make ourselves guilty of slighting God and his word. If a man lets a thing lie by, and never minds it, it is a sign he slights it: God's word is the book of life; not to meditate in it, is to undervalue it. If a king puts forth an edict or proclamation, and the subjects never mind it, it is a slighting of the king's authority. God puts forth his law as a royal edict; if we do not meditate in it, it is a slighting his authority, and what doth this amount to less than a contempt done to the Divine majesty.

CH. VIII.—*Showing the reason why there are so few good Christians.*

Use 1. Information. It gives us a true account why there are so few good christians in the world; namely, because there are so few meditating christians: we have many that have bible ears, they are swift to hear, but slow to meditate. This duty is grown almost out of fashion: people are so much in the shop that they are seldom on the mount with God. Where is the meditating christian? Diogenes, in a full market, was seeking up and down, and being asked what he sought for, saith, I seek for a man, that was to say, a wise man, a philosopher: among the crowd of professors, I might search for a christian, namely, a meditating christian. Where is he that meditates on sin, hell, eternity, the recompense of reward; that takes a prospect of heaven every day? where is the meditating christian? It is to be lamented in our times, that so many who go under the name of professors, have banished good discourse from their tables, and meditation from their closets. Surely the hand of Joab is in this!

The devil is an enemy to meditation; he cares not how much people read and hear, nor how little they meditate; he knows that meditation is a means to compose the heart, and bring it into a gracious frame: now the devil is against that. Satan is content that you should be hearing and praying christians, so that ye be not meditating christians; he can stand your small shot, provided you do not put in this bullet.

CH. IX.—*A Reproof to such as do not meditate in God's law.*

Use 2. Of reproof. It serves to reprove those who meditate indeed, but not in the law of God: they turn all their meditations the wrong way; like a man that lets forth the water of his mill, which should grind his corn, into the highway, where it doth no good: so there are many who let out their meditations upon other fruitless things which are no way beneficial to their souls.

1. The farmer meditates on his acres of land, not upon

his soul: his meditation is how he may improve a barren piece of ground, not how he may improve a barren mind: he will not let his ground lie fallow, but he lets his heart lie fallow: there is no spiritual culture, not one seed of grace sown there.

2. The physician meditates upon his receipts, but seldom on those receipts which the gospel prescribes for his salvation,—faith and repentance. Commonly the devil is physician to the physician, having given him such stupifying physic, that for the most part he dies of a lethargy.

3. The lawyer meditates upon the common law, but as for God's law he seldom meditates in it either day or night. The lawyer while he is meditating on his client's evidences, often forgets his own. Most of this robe have their spiritual evidences to seek, when they should have them to show.

4. The tradesman is for the most part meditating upon his wares and drugs: his study is how he may increase his estate, and make the ten talents a hundred. He is "cumbered about many things;" he doth not meditate in the book of God's law, but in his account-book day and night. At the long run you will see these were fruitless meditations; you will find that you are but golden beggars, and have got but the fool's purchase when you die, Luke xii. 20.

5. There is another sort that meditate only upon mischief, "who devise iniquity," Mic. ii. 1, they meditate how to defame and to defraud; "they make the ephah small, and the shekel great," Amos viii. 5. The ephah was a measure used in buying, the shekel a weight used in selling; they know how to collude and sophisticate. Christians who should support, too often supplant one another. And how many meditate revenge! it is sweet to them as dropping honey, as Homer speaks, "Their hearts shall meditate terror," Isa. xxxiii. 18. The sinner is a felon to himself, and God will make him a terror to himself, Jer. xx. 4.

Ch. X.—*A holy persuasive to meditation.*

Use 3. Of exhortation. I am in the next place to exhort christians to this so necessary duty of meditation. If ever there be a duty I would press upon you with more earnest-

ness and zeal, it should be this, because so much of the vitals and spirit of religion lies in it. The plant may as well bear fruit witho' watering, the meat may as well nourish without digesting as we can fructify in holiness without meditation. God provides the meat, ministers can but cook and dress it for you. Meditation must make the concoction: for want of this you may cry out with the prophet, "My leanness, my leanness, wo unto me!" Isa. xxiv. 16. O let me persuade such as fear God, seriously to set about this duty. If you have formerly neglected it, bewail your neglect, and now begin to make conscience of it. Lock up yourselves with God, at least once a day, by holy meditation. Ascend this hill, and when you are arrived at the top of it, you shall see a fair prospect, Christ and heaven before you. Let me put you in mind of that sweet saying of Bernard, "O saint, knowest thou not that thy husband Christ is bashful, and will not be familiar in company, retire thyself by meditation into the closet, or the field, and there thou shalt have Christ's embraces." "Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field, there will I give thee my loves," Cant. vii 11, 12. O that I could persuade christians to this rare duty! Why is it that you do not meditate in God's law? let me expostulate the case with you; what is the reason? Methinks I hear some say, We are indeed convinced of the necessity of the duty, but alas there are many things that hinder. There are two great objections that lie in the way: I shall remove them, and then hope the better to persuade to this duty.

Ch. XI.—*The Answering of Objections.*

Obj. 1. I have so much business in the world that I have no time to meditate.

Answer. The world indeed is a great enemy to meditation. It is easy to lose one's purse in a crowd of worldly employments, it is easy to lose all the thoughts of God. So long as the heart is an exchange, I do not expect that it should be a temple: but, to answer the objection, hast thou so much business that thou hast no time for meditation? as if religion were but, by the by, a thing fit only for idle hours. What! no time to meditate! What is the business of thy

life but meditation? God never sent us into the world to get riches. I speak not against labour in a calling; but I say this is not the end of our coming hither. The errand God sent us into the world about, is salvation; and that we may attain the end, we must use the means, namely, holy meditation. Now, hast thou no time to meditate? just as if a husbandman should say, truly he hath so much business that he hath no time to plough or sow! Why, what is his occupation but ploughing and sowing? What a madness is it to hear christians say they have no time to meditate! What is the business of their lives but meditation? O take heed, lest by growing rich you grow worth nothing at last. Take heed that God doth not sue out the statute of bankrupt against you, and you be disgraced before men and angels. No time for meditation! you shall observe that others in former ages have had as much business as you, and public affairs to look after, yet they were called upon to meditate; "Thou shalt meditate in this book of the law," Josh. i. 8. Joshua might have pleaded an excuse; he was a soldier, a commander, and the care of marshalling his army lay chiefly upon him, yet this must not take him off from religion; Joshua must meditate in the book of God's law. God never intended that the great business of religion should give way to a shop or farm; or that a particular calling should jostle out the general.

Obj. 2. But this duty of meditation is hard. To set time apart every day to get the heart into a meditating frame is very difficult. Gerson reports of himself, that he was sometimes three or four hours before he could work his heart into a spiritual frame.

Ans. Doth this hinder? To this I shall give a threefold reply.

1. The price that God hath set heaven at is labour; our salvation cost Christ blood, it may well cost us labour. "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence," Matt. xi. 12. It is as a garrison that holds out, and the duties of religion are the taking it by storm. A good christian must offer violence to himself; though not to self natural, yet to self sinful. Self is nothing but the flesh, Gal. v. 17, as Basil, Jerome, Theophylact, and Chroysostom, do all expound it. The flesh cries out for ease, it is a libertine; it is loth to take pains, loth to

pray, to repent, loth to put its neck under Christ's yoke. Now a christian must hate himself; no man ever yet hated his own flesh, Eph. v. 29, yes, in his sense he must hate his own flesh, "the lusts of the flesh," Rom. viii. 13. He must offer violence to himself by mortification and meditation. Say not it is hard to meditate, is it not harder to lie in hell?

2. We do not argue so in other things. Riches are hard to come by, therefore I will sit still and be without them: no, difficulty is the whetstone of industry. How will men venture for gold! and shall we not spend and be spent for that which is more precious than the gold of Ophir? by meditation we suck out the quintessence of a promise.

3. Though while we are at first entering upon meditation it may seem hard, yet, when once we are entered, it is sweet and pleasant. Christ's yoke at the first putting on may seem heavy; but when once it is on it becomes easy; it is not a yoke, but a crown. Lord, saith Austin, the more I meditate on thee, the sweeter thou art to me. According to that of holy David, "My meditation of thee shall be sweet," Psal. civ. 34. The poets say, the top of Olympus was always quiet and serene: it is hard climbing up the rocky hill of meditation, but when we are got up to the top, there is a pleasant prospect, and we shall sometimes think ourselves even in heaven. By holy meditation the soul doth, as it were, breakfast with God every morning; and to be sure his breakfast is better than his dinner. When a Christian is upon the mount of meditation, he is like Peter on the mount when Christ was transfigured, Matt. xvii. 4, he cries out, "Lord, it is good to be here:" he is loth to go down the mount again. If you come to him, and tell him of a purchase, he thinks you bid him to his loss: what hidden manna doth the soul taste now! how sweet are the visits of God's Spirit! When Christ was alone in the wilderness, then the angel came to comfort him; when the soul is alone in holy meditations and ejaculations, then not an angel, but God's own Spirit doth come to comfort him. A Christian that meets with God in the mount, would not exchange his hours of meditation for the most orient pearls or sparkling beauties that the world can afford. No wonder David spent the whole day in meditation, Psal. cxix. 97. Nay, as if the day

had been too little, he borrows a part of the night too; "When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches," Psal. lxiii. 6. When others were sleeping, David was meditating. He who is given much to meditation, shall, with Samson, find a honeycomb in this duty: therefore let not the difficulty discourage. The pleasantness will infinitely countervail the pains.

Having removed these two objections out of the way, let me again revive the exhortation to "meditate in God's law day and night." And there are two sorts of meditation which I would persuade to.

Ch. XII.—*Concerning occasional Meditations.*

1. Occasional, and 2. Deliberate.

1. Occasional meditations; such as are taken up on any sudden occasion. There is hardly anything doth occur, but we may presently raise some meditation upon: as a good herbalist doth extract the spirits and quintessence out of every herb, so a Christian may from every emergence and occurrence extract matter of meditation. A gracious heart, like fire, turns all objects into fuel for meditation. I shall give you some instances. When you look up to the heavens, and see them richly embroidered with light, you may raise this meditation: If the footstool be so glorious, what is the throne where God himself sits? When you see the firmament bespangled with stars, think what is Christ the bright Morning Star! Rev. xxii. 16. Monica, Austin's mother, standing one day, and seeing the sun shine raised this meditation: O! if the sun be so bright, what is the light of God's presence! When you hear music that delights the senses, presently raise this meditation: What music like a good conscience; this is the bird of paradise within, whose chirping melody doth enchant and ravish the soul with joy; he that hath this music all day, may take David's pillow at night, and say with that sweet singer, "I will lay me down in peace and sleep." Psal. iv. 8. How blessed is he who can find heaven in his own bosom! When you are dressing yourselves in the morning, awaken your meditation, think thus, But have I been dressing the hidden man of the heart?

1 Pet. iii. 4; have I looked at my face in the glass of God's Word? I have put on my clothes, but have I put on Christ? It is reported of Pambo, that seeing a gentlewoman dressing herself all the morning by her glass, he fell a-weeping: O, saith he, this woman hath spent the morning in dressing her body, and I sometimes spend scarce an hour in dressing my soul! When you sit down to dinner, let your meditation feed upon this first course, How blessed are they who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God! What a royal feast will that be which hath God for the founder! What a love-feast where none shall be admitted but friends!

When you go to bed at night, imagine thus: Shortly I shall put off the earthly clothes of my body, and make my bed in the grave. When you see the judge going to the assizes, and hear the trumpet blow, think with yourselves, as Jerome did, that you are hearing that shrill trumpet sounding in your ears, "Arise ye dead, and come to judgment." When you see a poor man going in the streets, raise this meditation: Here is a walking picture of Christ, "He had no place where to lay His head," Matt. viii. 20. My Saviour became poor, that I through his poverty might be made rich. When you go to church, think thus: I am now going to hear God speak, let me not stop my ear; if I refuse to hear him speaking in his word, I shall next hear him speaking in his wrath, Psal. ii. 5. When you walk abroad in your orchard, and see the plants bearing and the herbs flourishing, think how pleasing a sight it is to God to see a thriving Christian; how beautiful are the trees of righteousness when they are hung full of fruit, Phil. i. 11, when they abound in faith, humility, knowledge! When you pluck a rosebud in your garden, raise this contemplation: How lovely are the early puttings forth of grace! God prizeth a Christian in the bud, he likes the bloomings of youth rather than the sheddings of old age. When you eat a grape from the tree, think of Christ the true vine; how precious is the blood of that grape! such rare clusters grow there, that the angels themselves delight to taste of them. It is said of Austin, that he was much in these extempore meditations. A gracious heart, like the philosopher's stone, turns all into gold. It is stilling-time all the year with a Christian; he stilleth out

heavenly meditations from earthly occurrences. As the curious alchymist, when several metals are mingled together, can by his skill extract the gold and silver from the baser metals; so a Christian, by a divine alchymy, can extract golden meditations from the various objects he beholds. Indeed it argues a spiritual heart, to turn everything to a spiritual use; and we have Christ's own example for these occasional meditations, John iv. 7, 10, 13, 14. While he sat on Jacob's well, he presently meditates on that, and breaks forth into a most excellent discourse concerning the water of life. So much for occasional meditations.

2. Be exhorted to deliberate meditations, which are the chief. Set some time apart every day, that you may, in a serious and solemn manner, converse with God in the mount. A godly man is a man set apart, Psal. iv. 3, as God sets him apart by election, so he sets himself apart by meditation.

Ch. XIII.—*For the right timing of Meditation.*

Quest. 1. What is the fittest time for meditation?

Ans. For the timing of it, it is hard to prescribe, because of men's various callings and employments. But, if I may freely speak my thoughts, the morning is the fittest time for meditation. The best time to converse with God is, when we may be most private; that is, before worldly occasions stand knocking as so many suitors at the door to be let in: the morning is, as it were, the cream of the day; let the cream be taken off, and let God have it. In the distilling of strong water, the first water that is drawn from the still is more full of spirits, the second drawing is weaker; so the first meditations that are stilled from the mind in a morning are the best, and we shall find them to be most full of life and spirits. The morning is the golden hour. God loved the first-fruits; "The first of the first-fruits thou shalt bring into the house of the Lord," Exod. xxiii. 19. Let God have the first-fruits of the day; the first of our thoughts must be set upon heaven. The student takes the morning for his study. The usurer gets up in the morning and looks over his books of account. A Christian must begin with God in the morning. David was with God before break of day; "I prevented the dawning of the morning," Psal. cxix. 147.

Quest. 2. But why the morning for meditation?

Ans. 1. Because in the morning the mind is fittest for holy duties; a Christian is most himself then. What weary devotion will there be at night when a man is quite tired out with the business of the day! he will be fitter to sleep than to meditate. The morning is the queen of the day; then the fancy is quickest, the memory strongest, the spirits freshest, the organ of the body most disposed, having been recruited by sleep. It is a sure rule, then is the best time to serve God, when we find ourselves most in tune. In the morning the heart is like a viol strung and put in tune, and then it makes the sweetest melody.

2. The morning thoughts stay longest with us the day after; the wool takes the first dye best, and it is not easily worn out. When the mind receives the impression of good thoughts in the morning, it holds this sacred dye the better; and, like a colour in grain, it will not easily be lost. The heart keeps the relish of morning meditations, as a vessel that receives a tincture and savour of the wine that is first put into it; or as a chest of sweet linen, that keeps the scent a great while after. Perfume thy mind with heavenly thoughts in the morning, and it will not lose its spiritual fragrancy. Wind up thy heart towards heaven in the beginning of the day, and it will go the better all the day after. It is with receiving thoughts into the mind, as it is with receiving guests into an inn: the first guests that come fill the best rooms in the house; if others come after, worse rooms will serve them: so, when the mind entertains holy meditations for its morning-guests, if afterwards earthly thoughts come, they are put into some of the worst rooms, they lodge lowest in the affections. The best rooms are taken up in the morning for Christ. He that loseth his heart in the morning in the world, will hardly find it again all the day after.

3. It is a part of that solemn respect and honour we give to God, to let him have the first thoughts of the day: we give persons of quality the precedency, we let them take the first place. If we honour God, whose name is reverend and holy, we shall let the thoughts of God take place of all other. When the world hath the first of our thoughts, it is a sign the world lies uppermost, we love it most. The first thing a

covetous man meditates on in the morning, is his money; a sign his gold lies nearest to his heart. O Christians, let God have your morning meditations! It displeases God to have the world served before him. Suppose a king and a yeoman were to dine in the same room, and to sit at two tables: if the yeoman should have his meat brought up, and be served first, the king might well be displeased, and look upon it as a contempt done to his person. When the world shall be served first, all our morning thoughts attending it, and the Lord shall be put off with the dregs of the day, when our thoughts begin to run low, is not this a contempt done to the God of glory.

4. Equity requires it. God deserves the first of our thoughts. We had a being in his thoughts before we had a being; he thought upon us "before the foundations of the world," Eph. i. 4. Before we fell, he was thinking how to raise us. We had the morning of his thoughts. O! what thoughts of free grace, what thoughts of peace hath he had towards us! we have taken up his thoughts from eternity: if we have had some of God's first thoughts, well may he have our first thoughts.

5. This is to imitate the pattern of the saints. Job rose early in the morning, and offered, Job i. 5. David when he awaked was with God, Psal. cxxxix. 18; and indeed this is the way to have a morning blessing. "In the morning the dew fell," Exod. xvi. 13. The dew of a blessing falls early; now we are likeliest to have God's company. If you would meet with a friend, you go betimes in the morning before he be gone out. We read that the Holy Ghost came down upon the apostles, Acts ii. 3, 4, and it was in the morning, as may be gathered from Peter's sermon, ver. 15, it was but "the third hour of the day." The morning is the time for fruitfulness, "In the morning shalt thou make thy seed to flourish," Isa. xvii. 11. By morning meditation we make the seed of grace to flourish.

I would not by this wholly exclude evening meditation. Isaac went out to meditate in the even-tide, Gen. xxiv. 63. When business is over, and everything calm, it is good to take a turn with God in the evening. God had his evening sacrifice, as well as his morning, Ex. xxix. 39. As the cream at

the top is sweet, so likewise the sugar at the bottom. In two cases, the evening meditation doth well.

1. In case such hath been the urgency of business, that thou hast time only for reading and prayer; then recompense the want of the morning with evening meditation.

2. In case thou findest thyself more inclined to good thoughts in the evening; for sometimes there is a greater *impetus** upon the heart, a greater aptitude and tuneableness of mind; dare not neglect meditation at such a time. Who knows but it may be a quenching the Spirit! Do not drive this blessed dove from the ark of thy soul. In these cases evening meditation is seasonable. But I say, if I may cast in my verdict, the morning is to be preferred. As the flower of the sun opens in the morning to take in the sweet beams of the sun, so open thy soul in the morning to take in the sweet thoughts of God. And so much for the timing of meditation.

CH. XIV.—*How long Christians should be conversant with this Duty.*

Quest. 2. But how long should I meditate?

Ans. If we consider how much of our time is given to the world, it is hard if we cannot give God at least one half hour every day. I shall only say this for a general rule. Meditate till thou findest thy heart grow warm in this duty.

If, when a man is cold, you ask how long he should stand by the fire? Surely, till he be thoroughly warm, and made fit for his work. So, Christian, thy heart is cold; never a day, no, not the hottest day in summer, but it freezeth there. Now stand at the fire of meditation till thou findest thy affections warmed, and thou art made more fit for spiritual service. David mused till his heart waxed hot within him, Psal. xxxix. 3. I will conclude this with that excellent saying of Bernard, "Lord, I will never come away from thee without thee." Let this be a Christian's resolution not to leave off his meditations of God till he find something of God in him: some ardent desires after God, Cant. v. 4, some "flamings of love," Cant. v. 8.

* Desire, ardour, force.

Ch. XV.—*Concerning the usefulness of Meditation.*

Having answered these questions, I shall next show the benefit and usefulness of meditation.

I know not any duty that brings in greater income and revenue than this. It is reported of Thales, that he left the affairs of state to become a contemplating philosopher. O! did we know the advantage which is gained by this duty, we would often retire from the noise and hurry of the world, that we might give ourselves to meditation.

The benefits of meditation appears in seven particulars:—

I. Meditation is an excellent means to profit by the Word. Reading may bring a truth into the head; meditation brings it into the heart. Better meditate on one sermon than hear five. I observe many put up their bills in our congregations, and complain that they cannot profit; may not this be the chief reason, because they chew not the cud, they do not meditate on what they have heard. If an angel should come from heaven, and preach to men, nay, if Jesus Christ himself were their preacher, they would never profit without meditation. It is the settling of the milk that makes it turn to cream; and it is the settling of a truth in the mind, that makes it turn to spiritual aliment. The bee sucks the flower, and then works it in the hive, and makes honey of it: the hearing of a truth preached is the sucking of a flower; there must be a working it in the hive of the heart by meditation, before it will turn to honey. There is a disease in children called the rickets, when they have great heads, but their lower parts are small and thrive not. I wish many of the professors in London have not the spiritual rickets, they have great heads, much knowledge, but yet they thrive not in godliness, their heart is faint, their feet feeble, they walk not vigorously in the ways of God; and the cause of this disease is, the want of meditation. Illumination without meditation makes us no better than devils. Satan is an angel of light, yet black enough.

II. Meditation doth make the heart serious, and then it is ever best. Meditation doth ballast the heart: when the ship is ballasted, it is not so soon overturned by the wind; and when the heart is ballasted with meditation, it is not so

soon overturned with vanity. Some Christians have light hearts, "his prophets are light." Zeph. iii. 4. A light Christian will be blown into any opinion or vice; you may blow a feather any way: there are many feathery Christians; the devil no sooner comes with a temptation, but they are ready to take fire. Now meditation makes the heart serious, and God saith of a serious Christian, as David of Goliath's sword, "there is none like that, give it me." Meditation consolidates a Christian. Solid gold is best; the solid Christian is the only metal that will pass current with God. The more serious the heart grows, the more spiritual; and the more spiritual, the more it resembles the Father of spirits. When a man is serious, he is fittest for employment. The serious Christian is fittest for service, and it is meditation brings the heart into this blessed frame.

III. Meditation is the bellows of the affections. Meditation hatcheth good affections, as the hen her young ones, by sitting on them. We light affection at this fire of meditation; "While I was musing the fire burned," Psal. xxxix. 3. David was meditating on mortality, and see how his heart was affected with it, ver. 4. "Lord, make me to know mine end and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am." The reason our affections are so chill and cold in spiritual things, is, because we do not warm ourselves more at the fire of meditation. Illumination makes us shining lamps; meditation makes us burning lamps. What is it to know Christ by speculation, and not by affection! It is the proper work of meditation to excite and blow up holy passions. What sparklings of love in such a soul! When David had meditated on God's law, he could not fail to love it, "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day," Psal. cxix. 97. When the spouse had by meditation viewed those singular beauties in her beloved, white and ruddy, Cant. v., she grew sick of love, ver. 8. Galeatius Caraccialus, that famous marquis of Vico, who had been engaged much in the contemplation of Christ, breaks out into a holy pathos, Let their money perish with them, who esteem all the gold in the world worth one hour's communion with Jesus Christ!

IV. Meditation fits for holy duties. The musician first puts his instrument in tune, and then he plays a lesson;

meditation tunes the heart, and then it is fit for any holy service. As the sails to the ship, so is meditation to duty, it carries on the soul more swiftly.

1. Meditation fits for hearing. When the ground is softened by meditation, then it is fit for the plough and the seed; when the heart is softened by meditation, then is a fit time for the seed of the Word to be sown.

2. Meditation fits for prayer. Prayer is the spiritual pulse of the soul, by which it beats strongly after God. There is no living without prayer. A man cannot live, unless he takes breath; no more can the soul, unless it breathes out its desires to God. Prayer ushers in mercy, and prayer sanctifies mercy, 1 Tim, iv. 5, it makes mercy to be mercy. Prayer hath power over God, Hos. xii. 4. Prayer comes with letters of *mandamus* to heaven. Isa. xlv. 11. Prayer is the spiritual leech, that sucks the poison of sin out of the soul. What a blessed (shall I say duty or) privilege is prayer! Now meditation is a help to prayer; Gerson calls it the nurse of prayer. Meditation is like the oil to the lamp; the lamp of prayer will soon go out, unless meditation cherish and support it. Meditation and prayer are like two turtles; if you separate one the other dies. A cunning angler observes the time and season when the fish bite best, and then he throws in his angle: when the heart is warmed by meditation, then is the best season to throw in the angle of prayer, and fish for mercy. After Isaac had been in the field meditating, he was fit for prayer when he came home. When the gun is full of powder, it is fittest to discharge. So when the mind is full of good thoughts, a christian is fittest by prayer to discharge; then he sends up whole vollies of sighs and groans to heaven. Meditation hath a double benefit in it, it pours in, and pours out: first it pours good thoughts into the mind, and then it pours out those thoughts again in prayer. Meditation first furnishes with matter to pray, and then it furnishes with a heart to pray Psal. xxxix. 3. "I was musing," saith David, and the very next words are a prayer, "Lord make me to know my end;" and, "I muse on the works of thy hands, I stretch forth my hands to thee;" Psal. cxliii. 5. 6, the musing of his head made way forthestretching forthof his hands in prayer. When Christ was upon the mount, then he prayed: so when

the soul is upon the mount of meditation, then it is in tune for prayer. Prayer is the child of meditation: meditation leads the van, and prayer brings up the rear.

3. Meditation fits for humiliation. When David had been contemplating the works of creation, their splendour, harmony, motion, influence, he lets the plumes of pride fall, and begins to have self-abasing thoughts, "When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and stars which thou hast ordained, What is man that thou art mindful of him!" Psal. viii. 3, 4.

V. Meditation is a strong antidote against sin. Most sin is committed for want of meditation: men sin through thoughtlesness and passion. Would they be so brutishly sensual as they are, if they did seriously meditate what sin is? Would they take this viper in their hand, if they did but consider before of the sting? Sin puts a worm into conscience, a sting into death, a fire into hell. Did men meditate on this, that after all their dainty dishes, death will bring in the reckoning, and that they must pay the reckoning in hell, they would say as David, in another sense, "Let me not eat of their dainties," Psal. cxli. 4. The devil's apple hath a bitter core in it. Did men think of this, surely it would put them into a cold sweat, and be as the angel's drawn sword to affright them. Meditation is a golden shield to beat back sin. When Joseph's mistress tempted him to wickedness, meditation preserved him, "How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Meditation makes the heart like wet tinder, it will not take the devil's fire.

VI. Meditation is a cure of covetousness. The covetous man is called an idolater, Col. iii. 5. Though he will not bow down to an idol, yet he worships graven images in his coin. Now meditation is an excellent means to lessen our esteem of the world. Great things seem little to him who stands high: if he could live among the stars, the earth would seem as nothing. A christian who stands high upon the pinnacle of meditation, how do all worldly things disappear, and seem as nothing to him! He sees not that in them which men of the world do. He is got into his tower, and heaven is his prospect. What is said of God, I may allude to with reverence: "He dwelleth on high, he humbleth himself to behold

the things done on the earth," Psal. cxiii. 5, 6. The christian that dwelleth on high by meditation, accounts it a humbling and abasing of himself to look down upon the earth, and behold the things done in this lower region. Saint Paul, whose meditations were sublime and seraphical, looked at things which were not seen, 2 Cor. iv. 18. How did he trample upon the world! how did he scorn it! "I am crucified to the world," Gal. vi. 14, as if he had said, it is too much below me to mind it. He who is catching at a crown, will not fish for gudgeons, as Cleopatra once said to Mark Antony. A christian who is elevated by holy meditation, will not set his heart where his feet should be, upon the earth.

VII. Holy meditation banishes vain and sinful thought; it purifies the fancy; "How long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee," Jer. iv. 14. The mind is the shop or workhouse where sin is first framed. Sin begins at the thoughts. The thoughts are the first plotters and contrivers of evil. The mind and fancy is a stage where sin is first acted; the malicious man acts over sin in his thoughts, he concontemplates revenge. The impure person acts over concupiscence in his thoughts, he contemplates lust. The Lord humbles us for our contemplative wickedness, "If thou hast thought evil, lay thy hand upon thy mouth," Prov. xxx. 32. How much sin do men commit in the chamber of their imagination! Now meditating in God's law would be a good means to banish these sinful thoughts. If David had carried the book of the law about him, and meditated in it, he had not looked on Bathsheba with a lascivious eye, 2 Sam. xi. 2. Holy meditation would have quenched that wild-fire of lust. The word of God is pure, Psal. cxix. 140, not only subjective, but effective. It is not only pure in itself, but it makes them pure that meditate in it. Christ whipped the buyers and sellers out of the temple, John ii. 15. Holy meditation would whip out idle and vagrant thoughts, and not suffer them to lodge in the mind. What is the reason the angels in heaven have not a vain thought? They have a sight of God, their eye is never off him. If the eye of the soul were fixed on God by meditation, how would vain impure thoughts vanish! As when that woman, Judg. ix. 53, was in the tower, and Abimelech came near to the town to enter it, she

threw a mill-stone out of the tower upon him, and killed him: so when we are entered into the high tower of meditation, and sinful thoughts would come near to enter, we may from this tower throw a mill-stone upon them, and destroy them. And thus you have seen the benefit of meditation.

Ch. XVI.—*Setting forth the Excellency of Meditation*

Aristotle places felicity in the contemplation of the mind. Meditation is highly commended by Austin, Chrysostom, Cyprian, as the nursery of piety. Jerome calls it his paradise; with what words shall I set it forth? Other duties have done excellently; but "thou excellest them all." Meditation is a friend to the graces; it helps to water the plantation. I may call it, in Basil's expression, the treasury where all the graces are locked up; and, with Theophylact, the very gate and portal by which we enter into glory. By meditation the spirits are raised and heightened to a kind of angelical frame. Meditation doth sweetly anticipate happiness, it puts us in heaven before our time. Meditation brings God and the soul together, 1 John iii. 2.

Meditation is the saint's perspective glass, by which they see things invisible. It is the golden ladder by which they ascend paradise; it is the spy they send abroad to search the land of promise, and it brings a bunch of grapes with it; it is the dove they send out, and it brings an olive branch of peace in its mouth; but who can tell how sweet honey is, save they that taste it? The excellency of meditation I leave to experienced christians, who will say the comfort of it may be better felt than expressed.

To excite all to this panchreston,* to this so useful, excellent, I had almost said angelical, duty, let me lay down some divine motives to meditation, and how glad should I be if I could revive this duty among christians.

Ch. XVII.—*Containing divine motives to Meditation.*

Motive 1. Meditation doth discriminate and characterize a man; by this he may take a measure of his heart, whether

* Universal remedy, precious for all.

it be good or bad; let me allude to that; "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he," Prov. xxiii. 7, as the meditation is, such is the man. Meditation is the touchstone of a christian; it shows what metal he is made of. It is a spiritual index; the index shows what is in the book, so meditation shows what is in the heart. If all a man's meditations are how he may get power against sin, how he may grow in grace, how he may have more communion with God, this shows what is in his heart; the frame of his heart is spiritual; by the beating of this pulse, judge of the health of thy soul. It is the character of a godly man; he fears God, "and thinks of his name," Mal. iii. 16. Whereas if the thoughts are taken up with pride and lust, as are the thoughts, such is the heart; "their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity," Isa. lix. 7. When vain sinful thoughts come, men make much of them, they make room for them, they shall diet and lodge with them; if a good thought chance to come into their mind, it is soon turned out of doors, as an unwelcome guest. What need we further witness? this argues much unsoundness of heart; let this provoke to holy meditation.

Motive 2. The thoughts of God, as they bring delight with them, so they leave peace behind: those are the best hours which are spent with God. Conscience, as the bee, gives honey; it will not grieve us when we come to die, that we have spent our time in holy soliloquies and ejaculations. But what honour will the sinner have, when he shall ask conscience the question, as Joram did Jehu. 2 Kings ix. 22. Is it peace, conscience, is it peace? and conscience shall say as Jehu, "What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel, and her witchcrafts are so many?" Oh how sad will it be with a man at such a time! Christians, as you tender your peace, "meditate in God's law day and night."

This duty of meditation being neglected, the heart will run wild, it will not be a vineyard, but a wilderness.

Motive 3. Meditation keeps the heart in a good decorum. It plucks up the weeds of sin, it prunes the luxuriant branches, it waters the flowers of grace, it sweeps all the walks in the heart, that Christ may walk there with delight. For want of holy meditation the heart lies like the sluggard's field, Prov. xxiv. 31, all overgrown with thorns and briers, unclean

earthly thoughts. It is rather the devil's hogstye, than Christ's garden. It is like a house fallen to ruin, fit only for unclean spirits to inhabit.

Motive 4. The fruitlesness of all other meditations. One man lays out his thoughts about laying up; his meditations are how to raise himself in the world, and when he hath arrived at an estate, often God blows upon it, Hag, i. 9. His care is for his child, and perhaps God takes it away; or if it lives it proves a cross. Another meditates how to satisfy his ambition, "Honour me before the people," 1 Sam. xv. 30. Alas, what is honour but a meteor in the air; a torch lighted by the breath of people, with the least puff blown out! how many live to see their names buried before them! When this sun is in the meridian, it doth soon set in a cloud.

Thus fruitless are those meditations which do not centre upon God. It is but to carry dust against the wind. But especially at death; then a man sees all those thoughts which were not spent upon God to be fruitless, "In that very day his thoughts perish," Psal. cxlvi. 4. I may allude to it in this sense; all worldly, vain thoughts in that day of death perish, and come to nothing: what good will the whole globe of the world do at such a time? Those who have revelled out their thoughts in impertinencies will but be the more disquieted; it will cut them to the heart to think how they have spun a fool's thread. A Scythian captain having, for a draught of water, yielded up the city, cried out, What have I lost? what have I betrayed? So will it be with that man when he comes to die, who hath spent all his meditations upon the world; he will say what have I lost? what have I betrayed? I have lost heaven, I have betrayed my soul. And should not the consideration of this fix our minds upon the thoughts of God and glory? All other meditations are fruitless; like a piece of ground which hath much cost laid out upon it, but it yields no crop.

Motive 5. Holy meditation is not lost. God hath a pen to write down all our good thoughts, "A book of remembrance was written for them that thought upon his name," Mal. iii. 16. As God hath all our members, so all our meditations, written in his book. God pens our closet devotion.

Motive 6. The sixth motive is in the text, namely, the blessedness affixed to the meditating christian, "Blessed is the man," &c. ver. 1. Say not it is hard to meditate. What think you of blessedness? Lycurgus could draw the Lacedemonians to anything by rewards. If men can meditate with delight on that which will make them cursed, shall not we meditate on that which will make us blessed? nay, in the Hebrew it is in the plural, blessednesses; we shall have one blessedness upon another.

Motive 7. Lastly, delightful meditation in God's law is the best way for a man to prosper in his estate. "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein for there thou shalt make thy way prosperous," Josh. i. 8. I leave this to their consideration who are desirous to thrive in the world; and let this serve for a motive to meditation.

The next thing remaining, is, to lay down some rules about meditation.

Ch. XVIII.—*Prescribing rules about Meditation.*

Rule 1. When thou goest to meditate be very serious in the work. Let there be a deep impression upon thy soul; and that thou mayest be serious in meditation, do these two things: 1. Get thyself into a posture of holy reverence. Overawe thy heart with the thoughts of God, and the incomprehensibleness of his majesty. When thou art at the work of meditation, remember thou art now to deal with God. If an angel from heaven did appoint to meet thee at such an hour, wouldst thou not address thyself with all seriousness and solemnity to meet him? Behold a greater than an angel is here; the God of glory is present: he hath an eye upon thee, he sees the carriage of thy heart when thou art alone. Think with thyself, O christian! when thou art going to meditate, that thou art now to deal with him in private whom the angels adore, and before whom the devils tremble. Think with thyself, that thou art now in his presence before whom thou must shortly stand, and all the world with thee, to receive their doom. Thou must be removed, and how soon thou knowest not, from the closet to the tribunal.

2. That thy heart may be serious in meditation, labour to possess thy thoughts with the solemnity and greatness of the work thou art now going about. As David said concerning his building a house for God, "the work is great," 1 Chron. xxix. 1, so it may be said of meditation, the work is great, and we had need gather and rally together all the powers of the soul to the work. If thou wert to set about a business wherein thy life were concerned, how serious wouldst thou be in the thoughts of it! In the business of meditation thy soul is concerned; eternity depends upon it; if thou neglect, or art slight in it, thou runnest a hazard of thy salvation. If Archimedes was so serious in drawing his mathematical line, that he minded not the sacking of the city, O how serious should a Christian be when he is drawing a line for eternity! When thou art going to meditate, thou art going about the greatest work in the world.

Rule 2. Read before you meditate. "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate in it," Josh. i. 8. The law must be in Joshua's mouth; he was first to read and then meditate; "Give attendance to reading," 1 Tim. iv. 13. Then it follows, "meditate on these things," ver. 15. Reading doth furnish with matter; it is the oil that feeds the lamp of meditation. Reading helps to rectify meditation. Austin saith well, that meditation without reading will be erroneous. Naturally the mind is defiled as well as the conscience, Tit. i. 15; the mind will be minting* thoughts, and how many untruths doth it mint! therefore first read in the book of the law, and then meditate: be sure your meditations be grounded upon Scripture. There is a strange Utopia in the fancies of some men; they take those for true principles which are false; and if they mistake their principles, they must needs be wrong in their meditations. He that is of the Sadducees' opinion, that there is no resurrection, mistakes a principle; now while he is meditating on this, he is at last carried to direct atheism. He that is of the antinomians' opinion, that there is no law to a justified person, mistakes a principle, and while he is meditating on this, he at last falls into scandal. Thus the mind having laid in wrong principles, and taking that for a truth which is not,

* Coining.

the meditation must needs be erroneous, and a man at last goes to hell upon a mistake; therefore be sure you read before you meditate, that you may say, it is written. Meditate on nothing but what you believe to be a truth; believe nothing to be a truth, but what can show its letters of credence from the Word. Observe this rule, let reading usher in meditation: reading without meditation is unfruitful; meditation without reading is dangerous.

Rule 3. Do not multiply the subjects of meditation; that is, meditate not on too many things at once; like the bird that hops from one bough to another, and stays nowhere: single out rather some one head at a time, which you will meditate upon. Too much variety distracts. One truth driven home by meditation will most kindly affect the heart. A man that is to shoot, sets up one mark that he aims at to hit; when thou art to shoot thy mind above the world by meditation, set one thing before thee to hit. If thou art to meditate on the passion of Christ, let that take up all thy thoughts; if upon death, confine thy thoughts to that: one subject at a time is enough. Martha while she was cumbered about many things, neglected the one thing; so while our meditations are taken up about many things, we lose that one thing which should affect our hearts, and do us more good. Drive but one wedge of meditation at a time, but be sure you drive it home to the heart. Those who aim at a whole flock of birds hit none. When several medicines are applied together, the one hinders the virtue of the other; whereas a single medicine might do good.

Rule 4. To meditation join examination. When you have been meditating on any spiritual subject, put a query to thy soul, and though it be short, let it be serious. O my soul! is it thus with thee or not? When thou hast been meditating about the fear of God, that is the "beginning of wisdom," Prov. i. 7, put a query, O my soul! is this fear planted in thy heart? thou art almost come to the end of thy days, art thou yet come to the beginning of wisdom? When thou hast been meditating on Christ, his virtues, his privileges, put a query, O my soul! dost thou love Him who is so lovely, Cant. v. 16, and art thou engrafted into him? art thou a living branch of this living vine? When thou hast been meditating upon the

graces of the Spirit, put a query, O my soul! art thou adorned as the bride of Christ with this chain of pearl? hast thou thy certificate for heaven ready? will not thy graces be to seek when thou shouldst have them to show? Thus should a Christian, in his retirements, parley often with his heart.

For want of this examination, meditation doth evaporate and come to nothing. For want of examination joined with meditation, many are strangers to their own hearts; though they live known to others, they die unknown to themselves. Meditation is like a perspective glass by which we contemplate heavenly objects; but self-examination is like a looking-glass by which we see into our own souls, and can judge how it is with us. Meditation joined with examination, is like the sun on the dial, which shows how the day goes; it shows us how our hearts stand affected to spiritual things.

Rule 5. Shut up meditation with prayer; pray over your meditations. Prayer sanctifies everything; without prayer they are but unhallowed meditations; prayer fastens meditation upon the soul; prayer is a tying a knot at the end of meditation, that it doth not slip; pray that God will keep those holy meditations in your mind for ever, that the savour of them may abide upon your hearts; "O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people," 1 Chron. xxix. 18. So let us pray, that when we have been musing on heavenly things, and our hearts have waxed hot within us, we may not cool into a sinful tepidness and lukewarmness, but that our affections may be as the lamp of the sanctuary, always burning.

Rule 6. The last rule is, let meditation be reduced to practice; live over your meditation. "Thou shalt meditate in this book, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein," Josh. i. 8. Meditation and practice, like two sisters, must go hand in hand. Cassian saith, that the contemplative life cannot be perfected without the practice. We read that the angels had wings, and hands under their wings, Ezek. i. 8, it may be an hieroglyphical emblem of this truth; Christians must not only fly upon the wing of meditation, but they must be active in obedience; they must have hands under their wings. The end of meditation is

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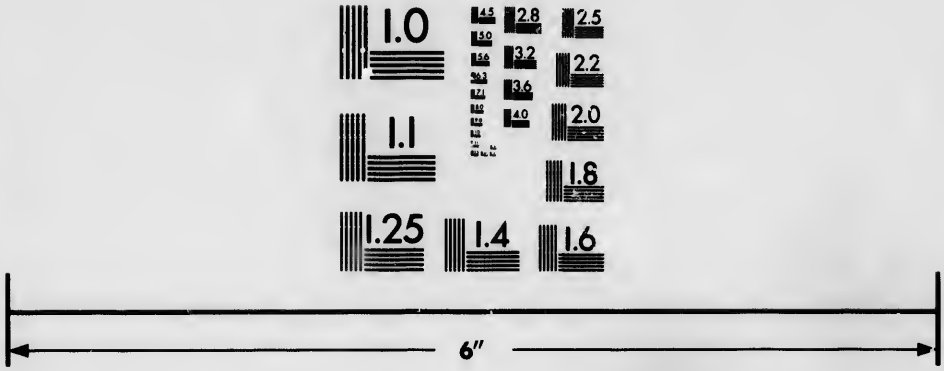

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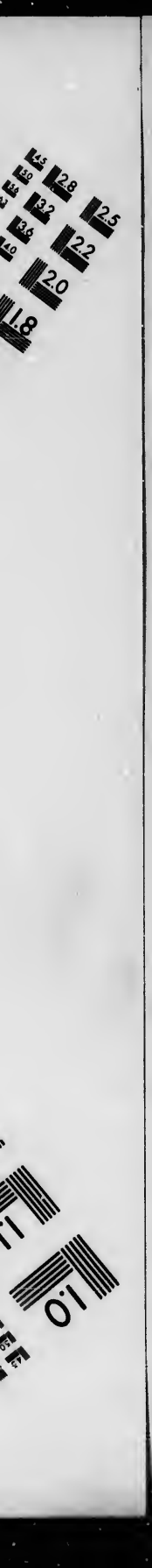
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action. We must not only meditate in God's law but walk in his law, Deut. xxviii. 9. Without this we are like those gnostics, of whom Epithanius complains, they had much knowledge, but were in their lives licentious. Christians must be like the sun, which doth not only send forth heat, but goes its circuit round the world. It is not enough that the affections be heated by meditation, but we must go our circuit too; that is, move regularly in the sphere of obedience. After warming at the fire of meditation, we must be fitter for work. Meditation is the life of religion, and practice is the life of meditation. It is said to the honour of Nazianzen, that he lived over his own sermons. So a good Christian must live over his own meditations.

For instance: 1. When you have been meditating on sin, which, for its bitterness, is compared to grapes of gall, for its damnableness, to poison of asps, and you begin to burn in a holy indignation against sin, now put your meditations in practice, give sin a bill of divorce; "If iniquity be in thy hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles," Job xi. 14.

2. When you have been meditating on the graces of the Spirit, let the verdure and lustre of these graces be seen in you; live these graces; meditate, "that you may observe and do." It was St. Paul's counsel to Timothy, "Exercise thyself unto godliness," 1 Tim. iv. 7. Meditation and practice are like a pair of compasses; the one part of the compass fixeth upon the centre, and the other part goes round the circumference: a Christian by meditation fixeth upon God as the centre, and by practice goes round the circumference of the commandments. A man who hath let his thoughts run out upon riches, will not only have them in the notion, but will endeavour to get riches.

That this rule may be well observed, consider, 1. It is only the practical part of religion will make a man blessed.

2. If when you have meditated in God's law, you do not obey his law, you will come short of them who have come short of heaven.

3. Meditation without practice will increase a man's condemnation.