

Monergism

**A Child
of Light
Walking
in Darkness**

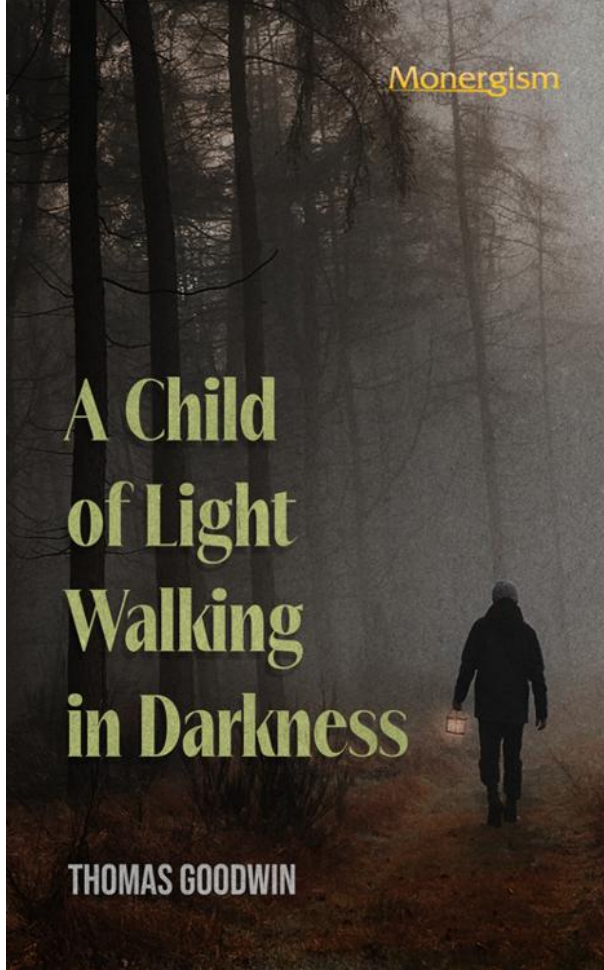


THOMAS GOODWIN

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**A Child
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in Darkness**

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A Child of Light Walking in Darkness

by Thomas Goodwin

OR

A TREATISE SHEWING THE CAUSES BY WHICH, THE
CASES WHEREIN, AND THE ENDS FOR WHICH, GOD
LEAVES HIS CHILDREN TO DISTRESS OF CONSCIENCE.
TOGETHER WITH

**DIRECTIONS HOW TO WALK SO AS
TO COME FORTH OF SUCH A
CONDITION WITH OTHER
OBSERVATIONS UPON ISAIAH L. 10,
11. 'WHEN HE HIDETH HIS FACE,
WHO CAN BEHOLD HIM?'—JOB
34:29.**

**HONORATISSIMO
DOMINOROBERTODOMINO
BROOKE, BARONI BROOKE DE
BEAUCHAMP COURT, HEROIEXIMII
ACUMINIS, SUMMI CANDORIS,
PIETATIS AC LITERARUM
CULTORI, FAUTORIQUE, OPELLAM**

**HANC, LABORANTIS CONSCIENTIÆ
CONSOLATORIAM, IN
PERPETUÆ OBSERVANTIÆ
TESTIMONIUM: DO. DICO.
CONSECRO. THOMAS GOODWIN.**

**TO MY MOST HONOURED
LORD ROBERT LORD BROOKE,
BARON BROOKE OF BEAUCHAMP
COURT, A HERO, OF RARE
INTELLIGENCE, OF EXTREME
CANDOUR, A CULTIVATOR OF PIETY
AND LEARNING HIMSELF, AND A
FAVOURER OF THEM IN OTHERS, I
GIVE, DEDICATE, DEVOTE THIS
LITTLE WORK, DESIGNED TO
COMFORT DISTRESSED
CONSCIENCES, IN TOKEN
OF UNENDING RESPECT. THOMAS
GOODWIN.**

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A Child of Darkness Walking in Light

TO THE READER

THAT which drew these sermons from me, next to thy good, was to right myself. They were first preached eight years since, and some notes thereof were, to say no more, dispersed into the hands of many, to my prejudice. They are here presented as they were preached, with little alteration or addition in method, style, and matter; only, to make up the treatise more complete, I entirely

added, against the publishing thereof, that whole discourse about Satan's part and hand in these desertions, beginning at Chap. 6. In handling which, I trust I have not at all incurred that severe increpation of the Apostle against curious speculations about angels, of 'intruding into those things which I have not seen' ground and warrant for in the word. Sure I am, I have endeavoured to follow the school, in their labyrinths herein, no further than I found a clue of Scripture and right reason clearly guiding and warranting my way; without which I account the ways of this old and winding serpent, in his communications to us, to be, as Solomon speaks, 'like the way of a serpent upon a stone,' hidden, and past tracing or finding out. And lest any of the weaker readers, especially those in distress, to whom more speculative and doctrinal discourses, though about things practical, prove usually tedious and displeasing, should, in reading that piece, be discouraged at the first, my advertisement is, that, if they find that part of the way craggy or tiresome, which I hope they will not, they would divert out of it, and come in again at Chap. 11; from whence to the end they shall find what is more accommodate to their understanding and conditions, and more practically speaking to their distress. The blessing of Heaven go with it!

THO. GOODWIN.

A CHILD OF LIGHT WALKING IN DARKNESS

PART I: A PARAPHRASE UPON THE WORDS (ISA. 50:10, 11)

Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God. Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks; walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This ye shall have of mine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.—ISA. 50:10, 11.

The words paraphrased

WE have in these words a true believer in his worst, and natural men in their best condition, set forth together unto our view; and withal the power of true faith, as it alone upholdeth him in the saddest hour of darkness that can befall him, opposed unto and compared with the falseness of their presumptuous confidence, in their greatest security; together with the differing supports of either; the one in ver. 10, the other in ver. 11.

First, take a true believer, who hath had the least beam of the 'light of the glory of God, which shines in the face of Christ,' 2 Cor. 4:6, let in upon his soul, and his heart so taken with that sight as it became eternally divorced from all things here below, and resolved to adventure all his future hopes of comfort and happiness in the enjoyment of that light of God's countenance alone: which that he may enjoy, he feareth to offend the Lord more than hell, and endeavoureth as truly 'to obey the voice of his servants,' as ever he desires to attain unto that happiness. Think with yourselves, what is the worst thing, next to the eternal loss of God, really and indeed, that can be supposed to befall this man. What worse than to have that cranny, through which he first espied that beam, to be as it were clean shut up, the 'light of God's countenance' withdrawn; yea, all light and appearance to him of his own graces withheld and

overclouded; the face of heaven so overcast with darkness that neither sunlight nor starlight appeareth to him, so as he hath no light; yea, further, finds his soul beset and besieged round with all the powers of hell and darkness, and the terrors of the Almighty shot into his soul? And he, thus quite left, walking in this darkness, is filled with strong fears and jealousies that God is not his God; nay, questioning whether he ever will be; yea, apprehending, by the wrath he feels, God to be become his enemy, Psalm 77:7. All this is set forth to us here as the very estate of one who 'feareth the Lord and obeys him;' and is comprehended in these words, 'that walketh in darkness, and hath no light.' You see him at his worst.

In which forlorn condition, what is there to be found to relieve and support this man? But only one thing, which is here held forth to him, 'the name of the Lord,' for him to trust and stay himself upon; both that name of God, Exod. 34:6, 'The Lord God, gracious and merciful,' &c., and that name of Christ which is called, Jer. 23:6, 'Jehovah our righteousness.' Both or either of which, he, by the naked hand of faith laying hold upon, may now make use of as of a staff, (as David compares it, Psalm 23:4,) whilst he thus 'walks in darkness,' and 'through the valley of the shadow of death,' safely to trust and stay himself upon, so as in the end to come forth 'to see light in God's light for evermore,' Psalm 36:9. You see likewise the prop of his soul in this condition.

On the contrary, let us behold, as all are here called to do, the best and most secure of unregenerate men, encompassed about with all means and supports of confidence and comfort, whether of legal righteousness of their own, which these Jews made boast of, together with the addition of all worldly and outward comforts, both which the prophet here compares to fire and sparks, as preserving light and comfort in them. As, (1.) Let their lives and natural dispositions abound with never so many sparks of legal righteousness, which themselves have kindled: for so he compares all those several acts and performances of natural and acquired righteousness, struck out and educed from the powers of natural principles improved, which

make a great blaze in a man's own opinion and esteem; which yet, not proceeding from the Holy Ghost baptizing them as with fire and renewing them, nor from internal principles of regeneration, which Christ compares to fire, Mark 9:49, are all in God's account but as a sacrifice offered up with strange fire, which was forbidden, and are here said to be of their own kindling. And such were the sparks in the light of which these Jews walked, who 'went about to establish their own righteousness,' Rom. 10:3, and with confidence trusted therein, and not on the name of the Lord. And further, (2.) Let those men be surrounded and encompassed about with the greatest splendour of worldly glory, and abound in all those good things this world can afford them,—the comforts whereof, Solomon, Eccles. 7:6, in like manner compares to a fire of thorns, and the pleasures of it to the crackling of thorns, as here to sparks,—and let them keep never so good fires to warm and cheer themselves withal, lay on as much every day as shall even encompass them about with sparks; and in the light and confidence of both these let them walk for many years, despising that other poor believer that feareth to be found in his own righteousness, and refuseth to be comforted by any of these: yet, let them know, says Christ, who is brought in as the speaker here, that when they have thus walked presumptuously and securely, and even walked themselves weary, as it is Isa. 40:31, weary of all their own ways and pleasures, as they will be one day; and then at their deathbeds think to lie down and rest them; they shall lie down indeed, says Christ, and their bed shall be of my making and providing,—'This you shall have of my hand; you shall lie down,'—but 'in a bed of sorrow' and despair, in which they shall lie down never to rise again.

CHAPTER I:

The first and main observation: That a child of God may walk in
darkness

The main proposition and subject of this discourse thence deduced: That a child of God may walk in darkness.—That thereby distress of conscience, and desertion in the want of assurance of justification, is meant, proved.

THIS to be the meaning of the words will more fully appear in opening the several propositions to be delivered out of them, whereof the first and principally intended is this: That one who truly fears God, and is obedient to him, may be in a condition of darkness, and have no light; and he may walk many days and years in that condition.

And herein, further to explain the text, and bottom this great point well upon it, and more particularly to discover what the condition of a child of God, thus in darkness, is, we will first inquire what is meant by walking in darkness here in this place.

First, Walking in darkness is taken in 1 John 1:6, for living in sin and ungodliness—in the commission of known sins or omission of known duties, going on in the works of darkness. But so it is not to be taken here; for Christ would not have encouraged such to trust in God, who is light, and there can be no fellowship between him and such darkness, as the Apostle tells us. Nay, the Holy Ghost reproves such as do 'lean on the Lord' and yet transgress, Mic. 3:11. And besides, the text speaks of such who for their present condition fear God and are obedient to him, which if they thus walked in darkness they could not be said to do. Neither—

Secondly, Is it to be meant of walking in ignorance, as, John 12:35, it is taken. For one that hath no light, in that sense, can never truly fear God nor obey him: the 'heart that wanteth knowledge is not good,' says Solomon, Prov. 19:2; and so to walk in darkness is accompanied with walking 'in vanity of mind,' Eph. 4:17. But—

Thirdly, He means it of discomfiture and sorrow, as often we find in Scripture darkness to be taken, as Eccles. 5:17; as, on the contrary, light, because it is so 'pleasant a thing to behold,' is put for comfort, Eccles. 11:7. And that so it is taken here is evident by that which is opposed in the next verse, 'Walk ye in your light, yet ye shall lie down in sorrow.' But—

Fourthly, Of what kind of sorrow, and for what? Whether from outward afflictions, or inward distress of mind and conscience; or, to use Solomon's distinction, whether by reason of man's ordinary infirmities, or of a wounded spirit? That is yet in question. And—

First, It is not to be restrained to outward afflictions only, which are called man's infirmities, as being common to man; which arise from things of this world, or from the men of the world; though to walk in darkness is so taken, Isa. 59:9, and I will not exclude it here. For, in them also, a man's best support is to trust in God; and it is the safest way to interpret Scriptures in the largest sense which the words and coherence will bear. But yet that cannot be the only or principal meaning of it; for besides what is further to be said to the contrary, he adds withal, 'and hath no light,' that is, no comfort. Now, as philosophers say, *non dantur puræ tenebræ*, there is no pure darkness without some mixture of light; so we may say, there is not mere or utter darkness caused by outward afflictions: no outward affliction can so universally environ the mind, as to shut up all the crannies of it, so that a man should have no light. And besides, God's people, when they walk in the greatest outward darkness, may have, yea, often use to have, most light in their spirits. But here is such an estate spoken of, such a darkness as hath no light in it. Therefore—

Secondly, It is principally to be understood of the want of inward comfort in their spirits, from something that is between God and them; and so meant of that darkness and terrors which accompany the want of the sense of God's favour. And so darkness is elsewhere taken for inward affliction of spirit and mind, and want of light, in point of assurance, that God is a man's God, and of the pardon of a

man's sins; so, Ps. 88:6, Heman useth this word to express his distress. And the reasons why it is thus to be understood here are—

First, Because the remedy here prescribed is faith; to stay himself upon God, and that as upon his God; he puts in his God, emphatically, because that is the point he is troubled about, and concerning which he is in darkness, and of which he would have such a one to be persuaded. And that is it which faith, which is propounded here as the remedy, doth in the first place and principally look unto, as its primary aim and object.

Secondly, In the foregoing verses he had spoken of justification, whereby God pardons our sins and accepts our persons; the prophet, or Christ in the person of his elect, (as some,) having expressed his assurance of this: 'God is near that justifies me, who shall condemn?' Which words the Apostle, Rom. 8:32, 33, doth allege in the point of justification, and to express the triumphing assurance of it; and applies them in the name and person of true believers too. But because there might be some poor souls, who, though truly fearing God, yet might want this assurance; and upon the hearing of this might be the more troubled, because not able to express that confidence which he did; therefore he adds, 'Who is among you that feareth the Lord, and walketh in darkness?' &c.: as if he should have said to such, Though you want the comfortable sense and assurance of this, yet be not discouraged; but do you exercise faith, go out of yourselves, rely upon Christ and that mercy which is to be found in God: you may fear God and want it, and you are to trust in God in the want of it.

Thirdly, These words have a relation also to the 4th verse, where he says, as that God had given him this assurance of his own justification, for his own particular comfort, in those immediately foregoing verses to the text, so there, that God had also given him the 'tongue of the learned, to minister a word of comfort in season to him that is weary and heavy laden:' and thereupon, in this verse, he accordingly shews the blessed condition of such persons as are most

weariness through long walking in darkness; and withal he discovereth to them the way of getting out of this darkness, and recovering comfort again. And in all the word of God there is not a more comfortable and seasonable word to one in such a condition to be found. All which argues it is spoken of inward darkness and trouble of spirit, and that in point of applying justification, and God to be a man's God.

CHAPTER II:

The two phrases, 'walking in darkness,' 'having no light'

The particulars of the distress contained in these two phrases: walking in darkness; having no light.

THE second thing to be inquired into is, What is the condition of such a one who is thus in darkness, and who hath no light? Which I will so far discover, as the phrases used here will give light into, by the help of other Scriptures.

1. First, he is said to have no light. 'Light,' saith the Apostle, Eph. 5:13, 'is that whereby things are made manifest,' that is, to the sense of sight, to which light properly belongs; and as light and faith are here severed, as you see, so sight also is, in 2 Cor. 5:7, distinguished from faith, which is the evidence of things absent and not seen, Heb. 11:1. When, therefore, here he says he hath no light, the meaning is, he wants all present sensible testimonies of God's favour to him; he sees nothing that may give sensible present witness of it to him. God's favour, and his own graces, and all the sensible tokens and evidences thereof, which are apprehended by spiritual sight, are become all as absent things, as if they were not, or never had been; that light which ordinarily discovers these as present, he is clean deprived of.

To understand this, we must know that God, to help our faith, which, as I said before, is distinguished from sight, as we now speak of it, vouchsafeth a threefold light to his people, to add assurance and joy to their faith; which is to faith as a back of steel to a bow, to strengthen it, and made to be taken off or put on to it at God's good pleasure.

(1.) First, the immediate light of his countenance, which is a clear, evident beam and revelation of God's favour, immediately testifying that we are his, which is called the sealing of the Spirit, received after believing, Eph. 1:13; which David desired, and rejoiced in more than in all worldly things, Ps. 4:6, 'Lord, lift up the light of thy countenance;' in which, more or less, in some glimpses of it, some of God's people have the privilege to walk with joy from day to day: Ps. 89:15, 'They shall walk in the light of thy countenance; in thy name shall they rejoice all day.' And this is here utterly withdrawn; and it may thus come to pass, that the soul, in regard of any sense or sight of this, may be left in that case that Saul really was left in, 1 Sam. 28:15, 'God is departed from me, and answers me not, neither by prophets nor by dreams;' though with this difference, that God was really departed from Saul, but to these but in their own apprehensions: yet so as, for aught they can see of him, God is departed clean from them; answers them neither by prayer, nor by word, nor by conference; they cannot get one good look from him. Such was Jonah's case, chap. 2:4, 'I am cast out of thy sight;' that is, he could not get a sight of him,—not one smile, not one glance or cast of his countenance, not a beam of comfort,—and so thought himself cast out. And so he dealt with David often, and sometimes a long time together: Ps. 13:1, 'How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?' and, Ps. 89:46, 'How long,' &c.; even so long as David puts God in remembrance, and pleads how short a time in all he had to live, and complains how in much of that time his face had been hid from him, ver. 47. And the like was Heman's case, and this also long, even from his youth up, Ps. 88:14, 15. So from Job, chap. 13:24. Yea, and from Christ himself, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'

But concerning this you will ask, How can this dealing of his stand with his everlasting love, continued notwithstanding to the soul, that he should deal so with one he loves; but especially how it may stand with the real influence of his grace, powerfully enabling the soul all that while to go on to fear and obey him?

For the first; it may stand with his everlasting love, and God may be his God still, as the text tells us; so, Isa. 54:8, 'For a moment I have hid my face, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee.' It is but 'hiding his face,' and concealing his love, as David concealed his love from Absalom, when his bowels yearned towards him. And God takes the liberty that other fathers have, to shut his children out of his presence when he is angry. And it is but 'for a moment,'—that is, in comparison of eternity,—though haply it should be thus with him during a man's whole life; and he therefore takes liberty to do it, because he hath such an eternity of time to reveal his kindness in; time enough for kisses and embraces, and to pour forth his love in.

And for the second; the real gracious influences and effects of his favour may be continued, upholding, strengthening, and carrying on the soul still to obey and fear him, whilst he yet conceals his favour. For, when Christ complained, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' when as great an eclipse in regard of the light of God's countenance was upon his spirit as was upon the earth, yet he never more obeyed God, was never stronglier supported, than at that time, for then he was obeying to the death. Like as we see that when the sun is eclipsed, though the earth wants the light of it, yet not the influence thereof; for the metals which are engendered in the bottom of the earth are concocted by the sun; so as though the light of the sun comes not to them, yet the influence and virtue of it doth, and altereth and changeth them. So doth God's favour visit men's hearts in the power, heat, and vigorous influence of his grace, when the light and comfort of it doth not, but is intercluded. *Deus se communicat, vel quâ beatus, vel quâ sanctus; quâ beatus, gaudium et gloriam; quâ sanctus, gratiam: utrumque voluntariè, ideoque non utrumque simul necessario.*

(2.) The second light which God vouchsafeth his people ordinarily to help and eke out their faith, is the sight and comfort of their own graces, unto which so many promises belong; as, of their love to his people, fear of his name, desire to obey him. So that often when the sun is set, yet starlight appears; that is, though that other, the immediate presence and evidence of his favour, shines not on the soul, yet his graces therein appear, as tokens of that his love: so as the soul knows that there is a sun still, that gives light to these stars, though it sees it not; as in the night we know that there is a sun in another horizon, because the stars, we see, have their light from it, and we are sure that it will arise again to us.

Now a soul that hath true grace in it, and goes on to obey God, may also want light to see these his graces, and look upon his own heart as empty of all. And as they in the storm, Acts 27:20, so he in temptation may come to have 'neither sunlight nor starlight;' no light, as in the text. Thus, Isa. 63:17, the church there complains that God had hardened them from his fear; they were afraid, feeling their hearts so hard, that the fear of God was wanting; which yet was there, for they complain of the want of it.

(3.) But yet, thirdly, though he want the present light of God's countenance, and the sight of present grace, yet he may have a comfortable remembrance of what once before he had still left, and so long is not utterly left in darkness. Therefore further know, that the state of one that fears God and obeys him may be such as he may have no comfortable light or remembrance of what grace, &c., formerly he had, 2 Pet. 1:9. One that hath true grace in him only lacks the exercise of it,—for I take it that place is to be understood of a regenerate man, because he was 'purged from sin,'—and is now said to lack grace because he doth not use it; for *idem est non habere, et non uti*, a man is said not to have that which he doth not use when he ought to use it, especially in things whose worth lies wholly in use and employment, for it is as good as if he had it not. Now, such a man may fall into such a blindness that he 'cannot see afar off,' and so forgets his former assurance, 'that he was purged from his old

sins;' yea, it may be, calls all into question. Thus David, in Ps. 30:6, 7, though his heart was but even now, a little before, 'full of joy' and assurance of God's favour, yet God did but 'hide his face,' and all was gone; 'I was troubled,' says he. He was thus blind, and could not see what was but a little past him, as it is with men in a mist.

And the reason of these two last assertions is as evident as the experience thereof. For graces in us shine but with a borrowed light, as the stars do, with a light borrowed from the sun. So that unless God will shine secretly, and give light to thy graces, and irradiate them, thy graces will not appear to comfort thee, nor be at all a witness of God's favour to assure thee. For our spirit, that is, our graces, never witness alone; but if God's Spirit joineth not in testimony therewith, it is silent: 'The Spirit of God witnesseth with our spirits,' Rom. 8:16. Now therefore, when God hath withdrawn his testimony, then the testimony of our hearts, and of our own graces, hath no force in it.

But you will say, Can a man have the exercise of grace and not know it? fear God, &c., and not discern it?

Yes; and some graces may then be as much exercised in the heart as at any other time. He may fear God as truly and as much as ever, and yet this fear have no light in it to discover itself to him; it may be in the heart, in *esse et operari*, when not in *cognosci*,—it may have a being and a working there, when not in thy apprehension.

The reason is, because, as the influence of God's favour may be really in the heart, when the sense, sight, and light of it is withdrawn, as was said before; so the power of grace may in like manner be in the heart when the light and comfort thereof is wanting. And although it is true that every man having the power of reflecting upon his own actions, can discern what thoughts are in him and what affections, and can tell, for the matter of them, what he thinks on, that he puts his trust, and that he is grieved, &c.: but yet so as he may still question whether those thoughts be acts of true and unfeigned faith,

and whether those affections of sorrow for sin, &c., be sanctified affections, holy, and genuine, and spiritual affections; and the reason of the difference is, because though the natural 'spirit which is in a man knows the things of a man,' as the apostle hath it, 1 Cor. 2:11 (that is, his own thoughts, &c., understanding them physically, as they are acts of a man), yet what is the true goodness of them morally, in discerning this, the 'spirit of a man is deceitful, and cannot know it,' Jer. 17:9, without the supernatural light of the Spirit of God, who as he is the giver and actor of that grace in us, so 'is given of God that we might know the things which are given us of God,' 1 Cor. 2:12. 'Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright,' says the Psalmist. Grace, and the exercise of it, is the seed which they continually scatter; but light and joy is the crop that is to be reaped. The seed often lies hid long, though it will come up in the end. Thus light or joy may be severed from grace; and the comfort of it from the power of it.

2. Secondly, let us further consider the other phrase, and what is intimated thereby to be his condition, when, as it is said, he walks in darkness:—

(1.) First, to walk in darkness implies to be in doubt whither to go; so John 12:35, 'He that walks in darkness knows not whither he goes.' And thus the soul of one that fears God may be filled with doubts whether God will ever be merciful to him, yea or no, and not know what God means to do with him, whether he shall go to heaven or hell. Ps. 77:7–9, 'Will the Lord be merciful?' which speeches are spoken doubtingly; for, ver. 10, he says, 'this was his infirmity,' to call this into question. So Heman, Ps. 88:5, 6, 11, 12: he thought himself as one that was in hell, 'free among the dead,' that is, as one admitted free into the company of them there, ver. 5; free of that company, as you use to say, and of the number of those 'whom God no more remembered:' in such darkness was he, ver. 6. And to raise him out of that condition was a thing he doubted whether God would ever do, ver. 10–12: 'Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? shall thy wonders be declared in the grave?' that is, Did God ever shew mercy to one

that was in the same state that they in hell are in? which is my state now; yea, so as to be out of hope. So Lam. 3:18, 'My hope is perished from the Lord.'

(2.) Secondly, those in darkness are apt to stumble at everything. So Isa. 59:10; one effect of darkness, mentioned there, is to 'stumble at noon-day.' So take a soul that is left in darkness, and it will stumble at all it hears out of the word, either in conference or at sermons; all it reads, all promises it meets with, it is more discouraged by them. Oh, think they, that there should be such glorious promises, and not belong to us! Such a one misapplies and misinterprets all God's dealings and the Scriptures against himself, and 'refuseth comfort,' as Ps. 77:2; yea, and, as at the 3d verse, when he 'remembers God, he is troubled.'

(3.) Thirdly, darkness is exceeding terrible and full of horror. When children are in the dark, they think they see fearful sights; it is therefore called the 'horror of darkness,' Gen. 15:12. So his soul here may be filled with fears and terrors from God's wrath, and of God's being an enemy to him. Heman was almost distracted and out of his wits with terrors, Ps. 88:15. So the church thought, Lam. 3; yea, and concluded it for certain that God was her enemy: 'Surely he is turned against me,' ver. 3.

CHAPTER III:

The efficient causes of this distress.

First, the Spirit; whether he hath any hand therein, and how far.

HAVING thus explicated and proved this, that this doth and may befall one who truly fears the Lord, for the more full clearing of it I will further shew—

I. The efficient causes;

II. The cases wherein;

III. The ends for which, God leaves his children in such distresses.

I. For the efficient causes of this so woeful, desperate, dark condition of God's child; they are three which have a hand in it:—

1. God's Spirit.

2. A man's own guilty and fearful heart.

3. Satan.

1. For God's Spirit. Although he hath a hand in some part of this disquiteness, yet we must take heed how we put upon him any of those doubts and desperate fears and conclusions whereby the child of God calls his state into question. For the Spirit is not the direct efficient, or positive cause of them.

And to this end we may consider that known place, Rom. 8:15, 'Ye have not received the spirit of bondage to fear again, but the spirit of adoption;' the right understanding of which will also prevent an objection. For some have alleged this place, as if the child of God, after he had once the Spirit, sealing adoption to him, could never after fall into apprehension of bondage—that is, into fears of eternal damnation—any more, or of being bound over for hell; and that this can befall him but once, and that at his first conversion.

But if we mark the words well, the Apostle affirmeth not that fears of bondage can never befall God's child again, but his scope is to shew that the Spirit which we have received, having been once become the spirit of adoption, that Spirit is never after again the spirit of bondage to us, nor the cause of such fears. Indeed, at first conversion, and before he did witness adoption, he then revealed our estate to us to be an estate of bondage; which he then doth in love, to

drive us out of it; and then indeed he was a 'spirit of bondage:' to which he hath reference when he says, 'to fear again,' because he was once such to them, and such the Holy Ghost then might be, and then witness to them that their estates were damnable; for then it was a truth, in that they had lived in an estate of bondage, whereunto damnation was immediately due; and had they died in it, had certainly fallen upon them. But when once, by making a man a son, he hath become the spirit of adoption to him, then if ever he should put him into such apprehensions and fears again, he should witness an untruth. Therefore, for the comfort of them and all believers, he tells them that he never crosseth nor reverseth his testimony of adoption, but his office is to be ready as a witness to seal to it. But yet, though the judge doth not condemn any more, yet the jailor may trouble and affright us, and our own hearts may condemn us, 1 John 3:21. God may give Satan leave to east us into prison, to clap bolts upon us again, and to become a lying spirit of bondage to us, as he became a lying spirit in the mouth of Ahab's prophets; and he may give up our hearts to be fettered with 'the cords of our own sins,' Prov. 5:22, and to be ensnared with its own inventions, and fears, and jealousies.

For a more distinct understanding of this, to manifest how it comes to pass that all this befalls God's child, I will shew how far the Holy Ghost proceedeth in it, and puts forth his hand towards it; and what Satan's work is, where he strikes in, and our own hearts, to work further and deeper distress than the Holy Ghost by himself alone intended. For unto these three several hands is the whole to be ascribed, and the works of God's Spirit, and his concurrence therein, carefully to be severed from Satan's, as light from darkness at the first.

Thus far, then, the Spirit of God may concur in this darkness that befalls his Child:—

(1.) Privatively. He may suspend his testimony, and the execution of his office of witnessing adoption; he may withdraw his comfortable

presence, and hide himself for a moment, and conceal his love, as other fathers will sometimes do; as David did, when yet his heart was towards Absalom. He may not admit him to see his face, he may shut a son out of doors, when yet he doth not cast him off. He may 'retain their sins,' as Christ's expression is, John 20:23,—that is, call in the patent of his pardon which he had passed under his hand and seal, 'in earth,' that is, in their own consciences; take it out of their hands and custody, and call for it homo again into the pardon-office 'in heaven,' Matt. 18:18, and there keep it. And also when Satan comes and gives in a false witness and evidence, and our own hearts thereupon likewise condemn us, the Holy Ghost may stand by, as it were, silent, and say nothing to the contrary, but forbear to contradict Satan by any loud testimony or secret rebuking him, as he doth at other times; as Zech. 3:1, 2.

(2.) Positively. He may further proceed:—

[1.] To reveal and represent God as angry with his child for such and such sins formerly committed, and make him sensible thereof; not barely by concealing his love, but by making impressions of his wrath upon his conscience immediately, and not by outward crosses only. Thus, Isa. 57:17, 18, God not only 'hid himself and was wroth,'—that is, expressed his wrath by hiding himself,—but 'I smote him and was wroth;' and ver. 16, he contended and was wroth,'—that is, fought against him as an enemy, as Isa. 63:10, and this with his wrath upon his spirit. For it follows that the spirit was ready to fail, and the soul which he had made. So as it was the spirit which was the white God shot at and wounded, and that be deep that it was ready to fail and come to nothing: which Solomon calls by way of distinction 'a wounded spirit,' which who can bear? and differenceth it from all other afflictions upon the outward man, which strike the spirit but through the clothes of the body mediately; for, says he, 'the spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity'—that is, all such outward afflictions wherein it suffers but by way of sympathy and compassion. But when the spirit itself is laid bare and naked, and wounded immediately by God's wrath, which only can reach it and wound it, who can bear

this? Thus towards Heman, God did not only hide his face from him, Ps. 88:14, but 'his fierce wrath went over him,' and 'thy terrors,' says he, 'cut me off,' ver. 16; not wounded him only, but even cut him off. And such impressions of immediate wrath, as expressions and effects of God's anger, the Holy Ghost may make upon the spirit of his child. For it is a truth that God is angry and wroth with them when they sin; which anger he may make known, not only by dumb signs in outward crosses and effects, but by an immediate witnessing, and plain and express speaking so much to their consciences, and making them to feel so much, by scalding drops of his hot displeasure let fall thereon. And as other fathers shew their anger by whipping the bodies of their children, upon this ground, as says the apostle, because they are the 'fathers of our flesh,' Heb. 12:9; so, for the like reason, may God shew his anger and chastise his children by lashing their spirits: for he is the 'Father of our spirits,' as he speaks in the same place. And likewise our spirits, and the very 'bones and marrow' of them, do lie 'open and naked to him with whom we have to do;' and his word and Spirit being 'quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword,' are able 'to divide,' and cut even to the 'bones and marrow,' as the same author speaks, Heb. 4:12, 13. Yet withal, so as when he expresseth his wrath thus upon their consciences, he doth not witness that this is an eternal wrath which he hath conceived against them; for it is but a temporary displeasure, 'it is but for a moment,' as Isaiah speaks, the indignation of a father; nor is it a wrath which revenging justice hath stirred in him, but fatherly affection, Heb. 12:6. And though the Spirit tells them that God is displeased, yet never that they are accursed; that is a false collection made out of it. Yet—

[2.] The Holy Ghost may proceed yet further herein; so far as to bring forth, and shew him, and shake over him the rod of his eternal wrath, especially when he hath provoked Christ by presumptuous sins already, and to prevent his going on frowardly in the way of his heart. And this, both by presenting to them and setting on all those threatenings, which do hypothetically and conditionally threaten, even to believers, eternal damnation: such as that which we find,

Rom. 7:13, 'If ye live after the flesh, ye,' even you believers, 'shall die;' for there is a truth in all such threatenings, so conditionally propounded, which reacheth God's dearest children, under a condition, and with relation to going on in sin. To stop him and prevent him in which, when he is agoing on frowardly in the way of his heart, the Holy Spirit may bring home such threatenings to him, with respect to such a course as he is entering into, and accordingly stir up the fear of that damnation thus threatened, if he should go on in those sins he hath begun to commit. But to apply threatening of eternal damnation simply to his person, as that thou shalt die eternally, this the Holy Ghost doth not speak to the heart of a believer, when he is a believer. And again also, the Holy Ghost may represent to him and mind him of all those examples of men in whom, for their going on in sin, 'his soul hath had no pleasure,' Heb. 10:39; and of God's dealings with them,—as how he sware against many of the Israelites, for their provocations of him, 'that they should never enter into his rest;' and how he rejected Esau for the despisal of his birthright,—and all this with this end, to startle and awaken him; and with this intimation, that for such and such sins God might in like manner deal with him. For these and the like examples doth the Spirit of God set before the believing Hebrews, Heb. 3:12; and the believing Corinthians, 1 Cor. 10:5–13, to keep them in fearfulness to offend. But to apply any such examples absolutely unto them, so as to say, Thus God intends to do with thee for such and such sins, and that God will never be merciful, this the Holy Ghost doth not speak to a believer's heart.

CHAPTER IV:

How Satan and our hearts increase this darkness and distress

How Satan and our hearts increase this darkness by false conclusions from the Spirit's work, illustrated by the like in the illumination of temporaries.—The Spirit's work in both compared.

AND now the Spirit of God having proceeded thus far himself in causing such darkness and terrors of conscience in them that fear him; Satan and their own hearts, unto which he may and doth often further also leave them, may take occasion from these dispensations of the Holy Ghost, which are all holy, righteous, and true, to draw forth false and fearful conclusions against themselves and their estates, and start amazing doubts and fears of their utter want of grace, and lying under the curse threatenings of eternal wrath at the present, yea, and further, of eternal rejection for the future, and that God will never be merciful; and so lay them lower, and cast them into a further darkness and bondage than the Holy Ghost was cause of, or intended: misinterpreting and perverting all these his righteous proceedings, as interpreting that withdrawing his light and presence, and hiding himself, to be a casting them off, (thus Heman, Ps. 88:14;) so, likewise, misconstruing that temporary wrath, chastising and wounding their spirits for the present, to be no other than the impressions and earnest of God's eternal vengeance; and arguing, from their being under wrath, themselves to be children of wrath; and misapplying the application of all those threatenings of eternal damnation made by the Spirit, but in relation and under a condition of such and such courses for the future, to be absolute against their persons, and to speak their present estate. And because such examples of men cast off are presented to them, to shew them what advantage God might take against them; they, mistaking, think they read their own destiny laid before them in them, and conclude that God will deal so with them. And thus the Apostle says of sin, Rom. 7:11, that 'sin taking occasion by the commandment,'—he misunderstanding the scope of it when a Pharisee,—'it deceived him, and therefore slew him;' and yet 'the commandment is holy, just, and good,' ver. 12. So Satan and our hearts, by occasion of these dealings of the Spirit, which are righteous and true, as himself is, who is the Spirit of truth and leads into truth, do deceive believers, and lay

them in their apprehensions 'among the slain, whom God remembereth no more,' as Heman speaks, Ps. 88:5.

And as in these, so in other works and dispensations of God's Spirit, it is ordinary for Satan and our hearts to practise the like delusions and false conclusions upon them. To instance in those more common and inferior works of the Spirit on the hearts of men, not as yet savingly regenerated: the Spirit enlightening them, together with impressions of joy, and a taste of sweetness in the promises of the gospel, and of salvation revealed therein, which, under a condition of true repentance and conversion, the Spirit of God doth make the offer and tender of known unto their hearts. Thus he wrought upon the stony ground, and in the Jews by John's ministry, John 5:35; which light, and taste, and revelation of this conditional proffer, tending in a way unto salvation, by alluring their hearts to seek it, they often through Satan's abuse of this good work, and the self-flattery of their own hearts, do too hastily take to be that grace which accompanies salvation, (ἐχόμενα τῆς σωτηρίας,) or which hath salvation annexed to it; from which the Apostle, by that very expression, Heb. 6:9, doth difference those enlightenings mentioned ver. 4. They thus mistaking these works precursory to grace, even as the Jews mistook John, that was sent but before to prepare the way for Christ, to be that very true Christ that was to come into the world, and misunderstanding the intendment of God's most blessed Spirit in such his dealings, they make up too hasty a conclusion not meant by the Spirit in those promises.

And I instance in these the rather, because these his dispensations of desertion, which we have in hand, towards them already regenerated, and those forementioned visitations towards such as often attain not to regeneration, are in an opposite way of comparison exceeding parallel, and much alike in the dispensations themselves,—as well as in the differing false conclusions which are drawn from either,—and do therefore exceedingly illustrate the one the other; God withdrawing himself as much in their sense from those who are in covenant with him, as he draws near unto and visits

their hearts from on high who are as yet strangers to him. The needle of God's favour and love varying as much, that I may so allude, towards hell in their compass who shall be saved, as it doth heavenward in the other, many of whom arrive not thither. For as they are brought nigh to the kingdom of heaven, as Christ told him, Matt. 12:34; so of true believers it may be said, that their souls do often draw near to hell in their own sense and apprehension, and 'the pains of hell do take hold upon them.' And as the other are enlightened, as Balaam was, so they are left to walk in darkness and see no light; and do taste of that wrath which the law threatens, as those other taste the goodness of that salvation the gospel offereth. God, out of a temporary anger, chastising them for a moment, as with a temporary favour he shineth upon the other. That as they 'for a season rejoice in that light,' John 5:35, so God's dearest children 'may be for a season in much heaviness,' as the Apostle speaks, 1 Pet. 1:6, and 'walk in darkness.' And as the similitude of the dealings themselves runs thus far along in a parallel line of comparison, so it holds in the false apprehensions which Satan and our hearts do make out of both. And the cause of the mistake in each is also alike. For God's dealings with those temporary believers being so like to those dealings towards such as receive a state of adoption from him, they thence too hastily conclude their acceptance unto life. And, on the contrary, God's dealings with these temporary despairers, as I may so call them, being so like in their sense to his proceedings with those he cuts off for ever, they, in like manner, as hastily conclude ('I said in my haste,' says David) their eternal rejection. Only in the issue they prove unlike: these desertions tending but to the present discomfort of true believers through their frailty; but in the other, through their own willing neglect, their enlightenings turn to their destruction.

So as, to conclude, we must warily sever the work of God's Spirit herein from that of Satan and our own hearts, not attributing such desperate conclusions to the Spirit. Thus that depth of sorrow wherewith that humbled Corinthian was well-nigh 'swallowed up,' 2 Cor. 2:7, is ascribed unto Satan, when, ver. 11, it is made and termed

one of his devices, which word doth in part refer to the Corinthian's sorrow. Thus David also imputes that his questioning, Ps. 77, 'whether God would be merciful' to him, ver. 7, unto his own heart; 'this is my infirmity,' says he, ver. 10. So as the blame herein is to be divided between Satan and our hearts.—To speak more particularly of either.

CHAPTER V:

The second efficient cause of this darkness

How our own hearts are the causes of this darkness.—The principles therein which are the causes of it.

2. THAT our own hearts should be the causes and producers of such distress and darkness, when the Holy Ghost thus deals with us, is at all no wonder; because—

(1.) As we are creatures, there is such a weakness and infirmity in us, as David speaks; by reason of which, if God doth but hide himself and withdraw his presence, which supporteth us in comfort, as in being, we are ready presently to fall into these fears of ourselves. The Psalmist saith of all the creatures, 'Thou hidest thy face, and they are troubled,' Ps. 104:29; and this by reason of their weakness and dependence upon God. And no less, but far greater, is the dependence of the new creature upon God's face and presence; that it cannot be alone and bear up itself, but it fails if God hide himself, as Isaiah speaks, chap. 57. Especially now in this life, during the infancy thereof, whilst it is a child, as God speaks of Ephraim, Hos. 11:1; then it cannot stand or go alone, unless God 'bear it up in his arms, and teach it to go,' as he speaks there, ver. 1–3. And then also, as children left alone in the dark are afraid of bugbears, and they know not what,

and are apt to stumble and fall, which is by reason of their weakness; so is it with the new creature in its childhood here in this life. It was my infirmity, says David; and again, 'Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled,' Ps. 30:7.

There is not only such a weakness in us as we are creatures; but—

(2.) Also an innate darkness in our spirits as we are sinful creatures. Since the fall, our hearts of themselves are nothing but darkness, and therefore no wonder if when God but draws the curtains, and shuts up the light from us, that our hearts should engender and conceive such horrid fears and doubts. Thus, in 2 Cor. 4:6, the Apostle compareth this native darkness of our hearts unto that chaos and lump of darkness which, at the first creation, covered the face of the deep, when he says that 'God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness,'—he referreth to the first creation, Gen. 1:1, 2,—'hath shined into our hearts,' even of us apostles, 'to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' So that no longer than God continues to shine, either the light of comfort or of grace, no longer do our hearts, even of us believers, retain light in them. And if at any time he withhold that light of comfort in his face, when yet he continueth an influence of grace, then so far do our hearts presently return to their former darkness; and then doth that vast womb of darkness conceive and form all those fears and doubts within itself. Considering withal that our hearts are a great deep also, so deep in darkness and deceitfulness as no plummet can fathom them; 'deceitful above all things, who can know it?' Jer. 17:9. Darkness covereth not the face of this deep only, but it is darkness to the bottom, throughout darkness. No wonder then, if when the Spirit ceaseth to move upon this deep with beams of light, it cast us into such deeps and darkness as Heman, complaining, speaks of, Ps. 88:6, and frameth in itself such hideous apprehensions and desperate conclusions of a man's own estate.

(3.) Especially seeing there is so much strength of carnal and corrupt reason in men, ready to forge and invent strong reasons and

arguments to confirm those sad fears and darkened apprehensions; and those drawn from those dealings of God's Spirit mentioned. For as it is said of the Gentiles, that when 'their foolish hearts were darkened,'—that is, when left and given over to their own natural darkness,—'they became vain in their imaginations,' or (as the original hath it) in their reasonings, λογισμοῖς, Rom. 1:21; and this even in those things which God had clearly revealed in his works to the light of nature, of which that place speaks: so may it be said even of those who have been most enlightened, that their hearts are apt to become much more vain in their reasonings about, and in the judging of their own estates before God, out of his word and dealings with them if God once leaves them, unto darkness. And this that great caveat given to professors, James 1:22, gives to understand, when they are exhorted to take heed that 'in hearing the word' they be not found 'deceiving themselves by false reasonings.' So the original, παραλογιζόμενοι ἑαυτούς, renders it; which is as if we should say, false-reasoning themselves: as we use to say, in a like phrase of speech, befooling themselves. And this is spoken of judging of their own estates, concerning which men are more apt, through the distempers and prejudices of self-love, to make (to speak in that phrase of the Apostle) false syllogisms, and to misconclude, than about any other spiritual truth whatever. And as men that want true faith, the unsound hearers of the word, of whom the Apostle there speaks, are thus apt, through carnal reason misapplying the word they hear, to frame and draw from thence, as he insinuates, multitudes of false reasons to uphold and maintain to themselves a good opinion of their estates: so, on the contrary, in those who have true faith, all that carnal reason, which remains in a great measure unsubdued in them, is as apt to raise and forge as strong objections against the work of faith begun, and as peremptorily to conclude against their present estates by the like misapplication of the word, but especially by misinterpreting God's dealings towards them. And they being sometimes led by sense and reason, whilst they walk in darkness, they are apt to misinterpret God's mind towards them rather by his works and dispensations, which they see and feel, than by his word, which they are to believe. This we see in Gideon, Judges

6, who, because God wrought not miracles, as he had formerly for his people, but had delivered them into their enemies' hands, from thence reasoneth against the message of the angel, (Christ himself,) who had told him, 'The Lord is with thee,' ver. 12. But he objects, 'Oh, my Lord, if the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? Where be all the miracles which our fathers told us of? But now the Lord hath forsaken us,' &c. This we may also see in Asaph, or what other holy penman of the 73d Psalm; his heels were well-nigh tripped up in the dark: 'My feet were almost gone,' says he, ver. 2,—that is, from keeping his 'standing by faith,' as the apostle speaks, Rom. 5,—and this by an argument framed by carnal reason, from God's dispensation of outward prosperity to wicked men, but, on the contrary, 'chastening of him every morning,' with outward afflictions, as the opposition doth there import. And how peremptory is he in his conclusion thence deduced? 'Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain,' ver. 13; and what reason hath he? 'For all the day long I have been plagued,' &c., ver. 14. He thought his reason strong and irrefragable, else he would not have been so concludent: 'Verily,' &c. But what would this man have said and thought if he had been in Heman's condition, or in Job's or David's? If in those shallows of outward troubles, which are common to man, his faith could not find footing, but he was well-nigh carried away with the common stream and error of wicked men, to have condemned himself and the 'generation of the righteous,' ver. 15; how would his faith have been overborne 'if all God's waves and billows had gone over him?' as David complains, Psalm 42:7. How would he have sunk in Heman's deeps, Psalm 88? or in David's, Psalm 69:2, 'I sink in the deep mire, where there is no standing. I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me?' speaking of such 'waters as came in unto his soul,' ver. 1, even the floods of God's immediate wrath breaking in upon his; conscience, overflowing the inward man, and not the outward only. How much more peremptorily would he have concluded against himself if this had been his condition? As indeed they, and many others of the generation of God's children have done, when they have lain under and walked in such distresses.

And the reason of all this is as evident as the experience of it:—

[1.] In general; reason is of itself a busy principle, that will be prying into, and making false glosses upon all God's matters as well as our own, and trying its skill in arguing upon all his dealings with us. Thus Jeremiah must needs be reasoning with God about his dispensations towards wicked men, chap. 12:1, 2; and Job, of his dealings with himself, chap. 13:3. And reason being likewise the supreme principle in us by nature, and our highest difference as we are men, therefore no wonder if, when we are left to ourselves to 'walk in darkness,' we 'walk as men,' as the Apostle speaks, 2 Cor. 10:3; and, to use Solomon's words, do lean to our own wisdom, Prov. 3:5, even because it is our own, and was brought up with us. It is our great Ahithophel, and, as David says of him, 'our guide, with whom we have taken so much sweet counsel' in all our worldly and politic affairs. In which only we should make use of its advice; but we too often take it into the sanctuary with us, and 'walk in company with it into the house of God,' (to allude to what David says there, Psalm 55:13, 14;) that is, we suffer it to meddle in matters that pertain to the sanctuary, and to debate and conclude of our spiritual and eternal estates, as well as of our temporal. And, which is worse, we are opinionative of its judgment therein: 'I thought,' says Asaph, in that forementioned psalm, 'to know this,' ver. 16,—that is, he thought to have comprehended and reached God's mind, in those his dispensation, by the discussions of reason, and so to have concluded rightly from them; whereas, 'after he had gone into the sanctuary,' ver. 17, with faith alone, and thereby consulted with the word, he confesseth his own wisdom and best reason to have been as ignorant of God's meaning, and of those rules he proceedeth by, in those his dispensations towards his children, 'even as a beast' (ver. 22) is of those principles which men walk by, or the intentions they have in their ways. If reason then, when it is so utterly unskilful and mistaken in the premises, will yet be exercising and trying its faculty in reasoning from them, no wonder if the conclusions thence deduced be so wide and wild; and yet, with Asaph, we think we know this.

[2.] But more particularly; carnal reason is the most desperate enemy to faith of all other principles in man. For until faith be wrought, it is the most supreme principle; but then faith deposeth and subjecteth it, and afterwards doth often contradict it; yea, excludes it, as unskilful in its matters, from being of its counsel. And so deep and desperate is this enmity against faith, that look, what is the most especial work and business of faith, which is to alter our estates before God, and put us into a state of justification and to assure us of it, therein it shews a more peculiar enmity against faith, by opposing it in that work of it more than in any other. This enmity shews itself both before and after faith is wrought, and the one illustrates the other. For as before faith was wrought, carnal reason shews its opposition, by using the utmost of its strength to persuade a man of the goodness of his estate, though without faith; thereby to prevent the entrance of faith and our seeking after it at all, as not needful to change our estates or to justify us, and thus would keep it wholly out; and therefore, in the first working of faith, the Holy Ghost brings faith in by force of open arms, as a conqueror casting down all those strongholds and reasonings—λογισμοὺς, as the word is, 2 Cor. 10:5—which carnal reason had been long a-building and a-fortifying, and so erecteth faith a throne upon the ruins of them all: thus, in like manner, after faith is thus wrought, all that carnal reason which is left unsubdued doth, out of a further revenge of such an overthrow, and with a greater degree of enmity, oppose faith still; only it diverts the war, now mustering up new forces, and turneth all the great ordnance a clean contrary way; namely, to persuade a man, by all the objections it can raise, of the badness of his estate now, as before of the goodness of it; hereby to blaspheme the great work of faith in justifying of us. And also because that, next to justifying us, the office and errand of faith is to settle in our hearts peace with God, and a persuasion of our being in his favour, as Rom. 5:1; therefore doth carnal reason bend the utmost of its power and acumen to persuade upon all occasions, by all the most specious and seeming arguments it can start and suggest, that God is not at peace with us, nor as yet reconciled to us; merely to contradict faith in what is the principal point it would persuade us of.

So that as in men, whilst unregenerate, carnal reason endeavours by false reasonings to preserve a good opinion of their estates in them; in like manner, the very same principle of carnal reason, continuing its opposition to faith, doth as much persuade to a bad opinion of their estates when they are once regenerated.

[3.] And to conclude this; if in any condition that befalls God's child carnal reason hath the advantage and upper ground of faith, it is now when it is in 'the valley of the shadow of death,' as David speaks, when it walks in darkness, and hath no light. A condition that doth afford a most complete topic for carnal reason to frame objections out of; when, in respect of God's dealings with him, there is a seeming conjunction of all bad aspects threatening perdition and destruction; when faith is under so great an eclipse, and is left to fight it out alone in darkness, and hath no second: when, on the contrary, carnal reason and our dark hearts, which are led by sense, are possessed with the sense, the deepest and most exquisite sense, and impressions of (that which the heart is most jealous of) God's sorest wrath and displeasure, and that felt and argued, not mediately and afar off, by consequence from outward afflictions, but immediately from God's own hand. Thou always hast suspected, says carnal reason, that thou wert a child of wrath, and that thou and God were enemies, but now thou findest it put out of question, and that from God's own mouth, 'who speaketh' grievous things 'against thee,' Jer. 31:20: thou hast it also under his own hand, for, lo, 'he writeth bitter things against thee,'—that is, in thy conscience,—as Job speaks, chap. 13:26, and 'holdeth thee for an enemy,' ver. 24; and whips thee with the same rod of his immediate wrath and displeasure wherewith he lasheth those that are cut from his hand, and whom he remembereth no more, but are now in hell, as Heman speaks. A time also this is when this present sense of wrath so distempers, and, to use Heman's words, distracts the mind, that it cannot listen to faith, which speaks of nothing too but of what it sees not; even as the people of Israel could not attend to Moses's message of deliverance, through the anguish of their present bondage, Exod. 6:9. So as no wonder if then carnal reason be most busy, and takes this advantage

to frame and suggest the strongest objections to the soul whilst it is in this distemper.

(4.) Add unto all this, that as there is such strength of corrupt reason which is thus opposite to faith, so that there are many other principles of corrupt affections in the heart which join and take part with carnal reason in all this its opposition against faith, and which set it a-work and do back it as much in persuading God's children that their estates are nought, as in securing men unregenerate that their estates are good; and the hand of self-love, which bribeth and biaseth carnal reason, especially in judging of our estates, is found as deep in the one as in the other;—and this doth yet give further light to this point in hand. For look, as before faith is wrought, self-flattery, which is one branch of self-love, bribeth and setteth carnal reason a-work to plead the goodness of their estates to men unregenerate, and causeth all such false reasons to take with them which tend to persuade them to think well of themselves: so when once faith is wrought, jealousy, and suspiciousness, and incredulity, —which are other as great sprigs of pride and self-love in us as the former, which do begin to sprout and shew themselves when that other is lopped off, and which do grow up together with the work of faith,—these do edge and sharpen the wit of carnal reason to argue and wrangle against the work of faith and grace begun; and all such objections as carnal reason doth find out against it are pleasing and plausible to these corrupt principles, for they are thereby nourished and strengthened.

And the reason why such jealousies and suspicions, &c.,—which are such contrary dispositions unto self-flattery, which swayed our opinions of our estates before,—should thus arise and be started up in the heart upon the work of faith, and be apt rather to prevail now after faith, is, [1.] because that in the work of humiliation, which prepares for faith, all those strongholds of carnal reason being demolished which upheld self-flattery, and that false good opinion of a man's estate, and those mountainous thoughts of presumption as then laid low, a man is for ever put out of conceit with himself, as of

himself. At which time also, [2.] he was so thoroughly and feelingly convinced of the heinousness of sin, which before he slighted, and of the greatness and multitude of his sins, that he is apt now, instead of presuming as before, to be jealous of God, lest he might have been so provoked as never to pardon him; and is accordingly apt to draw a misinterpretation of all God's dealings with him to strengthen that conceit. And, [3.] having through the same conviction, the infinite error and deceitfulness of his heart before, in flattering him and judging his estate good when it is most accursed, so clearly discovered and discerned, he thereby becomes exceeding jealous, and afraid of erring on that hand still, and so is apt to lend an ear to any doubt and scruple that is suggested. Especially, [4.] he being withal made apprehensive both of that infinite danger to his eternal salvation there may be in nourishing a false opinion of the goodness of his estate, if it should prove otherwise; because such a false conceit keeps a man from saving faith, whereas to cherish the contrary error in judging his estate bad, when it is in truth good, tends but to his present discomfort: so as he thinks it safer to err on that hand than the other. And, [5.] being also sensible of what transcendent concernment his eternal salvation is of, which he before slighted, this rouseth suspicion, which in all matters of great consequence and moment is always doubting and inquisitive, and also keeps it waking, which before lay asleep. And all these being now startled and stirred up, do not only provoke carnal reason unsatisfiedly to pry into all things that may seem to argue God's disfavour, or the unsoundness of our hearts, but also do give entertainment to, and applaud all such objections as are found out, and makes up too hastily false conclusions from them.

(5.) Last of all, as there are these corrupt principles of carnal reason and suspiciousness in us, to raise and foment these doubts and fears from God's dealing towards us; so there is an abundance of guilt within us, of our false dealings towards him. And we have consciences, which remain in part defiled, which may further join with all those, and increase our fears and doubtings; and as we are dark and weak creatures, so guilty creatures also. And this guilt, like

the waves of the sea, or the swellings of Jordan, does begin upon these terrible storms from God to rise, and swell, and overflow in our consciences. As in David, Ps. 38, when God's wrath was sore upon him, ver. 1, 2, then also he complains, 'mine iniquities are gone over my head,' ver. 4. There is much guile and falseness of heart, which in those distempers, when our consciences do boil within us, and are stirred and heated to the bottom, doth, like the scum, come up and float aloft. Thus in David, when he was under the rod for his sin of murder, as the guilt of his sin, so the guile of his spirit came up, and he calls for 'truth in the inward parts,' Ps. 51:6. For as his sin, ver. 2, so his falseness of heart was ever before him; and with an eye to this he spake that speech, Ps. 32, Oh, 'blessed is that man in whose spirit is no guile, and to whom the Lord imputeth no sin.' Thus he spake when God had charged upon him the guilt of his sin, and discovered to him the guile of his spirit, ver. 4, 5. And this guile doth oftentimes so appear, that our consciences can hardly discern anything else to be in us; it lies uppermost, and covers our graces from our view: and like as the chaff, when the wheat is tossed in the fan, comes up to the top, so in these commotions and winnowings of spirit do our corruptions float in our consciences, whilst the graces that are in us lie covered under them out of sight; and the dark side of our hearts, as of the cloud, is turned towards us, and the light side from us. And indeed there are in the best of us humours enough, which if they be stirred and congregated in our consciences, may alone cast us into these burning fits of trouble and distress; so as whilst God's Spirit shall withhold from us the light of our own graces, and our own consciences represent to us the guile and corruptions that are in our best performances, our hearts may conclude ourselves hypocrites, as Mr Bradford in some of his letters doth of himself, and others of the saints have done. Yea, so as even our own consciences—which are the only principle now left in us which should take part with and encourage faith, and witness to us, as the office of it is, the goodness of our estates—in this may join with the former corruptions against us, and bring in a false evidence, and pronounce a false judgment. Even conscience itself, which is ordained, as the urine of the body, to shew the estate of the whole, and therefore is accordingly called good

or evil as the man's state is, this is apt in such distempers to change and turn colour, and look to a man's own view as foul as the state of a very hypocrite.

And the reason of this is also as evident as is the experience of it. Even because conscience remains in part defiled in a man that is regenerate; and though we are 'sprinkled from an evil conscience' in part, yet not wholly: so as though our persons are fully discharged from the guilt of our sins, through the sprinkling of Christ's blood, before God; yet the sprinkling of that blood upon our consciences, whereby we apprehend this, is imperfect. And the reason is, because this very sprinkling of conscience, whereby it testifies the sprinkling of Christ's blood, and our justification thereby, is but part of the sanctification of conscience, as it is a faculty, whose office and duty is to testify and witness our estates; and therefore, as the sanctification of all other faculties is imperfect, so of conscience also herein. And hence it is that when God's Spirit forbearth to witness with conscience the goodness of our estates, and ceaseth to embolden and encourage conscience by his presence, and the sprinkling of Christ's blood upon it against the remaining defilement, that then our consciences are as apt to fall into fears, and doubts, and self-condemnings, even as much as, when he withdraws the assistance of his grace, those other faculties are to fall into any other sin. And therefore, as the law of sin in the other members may be up in arms and prevail so far as to load us captive unto sin; so may the guilt of sin in our consciences remaining in part defiled, by the same reason prevail against us, and get the upper hand, and lead us captive to fears and doubtings, and cast us into bondage.

CHAPTER VI:

The second efficient cause of this darkness

The third efficient cause, Satan.—His special malice in this temptation, commission.—Access to, and advantage over us in this temptation, by reason of the darkness in us.

THUS far our own hearts, upon the Holy Ghost's deserting, become authors unto us of this darkness.

3. But herein believers wrestle not alone with flesh and blood, and the darkness thereof; but do further conflict also with those spiritual wickednesses, the princes of darkness, Eph. 6:12, about their interest in those heavenly privileges, as the phrase there used, ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις, may be well interpreted; even with Satan and his angels, whom the Apostle compares to 'a roaring lion, that seeks whom he may devour,' 1 Peter 5:8. And like as when 'God makes his natural darkness, and it is night, then the young lions creep forth, and roar after their prey,' as the Psalmist says, Ps 104:20, 21; so do these roaring lions, when God hath withdrawn the light of his countenance, and night comes on, and those damps and fogs of jealousies and guilt begin to arise out of a man's own heart; then come these forth, and say, as David's enemies said in his distress, 'Come let us now take him, for God hath forsaken him;' let us now devour him, and swallow him up with sorrow and despair. And as God says of those enemies of his church, Zech. 1:15, 'I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction;' so when God is angry with his child, and but a little, and doth hide his face but our a moment, yet Satan watcheth that hour of darkness, as Christ calls it, Luke 22:53, and joins his power of darkness to this our natural darkness, to cause, if possible, blackness of darkness, even utter despair, in us.

Now, concerning Satan's working herein, we will, as in the former, more distinctly treat thereof by way of explication of it, (1.) more generally; (2.) more particularly:—

First, in general; (1.) Satan, he hath a special inclination, and a more peculiar malicious desire, to vex and molest the saints with this sort of temptations, of doubts and disquietness that God is not their God; so as all his other temptations unto sin are but as the laying in and barrelling up the gunpowder, and making of the train, for this great plot of blowing up all. He tempteth Peter to deny his Master,—'Satan desires to winnow you,'—but he hath a further reach, a design upon his faith, which Christ foresaw, and therefore did mainly bend his prayer against it; 'but I have prayed that thy faith fail not.' Satan hoped by that gross sin to have drawn him into despair. We may likewise observe how he did place this temptation in the forefront of those three assaults which he made upon Christ; who as in his obedience, so in his temptations, is made a complete example unto us; for he was tempted in all things, that is, with all sorts of temptations, and also like us for the manner, only without sin, Heb. 4:15. Now he tempted him not only to vain hopes, when he shewed him the glory of the whole world, and to presumption, to throw himself down headlong from an unwarrantable ground; but first and primarily, to jealousies and distrusts between him and his Father, and between his human nature and the divine. For when Christ had newly received that testimony from all the three Persons,—the Father proclaiming him to be his Son from heaven; the Spirit descending on him at his baptism, it being the special grace and institution of that ordinance to seal up adoption and regeneration,—then comes Satan and tempts him to question that voice, that it might be but a delusion. And Christ's human nature never having done any outward miracle as yet, as appears John 2:11, he would now have had him take this occasion, in the extremity of his hunger, by commanding stones to become bread, to make trial whether he was the Son of God or no, and hypostatically united to the second Person; which if God should not do for him, then to question his sonship, and think all this to be but a delusion. This was the meaning of it, 'If thou be the Son of God, command these stones to be made bread,' &c.; withal insinuating that God, leaving him oven destitute of daily bread, which parents that are evil give unto their children, and not a stone

instead of bread, might seem to occasion an if whether he was the Son of God or no. The reasons of this are—

[1.] Above all graces in us, he is the greatest enemy to faith; therefore, 1 Thess. 3:5, the apostle was jealous of Satan in nothing more than in this, lest he had been dealing and tampering with, and perverting their faith: 'I sent to know of your faith, lest by some means the tempter hath tempted you;' for faith in God is the greatest enemy unto Satan, it 'quencheth all his darts,' Eph. 6:16. By 'standing stedfast in which' we 'resist him, so that he flies from us,' 1 Pet. 5:9. As therefore faith is that τὸ ἔργον, that work of God and the master-grace, John 6:29; so despair and doubting is the masterpiece of Satan. And in faith he is envious especially at the joy of our faith, Rom. 15:13. And as comfort is the most proper work of the Spirit, and most pleasing work to him, so is discomfort and distress the proper work of this evil spirit. And again—

[2.] As he is most opposite to the Holy Spirit, so he delights to blaspheme his work in our hearts to us, by persuading us that all is counterfeit.

[3.] He is called ἐχθρὸς, that envious one, and the main object and mark of his envy is this, that God should be our God, who hath cast off him; and therefore, when he sees he cannot separate between God and us really, he will endeavour to cast and raise up jealousies that he is not our God in our apprehensions. He endeavoured to raise jealousies between God and our first parents,—'God knows ye shall be gods,' &c.,—as if God had forbidden them that fruit out of envy towards them of a better condition. And the like he endeavoured between Christ's human nature and the divine, though hypostatically united. And likewise—

[4.] That God hath given us eternal life, and that life is in his Son. This being that great truth of the gospel, so as a Christian that believes it not makes God a liar, 1 John 5:10, 11; therefore Satan, being that great liar, opposeth this great truth and our faith therein

above all other. His envy at the advancement of our nature in Christ, according to that truth, is thought by some to have been his fall and ruin, so understanding that in John 8:44, 'He abode not in the truth' However, he doth now delight to make God a liar to us in our apprehensions, by questioning his promises, and especially to enforce the persuasion thereof out of God's own dealing with us, 'perverting his righteous ways.'

(2.) And secondly, as Satan hath such a desire, so God may give his child up into Satan's hand for a while thus to afflict and terrify his spirit. His last commission over Job seemeth to extend thus far, for his life only was excepted, Job 2:6, 'He is in thy hand, only save his life:' and therefore, after that leave given, we hear Job, although never brought to question his estate, yet crying out of terrors, and of the sins of his youth; for Satan then, as he smote his body with boils, so buffeted his spirit. And though Satan hath will of himself, and a desire to it, and power physical enough, and abilities, to inflict this at all times, yet he must further have power moral, or leave and commission from God. And God sometimes gives to Satan power over the sons and daughters of Abraham, Luke 13:16, even as well as others; and as their bodies to be vexed by him, so their spirits; and as to provoke them unto sin, so much more to terrify for sin, there being more of punishment than of sin in that. Thus he left David to Satan, to provoke him unto sin, as well as Judas. Therefore that provocation to number the people, as it is imputed to Satan and his malice, 1 Chron. 21:1; so also to God and his anger, in given leave first to Satan, 2 Sam. 24:1. And as an 'evil spirit from the Lord' troubled Saul's mind, 1 Sam. 16:14; so a 'messenger of Satan was sent to buffet' Paul's spirit, 2 Cor. 12:7. Wherein yet God doth no way help Satan with any further power than what as an angel he furnished him with at his creation; nor with any assistance or information of our secret sins against us, to enable him the more to assault us,—this I find not in Scripture,—but permissive power only. Which is either—

[1.] Obtained and given at Satan's motion and request first made; so that phrase, Luke 22:31, 'Satan hath requested and petitioned to

winnow you,' as that also, Job 2:3, 'Thou movedst me against him,' doth imply; and as it may seem by singling out and calling forth some one for this combat; as he did him more especially, to whom therefore Christ addresseth that premonition, and the word ἐξήτησατο implies as much. So also Job was singled out for this duel both by God and Satan. Or else—

[2.] This is done through the ordinance of excommunication and censures of the church duly administered, *clave non errante*, for gross and scandalous sins. The proper inward effect that accompanies that ordinance which casts men out of the church, being inward affliction and distress of conscience by Satan,—which of all afflictions is the greatest punishment, ἐπιτιμία, as the Apostle calls it, 2 Cor. 2:6,—thereby to bring a man to repentance. Even as, on the contrary, the special work of baptism, to such as were *fideles adulti* and believers already, was by joy in the Holy Ghost to seal up their adoption and regeneration unto him; as to the eunuch, Acts 8:39. This we may see in the excommunication of the incestuous Corinthian; whose excommunication is therefore expressed to be 'a delivering him up unto Satan, in the name of the Lord Jesus,' 1 Cor. 5:4, 5; that is, he was to be cast out by a commission from Christ, which going forth in his name, when they published it on earth, he signed it in heaven. Upon which, rightly administered, doth ensue, first, that as the church doth cut them off from communion with them, so God cuts them off from communion with himself, and hides and withdraws the light of his countenance, the witness of his Spirit, and his comfortable presence. And not only so, but 'delivereth them up to Satan,' that being the consequent of it; which therefore, because it implies the former, is put to express the whole proceeding. Which delivery of him unto Satan was not a giving him a commission to carry him on to more sin,—though that often be indeed the effect of it in hypocrites, as in Alexander, 1 Tim. 1:19,—for the end propounded by the Apostle was to 'destroy the flesh,' that is, corruption and the body of sin; and that 'the spirit might be saved,' ver. 5, that is, that contrary principle of grace which yet remained, but was ready to die, as it is Rev. 3:2, might be saved and kept from

death and destruction: but it was to terrify and afflict his conscience, and to stir up in him the guilt of his sin, with terrors for it, which God sanctifieth to humble and to mortify the flesh. And thus, when that Corinthian was excommunicated, did Satan accordingly deal with him; for in the next epistle, 2 Cor. 2:7, we find him well-nigh 'swallowed up of sorrow,' which was Satan's doing; for, ver. 11, 'We are not ignorant,' saith the Apostle, in reference partly to this, 'of this devices.' And thus Satan continued still to handle him, even now when he began to be truly humbled, and was a fit subject to receive forgiveness and comfort, ver. 7; when, though, he feared God and obeyed him, yet he walked in darkness till the church received him. Or else—

[3.] When this ordinance is not in the case of such sins administered, then God himself, who works without an ordinance sometimes the same effects that with it, doth excommunicate men's spirits from his presence, and gives them up to Satan, by terrors to whip them home to himself. So that God gives him leave to exercise power over both godly men and wicked men, only with this difference: wicked men God gives up unto him as unto their ruler and their head; they are therefore called the 'rulers of the darkness of this world,' Eph. 6:12, who therefore 'work effectually in the children of disobedience,' Eph. 2:2; or else as captives to a prince, he taking them 'captive at his will,' 2 Tim. 2:26, so as they are captived and 'led away,' 1 Cor. 12:2. But his own, God gives up to him but as prisoners to a jailor, as a magistrate may do his child, to commit him; who hath not a power over his prisoner to do anything with him, but only by appointment for a time, with a limited commission, and therefore cannot put him on the rack or into the dungeon, but when and how far God pleaseth: even as when Satan is said to have 'cast them into prison,' Rev. 2:10, his commission was but for ten days, and then God rebukes him.

(3.) Satan having thus obtained leave, now to shew how able and powerful he is to work darkness in us, I need not much insist on. His physical and natural power to work upon our spirits, by his creation as he is an angel, is exceeding great. We are a middle sort of

creatures between them and beasts; beasts being merely corporeal, they merely spiritual, man between both. 'He made us a little inferior to the angels,' Heb. 2; though but a little, yet inferior; and in respect of that inferiority, we are exposed to their working and crafty wiles. The great advantage they have hereby over us, the Apostle insinuates when he says, 'We have not to do with flesh and blood, but spiritual wickednesses,' Eph. 6:12; that is, with spirits, in abilities transcending the power of the flesh and blood; for flesh is used to express weakness when it is thus compared, as here, with spirit: so Isa. 31:3. Therefore they are there also called, as principalities for their authority, so powers for their natural abilities; and that to work upon us, for it is spoken in that relation. All which power, how great soever in him at his first creation, is now become the power of darkness; and so called because most powerful that way; namely, to cause and work darkness in us. And though he can for a need 'transform himself into an angel of light,' by deluding his deceived enthusiasts with false joys, yet therein he doth but act a part, it is but forced. But to shew himself an angel of darkness, by terrifying and affrighting weak consciences, this is natural now to him; his power lies most in this. Therefore his title further is the 'ruler of darkness;' and also he is called 'that strong man,'—strong, as to keep peace, Luke 11:21, in those he deceives with a false peace, so to make war and commotions in us when he is cast out. We are bidden, therefore, to stand upon our guard, and to look that 'we have on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand against his wiles,' Eph. 6:11.

(4.) Only, in the fourth place, though Satan hath never so much power, yet the advantage and exercise of this his power to work those disquietments in us is by reason of that sinful darkness which is in us. We may say, that as unless he had power from above,—that is, from God,—so nor unless he had furtherance from beneath, even from those principles of guilt and darkness in us before-mentioned, he could not disquiet us. 'Satan cometh,' saith Christ, 'but hath nothing in me.' A commission he had, and therefore came; but he had nothing of his image, or of the guilt of any of his works, to work

upon in Christ; and therefore could effect nothing at all upon his spirit. That, therefore, which gives him privilege, scope, and matter to work thus upon us is something within us; there being, even in the best, something which doth belong to his jurisdiction, which maketh their spirits fit subjects for his temptations to take upon. In Eph. 6:12, they are called the 'rulers of the darkness of this world;' and, Col. 1:12, 13, their power is called 'the power of darkness;' so as darkness is his territories, dominion, and jurisdiction: for it is his work and his image, without which he could have no power at all with us.

(5.) But by reason of this remaining darkness he hath a double advantage over us:—

[1.] An advantage of more near, intimate, and immediate access to our spirits, to close with them, to suggest unto them, and to work upon them; and to tempt not only, as one man tempts another, by the outward senses, but by the inward also, which is an exceeding great advantage. And though it is true that, as he is an angel, he hath naturally by creation ability thus to do; yet as he is now a devil and an unclean spirit, were we but perfectly holy, as in innocency, he should be debarred all such near communication to us. To this purpose it may be observed, that in that his temptation of Adam in innocency, he was not permitted, in his first assault, till he had sinned, to come within him to work upon his fancy and affections indiscernibly; but only mediately and externally, by an audible voice in the body of a serpent. And likewise, as touching the second Adam, we read not that he had access to his inward, senses and spirit; but only by an external suggestion by voice and by visible representations; as when he shewed him the glory of the world in visible landscapes of his own making, which were represented to the eye. What else was the reason why he took the advantage of a mountain? If it had been by working on his inward senses, any place would have served for that. But the devil then appeared in a visible shape, and so tempted him, for he would have had him fall down to worship him. *Cæterum malus ille extrinsecus, ac non per*

cogitationes, Christum adortus est, quemadmodum et Adamum. Nam ne illum quidem per immissas cogitationes, sed per serpentem impetivit.* Another time we find him crept into one of his apostles, to assault our Saviour by him, Matt. 16:23, 'Master, spare thyself,' says he; when therefore Christ says to him, 'Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence to me.' So as still Satan was kept at a distance, and could come no nearer. And that he should yet come thus near to him, made Christ also, in that great temptation in the wilderness, with so much vehemency and indignation at last say to him, 'Avoid, Satan,' Matt. 4:10, as loathing the nearness of so foul a spirit. For what fellowship,—that is, such thus near,—should light have with this angel of darkness? Nor should he have such more near and inward access to our spirits, but for that darkness in us, by reason of which he thus comes within us; and as darkness mingleth with darkness, so he with our spirits. So that as the light of grace in us begun doth fit us for God's drawing nigh to us, so this darkness, remaining in part unexpelled, exposeth us to Satan's drawing nigh so near as to mingle with our spirits, and, as it were, to become one spirit with us.

[2.] As hereby he hath this advantage of access to get within us, so this darkness in us is also as fit fuel and as tinder to his fiery temptations, that presently enkindleth and inflameth. So as all those effects of the principles of darkness mentioned he can both increase and augment, and so add blackness to that darkness in us. And darkness being his dominion, therefore so much darkness as is in us, so great a party he hath in us to work upon. Hence, therefore, all the effects that he worketh in unregenerate men, who are nothing but darkness, he may work in regenerate men, according to the proportion of the remainder of darkness in them, to a certain degree, and for a limited season; as to delude their reason, falsely accuse and terrify their consciences, &c. Only final despair and revenge against God, which is that sin unto death, this the Apostle excepteth; for having occasionally mentioned that sin, 1 John 5:16, he adds, ver. 18, that 'he that is born of God sinneth not,' that is, not that sin; and he subjoineth, 'but keeps himself that that evil one touch him not,' that

is, not with the least infusion of the venom of that sin which is properly his sin, John 8:44, and which he toucheth their spirits with who become the serpent's seed. And therefore all such instances as we find, that shew how he hath wrought on the spirits of carnal men by reason of their total darkness, may be alleged to shew in a proportion what he may also work on regenerate men for a season by reason of their darkness in part remaining: all things happening alike to all.—Thus in general.

CHAPTER VII:

More particularly how Satan works upon those three principles in us:
first, on carnal reason

More particularly, how Satan works upon those three principles in us: first, on carnal reason.

SEEING therefore the exercise of his power lies in that darkness which is in us, let us more particularly see how able and powerful he is to work upon those several principles of carnal reason, guilt of conscience, jealousies and fears.

First, on carnal reason; on which he chiefly worketh in this sort of temptations, the strength whereof lies in false reasonings, wherein, if in anything, he hath the advantage.

1. First, his abilities to forge and invent false reasonings and arguments to overthrow our faith, are, as they must needs be conceived to be, exceeding great: who for this knowledge is called δαίμων; as well as Satan for his malice; and for his subtlety in outreaching us, a serpent: who when young, outwitted our first parents; 'he beguiled Eve through his subtlety,' says the Apostle, 2

Cor. 11:3, then when their reason was not depraved; but now he is grown 'that old serpent,' Rev. 12:9: and we are become 'children, apt to be tossed to and fro,' Eph. 4:14. He hath had time enough to improve his knowledge in; a student he is of five thousand years' standing, that hath lost no time, but as he is said to 'accuse day and night,' Rev. 12:10, so is able to study both day and night; and he hath made it his chief, if not whole study, to enable himself to tempt, and plead against us. It is his trade. Therefore as men are called lawyers or divines from their callings, so he the tempter and the accuser from his employment. And by this his long experience and observation he hath his νοήματα, 2 Cor. 2:11, his set and composed machinations; his μεθοδείας, Eph. 6:11, his methods of temptations, which are studied and artificially moulded and ordered; even such systems and methods of them as tutors and professors of arts and sciences have, and do read over again and again to their auditors. The Apostle calls them 'darts,' ver. 16,—and he hath a whole shop and armoury of them ready made and forged,—which, for the acuteness and subtle sophistry that is in them, are called 'depths of Satan,' Rev. 2:24; which depths, if in any point, are most to be found in this: for he is more especially versed in this great question and dispute, Whether a man be the child of God or no? more than in any other. All other controversies he hath had to deal in but in particular ages, as occasionally they were started; but this hath been the standing controversy of all ages, since God hath had any children on earth: with every one of whom, more or less, he hath at one time or another had solemn disputes about it; so as he knows all the advantages, windings, and turnings in this debate, all the objections and answers, and discussions in it.

And as other controversies, the longer they are on foot, and the further they have been carried along, the more they are enlarged, improved, and grow more subtle; so must this needs also, especially in this latter knowing age of the world, and by reason also of that seeming near similitude which hypocrisy holds unto the truth and power of grace, which hath fazzled* and entangled this controversy. The objections and difficulties which a believer meets with in beating

out a right judgment of his estate, are greater than in any controversy the world ever knew, and afford stranger knots, and require as acute distinctions to dissolve them as the school knows any; and indeed such as, did not the Holy Ghost sometimes cut, sometimes untie them for believers, by witnessing with our spirits that we are the sons of God, bare reason alone could never determine in it. Now Satan, through long experience and observation, hath all these at his fingers' ends, and hath reduced them all to commonplaces long since. He hath still observed and laid up what answers have relieved the spirits of believers in such and such a doubt cast in by him, and then studies a further reply against the next time, or for the next believer he shall have to do with.

2. Secondly, as he hath thus thoroughly studied this controversy, and knows all the windings and false reasonings in it; so withal, by his daily studying and considering men, he knows how best to suit and make use of those reasonings, both to persons and seasons. It is the sole business of those evil spirits to study men; for this end they 'go up and down the earth.' And he hath commonplaces of men, and their several frames and temper of spirit, as well as of temptations; he knows all the several ranks and classes of men in the state of grace; and according to their ranks, with what sort of temptations to encounter them. For men's temptations are 'various and manifold,' 1 Pet. 1:6; even as the gifts and operations of the Spirit are, 1 Cor. 12:4, 5. Now, he having beaten out this controversy with all sorts, knows how to lay the dispute, how to order, and marshal, and apply objections, and wield his blows with most success and advantage. That as physicians, having observed the several workings of medicines of all sorts, upon several ages and constitutions, and what several issues and effects they have had, do therefore accordingly prescribe and apply several medicines according to the several and differing conditions of their patients, though sick of the same disease. Thus Satan, he by observation finding the hearts of some men 'answering' to some others, 'as face to face in water,' as Solomon says; and withal remembering what reasonings have always taken most with such a sort or strain of Christians, whose corruptions and

whose graces were much alike unto those in this or that man he hath now to deal with; accordingly he makes use and application of these reasonings again. The tempers of men's spirits we know are diverse, and so are capable of diversity of suggestions. And again, the operations of grace, as of sin, are various in those several tempers. And God's dealings with and workings upon his children are as various as either. Some he humbleth much, some are led on with comfort; some he works on with a sudden and marvellous light, as if the sun should rise on the sudden at midnight, and on others insensibly and by degrees, as when the dawning steals upon the day; some have had a false and counterfeit work before, some were never enlightened until savingly; and this variety affords rise and occasion for several temptations. So as what kind of work any other Christian hath had is apt to be made an exception to another that wants it. I was never thus humbled, says one; nor I thus comforted, says another; I had a sudden violent work indeed, which came in like a spring-tide, but now the tide is fallen, and my first love abated, says a third; I had some workings and enlightenings heretofore, says another, and I was deceived then, and I may be so now also: and so he hath that vast task set him, to compare a counterfeit work with a true. Thus every several way of working lies open to several exceptions; and as we say that every calling earthly hath its several and proper temptations, so the several ways and manners of effecting this calling heavenly have their several veins and currents of temptations. All which Satan knows, and hath often traced; and accordingly knows how to fit them to men, and to prosecute them the most advantageous way.

So in like manner he takes the compass of every man's knowledge, notions, and apprehensions; according unto which, as our knowledge is more or less, we are also capable of several temptations. Many reasonings and objections, which, like small hail-shot, could not reach or make any dint at all upon men of parts and knowledge, both because they by reason of their knowledge do soar high out of the gun-shot of them, and have also on the 'whole armour of God,' as the apostle speaks, Eph. 6—that is, are in complete armour, abounding

in all faith and knowledge,—yet such reasonings may be fittest to level with at such as are more ignorant, and fly low, and have but some few broken pieces of that armour to defend some parts with. But on the contrary, those other of his great-shot, which he dischargeth on men of knowledge, they would clean fly over the others' heads, and not come near such smaller vessels. All in Thyatira knew not Satan's depths, nor were capable of them, Rev. 2:24. Thus the ignorance and the want of knowledge of the meaning of the Scriptures, and of the ways of grace chalked forth therein, how doth Satan abuse, to the disquietment of many poor and good souls that want much knowledge, by putting false glosses upon them! How many weak souls do stick in shallows, and are sometimes a long while terrified with gross mistakes, and like small birds are held long under with limed straws of frivolous objections, which great ones fly away with! That great apostle, being a man of knowledge, was not easily taken with such chaff. 'We are not ignorant of his devices.' says he, 2 Cor. 2:11; and therefore Satan takes another course with him, and comes with downright blows, and falls a-buffeting him, 2 Cor. 12:7. Thus doth Satan take measure of the bore, as I may so speak, of every man's understanding, and fits them with objections proportionable, in several sizes. And as the Apostle in his sermons prepared milk for babes, but strong meat for strong men, so doth Satan in his temptations apply and suit them to men's notions and apprehensions, still framing objections according to their reading.

3. Thirdly, he is able undiscernibly to communicate all his false reasonings, though never so spiritual, which he doth forge and invent, and that in such a manner as to deceive us by them, and to make them take with us.

(1.) First, he is able not only to put into the heart suggestions and solicitations unto sensual and worldly objects; such as that into Judas's heart, to betray his Master for money, John 13:2, and to tempt married couples severed to incontinency, 1 Cor. 7:5; but also the most subtle and abstracted reasonings concerning things spiritual, which are utterly remote from sense, he can insinuate and

impart according to the measure and capacity of men's apprehensions. Therefore we are said to wrestle with them about things heavenly, and our interest therein is often made the matter of contention and the subject of the question. So that phrase, Eph. 6:12, ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις, when it is said, 'We wrestle with spiritual wickednesses in heavenly,' is rather to be understood of heavenly things than of heavenly places; the word signifying rather supercelestial, in the highest heavens, whither, if rendered of places, the devils never came since their fall. And it being used elsewhere for heavenly things, as Heb. 8:5, and the preposition ἐν, or in, being likewise sometimes put to express the object-matter about which a thing is conversant, as Matt. 11:6, 'Blessed is he that is not offended in me,'—that is, with or about me, and for my sake,—it may congruously be so here meant, as noting to us, that the price, the stake, about which we wrestle with Satan are not things worldly, as honours, riches, and the like, but things heavenly, which concern our souls and estates hereafter.

Now the contention being about heavenly things and spiritual blessings, it cannot be transacted but by reasonings suitable; that is, spiritual false reasonings, abstracted from sense and fancy. And in this respect they are termed spiritual wickednesses, because in such wickednesses they deal and trade in especially, or as much as in those that are sensual; as tempting to unbelief, despair blasphemy against God, of which sort are all those temptations we have now in hand. And that he is able to convey and suggest such spiritual thoughts and reasonings of what sort soever, appeareth many ways: as by injecting blasphemous thoughts against God, such as do sometimes transcend the wit and capacity of the receiver of them; and is manifest likewise by Saul's prophesying even from the immediate dictating and suggestion of an evil spirit, as is expressly said, 1 Sam. 18:10; in the like manner to which haply the Sibyls also prophesied.

But more evident it is in all those damnable heresies which have been broached in all ages, as in the primitive times among the

Romans, the broachers whereof are made the emissaries of Satan; therefore, Rom. 16:18, he having branded them, unto the Romans, that taught false doctrines among them, and having instructed them against them, he gives this encouragement about them, ver. 20, 'that God should tread down Satan under their feet shortly,' having respect to Satan's work in those errors mentioned, ver. 18, Satan being the main author of them. Thus in the church of Thyatira, those cursed heretics who applauded themselves, and were admired by their followers for the depths and profoundness of their learning, shewn in those heresies they broached: 'depths, as they speak,' Rev. 2:24. But if they call them depths, says the Apostle, I will call them depths of Satan,—'depths of Satan, as they speak,'—for the devil was the master and the author and suggester of them. So, in after-times, apostasy is ascribed to spirits of error,—that is, devils, which he foretelleth men should give heed unto, 1 Tim. 4:1,—and to the working of Satan, 2 Thess. 2:9. It was he that sharpened their wits and pens. Now then, by the same reason, there is no reasoning about our estates, though never so spiritual, but he can suggest it, as well as he did those depths of the heresies to the broachers of them. So as Satan can not only make those false reasonings, which our own hearts forge, more specious and probable, and suggest further confirmations of them, which are enough to add unto this darkness; but he is also able to put in new, which himself invents, of what kind soever they be.

(2.) Secondly, he is not simply able to suggest them, but to insinuate them in such a manner as to take with us and deceive us; yea, and often to set them on with a deep impression. Therefore, in those places forementioned, it is not simply said that there should be spirits which shall suggest errors, but so suggest them as that 'men should give heed unto them.' Thus, 1 Tim. 4:1, and 2 Thess. 2, where the working of those very same spirits is set forth, ver. 9, it is not only said that they were sent as from God to delude, but with 'strong delusions;' such as should have a strength put into them to prevail, so as that men should believe them. So also, that lying spirit which God sent, and who persuaded Ahab by a lie in the mouths of his false

prophets, commission was not simply given to him to suggest a lie, but so as it should prevail with Ahab; so 2 Chron. 18:21, 'And the Lord said, Thou shalt entice him, and thou shalt also prevail.' And as he is thus able, when God gives leave, to delude wicked men's understandings with false reasonings in matters of heresy and false doctrine, by reason of that total darkness that is in them: so he is able, if God give leave, as sometimes he doth, to bring strong delusions upon the minds of God's children also, through false reasonings about their own estates, by reason of that darkness which in part remains in them; by means of which he may work the same effects for a time, and in a certain degree, in a godly man, which in another, as was before observed. Thus the believing Galatians, especially some of them, were so far 'bewitched,' as his word is, as for a time to assent to that great error in point of justification; and this by reason of that folly and darkness which remained in them, as he intimates, when he says, 'O ye foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth?' Gal. 3:1. And if in the very doctrine of justification itself believers were thus for a time deluded, which is rare, then much more may they, and ordinarily are they, misled in the application of faith, in the believing their own personal justification, which is the point in hand.

Only this is to be added here for caution's sake: that it is true that Satan cannot enforce an act of assent to any falsehood upon the understanding of any man. For how then should they 'all have been damned for believing that lie?' 2 Thess. 2:11, 12; which should not have been unless it were their own sin; which is as true of all other temptations as that. Though Satan put the thought into Judas's heart, John 13:2, yet his own conscience owns it wholly as his own act, Matt. 27:4, 'I have sinned,' &c.

Neither yet doth he so immediately concur to produce such an act of assent in us, as God doth when he worketh faith in us; for then God's power and assistance in working good should be no more than Satan's in working evil. *Tentationis potest esse causa efficax, at non*

peccati; potest necessitare homines ad sentiendum tentationem, non ad consentiendum.

And yet the Scripture phrases go far in ascribing unto Satan herein, when it says of those that believed not the gospel, that 'the god of this world hath blinded their minds that believe not,' 2 Cor. 4:4; which notes out a superadded working of blindness unto their own natural blindness. As also when he says that 'the prince of the air is ἐνεργῶν, that works effectually,' &c., Eph. 2:2. And also that of the Corinthians whilst unregenerate, who as then are said to be 'carried and led away after dumb idols,' 1 Cor. 12:2. All which phrases would seem to argue, not only a further power of working upon men's judgments than when one man doth endeavour to corrupt and persuade another man in a moral way, (because he suggesteth indiscernibly, and with more frequency and importunity, and holdeth the mind more to the object, and presenteth an army of confirmations at once, and is able so to marshal them as the mind can scarce resist; and puts all these upon the spirit with a violent and imperious affirmation,) but further, also, they would seem to imply some kind of physical working, though not immediately on the spring of the clock, yet upon the wheels and weights of it—I mean the passions in the body and the images in the fancy, though not upon the understanding immediately; all which, what influence they have to sway the judgment and pervert it, experience shews.

4. Fourthly, he is further able to follow and continue his reasonings as occasion is, and to keep up the dispute, and hold out arguments with us, and out-reason us, by putting in new replies to our answers, and so to maintain and manage and carry along the dispute, and to come up with fresh supplies: which in this respect is called wrestling, Eph. 6:12, 'We wrestle not with flesh and blood, but principalities and powers;' it being, as the bodily wrestling, transacted by reiterated assaults, and attempts to overcome and get the victory; he, as it were, going about to strike up our heels, as wrestlers do—that is, to take away from under us those reasonings which supported us, by cavilling objections; which kind of spiritual wrestlings how often

have we experience of in spiritual agonies! In the hour of temptation believers find conflicts and bandyings of disputes, rationally carried along, and pertinent objections brought in against those answers which they secretly meditate of. In which cause, therefore, divines bid men not to dispute with that cunning sophister. Thus many, when death hath approached, have found that they have had their reasonings for their estates, and those evidences they have had recourse unto, taken away and confuted as fast as they have thought of them.

And that Satan hath this dexterity and skill thus to manage such kind of disputes with us, is further evident in the framing of heresies, wherein he assists the contrivers of them with pertinent considerations to back and confirm their notions, in their private meditations, studies, and contrivements. And indeed, if Satan were not able and skilful thus to oppose and reply, these kind of temptations which consist in disputes could not be managed; for otherwise in them Satan disputed with us but as if one of us should reason with a dumb man that can hear, but his answers cannot be known, and so he knows no way what reply to make. Therefore surely Satan hath often some way, more or less, a guess and inkling what may be the answers of the heart again: which, were it otherwise, the glory also which God hath by the victory gotten over Satan in these temptations were much obscured, and Satan's confusion less; for the victory of our faith in these disputes, and the resistance it makes, lies chiefly in those replies which are made, whereby it quencheth all his darts: whereof the devil, when he is once sensible and perceives it, he is confounded; for then, when he is once sensible and apprehensive that he is resisted, doth he fly from us, as the Apostle speaks, James 4:7, and that of his own accord, as the expression there imports; even as a foiled and disgraced soldier. And this we may see in his carriage in those his temptations of Christ, which were managed by mutual disputes, and wherein the foiling of Satan was by the answers out of Scripture which Christ gave; by which being confounded, 'he left him,' as the text says, Matt. 4:11, as out of pride, ashamed that he was foiled. So that Satan, some way or

other, is able to guess at, and discerns the replies in our hearts to his objections, as well as to make and cast in objections.

CHAPTER VIII:

That Satan is able to work upon that other corrupt principle in us

That Satan is able to work upon that other corrupt principle in us: guilt of conscience.—Both how many ways Satan is able to know matter by us to object against us; as also, to set it on, and work upon the guilt and erroneusness of the conscience.

THUS we see how able Satan is to join with and assist carnal reason in us against ourselves. We will now further consider what power and working he may exercise upon that other principle in us, our consciences; in joining with the filth and defilement thereof, in accusing us and laying particulars to our charge; in which consisteth the greatest of his strength, even in an army of accusations of us to ourselves, which in this warfare he musters up against us. This sort of temptations we have in hand consists either of false majors or false minors, which are like the two wings of an army. His false majors, they are such as, misapprehensions of the ways and of the work of grace, or misunderstanding of sayings of Scripture, &c., which by reason of that darkness of ignorance that is in us, he puts upon us wrested and perverted. As, that to relapse into the same sin again and again is not compatible with grace; and many the like. For the opinions whereby some do measure what strictness is essential to the being in the state of grace are often too severe and rigid; as in others, too loose. The measure of some is too scant, not giving allowance to failings; as of others, too large, taking in such gross corruptions, and the constant practice of them, as cannot stand with grace. And Satan deceives with both: as the one sort, of profane men, to flatter themselves to be in a good condition when they are not, so

the other, of weak and tender consciences, that they are not in a good estate when they are. And in like manner places of Scripture misunderstood do oft prove matter of great temptation to many; as that Heb. 6, unto one who, having fallen from his first love, concluded he could never be saved, because it is there said, that 'they which are once enlightened, if they fall away, it is impossible they should be renewed to repentance;' whereas it is only to be understood of a revengeful total apostasy. Thus, as Elymas 'perverted the right ways of the Lord,' Acts 13:10, so doth Satan also; Elymas being therefore there called 'child of the devil,' because he did the work of his father therein.

Now, all such false reasonings as are founded upon such mistakes of the things, and of the rule itself whereby we should judge of our estates—false majors—do properly belong to the former head of carnal reason. But he hath another wing of forces to join to these; and they are false accusations of a man to himself. from the guilt of his own heart and ways, misconceits of a man's self, and misapplications to a man's self: another sort of arguments, wherein the minors are false. So, although a man be full of knowledge, and through the light thereof hath a right judgment both of the Scriptures and of the ways of the work of grace by which men's estates are to be judged, and so therein Satan cannot be too hard for him with all his sophistry; yet by misrepresenting a man to himself, and by perverting his own ways to him, making that which is straight seem crooked, and all in him to be hypocrisy, a man is brought to pass a false sentence upon himself. So as if this subtle pleader cannot deceive the judge, as I may so speak, with false rules and mistakes in the law itself, then he endeavours it by misrepresenting the case of the party, and puts in a false bill of accusation, so ordered and coloured as to procure a judgment against him; laying before the eyes of men's consciences their by-ends, deadness, and hardness of heart, and falseness in such and such turnings of their lives; excepting against what is good in them, aggravating what is evil, and all to enforce from thence a false conclusion. To instance in some one

false reasoning of this latter sort, Satan oft argueth and chargeth the conscience of one distressed in this or the like manner:—

'Those in whom any sin reigneth, or in whose hearts hypocrisy and self-love is the predominant principle, are not in the state of grace.'

'But such a one art thou,' &c. For the proof of which minor he musters up and sets in order, in the view of conscience, a multitude of instances of sins committed, thus heinously, thus oft; of duties omitted, and if performed, yet with such and such pride of heart, self-aims, &c. In which sort of reasoning the major and first proposition is true; but the minor, the assumption, such a one art thou, that is most false. And although there be a truth in the instances alleged to prove it, that such sins have been committed, and that in performance of duties such particular by-ends, &c., do arise and are found in the heart; yet not in that manner as he would lay the charge, not as reigning, not as the swaying and prevailing principle in a man's whole course. That hypocrisy is there cannot be denied; but that hypocrisy rules there and is predominant, and that nothing but hypocrisy, is false, which yet Satan amazeth the conscience with, to bring forth this conclusion out of all, 'Therefore thou art a hypocrite.' Which conclusion likewise, how able he is to set on with terrors and affrightments, we shall shew anon. That which we have now in hand is to shew how able he is for those kind of false reasonings, the deceit of which lies chiefly in the assumption and minor proposition; that is, in misapplications to a man's self. In which he hath principally to deal with conscience; for the guilt of a man's particular ways, actions, and corruptions, the seat whereof is the conscience, is made the matter of the evidence and the proofs of those minors; and the defilement and erroneousness of the conscience is that principle in us which he works upon when he enforceth such a misapprehension from those evidences.

Wherein, by the way, we may take notice of a difference between the Holy Ghost's dealing with a believer, when at any time he comes with the word, and searcheth and tries his heart, and discovers

corruptions to us,—to wit, such a searching as David prayed for, 'Examine me, O Lord, and try my heart,' &c., Ps. 26:2, 139:23,—convincing and reprovng us, and that sometimes with some sharpness, for our by-ends, hypocrisies, &c.; when also he 'bores the ear, and shews wherein we have exceeded,' as Elihu speaks, Job 36:9, 10;—and between these other siftings and winnowings of Satan, as Christ's phrase is, Luke 22:31. The difference is, that the Holy Ghost dealeth sweetly herein, but as a father that rebukes and convinceth his child of his misdemeanours; but without putting in any such sting in the conclusion, that therefore we are hypocrites; nor to any such meaning or purpose thence inferred, that therefore sin reigns in us, &c.: but in these of Satan, that is the issue he mainly drives all to, and it is made the foot, the burden of all those his accusations, and is as the scope and argument that runs through the whole of that his charge against us.

And in respect to this his misrepresenting our estates, and false aggravations of our sins unto us, he is called, as the tempter, which is in a general relation to all sorts of temptations, so the accuser, κατηγορος, Rev. 12:10, or impleader against us; and as the accuser of us to God, in God's court, and before his tribunal, (for to accuse in a court the word may seem to import,) so in the court of our own consciences. And as he tempts us unto sin, so also for sin and by sin,—that is, the guilt of it,—to draw us to despair. He that accused Job unto God, would sure accuse Job unto himself much more.

And though it may be truly affirmed that neither Satan nor our own consciences can ever aggravate unto us too much the intrinsical sinfulness, the heinousness and vileness of our sins in their due and proper colours, and true aggravations of them, which we can never come to see enough, as not to hate nor loathe and mourn for as we ought; yet Satan and our own consciences may, in the representation of our sins, put such false apprehensions and such aggravations upon them as may make us apprehend too much about them; as when it is suggested that they are such as are not compatible with the state of grace, or that they are utterly unpardonable. He may likewise use

them as inductions to prove a false conclusion. And also, although our sins, if truly, can never be enough represented, if it be in order to drive a man more to God's grace and unto Christ: yet to present them singly and alone, and to hold the mind and intention of it so to them as to cause us to forget our own mercies, and in such a manner as thereby God's mercies and all comforts are hidden and concealed from us; this is that is Satan's practice, and is the cause of this deep bondage we thus here speak of. And in this respect that name, κατήγορος, the accuser, is given this evil spirit in a direct and full opposition to that special name and office of the Holy Ghost, παράκλητος, the comforter or pleader for us: because as the Holy Ghost maketh intercession in our own hearts unto God for us, and upon true repentance helpeth us to make 'apologies' for ourselves, as the word is, 2 Cor. 7:11, and comforteth us by discovering 'our graces given us of God,' as 1 Cor. 2:12, and by pleading our evidences, and witnessing with our spirits that we are the sons of God; so on the contrary, Satan is κατήγορος, an accuser, by laying to our charge the guilt of our sins, by implending our evidences, misrepresenting our estates, thereby to deject us and 'swallow us up with sorrow,' as 2 Cor. 2:7.

And further; because in these accusations his scope is to misrepresent our estates to us, and falsely to disquiet us, therefore he is yet more especially called διάβολος, a slanderer, as one that falsely and lyingly calumniateth and slandereth all our graces, all God's dealings towards us, all our dealings towards him; slandering our persons, our estates to us, charging us to be hypocrites, unsound, and carnal, and counterfeit Christians, still misconstruing all unto the worst. Which false calumnies and charges of his, I take most properly to be those 'darts' mentioned Eph. 6:11, which are there said more especially to oppose our faith; and therefore faith is there said to quench them. From which trade of his forging darts of calumnies, he hath his name διάβολος, a slanderer, from διαβάλλω; a metaphor it is, from casting darts, (for the slanderous calumnies of the tongue are 'as a maul, and a sword, and a sharp arrow,' as Solomon speaks, Prov. 25:18; their teeth spears and arrows, Ps. 57:4;) and such are

these kind of Satan's temptations and accusations against us, even as darts and arrows that wound and pierce, and run through the passions and affections, that strike the soul through and through with fears. His name, πειράζων, the tempter, is from πειρω, to pierce; because such are his darts, so sharpened, and flung with that force, as they are fitted to pierce, and enabled to run through. And besides the sharpness of the darts themselves, they are said to be fiery, as making double way for themselves; for a piece of iron, though blunt, yet if fired red-hot, it runs through without resistance.

Satan, he is that great general of the whole powers of darkness in us; and therefore even the forces of the guilt of sin, the proper seat of which is the conscience, he hath some command over, as well as of the power of sin in other members: and therefore as he can muster up and set on fleshly lusts which fight against the soul, and provoke and back them in their assaults upon us, so he can clap on the chains of guilt and bondage upon our consciences.

And as he can stir up that guilt that is in us, so also work upon that in judiciousness and erroneous defilement that is in the conscience, to judge of a man's own estate; this Satan works upon and abuseth. For as he hath a power to work upon the corruption in the rest of the faculties, so also over the defilement and pollution of the conscience; misleading it in its verdict of our estates, as cunning pleaders do a silly jury. The wards of conscience are of themselves loose, and naturally misplaced, but he with his false keys wrings and perverts them much more; it naturally gives an uncertain sound, but he by his false alarms and panic fears cast in doth much more confound the testimony of it. And how easy is it to trouble a soul disquieted already, and to work upon jealousies which are raised! We see how far a cunning man can insinuate with jealous natures, to increase suspicions and surmises. When a humour is stirred, how easily is it wrought on! And thus often when the Spirit hath already read us a sharp lecture, and examined our consciences, then Satan he strikes in, and descants upon it all to deeper terrors and distress.

But the more fall and distinct explication of Satan's work of accusation of us herein requires a further search and inquiry, and a larger demonstration: how Satan should come, and how far, to know matter by us thus to accuse us of. For if he doth accuse, he must, as is said Acts 28, 'have aught against us whereof to accuse;' else it were in vain. And there is this difference between these kinds of temptations wherein we are exercised about the guilt of sin, and those other unto sin: that the object-matter of other temptations is what is without ourselves; but in these, that which is in us and from us, and hath been committed by us, is made matter of objection against, and disquietment unto us. That which is from within the man disquiets the man.

But ere I enter upon this inquiry I must premise a general caution, to set limits to our discourse therein.

And the caution is this: That we are to reserve and maintain this, both as an undoubted truth and as God's sole and royal prerogative, that he can alone both search and know the heart and conscience. As in like manner, That he can only by his wrath immediately make those deep and killing wounds and gashes with which men's souls are often here and hereafter externally wounded: (of which by way of caution also in the next chapter.) Which two glorious and incommunicable attributes of his, that eulogium of the word of God, Heb. 4:12, 13, seems fully to hold forth unto us: where, as at the gate of Paradise was set a cherubim with a flaming sword to keep our fallen parents from ever entering in again, so there Christ is represented as that supreme judge with whom, as at the 13th verse, we are eternally to have to do, (or, as the original, πρὸς ὃν ἡμῖν ὁ λόγος, to whom we are to give an account, for so λόγος is, Rom. 14:12, and elsewhere, taken;) and he there stands with that dreadful sword of his word ready drawn and brandished,—that word by which he will judge men at the latter day, John 12:48, and which therefore is called κριτικὸς, ver. 12, a judger of the thoughts, &c.,—and this to the end that by the awful terror thereof he might compel and drive those that hear the gospel to 'enter into that rest,' to which he had

exhorted, ver. 11, which is set open by him for men now fallen to come into.

Which sword, as it hath a double edge, as there, so in his hand, who alone can wield it, it serves to a double use. That whereas in a judge two things are requisite to the complete performance of his office,—(1.) skill and knowledge to find out and examine the fact; (2.) power to execute and torture the malefactor when found guilty,—he shews how both these do transcendently and solely meet in him, by relating what power is found to be in his word, (which is the ensign of his justice and instrument of his power in judging,) which is said to be a 'discerner of the thoughts,' and a sword that pierceth and woundeth the soul and spirit with unutterable anguish. Which wounding power of the word is distinctly set forth (as some) from the beginning of the 12th verse to those last words, 'and is a discerner of the thoughts;' from whence, to the end of the 13th verse, that other, the searching and all-judging property of God and his word, is laid forth to us: but rather, as I conceive, the Apostle, in one continued metaphor, carries along the expression of both throughout the whole, though more eminently the one in that former part of the words, and the other in the latter; yet so as both are alike made the royalty of God, which is the thing we have in hand.

Neither needs it stumble any that this is there attributed only to the word of God, of which he only seems to speak, for that is all one as to ascribe it unto God; for as 'where the word of a king is, there is power,' says Solomon, Eccles. 8:4, so, where the word of God is, there is the power of God, and so is it here to be understood: and therefore, as in other scriptures, his word is said to create, and by it the heavens to be established, &c., and also, Gal. 3:8, in the like phrase of speech, the Scripture is said to foresee, that is, God foresaw, who writ the Scripture, so also here, to know and wound the heart. Which to be the Apostle's express intention here appears by the connexion of the 12th and 13th verses. For whereas, ver. 12, he begins with attributing this power unto the word, yet in the end he

closeth his speech with transferring all that was said thereof upon God himself, ver. 13, 'with whom we have to do.'

To open the words a little more largely, so as to clear this assertion out of them, which it is necessary to premise. The words are, 'For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart: neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and opened to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.'

And, first, of that sole searching power of the soul in this chapter, and of that other, the sole wounding power of the conscience, in the next chapter, we shall have the like occasion to premise.

For the present; that searching, examining, and judging power of the word now in hand, he expresseth by an allusion to the anatomy of bodies; which then, though not so frequently as now, was yet in use; or else to the cutting up of the sacrifices, whether those of the Jews or as it was used among the heathen, especially by the soothsayers, who curiously searched into every inward part, as we find in the prophet Ezekiel, chap. 21:21: and his similitude stands then, that look, what the entrails are to a sharp sword, or sacrificer's knife, or the like instruments of anatomy in a strong and skilful hand, such are all the most inward and secret parts of the heart, even those which are most difficult to be divided, unto this sword in God's hand, when he is pleased to use it to search heart and reins, and to discover and bring forth to judgment the secrets thereof. He can use this sword not only to unrip and strip off the outward clothes of outward and formal actions, and so present the soul naked, as his expression is, ver. 13; nor only to flay off all the skin, to excoriate, and so to see what lies under it, as the next word there, τετραχλισμένα, which is translated 'opened,' doth sometimes signify; but, further, to cleave and cut up to the back-bone, for even so deep doth the signification of that word reach, that so all the inwards may appear, and this so

curiously divided and laid asunder, as to see and view apart what is in each. 'It pierceth to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit.' By which, grace and corruption are not so properly here to be understood, for then he would have rather said flesh and spirit; and besides, the persons he speaks this of are principally those who shall be found secret unbelievers, who have not spirit in that sense at all in them; but they are here used to express those two main powers of the heart: the soul,—that is, the inferior part, that more sensual part, wherein the affections are, as 1 Thess. 5:23 it is also used,—which it divides by discovering how close and inordinately all those affections cleave to sin; and then of the spirit,—that is, the superior part, of the understanding, conscience, &c.,—which it rips up by discovering how these plot and contrive the accomplishment of sin. 'Dividing;' that is, discovering apart, with difference, how things are carried severally in each: and withal, what correspondency and intercourse there is between these; how sin and all our actions pass through them from the one to the other, even as blood and spirits do through the veins and arteries, in all the parts from each to other. And as in the body there are several regions, as anatomists call them, divided by partitions: the vital parts in the upper loft next the neck, in which are lodged the heart and lungs; the natural parts in that lower, and these divided by the midriff, as by a floor between them: so in the soul—to which haply Solomon alludes, when he calls the several powers of it 'the chambers of the belly,' Prov. 18:8, as some read it—there is the sensual part of the affections, the soul, &c., which is, as it were, in a distinct room from that more sublime and spiritual part, the spirit. And as the 'spirit of man'—that is, the conscience and understanding of a man—'searcheth all those chambers,' as it is there, (that is, 'knows what is in man,' as the Apostle speaks, 1 Cor. 2:11; which yet when it doth so it is not by an innate light, but with God's candle, as Solomon's expression there is; that is, by the word and the light thereof set up by him in it:) so here, the word, under another similitude,—namely, of a sword,—is said to cut up and to discover all within those several regions. And in the spirit it is said to discover what can be imagined, most retired and withdrawn, and so locked up as no eye could find it out, which he expresseth by mentioning such

parts as are most inwardly seated of all other: the marrow, which we know is enclosed within the bones; and the joints, or ligaments by which the joints are knit and move; these it unbare and discovers also. Both which he interprets in the next words, 'and is a discoverer of the thoughts and intentions of the heart,' which are a more plain interpretation of what he had expressed by those two metaphors. The utmost intention and end, in all our actions, that is as the marrow; because as the marrow gives moisture to the bones, so by these our ends, all our purposes and resolutions, by which we are supported in all our actions, are strengthened and confirmed. And then our devising thoughts or plottings, our contrivements and machinations, those by which we artificially do connect and hang together many joints of means to accomplish and bring to pass our intentions,—which thoughts of all others we strive to hide and conceal,—these are as the joints, or (as the word ἄρμῶν rather implies) as the ligaments, and the sinews, and the tendons by which the joints do move; so these are they upon which our designs do move and turn: even all those cogitationes compaginatae, plotting thoughts, the word it discovers and cuts up, and also judgeth and examineth, and passeth sentence upon them; yea, and that so exactly, as not the smallest fault can pass uncensured by it. It is as a curious critic in this review: κριτικὸς, it judgeth exactly, as critics use to do. So as by this anatomy which the word make, all things in man, every creature, even the least fibra, the smallest sting in the heart, which would escape the sight of the most exact anatomist, are all 'naked and opened,' and cut up, 'before the eyes of him with whom we have to do.'

The reasons why God hath reserved this to himself are:—

1. It was for the glory of God that he should have one private cabinet among the creatures, which he alone should know and keep the key of, which might argue his omniscience; as also one place to be sanctified in, whither no creature's eye could pierce: that so the greatness of his glory might appear, namely, in this, that he is not worshipped outwardly only, as great ones are, but inwardly, 'in spirit and truth;' and that his glory is such as commands the inward parts,

which no eye seeth but his own: so as a man will respect God so much as to sanctify him in secret when no creature looks upon him.

2. That God alone might be the judge and rewarder of men's ways, and so looked at by them, to whom alone men must give an account; which would draw the creature's eye alone upon him, when the strength and firstborn of all our actions are his subjects alone, and do come under his eye and view. Therefore it is said that he 'rewards men according to their works, whose heart he knows.' It was fit that he only should take upon him to reward who only could know the principles of all actions; in which the chief of the good or evil in the action lies. This is the great glory of God and Christ at the day of judgment, that 'they will discover the secrets of all hearts,' 1 Cor. 4:5. It is not said so much of men's actions, that they shall be then discovered, as that the secrets of their hearts; for therein lies God's glory, which he will not give to any other.

This premised as a most necessary caution, I come to the disquisition of that query mentioned: How, and how far, Satan may come to know so much matter against us whereof to accuse us?

1. In general, it may be considered—

(1.) That he knows what ends, and intentions, and thoughts, and lusts such corrupt hearts as ours usually produce and bring forth in all men; and therefore can imagine what by-ends, &c., may be stirring in such and such actions, and so lay them to our charge; and so often hit right therein, and speak a man's heart thus at random. For our natures are apt to bring forth 'all concupiscence,' as the apostle says, Rom. 7:8. Therefore if there were no more than he knows all temptations common to man's nature, he might go far in accusing every man; he having keys of all sorts, sorted to all men's spirits, tries with every one which will enter. And as David's elder brother charged David, when he came into the wars, 'This is the pride and the naughtiness of thy heart,' guessing at his by-ends in it, so doth Satan; he often in like manner charges us by guess. Thus he

did Job; 'Doth Job serve God for nought?' He knew such by-ends were in men's hearts, and so ventures to lay them to Job's charge also.

(2.) Though he should know very little of us, yet he may from some one particular which he doth know or suspect, cast in a suspicious thought about a man's estate; and so set the jealous heart a-work itself to search out more matter against itself. As in case of treason, the least hint given by some one sets the state a-work to examine the bottom of the business, and so to get all out. So as Satan often gives and casts in but a scruple, which proves as a theme for the heart itself to dilate upon, and the conscience upon inquiry finds matter against itself to prove and increase that surmise.—Thus in general. But—

2. He may more particularly know much against us to accuse us of, and so frame bills against us out of what he knows, and this first supposing he had no access to our inward parts, and that he had no further way of knowing of us than men have one of another, it being made the limits of man's knowledge, by God to Samuel, to 'judge by outward appearance;' yet all those advantages which men have to know one another by, he hath over us, more than any man can have, and all more eminently. For—

(1.) Those spirits can discern all corporeal actions, though not of all men at once,—for then why should Satan travel up and down the earth to review all in it?—yet in that distance is proportioned unto them. They understand not only by innate inbred species, but some things per species acceptas a rebus. They learn daily. Thus 'by the church,' the good angels are said to 'learn' what they never knew before of the mysteries of the gospel, Eph. 3:10. And though those species in them, and their manner of knowing corporeal things differs from ours, yet they are analogical with ours, and we no more know the manner how they should receive species a rebus corporeis, the images of all things done by bodily substances, than a blind man can imagine how men that see should receive in colours. Yet this we may be sure of, that all that the senses or mind of man can know,

that they can also, for natural things are all debita objecta, due objects made for them: for they were therefore made to be discerned by intelligent creatures; and if by any, then by the most supreme and intellectual natures.

(2.) They make it their business to study men; it is their trade to go up and down and consider men: 'Hast thou not considered,' says God to Satan, 'my servant Job?' Satan useth to consider and study men; and as the Apostle exhorts to 'consider one another to provoke to love,' so Satan considers men to provoke to sin, and to tempt for sin unto despair.

(3.) He may be privy to our vocal confessions of sins to God or men; unto our laying open our own hearts to God in private prayers, or to others in trouble of conscience: therefore so much of the heart as is this way discovered he can and doth know. And why may not God permit him, and give him the liberty and advantage to accuse us, even of that which he comes, to know by this means? It being for the trial of his servants, especially in case they have returned again to those sins which they confessed, and yet have not forsaken; it is just that then as the guilt of former sins returns upon us in such a case, so that Satan should be permitted afresh to charge us with them; and that, in this case, a man should lose the privilege of sigillum confessionis, of the secrecy and seal of confession, as I may so speak. And if God may permit a man to whom we have confessed, according to God's own ordinance, yet to tell things confessed, and to cast them in our teeth, as sometimes it hath fallen out; why may not Satan, the accuser of the brethren, sometimes be permitted to lay that to our charge which he only knew this way?

(4.) He is and can be present at all our more retired actions, and is privy to them, being with us at bed, board, in all companies. By means of this he can accuse us—

[1.] Of all gross actions done that are obvious to sense; which, indeed, are usually the greatest matter of accusation, and do lie upon

us most heavily in such temptations, as David's murder and adultery did on him. 'My sin,' says he, 'is ever before me.' And these having pulled a man down, and put him into prison and clapped him up, our own consciences then may come in, with all our more privy corruptions, as lesser creditors use to do. And when once the soul hath, by means of the accusing of one foul act, given way to doubting, then all other privy corruptions join and offer themselves to accuse us also; for they 'lie at the door,' as God told Cain, ready for such an occasion.

[2.] Also he may by this be able to accuse us of all deadness, and drowsiness, and neglect in the performance of holy duties, as want of attention and quickness in them, for these are easily discerned by any one that is observant; and of the want of stirring affections, and also of neglect of holy conference in all companies, and the like. If a godly man were to follow a man up and down in all companies, how much might he know of a man and be able to accuse him of!

[3.] By such observations he may know a man's bosom sins. So he knew and observed Judas's bosom sin to be covetousness, and accordingly sorted his temptation to it.

(5.) By what he sees outwardly of our actions, he can many ways guess at inward corruptions, which are the principles of them. He hath all the ways which a wise discerning man hath, who should always watch a man, and set himself to study a man, and that hath opportunity to suggest when he pleaseth, on purpose for trial and discovery; all the ways such a man hath to know the heart Satan hath. And that which Solomon says of a wise man, that though 'the heart of man be deep, yet a man of understanding will fetch it out,' Prov. 20:5, holds true of Satan much more. As, [1.] by comparing one action with another, one speech with another; so wise men guess at men's ends in things, and their respects that move them. [2.] By gestures. By a cast of a man's countenance and behaviour, men are often discerned; by the like may Satan see into us. Thus Joab discerned David's pride in his command for numbering the people,

so as it was loathsome in his eyes. And if Joab discerned this by the outward carriage of the matter, how much more might Satan, that put in the motives to persuade him to it! The Jesuits bid those of their followers who are to deal with men, when they talk with any whose minds they would discern, still to observe their eyes, to see what alterations are in their countenances, as through which the mind is transparent; now Satan he is a good physiognomist, and he eyes a man. [3.] Further, he himself suggesting many motives and reasons in businesses, this way and that way, casting in many by-ends and motives to be considered by us, he observes how the heart comes off at such and such suggestions, or where it stuck, and what suggestion it was that turned a man this way or that way, and fetched him off. The Jews might see what moved Pilate to crucify Christ, because at that saying, as the text notes, that 'else he was an enemy to Cæsar,' he gave sentence. So Satan, when he stirred up David by proud arguments to number the people, he must needs know what pride was in his heart. Now—

(6.) Besides all this, how far he may have an insight into the fancy and the images therein, which follow and imitate the inward thoughts of the mind, as the shadow doth the body; and also into the passions, which are but the flowing and reflowing of corporal spirits, and in which the affections of the will discover themselves; this I leave to others to determine. For the present, this is certain, that although all the powers of the reasonable soul be fast locked up from him, as we shall shew, and the immediate acts which are immanent in the soul itself utterly hidden from him; and that, take the soul as it is the immediate subject and root of them, so intuitive no devil can discern them, no more than one angel can discern the thoughts of another; yet arguitivè, and as they do transire, and appear, and are put forth in the body and corporal organs, outwardly in actions, or inwardly in the images of the fancy or the passions, and so, quasi in alios, and mediately, they may be very far discerned and looked into by angels. Which yet will nothing at all prejudice that prerogative which is given to God, when he is said alone to know and search the heart, but give its full allowance; nor that privilege which is given to

the soul itself to enjoy, namely, that 'none should know the things of a man, but the spirit that is in man,' 1 Cor. 2:11; as we shall have occasion to shew in the Appendix to this discourse.

Besides, therefore, these advantages and ways of knowledge, somewhat common to us men, each of other, they have a further and more near way of knowing the acts of the reasonable powers, the understanding and will, than we men can have; even as they have also a way of communicating their thoughts to us in a more intimate, close, secret manner, yet still such as falls short of an intuitive knowledge of them. They can go into a room further then we; and into a room which is next the privy chamber, which yet remains fast locked up unto them. As their power in all other things reacheth a degree higher than ours, so in this also. To open this a little:—

Those reasonable powers and faculties in us, the understanding and the will, the immediate immanent acts of which are thus in themselves fast locked up, being yet in this life drenched in the body and bodily organs, upon which their working doth depend: as, the understanding is joined to the fancy, which makes parheli, and resemblances, and shadows of those thoughts the mind secretly conceives and forms, so as scarce any thoughts do stir but the fancy imitates them, and acts them as far as it is able; and the will also is conjoined with the affections, which are drenched and shew themselves in bodily organs and spirits, so as not any motion of the will puts itself forth, but more or less some affections of the body do stir with it; and therefore affections are as well defined by their motion in the body as by their seat in the will itself. As when anger is defined, *ira est ebullitio sanguinis circa cor*, a boiling of blood about the heart; and affections are but the flowings and reflowings of spirits to and from the heart.

Now both these, both phantasms and passions, all divines do grant that the devils may know, and that to know them they have a nearer access to us than men can have each to other; yea, and that they may discern them intuitive, as we do things which are present before us:

how else should they work upon fancy? And otherwise, there were no diabolical dreams; nor angelical neither, caused by good angels. But we find that a good angel dictated to Joseph a great article of faith—Christ's divinity and nativity. It was done in a dream, and therefore to his fancy. So they inspired the Sibyls, and dictated prophecies, as was said. And so the evil angels prompted Saul's fancy. And this they do, not by creating new species and images, but evocando, calling forth the images there already. For the images of things in the fancy being corporal species, they can no more beget a new corporal image than they can make a body anew. And therefore, all the power of the angels cannot cause a blind man to dream of colours.

And therefore, their way in communicating their suggestions to us herein must be by discerning the species, to wit, of all words heard or read that lie in the fancy already; and so by ordering and composing them, even as a compositor in printing doth his letters that lie confused before him, into words and sentences, to represent to the reader's eye what he would have read by him: so he to the understanding, which doth naturally print off and take the impression off from the fancy of whatever is in it as fast as he doth set them. And by the like reason, that he can call these phantasms forth, and so view the species and images laid up there already, to set them that as he pleaseth; by the same reason it must be supposed that he is as able to discern any of them in the fancy at any time, then when reason itself calls upon any of them, and maketh use of them, as it doth whenever it sets itself to think or muse. And these and all other operations of the sensitive powers they may view and see as truly, for aught I know, and as intuitively even, as we see colours and species of things in the eye of a man. So as these evil angels may, when God permits, get into the head, and see all the images and species in the fancy, and those that are in direct conjunction with the understanding, which it is then thinking and musing of; even as a man doth what images are in the apple of the eye of another man; and so by discerning those phantasms, which the understanding actually then vieweth and maketh use of, he may then judge what the mind is musing of. And again—

2. As we discern men's passions when they dye and affect the outward parts, as if shame dyes the face red, or fear paints it white; so may the angels more secretly discern the motion of them within us, which is the cause of this alteration without. They can go further than we men can; they can see the inward commotion of the spirits in our inward parts, even in their channels and springs, as in that bodily heart we carry within us, and in the veins and arteries, and so know what affections are stirring. And this is evident by this, in that they are able to work upon the passions also. Now, their power of working upon these affections ariseth from their knowing them, and skill to move and stir those spirits and humours electively, wherein these passions are seated. And herein their power of discerning us exceeds that in us men in discerning other men, as that of communicating their minds to us also doth. For as they can communicate secretly by fancy itself, we but by outward words and signs to the outward senses of others, so they can discern more secretly what is in the fancy, and not only what appears in the outward parts, which is yet but a room further that they get into, which we men cannot come to. So in like manner their power over our passions doth exceed also. They can see into the passions and discern the least rising of the tide, the least turn of the stream of affections in our veins, and in the corporal heart. Satan can discern those lesser aguish fits of passion that accompany any act of the will which men discern not. As also, they can stir those passions by working upon the humours and spirits they float in, which men cannot come to do. But of this great and necessary query, as also how by means of this he communicates all his temptations to us, more largely in an Appendix to be annexed to this treatise.

CHAPTER IX:

How able Satan is to work upon that third principle, the passions and corrupt affections

How able Satan is to work upon that third principle, the passions and corrupt affections, and bring home his false conclusions with terrors.

THUS we have seen how able Satan is to work upon those two fore mentioned principles, of carnal reason, and abuse it with false majors; and also upon conscience, in laying our sins to our charge, with misrepresentations of our states. It remains now only, that we shew how he can stir and work upon the passions and corrupt affections in us, and make use of them; and so set on all those false conclusions—that we are hypocrites—thence deduced, with hideous and horrid fears and terrors.

1. And in respect to these terrors, as he is called a serpent, as was said, for sleights, and cunning reasonings, and wiles; so likewise a lion, of all beasts the strongest, Isa. 38:13.* A roaring lion, of all the terriblest, and most terrible in his roaring; whose roaring is therefore often in Scripture put to express the working of dreadfulness and horror: 'The lion roars, who will not tremble?' Amos 3:8. And, as some have observed, and the Psalmist seems to intimate it, Ps. 104:21, by his roaring he strikes such horror and amazement into all other beasts, as they stand still as exanimated, and so he seizeth and preys upon them as he pleaseth. And in this respect also of his working on the passions is it that those darts beforementioned are principally called fiery; namely, for that dolour, and anguish, and inflammation, and combustion they cause through the distempering the affections. Those fears which our own hearts engendered within us were but as smoke; these darts of his put a fire into them, and do cause them to flame and blaze. The allusion is to the poisoned darts which the Scythians of old, and other nations now, use in war,

dipped in the blood and gall of asps and vipers; the venomous heat of which, like a fire in their flesh, killed the wounded by them, with torments the likest hell of any other. Which Job also alludes to, chap. 6:4, 'The arrows of the Almighty are within me: the poison,' or, as others read it, the heat and fervour; we may use both, and read, 'the hot poison thereof drinks up my spirit,' even as fire preying upon moisture. And what were those arrows he speaks of there but terrors? So it follows, 'the terrors of God,' &c. In the same phrase of which that Corinthian is said to have been in danger to have been drunk up—καταποθῆ—as the word signifies, with over-much sorrow, when Satan had to do with him, 2 Cor. 2:7; and the same word is again used of the devil, 1 Pet. 5:8, 'seeking whom to drink up.' So that as Satan inflames other members, and the inordinate lusts in them, with a superadded natural vehemency and violence; as the tongue, which, though of itself full of poison, is said to be 'set on fire from hell,' James 3:16, that is, from Satan, (who is called hell, as in that speech, 'the gates of hell;' as the good angels, the noblest creatures, are called heavens, Heb. 7:26,) he inflaming men's tongues with an overplus of venom and malice, to wound men's names with; even as on the contrary the Holy Ghost did set on fire the apostles' tongues with zeal. As, I say, he doth thus inflame other members, so in like manner he can and doth put fire into those darts he wounds the conscience with; and thereby augments our fears and griefs, and causeth such disquietments and pangs, as that hellfire, as it were, begins to flame in a man's conscience. As Christ is that 'brazen serpent,' so Satan is that 'fiery serpent' that can sting us by the guilt of sin.

And here I must bring in the like caution as I used in the former chapter; namely, that he works not these terrors by immediate impressions upon the conscience, which in that respect is subject to God's stroke alone, as to his knowledge alone. Which, as I intimated, I take to be that other principal part of the drift of those words, Heb. 4:11, 12, 'The word of God is quick and powerful,' &c. For there he sets forth Christ to us, as was shewed, as a judge completely enabled, for vengeance against us, not only in respect of an omniscency to

find us out in all our shiftings, but also, because a judge would not be much feared if he had only skill and knowledge, though never so much, to search and find out the guile and guilt of malefactors, if he were not armed with power to avenge and torture them; therefore withal, the Apostle's scope is to strike terror into their hearts in respect of that vengeance he can execute. And therefore his aim is to exhort them not to dally with God, or with his word; in which he had sworn, of those that believed not, 'they should not enter into his rest,' in the former verse. So as the purport of the words must necessarily also be supposed to be to shew the dreadful power of God, and of his word, in avenging itself upon the contemners of him and it, and not merely to describe his conscience, and knowing of the heart, but as joined also with power to pierce as deep in wounding of the soul as in knowing of it. Yea, and that so large an illustration of his knowledge is brought in but as a clearer demonstration of his power to punish, who can dive so deep into our hearts. As from whence we might argue and fear the stroke of that sword in his hand whose eyes are so piercing. And accordingly to set forth the dreadfulness of this his power, all those his expressions there used do as fully tend, as to set forth the other; and he likewise useth such a comparison as, both in the nature of the things and according to the more usual phrase of Scripture, doth more properly and abundantly intimate this slaying and wounding of men's souls that should be disobedient, by this his sword, than that other of searching the soul and spirit. As—

(1.) This word, says he, is quick and lively; so called not in respect of duration only, as abiding ever, but in respect to working and execution. Things that are exceeding operative, though inanimate, we call quick; so quick-silver, which runs through a man's bowels like hail-shot: and so oppositely, drugs and drinks that have lost their virtue, and are ineffectual, we call dead. And in respect to this energy and power to work upon men's hearts, is that in John 6:63 to be understood. 'The words I speak,' says Christ, 'are spirit and life:' that is, are fall of an operative principle. For an active working principle we use to call the spirit, as the spirit of wine, &c. In that therefore he says the word is quick, he notes out that that word is inspired with a

principle, most quick, spiritual, and active, and fit to work as occasion is; that is, even with the Holy Spirit, who is as the internal form of it. And therefore—

(2.) Having thus intimated this internal form of working, he adds ἐνεργῆς, powerful and mighty in operation, as noting out that power which flows from thence—that ability to produce strange effects upon the soul. These expressions carry report of more than of a skill and dexterity to search and know the heart only. And then—

(3.) He further instanceth in such operations of it, as the effects of that power, which are most dreadful, as the comparisons he useth do import: 'more piercing than any two-edged sword.' Now, as elsewhere the word is compared to an armoury of all sorts of weapons, and engines for war and vengeance,—'The weapons of our warfare are mighty,' &c., 2 Cor. 10:4,—in like manner here he more particularly resembles it to a sword, the most usual and most terrible of all the instruments of death which were then in use; the brandishing of which strikes paleness and horror into a man as the stroke comes at him; which is usually put in Scripture to express vengeance, and more especially in the prophecy of Ezekiel. And also Ps. 7:13, 'If he turn not, God hath whet his sword, and prepared his instruments of death;' that is, to inflict torments, and eternal torments also, as Deut. 32:42. And indeed, whatsoever doth torment, or cause dolour and anguish, is in Scripture called a sword; and the 'piercing with a sword' is used to express the most exquisite dolours: as Luke 2:35, 'Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy soul also;' speaking to the blessed mother of Christ, and of that her anguish and grief, wherewith she should be cut even to the heart, when she should behold her Son upon the cross. Of whose dolours upon the cross likewise, the same expression is used, Ps. 22:20, when he prays, 'Deliver my soul from the sword.' And in this respect the word in Christ's hand is still, when he is spoken of as a judge, compared to a sword, Ps. 45:3; Rev. 19:15; Isa. 49:2, and so here.

And we may further observe, how, thus to strike the more terror into their hearts in respect of the wounds and torments it inflicts, he goes further on to exaggerate the dread thereof. He says not only that it is as sharp, but more sharp, not than a sword of one edge, but than a two-edged sword; not than some, but than any two-edged sword. And further, to shew that he speaks it in relation unto wounding, and anguish, and torment it causeth in the soul, he mentioneth the division of such parts as are not only most hid and inward, in relation to discovery,—for such the marrow is, being covered with the bones, and the ligaments covered with flesh,—but which are also of most exquisite sense, and the wounding of which causeth the greatest dolour. He saith, it pierceth to the dividing the marrow, and therefore cuts through the bones; for so it must needs be supposed to do, when it is said to reach unto the marrow. Now the 'breaking of the bones' is still put to express those exquisite and unsupportable terrors and dolours of conscience, and woundings of the spirit, which a man cannot bear or sustain; for when the bones are broken, a man cannot stand nor support himself. And the like is also the cutting of the ligaments, the nerves, sinews, and arteries,* those ἄρμοι that knit the joints, which are the organs of sense and motion. Again, he says, it divideth not only the soul,—that is, the sensual part, the passions of the mind, as wounding them,—but τε καὶ πνεύματος, that is, the spirit also, which is with an emphasis expressed; and his meaning is not so much that it divideth the soul from the spirit, as some have understood it, but the soul and spirit also. It is a two-edged sword, and can at one blow strike through both; this 'axe strikes at the root,' at the spirit, which, when 'wounded, who can bear?' says Solomon. And then he concludes, ver. 13, that, as 'before him all things are naked;' so also τετραχλισμένα, that is, they lie with their throats cut, if he but strike them dead and speechless at his feet, as Theodoret expounds that word, which is translated 'opened.' Now thus far—that is, to this spirit in man—no created sword can reach; they turn edge at it: but even this the word reacheth, and that alone. So as the summary drift of all herein is the same which Christ expressed elsewhere in other words, to exhort them to fear that God, whose sword and powerful word is able thus alone to wound; and

'not to fear those who can only' wound and 'kill the body,' and but reach to the sensual soul that is drenched in it, but cannot wound or kill the spirit, which God alone can do, and no mere creature whatsoever. And therefore, in all our thoughts and fears of Satan's power of knowing our sins, or troubling or disquieting our spirits, as also throughout this discourse, we are to set such bounds as that this incommunicable royalty of God, and of his word, may be reserved unentrenched upon; namely, that he alone knows, and can immediately wound the spirit and conscience. Both which at once this place held out unto us, which made me the largelier to insist upon the opening of it.

2. But yet although Satan cannot immediately wound the conscience, and make impressions of God's wrath upon it; for as no creature can shed abroad God's love, and cause the creature to taste the sweetness of it, so nor the bitterness of his wrath, but God is his own reporter of both; yet—

(1.) When the Holy Ghost hath lashed and whipped the conscience, and made it tender once and fetched off the skin, Satan then may fret it more and more, and be still rubbing upon the sore, by his horrid suggestions and false fears cast in. And—

(2.) He can, by renewing the experimental remembrance of those lashes which the soul hath had from the Spirit, amaze the soul with fears of an infinitely sorer vengeance yet to come; and flash representations of hell-fire in their consciences, from those real glimpses they have already felt, in such a manner as to wilder the soul into vast and unthought of horrors. And then—

(3.) He can bring home all the threatenings that are thundered forth in the word against hypocrites and men unregenerate, and discharge them all with much violence and noise upon a poor doubting soul. He can and doth present and shew his prisoners those terrible chains, and racks, and other 'instruments of death,' as the Psalmist calls them, Ps. 7:13, which God hath prepared against sinners, and

hath stored up in that great armoury of his word, which he 'hath in a readiness to revenge all disobedience,' 2 Cor. 10:6. With the rattling of which chains, &c., Satan can make a noise in the conscience of a poor sinner, to affright him. Which he is the more enabled to do, out of experience of such terrors in himself; 'being bound up in chains everlasting, under darkness, to the judgment of the great day,' Jude 6. And as a son of consolation and child of light is enabled 'to comfort others the more, by the comfort wherewith he hath been comforted of God;' so this prince of darkness is the more powerful to terrify weak consciences that are ensnared with the cords of their own sins, by reason of the terrors which he hath received from the Lord. And therefore in Scripture, as a power in sin is attributed to him, so the 'power of death,' as Heb. 2:14; where by death is meant not so much that bodily as that eternal death, to which, as the proper punishment of sin, the guilt of it doth bind us over. Which power of his is not that of the judge in sentencing to death, or casting men to hell, which is a special flower of Christ's crown; who, Rev. 1:18, 'hath the keys of hell and death' at his girdle; and of God's, who is therefore only to be feared, because 'he only can cast body and soul into hell.' Nor is it as if he were the main tormentor and executioner of men's souls, after that great day, seeing that they are to be tormented by that fire which in common 'was prepared for the devils' themselves. And who is it that doth torment them? It is therefore principally meant, [1.] of that power and advantage he obtained over sinners when he had seduced them; so as to come boldly as a pleader against them, enabled with authority to urge God's righteous law and word, and to call upon, and to provoke his justice to condemn poor sinners, and adjudge them unto death: until Christ, that righteous advocate, despoiled him of those his pleas and power, by that satisfaction of his, which before the law had put into his hands; and so he 'destroyed him that had the power of death,' enervating all his pleas and terrors. And, [2.] the meaning is, that as he hath this power in God's court over the sentence of death upon poor sinners, so also in our consciences, to urge the law upon us, and to plead all that the law says against them that are under the law, and to put us into the fears of that death threatened therein; and to increase in us the fears

of that death, by presenting to us the terrors of the law, unto which, in respect of natural conscience, men of themselves are subject all their life long, And unto this latter power hath that 'power of death' there especial reference; for those words, 'and deliver them who through fear of death were subject to bondage all their life long.' follow in the next verse, ver. 15. And because the children of God, whilst in this life, as they 'know but in part,' so they love but in part, and so far as love remains imperfect, so far 'fear, which hath torment,' keeps possession; for it is 'perfect love only that casts out all fear,' 1 John 4:18: hence therefore, so far as slavish fear remains, so far they may be subject to be terrified by him that hath power of death; and that over all those that are in any degree subject to the fear of it whilst in this life. And—

(4.) He can immediately, by his own power, stir the passions of fear and grief, &c., excite them beyond nature, as the winds can raise the billows in the sea, and make the floods to make a noise; so can he a tumult in the affections, and put all the soul into a hurry and violent perturbation. He is the prince of the airy part of the little world in man, as well as of that elementary region in the great world; and so can raise unnatural storms and vapours that shall darken reason, and cause such thunders and lightnings as shall hurl all into a black confusion, such as if hell and the soul would presently come together. And though it is true that he cannot turn the stream and current of our affections back,—God only can turn this Jordan back,—yet he can drive them faster, and cause them to swell above their natural channels; that as a man possessed hath the strength of ten men in him, (as that man, Luke 8:29,) so shall the affections have that are blown up by him, as we may see in David. What a strong mind do we find in him, so needlessly to number the people, 2 Sam. 24, against all reason as well as religion, and the persuasion, yea, opposition, not of Joab only, but others also of his counsellors, 'the captains of the host!' A man would wonder that a man so holy and wise should be so transported to do an act so foolish, as himself saw afterwards: 'I have done very foolishly,' says he, ver. 10; yea, and so grossly sinful, as that it was abominable in the eyes of Joab, 1 Chron.

21:6, one that seemeth by his other carriages to have had but nature in him. But the devil was in it; so ver. 1, 'Satan provoked David to number the people,' by raising up such an affection and inclination in him.

The like appears in the affection of love; which how strongly hath Satan drawn forth in some, even to madness, towards such as before, and also after his fascination was overpast, they have loathed and hated above all others, is evident in stories by many instances. And as he can raise up other passions in us, so also fears and terrors, jealousies and distrusts; to 'fear where no fear is.' And thus he handled Saul, when God left him to him: 'An evil spirit from the Lord troubled him,' or, as most read it, and our margin varies it, 'terrified him,' 1 Sam. 16:15. And in the raising up of these affections of fear, and the like, he works more than simply morally,—that is, than by bare propounding such objects as shall move them, which men can only do,—but, further also, physically, by stirring such humours in the body, which such passions do act and stir in. And so those humours in the body, which shall put a man into a timorous and trembling disposition, he can electively work upon as he pleaseth.

And then also, he can disturb the phantasms in the head, the organs of the understanding; as in him, Luke 8:35, who, through Satan's working, is intimated not to have been 'in his right mind.' And when he hath thus distempered and disordered all in a man, and put a man to such dispositions, to fears, &c., then he comes with his suggestions, and speaks nothing but of wrath and terrors, and of the threatenings, and of the heinousness of a man's sins, the tearfulness of God's wrath, unto that conscience that is troubled. And then look, as when a man's choler is up, every small thing provokes him; so now, when fear and melancholy are excited, every suggestion, every surmise doth strike the soul through and through with horrid fears and jealousies. And thus, though not immediately, yet through the means of these mists and vapours, and fogs raised, which environ and darken this sun, he works upon the conscience; and therefore we see, by experience, that he prevails most in this sort of temptations

with melancholy tempers, whom, dwelling in dark shops, he much deceives with false colours and glosses. And when once affections are up and do cloud the mind, then multitudes of troublesome thoughts arise, and every suggestion suitable to that passion takes and prevails with a man's spirit; as appears by that speech of Christ, Luke 24:38, 'Why are ye troubled,' or afraid, 'and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?' Passions, like to heavy weights hung upon a clock, do not only make the wheels, the thoughts, move faster, but also pervert them and wrest them the wrong way; so as to a heart thus distempered all things come to be presented amiss, even as to a bloodshot eye all things seem red. In a word, as he deludes his enthusiasts by setting on and backing their false opinions and illusions with joys and ravishments of spirits, which differ as much from the joys of the Holy Ghost, which are unspeakable and glorious, as heaven from earth; so he can and doth back his false reasonings and accusations to holy men about their estates with abundance of terror and disturbance, which also differs as much from the impressions of God's wrath made immediately by the Spirit upon the conscience, as those joys are found to do.

CHAPTER X:

The conclusion: seven advantages, in common, which Satan hath over us in all these his dealings

The conclusion of this discourse about Satan.—Seven advantages, in common, Satan hath over us in all those forementioned dealings.

AND for a general conclusion to this, and all the rest of this discourse about Satan's working on us, I will but only mention some of those great and many advantages he hath in all these his false reasonings

and accusations over us, for to set them on, and to fasten his slanders and false conclusions thence deduced, and to persuade the mind of them. Which I therefore bring in here, as being common to all those particulars which have been related.

1. It is no small advantage that he can familiarly and frequently suggest them again and again unto us. The frequency of any thought that comes in again and again, that lies by us and haunts us, hath secretly the force of an argument to persuade us to think it is so. We use to say, I have thought so again and again. A cunning flatterer, that is continually suggesting, and taking all hints and occasions so to do, may at last put hard to work out a near and a dear friend, and to make one jealous of him. As the judge yielded to her importunity, Luke 18:5, so is the mind apt to yield to a suggestion that haunts it, and importunately presents itself yea, though it be to pass a false sentence against a man's self. And—

2. He can also, and doth, represent a multitude of reasonings and considerations together at once, all tending to confirm the same persuasion. He will sometimes bring in a cloud of witnesses and instances to prove us hypocrites, and environ the mind round about with them, that, look which way it will, it sees nothing else. As he represented to Christ 'all the glory of the world in the twinkling of an eye,' so he can do a man's sins, &c.; that a man shall have a general prospect of them, and see nothing else, look which way he will. And what force this must needs have to prevail with the mind and judgment to assent, experience shews. As when a man doubting of a truth in a thing controverted, reads an opposite party, presenting all that can be said for the other side alone, it often staggers him, and for the present wins and gains his opinion to that side, till he reads and considers what is said to the contrary; yea, though a man is confirmed and settled in the truth, yet sometimes a man shall have an army of arguments on the other side come in upon him, so ranked and ordered as for the present shall shake and stagger him. And so it must needs be in the agitation of this great controversy about a

man's estate, when Satan shall muster and marshal up an army of objections at once together, and not scatteredly; as he is able to do.

3. He is able to hold the intention of the mind so to them, as to keep off all that which should any way comfort: he can turn down that column in the leaves of our heart wherein grace or anything that may comfort is written, and turn over only, and hold our eyes fixed to read nothing but that other wherein our errata and sins are written; so as to cause a man's soul to 'forget all good,'—as, Lam. 3:17, the church in desertion is said to do,—and to 'forget his own mercies,' as Jonah speaks. He can multiply suggestions so fast, and come in with such a tempest, that as Job complains, chap. 9:18, he will not 'suffer them to take breath.' And therefore the Apostle calls them the 'buffetings, of Satan,' 2 Cor. 12:7; because, like unto buffeting they come in thick and threefold upon a man's spirit, so as a man's spirit cannot take breath. He rains down temptations sometimes, not by drops, as in ordinary rains, but by spouts, as mariners call them, when a cloud melts, as in hot countries, suddenly, and falls by wholesale, and often sinks a ship. 'He breaks me with a tempest,' says Job, in the place fore-mentioned. He speaks it of God, but such like tempests Satan also raiseth.

4. He adds weight to his lying accusations and false reasonings by an imperious and obstreperous affirmation that so it is; he suggests not reasons only that are fitted to persuade, but sets them on with words of affirmation therewithal suggested. And so, like as in reasoning a weak spirit is oftentimes borne down by a stronger, not by force of argument so much as by strength and violence of spirit; for many, when the 'iron is blunt,' and their arguments 'want edge, put to the more strength,' (as Solomon speaks, Eccles. 10:10,) and so prevail; and so doth Satan, he being a spirit of greater strength than ours by creation, and guilt also further weakening us in arguing with him. Cunning pleaders may so argue the case, with such violence and confidence, that as Socrates said when his accusers had done, that if he had not been very innocent he should have suspected himself guilty; how much more, when the accusation shall fall upon persons

that are so guilty, as we all are, and the thing also impleaded be that which we are already suspicious of? What a man already fears he easily believes, as what a man hopes, quod metuunt, facile credunt. We see that there falls out often in opinions a preconceit which exceedingly sways the mind, a giving of mind that such a thing is so or so; and in such a case Satan can strike in exceedingly to strengthen such a conceit. This I take to be implied in that phrase, 2 Thess. 2:2, where the Apostle gives warning they should not be troubled 'neither by spirit nor by word, to think the day of judgment was at hand.' By spirit he means a pretence and opinion of some revelation, concerning something which a man's own private conceit and imagination inclined him so to think; thus, 1 John 4:1, spirit is also taken. And thus oftentimes when Satan perceives the mind inclined to think so or so, he adds weight unto the balance; and so a man is given up to the efficacy of delusion. As we see in those false prophets which the Apostle there speaks of, when he says, 'Believe not every spirit, because many false prophets are gone out into the world.' Thus likewise those false prophets in Micah became confident of the truth of their prophecies, 'that walk in the spirit and in falsehood,' says the prophet, chap. 2:11. They took up such conceits, and the devil he joined therewith and confirmed them in them. Now, as Satan by false revelations confirms enthusiasts in their opinions and conceits, so he joins with the jealousies of believers and puts weight into the balance, strongly swaying them to judge amiss of their estates.

5. In that he, as was said, backeth his false conclusions thence deduced with terrors, &c., this becomes an argument to sense; and such arguments do exceedingly carry on the judgment in our opinion of things. A conceit that comes in with joy, we are apt to conclude is true; and so in like manner what comes in with terror. Such impressions are as it were a seal to what is suggested to confirm it. And as the Holy Ghost 'sealeth his instructions,' Job 33:16, with impressions of joy, &c., so doth Satan his temptations with impressions of fear and disquietment. If a man hath a dream with any strong impression, a man is apt to give heed to it, to think there

is something in it: that which made Nebuchadnezzar think there must needs be something in that of his, Dan. 2, 4, when yet he had forgot what it was, was that it made 'him afraid, and his thoughts troubled him,' ver. 5.

6. A sixth advantage is, that he suggests and works all these impressions undiscerned at all by us to be from him, so as we know not but that they are our own thoughts, yea, sometimes think that they be from the Holy Ghost, working as the spirit of bondage in us. This is also an exceeding great advantage; as it would be to an enemy to have gotten the opposites' own watchword, their own colours. This causeth us readily to yield and open the gates to him. And though when the temptation is over we perceive his delusion in it, yet still, because we cannot discern his suggestions from our own thoughts when upon us, when we are in the mist and eclipse, therefore he can come again and again with the same temptation, to-day, and to-morrow, and the next day, and we perceive it not: which if we did, we should not listen to it, no more than we would to one who had formerly deceived us. Thus Ahab's prophets know not that Satan was a lying spirit in them, for says one of them to Micaiah, 'When went the Spirit of God from me to you?' Those 'strong delusions,' 2 Thess. 2:11, could not have prevailed upon their minds to have 'believed a lie,' had it been discerned by them that Satan had suggested them. Peter knew not that Satan did by him tempt his Master to spare himself: which yet Christ perceived, and therefore called him Satan.

7. Last of all, a man can no way avoid his suggestions, nor subdue himself from them; neither can any take Satan off from a man but God. He must rebuke him, none else can. A poor soul fights with Satan in this darkness like unto a man that is assaulted by one that carries a dark lantern, who can see the assaulted, and how to buffet him, and follows him wherever he goes; whereas the poor man cannot see him, nor who it is that strikes him, nor be aware how to ward the blow. Therefore the Apostle, when buffeted by Satan, 1 Cor. 12, knew not what to do, but only to have recourse to God by prayer: for he could no more avoid or run away from those suggestions than

from himself. Nor could all the saints on earth any other way have freed him: none, till God should cause him to depart.

CHAPTER XI:

The cases wherein God leaves his unto darkness

The second general head: The cases wherein God leaves his unto this darkness.—First, three cases extraordinary.

II. HAVING despatched the efficient causes of this darkness,—the causes physical,—I now proceed to the cases wherein, and ends for which, God leaves his children to such a condition: the causes moral. The cases, they were the second general head I propounded to be handled; and they are either extraordinary or ordinary.

1. Extraordinary; as—

(1.) Out of his prerogative.

(2.) In case he means to make a man eminently wise, and able to comfort others.

(3.) In case of extraordinary comforts and revelations.

(1.) What if God will use his absoluteness and prerogative in this his dealing with his children, and proceed therein according to no ruled case or precedent? This he may do, and, as it is thought, in Job's case he did; who is thought by some to be set up as a type, among the Gentiles, of Christ at his crucifying, who was to be left by his apostles, forsaken of God, &c. And though Job's desertion began but with his estate, children, and body, yet it pierced further in the end,

and seized upon his spirit; this we read nowhere of him, yet it was seen in God's withdrawing himself in the comfort of his presence, and in Satan's making him a butt to spend his arrows on. And yet, although the Lord had cause enough against him, yet no cause, as I remember, is pleaded. But it is resolved into an extraordinary dealing, wherein God took a liberty to glorify himself, by singling out one of his stoutest, valiantest champions, and setting him hand to hand to wrestle with the powers of darkness. And because Satan was, as it were, not hard enough for him, he turned enemy himself, Job 13:24. None more just than he before; the Lord, you know, glories in him: none ever led a stricter life, read chap. 31: no man kept more in awe, and that by fearing such a desertion aforehand; which was the only way to prevent it, for what a man fears he prays much against; which he expresses when, complaining, he says, chap. 3:25, that 'though he feared it, yet it came,' implying that it was not ordinary; nor indeed is it so. And although Job justifies himself too far, yet this was it which made him so stoutly to plead his own cause, that he could find no precedent, no ruled case of the like proceeding. And therefore Elihu, who took both God's part and Job's, and stepped up as a moderator, and as one 'in God's stead' to decide the matter, resolves it most of all into God's prerogative, though not without Job's desert; yet not such as according to which God ordinarily proceedeth, not so severely with others, as appears by the 34th chapter. And to that end he set forth God's greatness in the 36th and 37th chapters. And thus also God himself, when he came to plead with Job about it, and to shew him a reason of it, he only tells him how great a God he was, and therefore might do as he pleased; and useth no other arguments in the 38th, 39th, 40th, and 41st chapters.

God indeed never wants a cause, nor doth deal thus where sin is not; yet, as is said of the young man, that he was blind, 'not for his sin, nor his parents,' yet not without it, 'but for the glory of God,' it was an act of God's prerogative: so here. God hath higher ends of glorifying himself in the patience, the victory, and the conquest of such a champion as Job was; and of confuting the devil, who accused him of not 'serving God for nought'; the falseness of which to

demonstrate, God tries conclusions with him; as also to confute the opinions which in those days were generally received, as may seem by his friends' arguings, and also by the 73d Psalm, that godly men did prosper and flourish outwardly, according to their godliness. For these and the like reasons God did it. However, Elihu gives Job this good and seasonable counsel, to make this use of it, to 'search into his sins,' chap. 34:31, 32. And God might well take liberty to deal thus with Job, because he could make him amends, as afterward he did, it restoring double to him; and indeed it was but the concealing a while of his love, us many parents love to do by their children, and yet to shew if the more in real effects, as God even then did, in making him more than a conqueror.

(2.) A second case extraordinary is, when he intends to make a man a wise, able, skilful, and a strong Christian; wise, namely, in this, which is the greatest learning and wisdom in the world, experimentally to comfort others.

This may seem to be the reason of this his dealing with Heman. Heman was brought up in this school of temptation, and kept in this form from a youth, Ps. 88:15. He was put soon to it; and so deep lessons had he set him, as he had like to have lost his wits, as he says there. Yet in the end, when God raised him up again, this Heman, who lived about David and Solomon's time, is reckoned among the wisest of his time, and one of the four that were next to Solomon for wisdom, 1 Kings 4:31. So that great Apostle was a man exposed to the same combats that others were; he was buffeted by Satan, 2 Cor. 12, filled with inward terrors, as well as those without. What was this for? Not so much for any personal cause of his own, as to make him able to comfort others, 2 Cor. 1:4, 5. For that comfort which answereth a temptation in one man's heart will answer the same in another's: when temptations have the same wards, that key which unlocked one man's bolts will serve and answer to another's.

It is not every word that will comfort a weary soul, but only 'a word in season,' ver. 4 of this 50th of Isaiah; that is, which is fitted to the

party's case. Now, who are they who are furnished with such apt, and fit, and seasonable considerations to comfort such, but those who have had the same temptations, and have been in the like distresses? This art of speaking peace and words of comfort in season is the greatest wisdom in the world, and is not learned but in Heman's school. Temptation was one of Luther's masters. And therefore of all abilities of the ministry, Christ in this chapter instanceth in this, ver. 4, and calleth the tongue of him that is able to speak seasonably to weary souls, 'the tongue of the learned;' and therefore, Job 33:23, to raise up one 'whose soul draws nigh to the grave,' is said to be the work of 'one of a thousand.' Which is easily granted, if you consider the danger of such a distress. In Scripture it is called the 'breaking the bones,' Ps. 51, because the strength of a man's spirit that should uphold it, as the bones the body, sinks within him. Now, to be a bone-setter is not every man's skill; he must have special art and cunning, and withal a lady's hand, as we use to say, that is, meekness and pity; which also are never kindly but when we have tasted the like, or may fear the like. The Apostle commands them to set such a one in joint again, Gal. 6:1, καταρτίζετε, as the word signifies, 'lest thou also be tempted;' and it is the work of one that is spiritual, 'You that are spiritual restore such a one.' It requires skill to get out every shiver, to meet with every scruple, and set all straight again. It is also called the wounding of the spirit; so Solomon, 'A wounded spirit who can bear?' Prov. 18:14. As the power of sin wounds, so the guilt also; and the one as incurably as the other: and it being the spirit of a man which is wounded, that which must heal it must be something dropped into the heart, that may come at the spirit. And there are to be peculiar elective plasters to heal these wounds, because these wounds are often differing. Some objections there are that often the learnedest men never met with in books; and Satan hath 'devised methods,' Eph. 6, of tempting souls deserted, which he useth again and again: and a man shall not know those depths, and fathom them, unless he hath been 'in the depths' himself, as Heman speaks; and then he shall see such wonders of God in those deeps which none else ever saw, and thereby gain such wisdom as to be able to

encourage others, by his example, to trust in God and call on him; so David, Ps. 32:5, 6.

(3.) The third case extraordinary; God doth desert, in case a man hath had, or is to have, from God an abundance of revelations and comforts.

[1.] First, in case he hath already had abundant revelations from God. As after that glorious testimony given to Christ at his baptism, 'This is my beloved Son,' &c., Matt. 3:17;' then was Jesus led aside to be tempted,' Matt. 4:1. He points out the time to this very purpose. In like manner doth God often deal with the members of Christ for the season and time of their desertions and temptations. This was also that great Apostle's case, 2 Cor. 12:7, 'Lest I should be exalted above measure, through abundance of revelations, a messenger of Satan was sent to buffet me.' That which he calls there 'the thorn, in the flesh,' that pricked him, is meant rather I think of a desertion, and leaving him to distress of spirit, than of a lust. For his scope is, 'to glory in his afflictions,' ver. 9, 10. Now if it had been a lust, it had not been a thing to have been gloried in. Again, it was a 'messenger of Satan,' which imports something external; and it buffeted him, he was as a mere patient in it, as a man buffeted is. In the exercise of lusts our spirits are active. And besides, he prayed it might depart; which phrase would seem to note out something external. God had took him aside into heaven, and spoke wonderful things to him, and when he comes down again, Satan must take him to task and batter him; the flesh would have grown proud if it had not been thus beaten black and blue. He had been in heaven, and heard the language of angels and saints, 'things not to be uttered;' and now he must hear by devils the language of hell. This buffeting, I take it, was by Satanical injections.

[2.] Secondly, before God doth dispense great revelations and comforts, he doth sometimes desert. And as before great distresses, which he means to lead his children into, he fills their hearts with joy unspeakable and glorious, to strengthen them against the

approaching conflict, (thus God, to hearten his Son against that great agony in the garden and combat on the cross, transfigureth him on the mount first;) so, on the contrary, sometimes before great revelations and comforts, to make them sweet and the more welcome, God useth to withdraw himself then most; thereby preparing the heart for them, as physicians do the body for cordials. The greatest spring-tide of comfort comes in upon the lowest ebb of distress. Distress enlargeth the heart, and makes it thirst after comfort the more, whereby it is made more capable of consolation; for that rule holds usually true, 2 Cor. 1:5, that 'as sufferings abound, so comforts shall abound also.'

CHAPTER XII:

The cases ordinary wherein God doth leave his in darkness

The cases ordinary wherein God doth leave his in darkness.

2. Now, secondly, we come to the more ordinary cases wherein God dispenseth this darkness. Ere I name particulars, I will premise concerning them this general rule: We shall find that God goes not constantly by the same rule in the dispensation of them,—so as no man can say that in such and such cases God will and doth desert men, or that he always doth so,—but is various in his dealings herein. For some men he leaves for a while in darkness, in and upon and immediately after their conversion; their sun riseth in an eclipse, and continueth so till noon, yea, till their night. On the contrary, towards others sometimes he never shines in more comforts on them than at their first conversion. Again, some he deserts upon a gross sin committed; to others he never reveals himself more at any time than after a gross sin humbled for and repented of, thereby to shew the

freeness of his grace. So likewise, some that have less grace and have lived more loosely, he fills their sails at death, and they have 'abundant entrance,' with full sail, into the 'kingdom of Christ.' Others that have walked more strictly with God, and whose ends you would expect should be most glorious, he leaves to fears and doubts, and their sun doth set in a cloud.

And the reasons why God is thus various in these his dealings is both because spiritual comforts tend not simply ad esse, but bene esse; not to the absolute being of a Christian, but his comfortable well-being: and also because in respect of their dispensation they are to be reckoned in the rank of temporal rewards; and though light and assurance is not an earthly but a heavenly blessing, yet it is but a temporary blessing. And therefore, as the promises of other temporal good things are not absolute, no more are the promises to give assurance to a believer absolute, as those to give him heaven and salvation are. Therefore likewise, on the contrary, darkness and distress of conscience is but a temporal chastisement, as outward crosses are, differing from them only in the matter of them; the one being conversant about things of the outward man; this of the inward, namely, a man's spiritual estate. Hence, therefore, in the dispensation of both, though God always goes by some rule, as in all other dealings of his, yet so as he varies and deals differently with his children therein; as he doth in dispensing outward prosperity and adversity, 'setting the one against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him,' as Solomon says, Eccles. 7:14, that is, gives such cross and contrary opposite instances in both kinds, that men might not 'find him out' in these ways, or 'trace' him, as the phrase is, Rom. 11:33, not so as to say certainly and infallibly what he means to do in such and such cases. Indeed, in the world to come, he makes even with all the world, how differing soever his dispensations of rewards or punishments have been here; and what is behindhand to any one, he then pays with respect to what they have received. Thus in matter of spiritual joy and assurance, God may vouchsafe it to one that hath not feared and obeyed him so much as one that walks in darkness; but then if any one hath received more earnest-

pennies beforehand, and hath not walked answerably, God considers it as an aggravation of his sin, as he did in Solomon, whose sin is aggravated by this, 1 Kings 11:9, 10, that he sinned against God, who 'had appeared to him twice.' Otherwise, if these comforts make a man, in any proportion to such cost, more fruitful than others are, I see not but that God, who crowns his own graces, will reward them the more; this being one means sanctified to some to work more grace, as afflictions are to others. Thus it is in like manner in desertings and distress of mind; they being a temporal punishment, God is as various in them. So as one of more grace, or whom God intends more grace unto, shall be afflicted and forsaken, when one of less shall 'reign as king,' as it is said of the Corinthians, 1 Cor. 4:8, in case of worldly prosperity. So he shall have peace and liberty of mind, triumph over Satan, and hell, and discomfort; when apostles in comparison—that is, men eminent in grace—are, in respect of spiritual conflicts, made 'spectacles to angels and men.'

This rule premised, the ordinary cases follow:—

(1.) First, in case of carnal confidence. Thus, Ps. 30, David had been in great distress of mind for a while, as appears by what is said, ver. 3, 5, that 'though heaviness be over-night, yet joy cometh in the morning;' and in this sunshine David looks about him, and sees never a cloud appear in view that might again eclipse his comfort. Than he grew confident, upon no other ground but present sense, thinking it would always be so with him, and so trusted in that comfort he had at present, as if now he could never have been troubled so again, as in such cases good souls are apt to think: 'Now I shall never be removed,' says David. This was carnal confidence, and God, to confound it, hides himself again, ver. 7.

Now, carnal confidence is either—

[1.] First, when we trust to false signs shuffled in among true; which is incident even to believers that are in the state of grace, and have good evidences to shew for it; who yet, together with those sound

evidences, do often rake together many other signs that are but probable, yea, and which are deceitful, and but common to hypocrites. This we are apt to do, to take many things as infallible signs which are not. As many are said in Daniel to cleave to the better side by flattery; so in a man's heart, many false signs will come in, and flatter a man, and give their testimony, and speak the same thing true evidences do. Now God, to discover which are false, and which are not, leaves a man; and then he will find all his false signs to leave him, as flatterers use to do; and to be but as broken teeth among those which are sound and whole, to fail and disquiet him; like reeds that break when any stress is put to them, and so to run into his hand. Or—

[2.] Secondly, when we put too much of our confidence upon signs, though true, and trust too much to comforts and former revelations, and witnesses of God's Spirit, and to our graces, which are all but creatures, acts of God upon us and in us. When, therefore, we let all the weight of our support to hang on these, God in this case often leaves us, 'that no flesh should rejoice in his presence.' Or—

[3.] Thirdly, when we think graces and comforts are so rooted in ourselves, that we neglect God and Christ, for the upholding, increase, and exercise of them; then God withdraws the light of these, that we may have recourse to the spring and well-head. As too much confidence in the power of inherent grace caused Christ to leave Peter to the power of sin, so the like confidence also in the power of grace, causeth God to leave us to the guilt of, and terrors that come by, sin.

(2.) The second case: for neglecting such precious opportunities of comforts and refreshings as God hath vouchsafed; as for the neglect of holy duties, wherein God did offer to draw nigh to us, the sacraments, prayer, &c. So, Cant. 5:4–7, Christ stood at the door and knocked; that is, moved the heart of the church there to pay or perform the like duty in which he useth to come into the heart and visit it; he offered to assist her, and began to enlarge and prepare her

heart, but she made excuses. Upon this, Christ went presently away; only he left behind him an impression, a scent of himself in her heart, ver. 4–6, enough to stir her up to seek him, in the sense of the want of him; as in desertion God useth to do.

(3.) Thirdly, in case of not exercising the graces which a man hath, not stirring them up, &c.; when Christians are, as it were, between sleeping and waking, which was the church's condition in that Cant. 5:2; then also Christ deserts. To perform duties with the inward man half awake, as it were, and half asleep; to pray as if we prayed not, (as, on the contrary, we are 'to use the world as if we used it not;') thus to do the work of the Lord negligently, this provoketh God to absent himself; as he did there, Cant. 5:2. And so, 2 Peter 1:9, 'He that lacketh these things,' that is, useth them not, neglecting to 'add grace to grace,' (as the former words expound that phrase; and it agrees with the like elsewhere used; as, Matt. 25:29, he that useth not his talent, is said not to have it, 'To him that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not,' &c.) a blindness soon falls on such a man, and he forgetteth all that ever he had, as was opened before. And, indeed, there is no reason that a man should have present comfort of future grace, when he neglects the use of present grace. Isa. 64:7, God complains that there was 'none that stirred up himself;' and for this 'God was wroth.' Whereas otherwise, ver. 5, 'God meets with him that worketh righteousness,' and rejoiceth in him that rejoiceth to work righteousness; God meets such, and rejoiceth with, and draws nigh unto them. But others, that stir not up themselves, God rouseth and stirs them up by terrors: 'He that walketh according to this rule, peace be on him,' Gal. 6:16; not else. Though comfort is not always the present necessary fruit of righteousness, yet it is never without it.

(4.) Fourthly, in case of some gross sin committed against light, unhumbled for, or proving scandalous, or of old sins long forgotten. I will give instances of each particular:—

[1.] First, for some gross sin committed against light. An instance for this is David; who, though he was a man after God's heart, yet we meet with him often complaining, as one that was frequently in these desertions. Amongst other times, once in the 119th Psalm, verse 25, 28, where 'his soul cleaveth unto the dust,' and is even at death's door, for he says, 'quicken me:' he means it in regard of the sense of God's 'favour, which is better than life;' which also is the meaning of that phrase, that his 'soul did cleave unto the dust,—that is, was brought to the apprehension of death; therefore, Ps. 22:15, Christ upon the cross, of whom the psalm is made, cries out that 'God had forsaken him, and brought his soul to the dust of death.' And David says here also, that 'his soul melted, and was dissolved;' even all the powers of it were loosened and failed within him at the sense of God's wrath, even as wax melts before the fire. Ordinarily we find in Scripture no such eminent desertion, but we find the cause of it not far off, if we read on; so here, in the 29th verse, 'Remove from me,' says David, 'the way of lying.' He points to the sore of his heart, and wherein his grief lay. David, among other corruptions, had a lying spirit. In 1 Sam. 21:2, David very roundly telleth two or three lies together, when he fled from Saul and came to Ahimelech, who, fearing to harbour him because of Saul, asked him why he was alone; it being a suspicious thing that he, so great a man, should have no greater train to attend him; and did argue that he fled as a proscribed person, and then it would be dangerous to foster him. To this he answers roundly, 'that the king had commanded him a business,'—there is one lie; and that 'the king had commanded him secrecy in it,'—there is another; and because 'my servants should not know it, I have sent them away' to several places,—there is a third. And again, at the 8th verse, 'I have not brought my sword, because the king's business required haste,'—there is a fourth lie. David went on here in a way of lying; they were all made and deliberate lies. Other such like speeches of his—as that, 1 Sam. 27:8, 10, where he told Achish, 'that he went against the south of Judah, and against the south of the Kenites,' ver. 10, whenas he went against 'the Geshurites and the Amalekites,' ver. 8—some excuse, because those nations bordered over against the south of Judah and the south of the Kenites, and so

make out a truth in that his speech; but yet the last verse, that says Achish believed David, implies that as he understood it, so David indeed meant it, as if he had gone up against his own countrymen; and then it can no way be excused. These, therefore, being gross sins, sins against light, as of all sins lying must needs be supposed to be, because it is against that truth which riseth up in the mind, and is a sin wherein a man's mind shews art, cunning, and wit, and a sin which, when the truth is discovered, proves exceeding shameful and scandalous; therefore this sin, especially when it had been some while gone on in by him, which therefore he calls a 'way of lying,' lay heavy on him long after. Therefore he entreats God to take the load of it off, 'Remove from me the way of lying.' It was the load hereof which did lie so heavy on him, as it pressed his soul to the dust of death, as he had before complained.

[2.] So for the second particular, in case a sin be not thoroughly humbled for and confessed; or if when we committed it, we had shifts to keep us from thinking it to be sin, or not so heinous, or were doubtful whether it were a sin or no, and so were loath to acknowledge it to be a sin, and to burden ourselves with it in our confessions; but our hearts stood out rather to clear ourselves in it, as it is likely David did in the case of his murder of Uriah. He had done it so cunningly as he thought he could clear himself and wash his hands of it; or it was but the chance of war, says he, that did cut him off—"The sword devoureth one as well as another,"—and so he excuseth it, 2 Sam. 11:25. God in this case brings him to the rack, Ps. 32. It is thought that psalm was made, as well as the 51st Psalm, upon that occasion of this murder; and indeed it may seem so, they are tuned so near together, as might be shewn in many particulars. These sins being known and become scandalous, David was to confess publicly; as in the end he did, when, in making the 51st Psalm, he stood to do penance in a white sheet, that I may so speak. Now David was loath to come to this; that murder being done so cunningly, he could hardly be brought to confess it so much as in secret, much less publicly. God in this case lays his hand so sorely on him that his 'natural moisture was dried up,' as that psalm tells us;

for in men troubled in conscience, their trouble of mind casts their bodies often into as great heats as men that are in burning fevers. So, Ps. 102:3, in the like fit, he says, 'his bones were burnt like a hearth,' and this was without intermission, 'day and night;' and thus he lay 'roaring,' (so he expresseth his carriage in his torture,) like a malefactor on the rack; though haply he cried out for mercy to God, yet because not with a broken heart, God therefore accounted it but as roaring,—that is, the voice of a beast, as it were, rather than the voice of a man humbled for his sin. And why was David put to the rack thus? He would not confess and humble himself for his sin; 'I was silent, and yet roared,' ver. 3; a still, broken-hearted confession might have saved all this torment. But when in the end 'I said I would confess my sin,' ver. 5, and in his heart he resolved once to lay open all that sin of murder and adultery in the circumstances of them, then God pardoned him, as you know he did; for Nathan coming to him, told him, as soon as but a word of confession began to fall from him, 'that his sins were pardoned.' And yet after that, as appears in the 51st Psalm, God did not yet 'restore comfort' and 'the joy of his salvation' to him, for there he prays for it in the sense of the want of it; not until he had publicly confessed it also, and thoroughly humbled himself; it having caused 'the enemies of God to blaspheme,' God would have a public satisfaction given.

So when the incestuous person had committed that sin, 1 Cor. 5:1, 9, for which, as then he was not humbled, (for afterwards, in 2 Cor. 2:7, when he was humbled indeed, he bids them comfort him,) yet till that his humiliation was apparent, he bids them to 'deliver such a one to Satan,' to the jailer, to the tormentor, to the prince of darkness, to terrify him and afflict his spirit. Now, the meaning of that delivering him up to Satan was, that he should be solemnly excommunicated; which, when it is performed as it ought to be, 'in the name of the Lord Jesus,' and with the power of the Lord Jesus, then, as the church cuts them off from communion with them, so God from communion with himself, and he withdraws all fellowship with their spirits, as was before declared, and so leaves them alone in darkness and to desertions. And not only so, but 'delivereth them up

to Satan,' not with a commission to carry them on to more sin,—for the end propounded by the Apostle was thereby to 'destroy the flesh,' ver. 5, not to nourish it by provoking him to more sin,—but to terrify and afflict his conscience, and to stir up therein the guilt of sin, and terrors for it, which God sanctifies to humble man and to mortify the flesh. And thus when that Corinthian was excommunicated, and given up to him, did Satan deal with him; for, 2 Cor. 2:7, he was nigh being 'swallowed up of too much sorrow,' and this occasioned by Satan, 'whose devices we are not ignorant of,' says the Apostle, ver. 11. Now, as every ordinance hath a proper peculiar work it is appointed for, an inward effect to accompany it in a man's spirit, so this; and that proper effect and inward working and event of this great ordinance of excommunication is terror, and sorrow, and desertion of spirit, thereby to humble a man; even as it is the proper effect of sacraments to convey comfort and assurance, and to convey the 'seal of the Spirit.' And when this ordinance is neglected or omitted, when yet gross and scandalous sins require it; then a man belonging to God, God himself often works thus, and inflicts this on him without that ordinance. Thus he dealt with David and others after gross sins. God inwardly excommunicates and casts them out of his presence, and from all comforts in his ordinances, although they are not refused by men to come to them; dealing herein as a father that is a public magistrate, with an unruly child, after some great misdemeanour, though he cast him not off, yet he may send him to the jail, to be for example's sake imprisoned: for the jailer to take him, and to clap irons on him, to have him down into the dungeon, where he sees no light, and into the little-case, where he is in so strait a condition as he can neither sit, nor stand, nor lie, as Elihu expresseth it, Job 36:16; he calleth it 'bringing into a strait place,' and 'binding them in fetters and cords of affliction; and then he shews them their transgression, and wherein they have exceeded,' ver. 8, 9.

[3.] Yea, and thirdly, this God doth not only presently after the sins were committed, but sometimes a long while after, and that when they have been often confessed. Yea, and after that God hath

pardoned them also in our consciences, as well as in heaven, yet the guilt may return again and leave us in darkness. Thus, Job 13:26, for 'the sins of his youth,' which questionless he had humbled himself for, and had assurance of the pardon of, yet God did 'write bitter things against him' for them many years after, and 'made him possess them,' as himself speaks. God gave him over to the jailer, and put him into the little-ease in prison: 'Thou putttest my feet into the stocks,' says he, ver. 27. For as the power of sin and the law of sin is but in part done away in our members, so in our consciences the guilt of sin is likewise but in part done away, in regard of our apprehensions of the pardon of it; and therefore as those lusts we had thought dead, and that they would never have risen again, do sometimes revive and trouble us afresh, coming with new assaults, so in like manner may the guilt of those sins revive which we thought long before had been pardoned; and after the commission of some new act, or forgetfulness of the old, and security about them, God may let them loose upon us afresh, that we shall look upon them, as if they never had been pardoned.

Now the reason of all these particulars, both why gross sins, especially if against light, when not confessed thoroughly, should yet after many years cast us into such fits of desertion, is—

Because therein we rebel against God's Spirit; and that Spirit, *ita nos tractat, ut à nobis tractatur*, doth deal with us as we with him. If you grieve him, he grieves you; if you rebel against him, he fights against you as an enemy. So, Isa. 63:10, 'They rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit; therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them.' Now to sin against light is called rebellion; so Job 24:13. When men go about to extinguish and darken the light of direction which God had set up in their hearts to guide their paths by, God puts out the light of comfort, and so leaves them to darkness. But especially then when our hearts are so full of guile, as we plead that they are no sins, or extenuate them, as David in all likelihood did, Ps. 32; in reference to which he says, in ver. 2 of that psalm, that 'that man is a blessed man in whom is no guile;' and in the 51st

Psalm, ver. 6, 'Thou desirest truth in the inward parts.' David had dealt guilefully and deceitfully in that sin. If man keeps a sin under his tongue, and will not be convinced of it, nor bring it forth by confession, God in that case brings him to the rack, as they do traitors, to confess; and if it be that any of our old sins revive and cause these terrors, it is because we began to look on them as past and gone, and thought we needed not go on to humble ourselves any more for them, making account they are so buried as that they will never rise again, whenas the remembrance of them should keep us low and humble us all our days. It is laid to the charge of them in Ezek. 16:22, 'that they remembered not that they lay in their blood.' We are apt to think that time wears out the guilt of sins; but to God they are as fresh as if they had been committed yesterday, and therefore nothing wears them out but repentance. Great sins forgiven must not be forgotten.

(5.) Fifthly, in case of a stubborn, stiff spirit, under outward afflictions; when we will not mend nor stoop to God. This may be part of the case mentioned Isa. 57, where God alleging the reason why he contended with a poor soul of his, he gives an account of it. Ver. 17, you shall see where the quarrel began: 'For the iniquity of his covetousness I was wroth;' that is, for some inordinate affection, which we call concupiscence; he mentioneth not a gross act of sin committed, so much as some lust harboured: for which God began to be angry, and to shew the effects of that his anger in smiting him, haply with some outward cross first, 'I was wroth and smote him:' and when that did no good, God began to be more angry, and to hide himself, 'I hid my face;' and this he speaks of inward affliction, which he also calleth, ver. 16, 'contending with the soul,' and so far leaving it as that the 'spirit was ready to fail.' It came to inward affliction in the end. And he further intimates the cause of all this, 'He went on frowardly in the way of his heart.' When lighter and outward strokes will not take us off, God leaves and deserts our spirits, and wounds them. And the reason is, for in this case what course else should God take? For either he must give him up to hardness of heart, and leave him to his stubbornness, and so he should have lost his child; but

that God is resolved he will not do: 'I will heal him,' I saith he, ver. 18. When, therefore, the heart remains stubborn under other strokes, he hath no way left, in his ordinary course and progress in the way of means, but to lay strokes upon his spirit, and wound that. And this yoke is like to break and tame him, if any; for this he cannot bear. Other outward afflictions man's natural spirit, stoutness, and stubbornness, may bear, and hath borne, even in heathen men; they have endured anything rather than be put out of their way—'The spirit of man will sustain its infirmities;' but in this 'the spirit fails in them,' ver. 16. Other afflictions are but particular—but as talking some stars of comfort out of the firmament, when others are still left to shine to them. But when God's countenance is hid, the sun itself, the fountain of light, is darkened, and so a general darkness befalls them. And therefore then the heart is driven to God, and broke off from all things else; and then God delights to restore and to comfort a man again, 'I will restore comfort to him,' ver. 18.

(6.) Sixthly, in case of deserting his truth, and not professing it and appearing for it when he calls us to do it. In this case he left many of the martyrs; many of whom, especially until those in Queen Mary's days, (when with the gospel's increase, and the light of it, God gave more strength also;) and some then also did desert the truth for a while, and then God in respect of comfort deserted them; and then they recovering God's favour again upon repentance, and a new resolution taken to stick to the profession of the truth whatever came of it, that their desertion made them the more bold and resolute. And this was in part Jonah's case, who having a commission sealed him to go to Nineveh with a message from God, he withdrew himself, and went another way; and God in the midst of his security cast him into a whale's belly: and when he was there, God withdraws himself from him, as if he meant never to own him more, insomuch that Jonah says, chap. 2:4, 'Then I said, I am cast out of thy presence.' And there is this equity in this dealing of God thus with us: that as when we are ashamed of Christ, the punishment fitted to it is, that Christ will be ashamed of us; so when we will not witness for God, there is no reason his Spirit should witness to us. And so, when we seem to

evade persecution for the cross of Christ, then it is meet God should meet with us, and take us in hand himself, which is far worse.

(7.) Seventhly, in case of unthankfulness, and too common an esteem had of assurance, and light of God's countenance, and of freedom from those terrors and doubtings which others are in; which is a sin Christians are apt to run into. For as the light of the sun, because it is ordinary, is not regarded, none mind it or look at the sun, but, as he said, when it is in the eclipse; so a continual sunshine of God's favour enjoyed occasioneth but a common esteem of it. And in this case God withdraws those comforts and assurance, because they are the greatest and sweetest comforts of all other; and which to abuse or not to value, of all other provokes most; therefore in this case God takes them away. For, as Hos. 2:9, in case of being unthankful in outward mercies, God 'took them away,' and restored them not again, till they esteemed them better, and acknowledged whence they had them; so also in spiritual assurance, light, and comfort, doth God in like manner deal.

CHAPTER XIII:

The ends for which God leaveth to darkness

The third general head: The ends for which God leaveth his children unto this darkness.—First, such as are drawn from God, and his faithfulness, &c.

III. Now let us come to those ends which God may have in this his dealing with one that fears and obeys him; which are many and holy ones.

1. First, to shew his power and faithfulness, in upholding, raising up, and healing such a spirit again as hath been long and deadly wounded with inward terrors; which is as great an evidence of his power as any other; and therefore saith Heman, Ps. 88:10, 11, 'Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? shall thy faithfulness be declared in destruction?' That is, in raising my soul up again to joy and comfort, which is as much as to raise up a dead man; nay more, as much as to raise up a soul already in hell; for the same terrors, says he, that destroy them do in like manner seize on me. In Eph. 1:19, it is said, that the exceeding greatness of God's power was seen in raising Christ from death to life; and wherein lay principally the demonstration of that power? Not simply in raising his body up again; that was no more than he did to others. But in Acts 2:24, the power is said to be shewn in this, that he having 'loosed the pains of death, wherewith it was impossible he should be held, he was raised up again.' His soul was heavy unto death with terrors: and those pains in themselves were deadly, though not to him, in that he being God as well as man, it was impossible for him to sink under them. Now therefore to raise up and glorify that his soul, that was so bruised, wounded, and pierced through and through, herein lay the wonder; and such a wonder God shewed in recovering Heman. And to shew the greatness of this work, let us consider a little the depth and deadliness of this kind of distress. It is compared to the 'bruising of a reed;' which when it is bruised, who can make it stand upright again? It is called 'the wounding of the spirit,' Prov. 28; which no creature knows how to come at to heal, none but God, who is the Father of spirits, who made them, and knows how to mend them. It is not only called the sickness of the spirit,—as Isa. 33:24, where the want of the assurance of the forgiveness of sins makes poor souls to say, 'I am sick;' which to heal is made the prerogative of 'the Sun of righteousness, arising with healing in his wings,' Mal. 4:2,—but also it is filled 'death and destruction;' for so in that 88th Psalm, Heman calls that distress that he was in. And the reason is, God's 'favour is our life,' by which we live and are upheld; which therefore being withdrawn, the soul is ready to fail and faint, and to come to nothing, and sink into destruction, Isa. 57:16. And again, the pains of those

terrors are more violent, and more powerful to hold us under, than are the pangs of death; the wounds of the guilt of sin being as deadly, and as strong, as the lusts of the power of it: and it requires as great a power to dissolve and scatter them. For all the strength that the law and God's justice hath, sin also hath to back it; 'for the strength of sin is the law,' 1 Cor. 15:56.

2. Secondly, as to know the power of Christ's resurrection, 'so the fellowship of his sufferings;' that thereby the soul may be made more 'conformable to him,' as it is, Phil. 3:10. As there are the sufferings for Christ, so the sufferings of Christ: and God makes his partakers of both—persecutions without, and terrors within; with which Christ's soul was filled then whenas the text says, 'He was heard in what he feared;' and 'his soul was heavy to death;' and 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' and so, Isa. 53, 'it pleased God to bruise and wound him.' Now then, to conform us to his image, we that are his brethren, and are the persons guilty, must suffer somewhat in spirit as well as he, and have a portion therein also. And therefore, as Christ did suffer both inwardly and outwardly, so do many of his members: 'If you have suffered with him, ye shall also be glorified with him.' The sons of Zebedee would have been glorified in Christ's kingdom more than the rest of the apostles; but says Christ, Matt. 20:22, 'Are ye able to drink of the cup whereof I shall drink?'—he means that cup delivered to him at his crucifying; 'Let this cup pass,' the bitter cup of God's anger,—'and are ye able to be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?' namely, outward afflictions and persecutions for the name of God; which are called baptisms, because they set God's mark on us that we are God's, as baptism doth seal to us that we are his; and because then the church owns us, and takes notice of us as sincere, when we have believed and suffered, as at baptism the church receives us. And of this baptism Christ speaks in the present tense, because that he was already baptized with outward persecutions; but the cup, which was inward affliction of his spirit, this he was to drink of at his agony—'which I shall drink of,' in the future; which cup cast him into that sweat, ere he came to the bottom. This, though no creature was able to drink off to the bottom,

yet taste they might; and he tells them they should, ver. 23, 'Ye shall drink of it,' &c., that is, taste of inward affliction and desertion, as well as of outward persecution,—terrors within and without,—and all to make us conformable to him, and so come to know in part what he endured for us.

3. Thirdly, to put the greater difference between the estate of God's children here, and that hereafter in heaven; to which very purpose is that speech of the Apostle, 2 Cor. 5:7, that here 'we walk by faith, not by sight.' He had said before, that the estate of believers in this life is an estate of 'absence from the Lord,' wherein we want his presence, and so enjoy not the sight of him; and therefore are to exercise faith the more, which is peculiar to this estate, and a grace given of purpose for us to walk by, whilst we live here. And though sometimes we have some light, and glimpses of him and his presence, yet we walk not by sight always; for we walk by faith, not by sight. We shall have enough of the sight of God hereafter, when 'we shall see him, as we are seen, face to face,' and be 'evermore with the Lord,' 'when in his light we shall see light, and be satisfied with his image.' We may therefore be content to want it here sometimes. You may well endure over-cloudings here, and sometimes that all sight should be taken away; for in the world to come there will not be one cloud to all eternity. 'Your inheritance is light,' Col. 1:12, 13. Light is your portion, but now is the seed-time; and 'light is sown,' Ps. 97:11, 'for the righteous.' You must be content to let it lie under-ground; the longer it doth so, the greater crop and harvest will come up in the end. You must endure the vicissitude of day and night here, 'sorrow overnight, and joy in the morning;' for hereafter you shall have continual day and no night. This difference there is put between earth and heaven, to make heaven sweeter, and to exercise faith: the estate in heaven is as a state of perfect and continual health; which that we may prize, we are over and anon sick here, and qualms come over our consciences, fears our sins are not forgiven; but when we come thither, 'The inhabitants there shall be no more sick, but their sins shall be forgiven them' Isa. 33:24.

4. The fourth end is, to let us see whence spiritual comforts and refreshings come: that God alone keeps the keys of that cupboard, and alone dispenseth them how and when he pleaseth. That we may know (as it is Isa. 45:6, 7) that it is 'the Lord that formed the light and creates darkness, evil and peace;' and that as 'affliction riseth not out of the dust,' as Job speaks, so nor comfort out of our hearts. Whereas if continually we enjoyed comfort, we should be apt so to think. God will let us see that our hearts are nothing but darkness; and that to cause any spiritual comfort is as much as to create light at first: therefore he says, 'I create the fruit of the lips; Peace,' Isa. 57:19, and that he it is that doth 'command light to shine into our hearts, who commanded light at first to shine out of darkness,' 2 Cor. 4:6; which can no way more fully be manifested than by withdrawing that light sometimes, and leaving us to darkness. As why doth he sometimes assist us in prayer, and fill the sails, and again at some times leaves our heart empty? Is it not that we may learn that lesson, Rom. 8:26, that it is 'the Spirit that helpeth our infirmities,' and that we of ourselves 'know not what nor how to ask?' Which lesson, although he sometimes straitens us, yet we are difficult in learning, nor are easily brought to acknowledge our dependence on him for his assistance. In like manner, for the same end doth he sometimes hide, and then again sometimes reveal himself, to shew that he is the immediate fountain of comfort,—'The God of all comforts,' 2 Cor. 1:3,—that so we might know whom to thank, whom to depend on, whom to go to for comfort: it being as difficult a thing for us to go out of ourselves, and from the creatures, for comfort, to God alone, as to go out of ourselves to Christ alone for righteousness. Hereby also we see, that though we have never so many outward comforts, that yet the comforts of our spirits do depend on God alone; for if he in the midst of them withdraw himself, they all prove but miserable comforters.

CHAPTER XIV:

A second sort of ends for the trial and discovery of graces, especially
of faith

5. OTHER ends God hath, to make trial of our graces and a discovery of them. The same end that God had in leading his people through 'the great wilderness, where no water was,' where 'scorpions stung them,' Deut. 8:16, which was to prove them, &c.; the same ends hath God in suffering his people to go through this desert, barrenness, and darkness, where no light is, and where terrors of the law do sting them,—for all those his dealings then were types of God's dealings with his people now,—even to prove them, and to make trial of their hearts. For the same ends as he left Hezekiah to the power of sin in the point of sanctification,—namely, 'to know what was in his heart,'—doth he also leave others of his children to the guilt of sin in the point of justification, to discover also what is in their hearts. This is conceived to have been his end in deserting Job, to shew what strong patience, unconquered faith was in him. There be many gracious dispositions which actually have not opportunity to discover themselves but in case of this kind of desertion. Some of those which are the highest acts of grace and purest fruits of it, and which are the surest evidences of the truth of grace, would never appear but in case of such desertion. For instance, then it is known whether a man love God for himself, and for those excellences of wisdom, holiness, and goodness that are in him, when yet he knows not whether he himself shall be ever the better for them, yea or no. Then also it is manifested to be pure, sincere, and unfeigned obedience. Then it is seen his repentance is true, when he repents not of it, then when he is out of hopes of any reward for it. Then it is seen his sorrow is godly sorrow, when, though the sentence of condemnation is read to him in his own apprehension and conscience, and he verily thinks he is taking his leave of God for ever, and going to execution, yet he can down upon his knees, and ask him forgiveness, and mourneth that ever he wronged him; is angry and displeased with himself that a God so

good, so just, should have so just cause to be angry and displeased with him; and he finds that he could have some rest and contentment that God is glorified upon one who hath so much dishonoured him. Such dispositions as these would never see the light, if it were not for this darkness. But as *natura vexata prodit seipsam*; nature, when conclusions are tried upon it, and it is put out of its course, then it discovers itself, (even as anger discovers itself when a man is vexed,) as, if you would know the properties that are in herbs, you must try conclusions with them; so also here doth God with a man's graces, and then they discover their most occult and hidden properties.

It were needless to go over all particular graces; I will but more distinctly instance in that glorious grace of faith. Which in this trial deserves more than all graces else, and though in all the varieties of conditions we pass through it stands us in stead, yet in desertions it alone doth wonders; standing like Samson, encountering and conquering alone, when there is none to help. Because likewise, it is that grace which is called for in the text, 'Let him trust in the name of the Lord,' as being that grace which God principally tries, to discover the truth, and magnify the power thereof in such desertions.

(1.) First, this is certain, there is no grace God tries more than this grace of faith. Therefore, 1 Pet. 1:6, 7, 'Ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold which perisheth, being tried in the fire, might be found to glory, praise, and honour;' that is, both to the honour of God who is believed in, and also of faith itself, which is the most glorious grace a Christian hath; which God loves to try, to that end the glory of it may appear. In the 5th verse he having said, that 'we are kept by the power of God to salvation,' if any now should ask, Wherein is that power of keeping us most shewn? he answers, In and through faith. 'Ye are kept by the power of God through faith.' And if you ask, When and wherein is the power of God through faith seen most? he instanceth in 'manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith,' &c.

Now then, as of all graces God would have faith tried; so—

(2.) Of all temptations none try it more than desertion of God's countenance, this of darkness and of terrors. Other temptations strike but obliquely at faith, but these lay direct battery to our faith, for they strike at that which is the immediate aim and object of it; namely, that God is a man's God. These speak the direct contrary to what faith endeavours to apprehend, and that directly, and not by consequence only. Again, other temptations are easily borne and answered, whilst the assurance of God's favour remains unshaken. It answers them all, and shakes them off, as he the viper off his hand; but when that shall begin to be questioned, as in this case it is, who is able to stand? And what is able to strengthen a man then but the power of faith? As Solomon says of the spirit of a man, that it will bear all kinds of infirmities, if itself be whole; but if it be wounded, who can bear it?—so I say of assurance: if it be weakened and battered, the very foundations thereby are shaken; a man's freehold touched, the root struck. Now, in such a case, it is faith's peculiar office to stand a man in stead, when nothing else can. Therefore he says, 'Let him trust,' &c., because it helps thus at this dead lift.

(3.) Again, thirdly, in these conflicts of faith with desertions, consisteth the height of our Christian warfare. This is the highest pitched battle, the greatest, and, as it were, the last brunt, upon which all is either won or lost; for in these a man encounters with God himself, apprehended as an enemy. God called out Job to try him by fighting a single combat with Satan, and he became, as I may so say, too hard for Satan alone; and God joins against him also. Now then, to bear the brunt and shock of his wrath, and yet to stand upon a man's feet; this, to the utmost, argueth the strength of faith. Hos. 12:3, it is said of Jacob that 'by strength he had power with God;' it argued strength indeed: and this is done by faith, by the power whereof, God's power rather supporting it, a man relies on God, when all his dealings would argue he had forsaken a man; that though God put on never so angry a countenance, look never so sternly, yet faith is not dashed out of countenance, but can read love

in his angry looks, and trust God beyond what he sees, it being the 'evidence of things not seen.' Then, faith goes wholly out of itself, as seeing nothing in itself but barely a capacity of mercy and plenteous redemption, which it knows to be in God. This faith is a miracle of miracles, for it is founded, as the earth, upon mere nothing in itself, and yet bears the weight and stress of sins, devil, yea, of God himself. And this is the faith ye are converted by, in believing then 'on him that justifies the ungodly,' Rom. 4:5; and that which we must live by when all comforts fail: and this is that faith which must stand you in stead at death, when the king of fears comes and besiegeth you: and this is the faith 'that is to honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.'

CHAPTER XV:

Six ends more, for the increasing of several graces, and destroying corruptions.

6. SIXTHLY, as it makes for the trial and discovery of graces, so it is a means sanctified to increase them, and to eat out corruptions:—

(1.) First, it is a means to destroy the flesh. The incestuous Corinthian was to be delivered to Satan,—that is, to be terrified,—to destroy the flesh. As corrosives eat out dead flesh, so these terrors the dead corruptions; and I the reviving of the guilt of old sins doth kill the seeds of those that remain in the heart. For if an outward affliction, which crosseth but the satisfaction of a lust, is a means sanctified by God to kill a lust; then much more the I inward terror which the conscience feels, and which ariseth immediately from the guilt of a sin, must needs be a means much more.

(2.) Secondly, it is a means to humble. So, Deut. 8:16, the end of the biting of the Israelites by scorpions—which were the types of these stings and terrors—was, as to prove, so to humble them; and for this end was that buffeting by Satan we have so often mentioned, 2 Cor. 12:7, to keep down being exalted above measure. So also, 1 Pet. 5:6, 'Humble your selves under the mighty hand of God;' and if in any other affliction his mighty hand lays hardest on, surely in these.

(3.) Thirdly, it is a means to bring you in more assurance and establishment. 1 Pet. 5:10, 'The God of all grace, after you have suffered a while, stablish and strengthen you.' He knew they could not be settled till they had suffered in this or some other kind. The tree roots itself the more, the more it is shaken. 'Comforts abound the more that sufferings do abound.' That light is clearest and strongest that ariseth out of darkness, because God creates it. Those things which men doubt of most, God gives the greatest evidence of in the end.

(4.) Fourthly, it trains you up to fear God more, and to obey him. Therefore, in the text, these are added as the concomitant dispositions of the soul in such a case. For of all other, these of fearing God and obeying him do most eminently and sensibly appear in that estate: Heb. 5:8, 'Christ himself learned obedience by what he suffered.' The yoke tames the wanton wildness in beasts, and makes them serviceable, breaks them; and so do these the stubbornness of a man's spirit.

(5.) Fifthly, to set believers' hearts a-work to pray more and more earnestly. So the Apostle's buffetings, 2 Cor. 12, made him pray thrice,—that is, often. So Christ, Luke 22:44, 'being in an agony, he prayed more earnestly;' and being in fear, he did lift up strong cries, Heb. 5:7. So Heman, by reason of his terrors, was a man much in prayers, Ps. 88:1, 'I have cried day and night before thee.' Christians that enjoy not communion with God, yet if they think they have not lost him, they are secure and lazy in prayers; but if they apprehend once that their beloved is gone,' or that they are in danger to lose

him, than they will seek him all the world over but they will find him, Cant. 5:6–8; and make hue and cry after him, as the church did there.

(6.) Sixthly, it causeth them to prize the light of God's countenance the more when they again obtain it, and so set a higher price upon it, and to endeavour by close walking with God, as children of light, to keep it; to prize it 'more than com and oil.' Cant. 3:2, 'she loseth him;' but at the 4th verse 'she finds him again,' and then 'she holds him,' and will not let him go.

PART II:

Uses

Who is among you that feareth the Lord that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light?—ISA. 50:10.

SECTION I

USE I.

To those that fear not God nor obey him; what darkness reserved for such!

IF those that fear God and obey him are exposed to such a condition as hath been described; then, 'Who is among you that feareth not the

Lord, nor obeys the voice of his servants?' You that live in known sins, and in omission of known duties, which God's servants, your ministers, tell you you ought to perform; that pray not with your families; who make not conscience of your speeches nor dealings, &c.,—'where shall yon appear, if the righteous be thus scarcely saved?' If they whom God hath loved with a love as great and unchangeable as himself, yet suffer his terrors here; what shall you do whom he hath set himself to hate, and to shew the power of his wrath upon, without repentance? 'If these things be done to the green tree, what shall be done to the dry?' Luke 23:31, which is fitted for wrath and the fire, even as 'stubble fully dry,' Nahum 1:10, as the prophet speaketh. If such an estate of darkness and horror befall them that are children of light, whose inheritance is light, Col. 1:12; then what is reserved for you that are darkness, and 'love darkness more than light?' And if this befalls them for not stirring up the grace which they already have; what to you that are utterly devoid of it; and not only so, but despise and scoff it? If this befalls them for not humbling themselves for old sins, though long since committed; what will befall you for going on to add new to the old with greediness? If to them for neglecting the opportunities of drawing nigher to God; what to you for neglecting the offer of grace, and trampling under foot the blood of Christ? All you that think there is no hell, or if there be, that it is not so dark as it is usually painted, look upon Heman ready to run distracted through terrors, and to give up the ghost every moment, Psalm 88, when yet his body was strong and outward estate whole. Look upon David lying upon the wheel, and the Spirit of God 'breaking his bones,' Psalm 51, whenas otherwise, he being a king, had all outward things at will. Look upon holy Job, chap. 6, 'Oh that my grief were weighed! it is heavier than the sand; and my words are swallowed up;'—that is, I am not able to express and utter my grief;—'the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison thereof drinketh up my spirit; the terrors of God do set themselves in battle array against me,' ver. 4. Insomuch, that at the 8th verse he wisheth 'God would cut him off;' and, 'Is my strength the strength of stones,' says ho, 'or my flesh brass,' as he complains, that he should be able to hold out against such fierce

encounters? My brethren, God's people find pains beyond those of the stone, gout, and toothache; the falling of God's wrath on the conscience is more than the dropping a little scalding rheum on a tooth; and yet these, which Job and David felt, are but a taste of that cup which you that obey not must drink off to the bottom; and it is eternity to the bottom. Psalm 75:8, 'There is a cup in the hand of the Lord, and it is full of mixture,'—that is, all the bitter ingredients in the world are in it, the quintessence of evils are strained into it; and here indeed God 'pours out of the same,' as it follows there,—that is, in this life some few sprinklings of it fall from the top of the cup, which his own do taste and drink of; but the bottom, 'the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall drink, and wring them out,'—that is, leave none behind; but the vials of it, which will never be emptied, shall be poured forth, even to the utmost drop. And if God's people do begin to taste of it,—as Christ himself did, it 'could not pass him,' and Zebedee's sons were to pledge him, as was observed,—then, as God says by Jeremiah, chap. 25:27–29, 'If my people have drunk of it,' and begun to you, 'and I have brought evil upon the city that is called by my name; then certainly you shall drink of it, and be drunk, and spue, and fall and never rise again.' If God's people be thus shut up in darkness, what darkness is reserved for you? Even as Jude says, ver. 13, 'blackness of darkness;' 'darkness where is weeping and gnashing of teeth,' Matt. 22:13. Blackness of darkness, because there is not a cranny of light, nor one beam of comfort that shines in to all eternity. And this is not for a moment, or a few years, but for ever. You 'that live many days in pleasure here, and rejoice in them all; remember the days of darkness, for they are many,' says Solomon, Eccles. 11:8. Many indeed! Days! An eternal night that shall know no end, which no day shall follow.

USE II.

To those that are translated from darkness into light, and yet never
thus walked in darkness

Who is among you that fears the Lord and is translated out of the state of darkness, and yet never was in this darkness of desertion which I have described unto you? You that have been free from those terrors of conscience, which are beyond all the miseries the world hath,—for as the joy of the Holy Ghost is unspeakable and glorious, so these terrors are unutterable and unsupportably grievous,—which yet souls that fear God and have obeyed him more than you, have been made the anvils of; you that have been dandled, cockered, and fed with sweetmeats, had into the wine cellar, and have had all the Trinity to sup with you, John 14:23, Rev. 3:20), when others have eaten 'gall and wormwood,' as it is, Lam. 3:19; and likewise you who, though you enjoy not much ravishing joy, and 'peace which passeth understanding,' yet, 'being justified by faith, you have' a solid 'peace with God,' Rom. 5:1; and so walk in freedom of spirit, in the use of God's ordinances, and in the performance of holy duties;—let me out of this doctrine give all such this great instruction: To take notice that such kind of troubles there are that do befall God's people beyond what they have experience of. Many there are that think not so; Job's friends did not, and therefore censured him. And this is a necessary instruction:—

1. For this very knowledge of it doth prepare men for such a condition, if it should befall them; and therefore, beforehand to prepare them he wrote to, for afflictions, the Apostle bids them 'not think it strange concerning the fiery trial,' 1 Pet. 4:12. For if they be strange to any, then if they befall them at any time, they are the more grievous. As if some strange disease befall a man which he had never heard of before, no physician hath skill in, it amazeth a man, and makes him desperate; but if he hath heard that such and such have had it, as well as himself, and have been recovered, this something helps to assuage the bitterness of it to him. Job's trial was a strange trial to his friends, and therefore you see how unskilfully they go about to heal it, and so left the sore worse than they found so, he that to prepare you for it, it is good to take notice that such a condition there is. In like manner also, in 1 Cor. 10:13, for the same end, the Apostle says of other kind of trials, that 'nothing had befallen them

but what is common to man.' There is a great relief in that, that it is common, and others have been in the like.

2. Secondly, also, take notice of it, that you may be kept more in dependence upon God, and that you may fear him more whilst you live in this world. Men that know not any afflictions in this life beyond what they see with their eyes and feel in the outward man, nothing beyond loss of friends and credit, these do often fear God less, though truly; and when they come to part with any of these for God, are less willing,—as when they must endure a cross rather than sin, are apter to choose sin rather than affliction,* as Job says,—but when they shall hear and know that God's wrath is beyond Pharaoh's wrath, as Moses knew in who yet in the vast apprehension of the greatness of it, cries out, Ps. 90, 'Who hath known the power of thy wrath?' then they will obey God and fear him more than they would all the kings of the earth, as Moses did; 'not fearing the wrath of Pharaoh,' Heb. 11:27. When men enjoy a confluence of all carnal worldly comforts, and think their mountain strong, well built, with wife, children, about them, and riches, health, and honours, they think they are then more out of God's danger than other men, and are apt to say, 'Soul, thou hast goods for many years;' but know, that God, without Liking either thy goods away or thy soul away, can in this life put thy spirit into such a condition of darkness as thou wouldest give all the world to have a moment's ease, when all other comforts shall be to thee but as the white of an egg, as Job says. As he hath joys the world gives not, so he hath afflictions the world inflicts not. Therefore fear him more than the loss of all, obey him rather than to keep all; for God can meet with thee in the midst of all: so he met with David, though a king, and then all his wives and kingdom could not comfort him, till God would 'heal the bones that he had broken.'

3. Thirdly, take notice there are such troubles, and learn not to censure others when they are in this condition. Thou walkest in the light, and thou seest another in the dungeon; he may be dearer to God than thou. It was Job's friends' fault, who, having not had

experience of such a condition in themselves, concluded that he was a hypocrite. If you thus judge, then, as Asaph say, 'you condemn the generation of the just,' Ps. 73:13, 14. And herein Satan also is gratified, the strict ways of grace scandalised. If God use his children thus, 'Curse God and die,' says Job's wife; and so the foolish men and women of this world.

4. Fourthly, 'pass your sojourning here in fear, and serve him with fear,' 1 Pet. 1:17; for even 'our God is a consuming fire,' Heb. 12:29. Keep the heart in awe with the knowledge of such an estate. This kept Job in awe, and made him so strict a man all his days. Read the thirty-first chapter throughout, and you shall see what a righteous man he was, and then see the reason of all: ver. 23, 'Destruction from the Lord was a terror to me. And to the same purpose also, chap. 3:25, 26, he says that 'he had always feared that which now had befallen him,' whereof the distress of his spirit was the greatest evil; this he feared might befall him when he had most assurance.

5. Lastly, be thankful that God spares thee. Haply thy body is weak; and he knows that thou art but flesh, and so stirs not up all his wrath: if he should fall on thee as on others, it would destroy thee. But consider that thou hadst a stone in thy heart as well as any other. God hath cured it by gentle draughts, and so dissolved it and carried it away; whenas he hath cut others, and bound them, and put them to much pain in taking of it out. Oh, be thankful! You that are healthful and have strong bodies, are you not thankful when you see others sick, and lie bedrid, roaring of the stone, toothache, gout, whereof you are free? And ought you not to be much more for the healthfulness of your spirits, (cheerfulness being the marrow of them,) whenas others are sick, as the expression is, Isa. 33:24, for want of assurance that their sins are forgiven? Others roar all day as on a rack, and are distressed almost out of their wits, and even themselves are a burden to themselves. Oh, be thankful that it is not so with you!

USE III.

To those that are translated from darkness into light, and yet never
thus walked in darkness

Who is among you that feareth the Lord, and hath been in darkness, but now is out of that eclipse, and walks in the light again? You who have been in the dungeon, and have been set free again; who have had the wounds of your spirit healed, your souls raised from the nethermost hell, when they 'drew nigh to the grave, and have found a ransom,' Job 33; learn your duty also:—

1. First, to be thankful to God and Jesus Christ, and to love the more; for you know and have tasted what he did for you. You know how bitter a few sips of the cup was which he drank off and took down, and therefore must needs love him more. You also have more experience of God's power and faithfulness, and what a miracle God hath wrought in raising you up again: he hath 'shewn you wonders among the dead,' as Heman speaks; be thankful. Thus David, in Ps. 116:3, 4, compared with ver. 1, 'I love the Lord.' And why? 'The sorrows of death compassed me, the pains of hell gat hold upon me; I found trouble and sorrow; I was brought low, and he helped me.'

2. Secondly, learn to pity others in that condition. Who can do it better than you, that have experience of the like? If you hear of any soul in distress, it is expected of you to pray for him more than of another. Christ learned to pity us in all our infirmities the more, by bearing our infirmities himself, Heb. 4:15. To that end God raised you up, that you might be able to comfort others with 'the comforts you have received,' 2 Cor. 1:4, and might pray for them. Therefore, Isa. 57:18, when any poor soul is smitten, God, as it is there said, is moved to restore him again, for his mourners' sakes as well as his own.

3. Thirdly, declare what God hath done for you. You have been in hell: give warning to others from coming there. 'We, knowing the

terror of the Lord, persuade men.' If the rich man had come from hell, what stories would he have told to have scared all his brethren! Tell you the like. You have seen 'the wonders of God in the deep;' now you are ashore, tell men of the rocks, and shelves, and storms they are like to meet with in such and such courses, of uncleanness, worldliness, &c. David says, when he would have once his bones that were broken healed again, that 'then he would teach sinners God's ways,' Ps. 51.

4. Fourthly, take heed of what may prove the fuel of such a condition. The devil may come and cast you into your old fits if he find the same materials to work upon, such as gross sins, acts of uncleanness, lying, unjust dealing, &c. You know what brought David to his broken bones. And likewise take heed of performing duties formally, coldly, and in hypocrisy, and of resting in them; which are but as a hollow tooth (as Solomon speaks, Prov. 25:19) that is broken, better out of the head than in; these may cause the toothache again. Take heed of sinning against light; if the devil found no such things in you, he should not trouble you. So also, get small straggling doubts answered, let them not lie neglected; they may come in together one day and make an army; though, several and apart, as they now rise in your consciences scattered, you can despise and neglect them.

USE IV.

To such as fear God, and walk in darkness

The fourth and main use, to such as fear God and walk in darkness.

Then, who is among you walking in darkness, that yet fears to offend God as much as hell, and endeavoureth and desires to obey him in all things as much as to go to heaven? Such, when they find God withdraw, and their hearts left comfortless, their spirits dead and hard, do call God's love and their own estates into question; especially if they were in the sunshine before, but now sit 'in the

valley of the shadow of death.' If dandled in God's lap before and kissed, now to be lashed with terrors and his sharpest rods, and on the tenderest place, the conscience; to have their songs in the night turned into writing bitter things against them; how bitter is it to them! Once, they say, they could never come to the throne of grace but their hearts were welcomed, their heads stroked, and they went seldom away without a 'white stone,' an earnest-penny put into their hands; but now God is a terror to them, and when they arise from prayer or the like duty, their hearts condemn them more than when they began. Once they never looked to heaven but they had a smile; now they may cry day and night and not get a good look from him. Once, say they, they never hoist up sail to any duty, but they had a fair and good wind, God went along with them; but now they have both wind and tide, God and the deadness of their own hearts, against them. In a word, God is gone, light is gone: God answers them neither by vision nor by prophets; neither in praying nor in hearing; and therefore hath forsaken them, cast them off, yea, will never be merciful. Oh, woe to us, say they, we are undone!

You err, poor souls, not knowing the Scriptures, and the manner of your God, and of his dealings with his people, to think that his mind is changed when his countenance is, and so to run away from him, as Jacob did from Laban; to think he hath cast you off, when he is but 'returning to his place,' that you may 'seek him more earnestly,' Hos. 5:15. Like children, when their mother is gone aside a little, you fall a-crying as if you were undone. So it is that you are always in the extremes: if he shines on you, then 'your mountain shall never be removed;' if he hides his face, then 'he will never be merciful.' This, as it is a fond and childish fault, so it is beastly and brutish also, thus to judge. I term it so because you are led therein by sense, and, like beasts, believe nothing but what you feel and see, and measure God's love by his looks and outward carriage; which when Asaph did in other afflictions, as you in this, he cries out he was 'ignorant, and as a beast,' Ps. 73:22. What! will you trust God no further than you see him? It will shame you one day to think what a great deal of trouble your childishness put the Spirit of God unto. As what trouble is it to a

wise man, to have a fond and foolish wife, who if he be but abroad, and about necessary business, haply for her maintenance, yet then she complains he regards her not, but leaves her; if he chides her for any fault, then she says he hates her, and is so much distempered by it as a whole day's kindness cannot quiet her again? Thus deal you with God, and though he hath given you never so many fair and clear evidences of his love, and these never so often reiterated and renewed, yet still you are jealous, never quiet, always doubting, questioning all upon the least frown; that either God must undo you, by letting you go on in your sinful dispositions, without ever rebuking of you, or else lose the acknowledgment of all his love formerly shewn, and have it called in question by your peevish, jealous misconstructions, upon every small expression of his anger towards you. Some of you that are less troubled, and thus 'wanton against Christ,' I would chide out of it.

But you that are more deeply and lastingly distressed, I pity you, I blame you not for being troubled; for when 'he hides his face, the creatures all are troubled,' Ps. 104:29. God would have you lay it to heart when he is angry, Isa. 57:17. God there took it ill that 'when he smote him, he went on stubbornly.' If you should not thus lay it to heart, it were a sign you had no grace; that you made not him your portion, if you could bear his absence and not mourn. Carnal men, having other comforts, can bear the want and absence of him well enough; but not you, that have made him your portion, and your exceeding great reward. But yet though you are to lay it to heart, so as to mourn under it; yet not to be discouraged, to call all into question. For though you change, yet not God, Mal. 3:6, James 1:7; nor his love, for his love is himself, 1 John 4:8–10. We may change in our apprehensions and opinions, and God's outward carriages and dispensations may be changed towards us, but not his rooted love. We are not the same to-day that yesterday we were; but 'Christ is the same to-day, yesterday, and for ever,' Heb. 13:8. To say that he hath cast you off because he hath hid his face, is a fallacy fetched out of the devil's topics, and injurious to him; for, Isa. 54:8, 'In a little wrath have I hid my face for a moment; but with everlasting kindness

will I remember thee.' I have but 'hid my face,' not cast thee out of mind; and though in 'anger', yet but a 'little' anger; and not long neither, but 'for a moment.' And all that while I am not unmindful of thee, 'I remember thee,' &c.; and this with 'kindness from everlasting to everlasting.' When the sun is eclipsed, (which eclipse is rather of the earth than of the sun, which shines as it did,) foolish people think it will never recover light, but wise men know it will.

Obj.—But you will say, If this desertion were but for a moment, it were something; but mine hath been for many years.

Ans.—How many years? This life is but a moment; and God hath eternity of time to shew his love in; time enough to make amends for a few frowns; 'everlasting kindnesses.' Remember the text says, one that fears God may walk in darkness; not for a step or two, but many wearisome turns in it. Heman was afflicted from his youth; David so long, that, Ps. 77, he thought God had forgotten mercy. And doth his promise fail for ever? Remember what he said in another case, Luke 18:8, that though he bears long, yet he comes speedily; that is, though long in our eyes, yet speedily in his own, who hath all time before him, and knows how much time is behind to be spent in embraces with you.

Obj.—Yea, but you will say, It is not only hiding his face; but I suffer terrors: he is wroth; he is turned enemy; he fights against me; and therefore I am a vessel of wrath fitted to destruction.

Ans.—So it was with Job, chap. 13:24, 'Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy?' So Isa. 63:10; Ps. 88:16. All these are but the effects of a temporal wrath. There is a wide difference between a child under wrath. and a child of wrath. Thou mayest be a child under wrath, when not a child of wrath, God, as he may afflict you in your estates and bodies, so your spirits, as a father; for, Heb. 12:9, he is 'the Father of spirits.'

TEN DIRECTIONS

for those who are more deeply troubled; and means to be used how to recover light

FOR THOSE WHO ARE MORE DEEPLY TROUBED; AND MEANS TO BE USED HOW TO RECOVER LIGHT AND COMFORT.

FOR their sakes who are thus more deeply troubled, I will prescribe some directions how they are to behave themselves in such a condition, so as to come more comfortably and the more speedily out of it. For it is in these long and great sicknesses of the soul as in those of the body; men are kept the longer in them, and under them, for want of right directions and prescriptions, as we see in long agues and fevers, and the like diseases.

DIRECTION I

First, Take heed of rash, desperate, impatient, and unbelieving speeches and wishes; such you will be forced to recall again with sorrow. As David, when he was in fears, uttered a desperate speech, namely, that Samuel's prophecy concerning him, and message to him from God, that he should be king, would prove false; and he says not only, that 'one day he should perish by the hand of Saul,' 1 Sam. 27:1;—the ground of which speech was, that he finding himself every day in some danger or other of his life, and so, though God had preserved him again and again, yet he thought that some of those many arrows which were shot against him so continually, and which still so narrowly missed him, might, at one time or other, hit and speed him, it were a wonder else;—but he says further, Ps. 116:11, 'I said in my haste, that all men are liars,' the prophet Samuel and all; that it was but a promise of a vain man. But he soon recalls himself, and adds, 'I said this in my haste.' So likewise, Ps. 31:22, 'I said in my haste, I am cut off.' They were rash speeches, as he confesses, spoken in haste. Even so doth many a poor soul break forth and say, after they have had strong hopes, at first conversion, that a kingdom is theirs, that

heaven is theirs, and that it is reserved for them; and they kept for it also through the power of God: yet the devil being let loose to persecute them, as Saul did him, and God hiding his face, and the arrows of the Almighty flying thick about their ears, the sorrows of hell encompassing them, and well-nigh every moment cutting them off; they, although upheld again and again, yet are apt to say that, one day or other, they shall in all likelihood be cut off by God's hand, swallowed up of Satan, and everlastingly destroyed. And when they are told of the hopes they had at their first conversion, and the promises that are made to them, they are apt to say that their graces by which they should now claim those promises are all a lie, false and counterfeit, and but in hypocrisy. This they say in their haste too often. So at another time, when David was in doubt about that other promise of an eternal kingdom, made to him in Ps. 77, he says, 'God will never be merciful.' What a desperate weak speech was this, that what a man sees not at present, he should conclude would never be! But he acknowledged his error in it: 'It was my infirmity,' ver. 10, thus to speak. So the church, Lam. 3:17–19: 'I said, My hope is perished from the Lord.' What a desperate speech was this! But she eats her words again with grief, ver. 21, 'This I recall to mind, therefore have I hope.' Job, though for a while, at the beginning of the storm, he was somewhat calm and quiet in his spirit, and it was his commendation; and therefore, in chap. 1:22, it is said that 'in all this'—that is, so long and thitherto—'he had not charged God foolishly:' but this held but to the first and second chapter, for when he began to be wet to the skin once, and the drops of God's wrath began to soak into his soul, then he falls a-roaring, chap. 3, and 'curseth the day of his birth;' and, chap. 6:8, 9, wisheth God would cut him off; and, chap. 7:15, says, 'his soul did choose strangling rather than life.' For which speeches God in the end steps out, as it were, from behind the hangings, overhearing him, taking him up for them: chap. 38:2, 'Who is this,' says he, 'that talks thus?' How now?

But, good souls, you that are in trouble; oh, take heed of such impatient wishes or speeches as these or the like, that all which you have had is but in hypocrisy; and, Oh that God would cut me off! that

I were in hell, and knew the worst! Take heed, I say. When a man is sick and raves, whereas otherwise the physician and those that stand about him would in pity use him gently, they are forced to hold and bind him. *Impatiens œgrotus crudelem medicum facit*,—an impatient patient makes a physician more cruel than otherwise he would be. So would God deal more gently with thee but for such impatiences. And know that this is taking God's name in vain in a high degree. You must know that the graces of God written in your hearts are a part of God's name, as whereby his love is manifested to you. Now for you to call the truth of these in question, and say they are counterfeit, is as if you should say of the king's hand and seal, when it comes down to you, that it were counterfeit, and deny it; which is *crimen Iæsæ majestatis*. So if a special friend, or your father, had given you some old precious pieces of gold or jewels, &c., as tokens of their love and remembrances of them, for you to say in a distempered fit of jealousy, all these are but counters and but alchemy, you should exceedingly wrong and abuse their love. Thus is it if you deny God's handwriting in your own hearts, when he hath written therein by his Spirit, joy, fear, love, zeal, &c., and should say it is not like his hand. So if you deny the seal of the Spirit, after he hath sealed you up unto the day of redemption, and say that all the earnest-pennies of heaven are but counters, and alchemy, and nothing worth, in so doing you take his name, his love, his mercy, and all in vain; yea, you lie against the Holy Ghost, as the Apostle said in another case. Thus though God give you full leave to try and examine all his graces in you and dealings with you; yet not desperately, at the first blush and view, upon the least mistake or flaw, to say they are no graces, and that he will never be merciful. You abuse him when you do so; take heed of it.

DIRECTION II

Secondly, Let the troubled soul make diligent search. Let an inquisition be set up in thy heart, So, Ps. 77:6, David, in case of desertion, is said to do: 'I communed with mine own heart, and made diligent search.'

Now in this search make inquiry into two things:—

First, What might be the true cause which provokes God thus to leave thee, and hide himself from thee?

Secondly, What in thine own heart is the main doubt and objection, reasoning and apprehension, which causeth thee to fear, and thus to call all into question?

These are two distinct things. For though God hath just cause and reason to leave us to this trouble, yet often the thing that troubles and disquiets us is a mere mistake, a misapprehension; even as a father sees good reason often to scare the child, but yet the thing he suffers him to be affrighted with is but a mere bugbear. It is necessary to inquire into both.

First, Examine what might be the true cause that provokes God thus to leave thee. So Lam. 3:40, 'Let us search and try our ways;' it was spoken by the church in desertion, as appears by the former part of the chapter. And to help yourselves in this, go over all the cases which have been propounded. Hast thou not been carnally confident in false signs? or rested too much on true, to the neglect of Christ and God's free grace? Didst thou not before neglect to stir up thy own graces? &c. Go over all those cases mentioned; something or other will be found to be the cause. This is necessary, for till the cause be known, the heart submits not; neither will it sanctify God's name, nor will the trouble cease, till that which provokes God to lay it on be confessed and forsaken. And if it be a particular sin that God aims at, then usually God useth the horror for, and the guilt of, that very sin to afflict thee with; and then that sin itself is made the cause of thy trouble in thy own apprehension. So as then it is easily found out; thou will find thy sin to be the thorn in thy foot, the stone in thy shoe, that did grate, gall, and vex thee. David easily knew, in Ps. 51, what it was for which God broke his bones; for his very sin was the iron mace, the instrumental cause itself, of God's executing it upon him: the horror of that murder God used as the hammer to break

him withal, and as the rod to whip him with: ver. 3, 'My sin,' says he, 'is ever before me;' it was ever in his eye. Indeed, in outward afflictions it is more difficult to find out the cause why God afflicts a man; unless sometimes you may, through God's wise-disposing hand, find and read the sin in the punishment, they so resemble one another: so as a man may say, This cross lay in the womb of such a sin, they are so like,—in quo peccamus in eodem plectimur. But in those inward distresses of conscience, that sin which is the true cause, and that moveth God to afflict, God often useth even the guilt of that very sin to terrify thee; to cast a man into the distress, and to keep him in it; it is both the procatartical cause and executioner also.

But in case thou canst not find out the cause, as Job, it seems, did not; and Elihu did suppose he might not, therefore gives him this counsel, (which do thou also follow till God shew thee the cause,) Job 34:31, 32, 'to say unto God,' as he adviseth there, 'That which I see not, teach thou me, and I will not offend any more;' and if thou findest it, say also, as ver. 31, 'I have borne chastisement' for such a sin; 'I will never offend any more.' Till then God will not let thee down.

The second thing to be searched into is, What is the chief and main reasoning in thy heart which makes thee call all into question whether God be thy God? What is the reason why thou thinkest so, what makes thee conclude so?

For this you must consider, that although God for some sin committed doth, hide himself from thee, terrifies and lasheth thy conscience, yet that which causeth in thee and worketh in thee this apprehension, that God hath cast thee off, is usually some false reasoning or misapprehension, some mere mistake, some device and sophistry of Satan. When the Corinthian was excommunicated for his sin, Satan had leave to terrify his conscience for it; but Satan went further, he would have 'swallowed him up of sorrow,' by persuading him that such a sin was unpardonable, and that God

would never own him again. Now the reasoning Satan used to bring this upon him was a false one, some trick and device, 2 Cor. 2:7, compared with ver. 11; whereof if a man be ignorant, he may go mourning a long while as a castaway. Therefore take thy soul aside, and seriously ask it, and examine it, why it is thus troubled; what reason, what ground thou hast to think that God is not thy God; and then examine it whether it be a true ground, yea or no. As the Apostle, 1 Pet. 3:15, bids us 'give a reason of our faith, so ask thou of thy soul the reason of its doubting.

Thus David, Ps. 42:5, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul?' And because doubts arise again and again, therefore he asketh the reason again, ver. 11, 'Why art thou cast down?' David knew the way to dissolve them was to search into and examine the reason of them; for still, when he had thoroughly examined them, he found them needless and causeless to put him into such desperate fears. The child of God is often cast into prison, into fears and bondage, and after he hath lain long in them, and begins to read over the writ and mittimus, he finds it to be false imprisonment, a mere trick of Satan, his jailer. For as carnal men, when they think their estate good, and that they are in the favour of God, it is some delusion, some false reasoning that is still the ground of such their opinion; as because they prosper in the world, therefore God loves them, because they perform some duties, have some good motions, which grounds they cannot endure to have examined: so contrarily, one that fears God, the ground of his apprehension that he is out of the favour of God is likewise some false reasoning, which, when examined, appears to be such, and when it appears the soul is freed out of its fears and doubts. Heman thought and said that God had cast him off; and what was the reason persuaded him to think so? Ps. 88:14, 'because God had hidden his face.' It doth not follow, Heman. A father may hide his face from his son, and yet not cast him off. So David also reasoneth, Ps. 77:2, 3, 'I have sought God,' prayed, and used the means, and 'yet I am troubled,' and yet God reveals not himself; and what doth he conclude from this? Ver. 7, 'Will the Lord cast off for ever?' He thought, If God had loved me, he would presently have

heard me; he thought his soul would not have been worse after praying. This was a false reasoning; for, Ps. 80:4, sometimes 'God shuts out his people's prayers.' A father may sometimes seem so angry that he may throw away his child's petition, and yet resolve to be his father still.

It were infinite to reckon up all the false reasonings that souls in distress have sometimes, from a place of Scripture misunderstood and misapplied. Some who, being annoyed with blasphemous thoughts against God and Christ, and his Spirit, though they be their greatest affliction, yet have thought they have sinned against the Holy Ghost, upon the misapplying that place, Matt. 12:31, that 'blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall never be forgiven;' whereas that place is meant only but of some one kind of blasphemy, which indeed is wilful blaspheming of God and the work of his Spirit, out of revenge, Heb. 10:29, So some, because they have sinned after enlightening and tasting, and fallen into some gross sin, think they shall never be renewed, by reason of that place, Heb. 6:4; whereas he speaks of a wilful and revengeful falling away, with such a revenge as they would, if they could, 'crucify Christ again,' ver. 6. For otherwise David had not been renewed, for he sinned presumptuously, and 'despised the commandment,' 2 Sam. 12:9. So some, if they hear but of some fearful example, and of God's severe dealing with others, how he cast them off upon such a sin, as he did Saul, they think and conclude that upon the commission of the like that God hath cast them off also. But there is no certain ground for such a thought; for 'secret things belong to God.' So because some hear there is a time after which God sometimes offers grace no more, but swears against some men, therefore that their time is also past; which they can have no ground for: for though it be true God doth so with many that hear the gospel, yet the word gives us no certain rules to judge he hath done so by any of us. It is good to fear lest thou shouldst provoke him to it, but thou hast no sign to fear he hath done so with thee. And indeed herein lies the main and first business to be done in raising up a troubled soul, even to find out the ground of their doubting, and to examine the truth of it, and confute it. If a man be falsely

imprisoned or cast in a suit at law, what doth he to remedy it? He seeks to find out the error in the writ. So do thou search out the ground of thy trouble; go to some spiritual lawyer skilled in soul-work: keep not the devil's counsel; he opposeth nothing more than making your doubts known.

DIRECTION III

The third direction I give to such is, that they keep and lend one ear, as well to hear and consider what makes for their comfort, as unto what may make against them.

This direction meets with a great infirmity of such as are in distress, who through Satan's temptations have their hearts so deeply possessed with prejudicial conceits of the misery of their estates, that, as the people of God in Exod. 6:9, 'through the anguish of their hearts,' were so far distempered that they listened not to the good message which Moses brought them, nor believed that so good news could be true of them: so are the souls of many that are in distress so filled with anguish and sense of misery, and so strongly prepossessed with desperate opinions, and so far put out of hopes, that they reject all that is spoken for their comfort; so as they will not so much as be brought to cast an eye or a thought upon anything that may be an occasion of comfort to them. Like some prisoners at the bar, through extremity of fear they cannot read that in their hearts and in the word which might save them. Tell them of what God hath wrought for them and in them, as evidences of his love; and as they cannot, so often they will not, read them over; or if they do, they read them over but as a man doth a book he means to confute: they pick quarrels, and make objections at everything that is said, as if they were hired as lawyers to plead against themselves, and to find flaws in their evidences. I have observed some who have set all their wits a-work to strengthen all arguments and objections against themselves, and who have been glad if they could object anything which might puzzle those who have come to comfort them; if they could hold argument against themselves; as if they were disputing for the victory only. And

thus through much poring upon, and considering only what might make against them, they have had the bolts of their hearts so far shot into despair, and fixed in desperate sorrow, and the true wards of sound evidences so far wrung and wrested by false keys, that when the skilfulest and strongest comforters have come with true keys to shoot back the bolt, they would not turn about; nay, could scarce get entrance.

This was David's infirmity, as at the 10th verso of the 77th Psalm, compared with the 2d verse, 'My soul refuseth to be comforted.' He spilt all the cordials and physic that were brought him: he was not only void of comfort, but refused it. What! bring me promises to comfort me!—will such a one say,—you may as well carry them to one in hell, or give physic to a man past recovery; and so will take down nothing that is given them. So also the church, in the 3d of the Lamentations, ver. 17, 18; her heart was deeply possessed with a desperate apprehension: 'My hope,' says she, 'is perished from the Lord.' And what was it that shot her soul into so fixed despair? Ver. 17, 'she forgot all good:' she forgot,—that is, she would not so much as take into consideration and remembrance anything that had been comfortable to her. All good,—so the original,—that is, all God's former good and gracious dealings with her, all the good things wrought in her, and for her, whence she might have comfort. And in stead thereof, what did her thoughts feed and chew upon? Only wormwood and gall, her bitterness and distress, poring only on what might make against her: 'I said my hope was perished from the Lord, calling to mind my affliction and my misery, my wormwood and gall.' These she could revolve and roll up and down in her mind, though they were bitter, and would entertain thoughts of nothing else. But when, on the contrary, she began to take into consideration God's gracious and faithful supporting her in that very desertion, 'in faithfulness renewing his mercies every morning,' ver. 22, 23, and that still he maintained in her heart a longing and lingering after him, and a secret cleaving to him, and that God did enable her to choose him as her portion, ver. 24,—'this I recall to mind,' says she, ver. 21, (which speech hath reference to those words fore-cited,

which follow there,) 'therefore have I hope,'—she spits out her wormwood, and eats her own words. And now that her heart began to listen to what might comfort her, presently she began to have hope. This sullen, peevish, desperate obstinacy is a thing you ought to take heed of; for hereby you take Satan's part, and that against those you ought to love so dearly, even your own souls. But as they said, 'Let Baal plead for himself;' so let Satan plead his own cause, do not you. Hereby also you 'forsake your own mercies,' as it is said, Jonah 2:8; you give up your own right, and are so far befooled as to plead against your own title, your own interest in the best things you can have interest in—God's mercies, made yours by an everlasting covenant; you give up your portion bequeathed you in your Father's will, which you ought to maintain; and you trust to lying vanities, the soothsayings and fortune-tellings, as I may call them, of Satan and of your own hearts. Hereby also 'ye become judges of evil thoughts,' James 2:4; for he is an ill hearer of a cause who will hear but one party speak.

DIRECTION IV

The fourth direction is, to make diligent search into, and to call to remembrance what formerly hath been between God and you. The remembrance of former things doth often uphold, when present sense fails. This David practised in the like case, Psalm 77:5, 6, when his soul had refused comfort, as I told you, ver. 2; yet in the end he began not only to be willing to listen to what might make for him, but set himself a-work to recall to mind, to 'consider the days of old, to make diligent search,' namely, into the records and register of God's dealings, ver. 11, to see if there were never a record extant which might help him, now the devil pleaded against his title. Even as if your houses and lands were called into question, you would search over old writings and deeds; so do you in this. 'I considered,' says he, 'the songs in the night,'—that is, that joyful communion he had enjoyed with God, when God and he sang songs together,—and 'I communed with mine own heart, and made diligent search;' I tossed and tumbled over my heart, to see if no grace formerly had been

there, and if no grace at present were there. He searched into what might comfort him, as well as into the causes might provoke God thus to deal with him; for I take it both may be meant.

And so Job did, when he was thus stricken and forsaken of God: he views over every part of his life; he seeks what dry land he could find to get footing upon in the midst of seas of temptations; recounts what a holy life he had lived, with what fear and strictness he had served God, chap. 29 and chap. 30, and chap. 31 throughout, and tells them plainly, chap. 27:5, 6, that let them plead and argue what they could against him, and go about to prove him a hypocrite, 'till I die,' says he, 'I will not remove mine integrity from me, nor let go my righteousness:' I will never give up mine interest in God's mercies, nor the evidences I have to shew for them. And, says he, chap. 19:27, 28, 'Though my reins be at present consumed, yet the root of the matter is in me,'—that is, though God deals thus hardly with me, as you see, yea, though the exercise of grace is much obscured, the sunshine of God's favour withdrawn, his face hidden from me, and the joyful fruits of righteousness, and comfortable fresh green speeches, and leaves you have known to grow upon this now withered stock fallen off; yet there is the root of the matter still in me—a root of faith that decays not, a constant frame of grace that still remains, which hateth sin, loveth God; and you shall all never beat me from it. And canst thou call nothing to remembrance betwixt God and thee, which argues infallibly his love? What! nothing? Look again. Did God never speak peace unto thy heart, and shed his love abroad in it? Hast thou at no time found in thine heart pure strains of true love and good-will to him, some pure drops of godly sorrow for offending him, and found some dispositions of pure self-denial, wherein thou didst simply aim at his glory more than thine own good? Hast thou never an old tried evidence which hath been acknowledged and confirmed again and again in open court? What! not one? And if thou canst now call to mind but one, if in truth, it may support thee. For if one promise do belong to thee, then all do, for every one conveys whole Christ, in whom all the promises are made, and who is the matter of them. As in the sacraments, the

bread conveys whole Christ, and the wine also whole Christ: so in the word every promise conveys whole Christ. And if thou canst say, as the church of Ephesus, Rev. 2:6, 'This thing I have, that I hate sin,' and every sin, as God hates it, and because he hates it: as Christ owned them for this one grace, and though they had many sins and many failings, yet, says he, this thou hast, &c. If Christ will acknowledge thee to be his for one ear-mark, or if he sees but one 'spot of his child' upon thee, Deut. 32:5, thou mayest well plead it, even any one, to him. Yea, though it be but in a lesser degree, in truth and sincerity. For God brings not a pair of scales to weigh your graces, and if they be too light refuseth them: but he brings a touchstone to try them; and if they be true gold, though never so little of it, it will pass current with him; though it be but smoke, not flame, though it be but as a wick in the socket, Matt. 12:20, (as it is there in the original,) likelier to die and go out than to continue, which we use to throw away; yet he will not quench it, but accept it. Yea, and though at present thou findest in thy sense no grace stirring in thee, nothing but hardness, deadness, &c., yet if thou canst remember, Yea, but this once I had; as a woman with child, though after her first quickening she doth not always find the child to stir, yet because she did feel it stir, she still conceives hopes and thinks she is with child; so think thou of the new creature formed within thee.

These things you are to recall and consider in time of distress: to remember former graces and spiritual dispositions in you; and God's gracious dealings with you. God remembers them to have mercy on you; and why should you not remember them to comfort you? Therefore, Heb. 6:9, 10, 'We hope,' says he, 'better things of you; for God is not unrighteous to forget your labour of love;' namely, to reward you And therefore he calls upon them in like manner, Heb. 10:31, 'to call to remembrance the former days' to comfort them; how they held out when their hearts were tried to the bottom; when shipwreck was made of their goods, good names, and all for Christ,—yet they made not shipwreck of a good conscience. And if thou dost thus call to remembrance things of old, and yet canst find no comfort

at first from them,—as often ye may not, as was David's case, Psalm 77, for after his 'remembrance of his songs in the night,' still his soul was left in doubt, and he goes on to say, 'Will God ever be merciful?'—yet have recourse to them again, and then again, for though they comfort not at one time, yet they may at another; that it may be seen that God comforts by them, and not they alone of themselves. Hast thou found a promise (which is a 'breast of consolation,' Isa. 66:11) milkless? Yet again suck; comfort may come in the end. If after thou hast empanelled a jury and grand inquest to search, and their first verdict condemns thee, or they bring in an ignoramus; yet do as wise judges often do, send them about it again, they may find it the next time. Jonah looked once, it seems, and found no comfort, chap. 2:4, for he said, 'I will look again towards thine holy temple.' A man's heart is like those two-faced pictures: if you look one way towards one side of them, you shall see nothing but some horrid shape of a devil, or the like; but go to the other side and look again, and you shall see the picture of an angel or of some beautiful woman, &c. So some have looked over their hearts by signs at one time, and have to their thinking found nothing but hypocrisy, unbelief, hardness, self-seeking; but not long after, examining their hearts again by the same signs, they have espied the image of God drawn fairly upon the table of their hearts.

DIRECTION V

But now if former signs remembered bring thee no comfort in, but the waves that come over thy soul prove so deep that thou canst find no bottom to cast anchor on, the storm and stress so great that no cable will hold, but they snap all asunder, as is often the case of many a poor soul:—

Then take and put in practice this fifth direction, renew thy faith and repentance, set thy heart a-work to believe and repent afresh as if thou hadst never yet begun. Spend not all the time in casting out of anchors, but fall a-pumping; leave off and cease a while to reason about the goodness of thy former faith and repentance, and set upon

the work of believing and repenting anew. Say, Well, suppose I have not hitherto been in the state of grace, yet I am not incapable of it for time to come, I may obtain grace yet. Suppose my faith and repentance hath not been true hitherto, I will therefore now begin to endeavour after such as is true. And to that end make this use of whatsoever flaws the devil finds in either, to direct thee what to mend and rectify for time to come; begin to make up the breaches and unsoundness which is discovered, endeavour after a supply of all those wants he objects to be in either: mend all the holes he picks. Say, Lord, I cast my soul on all thy mercies afresh; I desire now to make my heart perfect with thee for time to come, to part with every sin, to submit to every duty, to curse every by-end to hell, and to set up God and Christ as my mark, polestar, and aim in all. And when thou hast done this, let the devil say his worst. This of all the former directions I commend to you, as a special means to dissolve and put these temptations about assurance to an end. I set a probatum est upon it; take it, practise it, it is a tried one; and it is that which at the last the church in desertion comes to: Lam. 3:40, 'Come, let us try our ways, and turn to the Lord;' that is the last way and course she takes. Now when the water is at the lowest, and the tide of assurance ebbed, mend up your banks, as you use to do at low waters. Now when nothing but hypocrisy, and unbelief, and falseness of heart appear to thee to be in thy heart, do thou groan, sigh, endeavour after the contrary sincerity; and let Satan say his worst. And this direction I now in the next place prescribe you, because in time of temptation about assurance, it is the usual course of some troubled souls to spend all their thoughts upon what formerly they have had, as if they must have comfort only from the former work, or no way; laying out all their time and cost in new suits and new trials about their former title; and when they have been cast again and again, yet still to do nothing but read over old evidences again and again, and bring in and study new proofs.

But know, that though this is to be done, and not to be neglected, and is found often comfortable, therefore in the former direction I exhorted to it: yet you are not only to take that course, nor to look

back so much to your former faith and repentance as to forget to practise new; but being to practise new acts of faith and repentance, this is the rightest way, the shortest cut, and requires as little pains. Thou mayest with as little charge get a new lease renewed, as prove good the old one; it will require many terms to examine over all thy evidences again and again, which also haply are blotted and blurred. Thou mayest cut the knot and dissolve the temptations sooner by new faith, than untie it by reasonings and disputings. And the truth is, in the end thou must come to this; for God's great end in deserting is to put you upon renewing your faith and repentance. 'Except ye be converted,' as Christ says to his apostles, converted as it were anew. He will not deliver thee out of the dungeon, till thou enterest into new bonds and bail for thy good behaviour. Therefore begin to do it soon. And whereas thou thinkest that by this thou mayest prejudice thy former title, that is not my meaning, as if thou shouldest utterly give up thy old faith and repentance as counterfeit; 'I will keep my integrity,' says Job: only my advice is to forbear, and to cease pleading of it for a time, and to begin to renew it rather, that is it I exhort unto. And then the comfort of thy old repentance will come in. As the apostle says of the law, so I of thy former title, 'it is not destroyed, but established' rather by this. And as Christ says, John 7:17, 'If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine that it is of God;' so as the best way to know the truth is not to spend all the time in disputing about it, but to practise it, which puts an end to controversies in men's hearts: so say I, to know the truth of, and so to come to have the comfort of former grace, is to add to these reasonings about it, the practice of believing and repenting anew. This baffles the devil exceedingly, and gets the advantage of him; for by this the suit is removed, all his old pleas dashed, this puts him upon a new reply, diverts the war, and indeed non-plusseth him; for what can he say to it? He must now prove thou art incapable of grace, that thou shalt never repent, which all the world and devils in hell cannot prove. And yet if in this case he tells thee, as usually he doth, that all will be in vain for time to come, as well as it hath been for time past:—

DIRECTION VI

Then, sixthly, stand not now disputing it, but be peremptory and resolute in thy faith and turning to God, let the issue be what it will be. Faith is never nonplussed. Job vows 'he will trust him though he kills him,' chap. 13:5. So do thou; whether he will damn or save thee, do what he will with thee, leave not to cast thyself upon him for mercy, nor to serve and love him. Go thou on to use the means diligently and constantly; and be so much the more diligent, fear and hate sin still, pray day and night: as Heman did when he thought himself cut off, Ps. 88:1, 'I have cried day and night, though I be as one thou rememberest no more,' ver. 4, 5; and so at the 9th verse, 'I have called daily.' Though, ver. 10–12, he thought himself in hell, and thought it a miracle ever to be raised up again, yet says he, ver. 13, 'but I have cried to thee.' That but seems to come in as an expression of his resolution hitherto, that though these were his apprehensions of his condition, yet howsoever, he had, and accordingly would go on to seek the Lord. Suppose thou findest no relish in the ordinances, yet use them; though thou art desperately sick, yet eat still, take all is brought thee, some strength comes of it. Say, Be I damned or saved, hypocrite or not hypocrite, I resolve to go on. And there is good reason for it; for if thou shouldest leave off to serve the Lord, and resolve never to look after him more, then thou art sure to be damned. If there be 'an evil heart in thee to depart from the living God,' thou art undone. But this other way of seeking him, thou mayest in the end prevail; 'Who knows but God may be merciful?' In the 3d of the Lamentations, ver. 29, this counsel is given to a soul being yoked and deserted, 'to put his mouth in the dust; and it waiteth,' says he, suffers, and doth anything, not only if he hath hope, but 'if there may be hope,' if there be but such a thought it may prove so, he will make a venture; and so do thou. See what Esther did in the like desperate case: thought she, If I hold my tongue, (and so Mordecai told her,) God will destroy me. And better it was to make a venture upon the king to speak, and so to carry her life in her hand; and therefore she says, 'If I perish, I perish.' And so the lepers, see how they reasoned in a desperate case: 2 Kings 7:3, 4, 'If we go into

the city, we are sure to die, for the famine is there; if we sit still, we die also. Come, let us fall into the hands of the Assyrians: if they save us alive, so; if they kill us, we shall,' however, 'but die.' And there were many strong arguments to move them to think they would kill them, for they were Jews, and so of the enemy's side, and might be suspected for spies; if not, they were lepers, that might infect the camp, who were fit for no service, for nothing but to be knocked on the head. Yet in this desperate case they took the surer and more probable part, ventured to fall to the Assyrians' side, and the success is known to you all. So reason thou: If I give over my believing, humbling myself, praying, attending on the means, I shall certainly perish, there is no help for it; I will therefore rather go on to do all these as sincerely as I can to the utmost, and if God saves me, a sinner, a leper, an enemy, so; if not, I can be but damned.

But let me tell thee, such a resolution can never go to hell with thee; yea, if any have a room in heaven, such a soul shall: for this puts not the devil only to it;—for in this case, what can the devil himself say to thee? for if thou wilt venture thy soul, service, and all upon God, let the issue be what it will, in this resolute yet safe way; if thou wilt in a pure trust refer it unto God with contentedness and submission, what is that to him?—but it puts God to it also, who cannot find in his heart to damn such a one who shall go on to do thus. When thou thus freely servest him, chooseth him, ventur'est and leavest thyself and all the issue of thy ways to him; thou, by this one act in such a case, shalt win more upon him and his love, than haply by all thy obedience all thy life before. Thy salvation, and the assurance of it, that is God's work, leave it to him, try hid faithfulness; it is self-love makes us too much to be troubled about it. Go thou on to believe, repent, mourn for sin, hate, forsake it; to use the moans, &c.; that is thy work; and so doing, thou canst not be damned.

SECTION II:

Other observations out of the 10th verse

Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God, &c.—
ISA. 50:10.

SOME gleanings there yet remain of this text, which I thought good to bind up into one sheaf, and thresh out at this time.

The second* doctrine is: That though it may befall one that fears God to walk in darkness, yet but to a few. He says, 'Who is among you?' he singleth such out of a crowd. If simply he had spoken of those that fear God and obey him, without this limitation added, 'and walk in darkness,' he might well have spoken thus sparingly, 'Who is among you?' For to the wicked he says, 'All you that kindle a fire,' &c.; for there are but a few that fear God in comparison of them. If he had spoken of those that fear God, and have 'been in darkness' for some little while, haply some few days among many, there are yet fewer; for there are that walk in the light of God's countenance to their death, and never knew what terror of conscience means. But when he shall speak of those that 'fear God and walk in darkness,' and suffer terrors from their youth, as Heman did, such a one is one of a thousand. Of such a one he says, 'Who is among you?' Few have experience of such a condition. Job had friends who certainly were godly,—for Job was to pray for them, and God said he would hear Job for them, and they, as is likely, knew many godly men besides Job,—yet when this condition of darkness befell Job, it was so strange a trial to them, that they thought him therefore a hypocrite, as never having themselves felt or heard of the like in others. When Christ was to go into his agony, he would not have many of his apostles so much as be by him to be witnesses of it, much less to feel the like; he takes but two or three. The reasons are:—

Reason 1.—Because, though all God's people are fighting men and men of valour, yet he hath but a few champions,—as David, though he had many soldiers, yet but few worthies,—and therefore calls but a few out to fight single combats with Satan and his wrath; though he exerciseth them all in lighter skirmishes, yet not to fight such bloody battles. 'Seest thou not my servant Job? there is none like him.' Him God will venture into the field; but others his friends he will not.

Reason 2.—As he hath few champions able and fit for such an encounter, so he hath variety of other temptations to exercise his withal. He hath poverty and ill report, imprisonment and cruel mockings, loss of goods, crosses in friends; and some have enough to struggle under one of these; and there is no temptation but must befall some, and seldom all befall one. Some spirits are so weak, as they would faint and not be able to sustain themselves; and God never suffers any to be 'tempted above what they are able,' 1 Cor. 10:13. Some men's bodies are weak, and if God should 'rebuke them long for sin,' they would be brought to nothing; and he 'remembers they are flesh, and stirs not up all his wrath,' as David says: 'Oh, suffer me to recover strength!' Some men God hath present use of in their callings and employments, which if they were distracted, as Heman was, with terrors continually, they were unfit for.

Reason 3.—God afflicts in this kind but in case of extremity usually; when he meets with a very froward heart, and stout, proud spirit, a knotty piece, Isa. 57:17. If lesser crosses would do it, he would not fetch out the great rod. If a rod will 'thresh out the cummin,' he useth not to 'turn the wheel over it,' nor take a flail to do it, Isa. 28:27. Now lesser afflictions work with the most of his, through his blessing; mercies work, disgrace works, poverty works, and 'he doth not willingly afflict,' Lam. 3:33, and therefore not unnecessarily; he puts not men into the dungeon for every fault, and therefore there are few long exercised this way.

Use 1.—Think not therefore thou hast not true grace, because thou wert never terrified as some have been. As some have true faith and

sound peace who yet never tasted of 'joy unspeakable and glorious,' so some have sound humiliation who never knew terrors of conscience. If thou seest sin the greatest misery, Christ the greatest good, thou art humbled.

Use 2.—You see we may often preach such things which do yet concern but a few in a congregation, and yet we are to preach them. There are but a few walk long in darkness, yet to such Christ doth preach. Yea, and for such doth God 'give gifts, the tongue of the learned.' God often gives a pastor after his own heart for a few: Jer. 3:15, 'Take one or two of a city,' &c., 'and I will give them pastors after my heart;' much more are many sermons often preached but to a few. So even by Christ himself, as he says, Luke 4:26, 'There were many widows,' &c., 'but unto none was Elias sent but unto her at Sarepta;' and many lepers, but 'unto none was Elias sent but unto Naaman.' So says Christ, 'I am sent but to a few;' and therefore, as we must not defraud one poor soul of its portion because none else partake of it, so the rest are not to think much, but, as in a dole, stay till their portion come; and if any one poor soul hath had its estate discovered, all the rest are to be thankful.

Use 3.—See some reason why some in distress of mind complain that none ever were in the like condition; thus they are apt to do. So the church, Lam. 1:12. The reason is because few are so troubled, and haply they never knew any: but yet some are and have been in the like; for, 1 Cor. 10:13, 'no temptation befalls but is common to man.'

Doct. 3.—That those few in congregations that walk in darkness, and yet fear and obey him, God and Christ hath an especial eye unto and care of; you see he singles them out, as it were, from all the rest, 'Who is among you?' Isa. 66:2, 'All these things have my hand made; but to this man will I look, that is poor and broken, and trembleth at my word;' that is, though all things and persons else in the world be my creatures, and so I have a care of them all, yet he seems to overlook all else, and 'to him will I look,' &c., as if there were none else in the church.

Reason 1.—The first reason is, because it is the office of Christ so to do. The Spirit is upon him on purpose, Isa. 61:1–3, 'to open the prison to them that are bound,' shut up in this dungeon; 'to appoint to them that mourn beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness.' He is the physician, and hath undertaken the cure, Matt. 9:12. And whom should the physician have an eye to but the sick, and the most sick, as those are that cannot find their sins forgiven? Isa. 33:14. He is the shepherd, Isa. 40:11, and will take care of all his sheep, 'knows them by name.' But of whom especially? The lambs that are weak, young Christians. 'He will gather them with his arms, and gently lead the ewes with young;' that are travailing and bringing forth, as those under terrors are. He will not over-drive them; for God hath given him charge 'he should lose none of them.' He is 'that good shepherd' that will, as he hath promised, Ezek. 34:16, 'seek out that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and bind up that which is broken, and strengthen that which was sick.' He names all casualties that befall them, because he helps in all miseries; yea, and, ver. 12, after they have been wildered 'in a cloudy and dark day,' and walked in darkness long, he will 'find them out and deliver them,' as his promise there is.

Reason 2.—If his office did not move him to it, his love would; for he is a merciful and a pitiful high priest, Heb. 4:15, and was 'in all points tempted as we are;' and especially in agony of spirit. Therein he drank deepest of any, and therefore is fitted to pity us therein most; and the greatlier any is troubled, the more he is touched. Isa. 63:9, 'In all your afflictions he is afflicted;' and, Jer. 31:20, 'Since I spake against him, I remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him.' When a child is sick, the mother is more troubled and careful about it, and her eye and mind more upon it, than on all the house besides.

Use 1.—The use is, to meet with that conceit that befalls all that are in darkness: they think that of all men else, God regards not them. Sion said, 'God hath forgotten me,' Isa. 49:14. So David, 'God hath

forgotten to be merciful.' Because they find their hearts hard to God, they think that his is so to them: because they can find no love in their hearts to God, they think he bears none to them. But you see Christ especially inquires for such, and overlooks all others else. God hath 'graven thee on the palms of his hands;' every sigh of thine goes to his bowels. Isa. 57:15, 'I dwell with him that is broken, to revive his spirit.' God is nigh him.

Use 2.—Are God's eyes upon us more when we are in trouble of spirit than on any other? Then let our eyes be upon him: 'We cannot tell what to do, but our eyes are towards thee.' Let our eyes be towards him for help, as of those that looked on the brazen serpent: let our eyes be towards him for service, 'as the eyes of handmaidens are on their mistress;' to look not to men, not to credit, but to have our eyes on God in all we do, as if there were none else in the world to approve ourselves unto.

Doct. 4.—In that when he speaks of those his children that are in darkness, he chooseth rather to describe them by fear and obedience, than by any other grace; observe, That when the children of God are under terrors, the most eminent grace that doth appear in them is fearfulness to offend God, and willingness to obey him. Other graces may be stirred, but these are most eminent, and therefore he mentioneth these for their comfort.

Explication.—First, for explication. Know that several occasions draw out several graces. When the sunshine of God's favour melts the heart, then love and obedience, thence proceeding, are most eminent, and also godly sorrow. So Mary wept much, loved much, for 'much was forgiven her;' her heart was full of assurance. On the contrary, when the sense of God's love is withdrawn, and fears and terrors shed abroad in the heart, then fear and obedience shew and discover themselves. Therefore, Isa. 66:2, 'He that is poor and contrite, and trembleth at the word,' are joined; trembleth at every command and threatening, is fearful to transgress: and so those in that estate do find. The reason is:—

Reason.—Because graces, and affections in which graces are seated, stir more or less in us according as their objects are, and our apprehensions of them. Now therefore, when the soul is possessed most with displeasure for sin, and apprehensions of wrath, then it feareth most, and then fear works accordingly, against that which may displease. Hence the Apostle: seeing 'our God is a consuming fire,' Heb. 12:29, 'let us serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear;' therefore when we see him so, we are to suspect our hearts most, if we be not more fearful of offending him, and obey him.

Use 1.—The first use is of trial, whether thou art a child under wrath: if thou fearest more, and if that fear produceth obedience. As 'Christ learned obedience by what he suffered,' so wilt also thou, if thou hast his spirit.

Use 2.—The second use is, to exercise graces still in their seasons: 'When thou art afflicted, pray; when joyful, sing psalms,' James 5:13; when filled with assurance, then 'mourn and be confounded,' Ezek. 16:63.

A CHILD OF DARKNESS WALKING IN LIGHT

Behold, all ye that kindle a fire, that compass yourselves about with sparks: walk in the light of your fire, and in the sparks that ye have kindled. This shall ye have of wine hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow.
—ISA. 50:11.

LET us now come to the opposite state, of wicked men, who are said here to 'walk in the light of their own fire,' &c.

All the difficulty lies in opening what is meant by their own fire, and what is meant by walking in the light of it; which is opposed here to walking in darkness, and to trusting on the name of the Lord—namely, Christ's rightness, as I said before. To this purpose you must remember, that his scope is to shew the differing props and stays for justification and comfort, which a godly man hath, and a natural man.

The stay and comfort of a godly man's soul lies in the light of God's countenance, which he wanteth, he is in darkness, though he hath never so many outward comforts. The stay, comfort, and prop of his faith for justification in that estate, when he sees no righteousness in himself, is the name of the Lord Jesus Christ our righteousness.

Oppositely therefore, by the fire, and the light of their fire which wicked men are said to walk in, two things must be meant:—

I. Their own natural righteousness which they have by nature, and in the state of nature, and the sparks and acts thereof; this they trust to, and neglect the name of the Lord, and the righteousness of justification and of the new creature.

II. The light of outward comforts from the creatures, which in this world they enjoy, and the sparkling pleasures thereof which they walk in, and content themselves with, neglecting communion with God, being estranged from the life of God, and living without him in the world. So as the opposition strongly carries it, that both these should be meant by their fire here; and all interpreters give the first interpretation of it, and I have added this second to make the sense complete.

I. How that by fire of their own kindling, their own righteousness without Christ, such as the Pharisees had, and Paul had before conversion, should be meant, we must consider that he, speaking here to the Jews, alludeth to the types of the old law, which they were acquainted with. Wherein—

1. Fire, you know, was it they offered their sacrifices with, typifying out, an Mark 9:49, our inward habitual grace and righteousness, whereby we offer up ourselves and our service as a 'living sacrifice to God,' Rom. 12:1.

2. When they offered incense or sacrifice acceptable to God, they were not to offer it with common fire, which is ordinary in the world in their chimneys and kitchens, which was kindled by themselves by sparks out of stones, or from things here below; but it was to be fire from heaven, and taken from the altar, (so Lev. 9:24,) which was kept continually burning, and therefore when a new altar was made, 'fire came from heaven, 2 Chron. 7:3; and the high priest was to take fire off the altar, whenever he offered incense, Lev. 16:12. And therefore when Nadab and Abihu offered 'common fire of their own kindling,' Lev. 10:1, they were consumed for thinking to please God with it. Now all these things fell out in types to them. For answerably by fire of their own kindling is meant the common righteousness of civility and natural devotion, which was by nature in some of the heathen, Rom. 2:14, found even in their chimneys; which also the Jews performed, both by the common help of nature, custom, and education, by the strength of natural principles, of conscience enlightened by the law, and self-love improved; all which, thus coming but from nature not renewed by grace, is said to be of their own kindling: whereby yet they thought to please God, and rested in it, as a sacrifice well-pleasing to him; as Nadab and Abihu did. Whereas the righteousness they should have offered up to God should have been that from heaven, the righteousness of Christ apprehended by faith, and a new work of grace, as fire from off that altar Christ, changing their hearts, and making them new creatures, renewing them into the same image of holiness which was in him; which as it adds to what is in nature, and grows not there, so differs as much from that goodness of nature you bring into the world, or which hath been wrought in you by education, as the fire and light of the sun in heaven doth from common fire; or the light of a glow-worm from that of the sun.

Now because the Jews rested in such an outward conformity to the law of their own working, therefore they are said, Rom. 10:3, 'to establish their own righteousness,' being ignorant of both these righteousnesses—Christ's righteousness, which is the fire from heaven, and the righteousness of regeneration, to change their natures, which is the fire off the altar. Nicodemus was ignorant of both, and so had lain down in sorrow as his forefathers did, if Christ had not changed him and begotten him again.

To this end you may further consider, that in men's hearts there are, (to use the language of the metaphor here,) though they be stony unto God, yet some sparks of fire, which may be struck out of them by the word, by education, by enlightening of the conscience, and by working upon self-love in men: and the sparks of this fire are those outward acts of righteousness which arise and spring from self-love and natural conscience, which die as sparks and remain not; which the true righteousness of regeneration is said to do, 2 Cor. 12:9, and John 3:6. And the light of this fire, which carnal men, not born again, content themselves with, is that 'excusing' which natural conscience, upon the performing any outward act of just dealing, hath in such men's hearts, mentioned Rom. 2:15.

And the walking in the light of this fire is resting therein all their days, not endeavouring to have their hearts changed, and to get a new principle of grace, and of love to God fetched from Christ, as the spring of all.

USES

Use 1.—The first use is, seeing so many offer up but common fire to God, it is good you examine whether that righteousness you think to please God with be any more than fire of your own kindling.

First, That righteousness which is kindled in thy heart, and blazeth in thy life, whence was it first enkindled? examine the original of it. Was it kindled in thee by fire from heaven? that is, by the Holy Ghost

coming down in God's ordinances on thee as fire, burning up thy lusts, melting thy heart, dissolving the works of the devil, enkindling sparks of true love to God, zeal for his glory, which are above the reach of man's natural ability. Or is it no more than that, whereas every man hath some sparks of ingenuity and honesty towards others, and of sobriety, and of devotion to a deity, raked up in the ashes of corrupt nature,—for even the heathen had 'the law written in their hearts,' Rom. 2:14,—which sparks thou, living in the church, where civility and religion is professed, civil education, natural wisdom, and the accusing of natural conscience enlightened, have blown up to some blaze, to some just dealing, common care of serving God? Yet know that if there be no other principle, nor no more, it is but fire of your own kindling, and you will lie down in sorrow.

Secondly, Examine what duties are especially the fuel of that fire in thee. In what duties is that righteousness thou thinkest thou plearest God with chiefly spent and exercised? Are they principally the duties of the second table, of just dealing with men, and sobriety? And it may be thou bringest withal a stick or two of the first table to this fire; that is, some duties thereof, such as for thy credit thou must not omit, as coming to God's ordinances of public worship. This fuel, if there be no more, argues it is but common fire: for look into the chimneys of the heathen, thou shalt find the most of all this practised. And in that thou dost put the chiefest of thy religion in them, it is argued to be but a fire kindled of those sparks which are raked up in nature; for those common sparks which are in all men's hearts are especially those of the second table. But now, if it were a fire from heaven, then though those would not be left undone, yet the chiefest heat of thy heart would be to the duties of heaven, of the worship of God, public and private. When men practise but so much righteousness as is necessary for them to do if they will live in the world in any comfort or credit, as to be just and sober is necessary, as also to frequent God's ordinances, for the state we live in enjoins them; but when men's zeal and fervour contends also, and lives upon such duties which the world regards not, as mourning for sin, taking

pains with the heart in private, between God and a man's own soul, and feeds upon heavenly things and thoughts, and is such fire as the world quencheth, it is a sign it is more than common fire.

Thirdly, In these duties common fire warms but the outward man, as that fire doth which you feel daily; it heats you not within: so common righteousness contents itself with 'bodily exercise,' a formal performance of duties, public and private; but fire from heaven heats first within, heats the heart within, as at the hearing the word: 'Did not our hearts burn within us?' say they; so it heats the heart in prayer, makes a man 'fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.'

Fourthly, Examine what bellows cherish and keep alive that fire of righteousness that is in thee, and make it flame; that is, what motives set thee a-work to do what thou dost. If worldly ends make thee abstain from sin and to be just in thy dealings, as credit with the world and fear of disgrace, or the accusings of conscience only, or fear of hell, or hope of heaven; this is but common fire. But if love to God, the consideration of his mercies, his eternal love, and the love of Christ, zeal for his glory; if these be the bellows, the fire is heavenly. But if when thou art to be moved with such as these, they stir not thy heart, it is but common fire.

Use 2.—The second use is, to take heed of walking in the light of such fire; that is, resting in it for salvation, and contenting yourselves with it, as most in the world do, and as the Jews here did, for you will lie down in sorrow if you do.

But you will say, We do not trust in this our own righteousness, for we profess Christ, and believe in him, which, added to this, is enough.

I answer: That though you profess Christ, yet, (1.) unless you have had a light that hath discovered to you that all the righteousness you have by nature, and improved in nature, is a false righteousness, you do then as yet rest in your own righteousness, and rely not wholly on

Christ. So, Phil. 3, Paul first saw all to be dross and dung, counted it loss, that he might win Christ; it implies he could not have him else. Men though they seem to take Christ's title, as many will procure the king's title for a living to make all sure, yet they keep, and stick to, and plead their own; but you must give up that first, and rely wholly on Christ, or he will not save you.

(2.) He that doth not daily, above all things, directly and immediately aim at and seek out for Christ's righteousness, and maketh it not the chiefest of his thoughts, prayers, and business, and is restless without it, rests in his own; for so when he had given up his title in his own, he mainly endeavoured after this 'to be found in Christ,' Phil. 3.

(3.) You still seek from Christ a new righteousness of sanctification also: for you will see that the common righteousness of nature and education will not please him; and Christ must be 'made sanctification to you,' 1 Cor. 1:30, as well as righteousness. Thus Nicodemus, though a civil man before, yet when he came to Christ, his old civility would not serve, without being born again and becoming a new creature. So as you must not think to make a supply or addition unto Christ with fire of your own kindling; you must have all off the altar: your moral virtues must be turned into graces, by having a new end put into them, carrying your hearts in them unto God.

II. The other interpretation which I add is, that the fire of outward comforts is also meant; which, whilst men enjoy, they go on merrily, neglecting God and Christ, and communion with him. But the soul of a believer, wanting this communion with God, is in darkness, and till he enjoys God again, can take comfort in nothing. Thus, Eccles. 7:6, 'the laughter of the wicked' is compared to 'the crackling of thorns.'

Fire is a comfortable creature, having both heat and light in it, which serve and help against both cold and darkness, which are two of the greatest evils to the senses.

Heat is comfortable; therefore, Isa. 44:16, 'he warmeth himself,' saith the prophet, 'and cries, Aha!'

Light also is comfortable; for, saith Solomon, 'it is a pleasant thing to behold the sun.' Hence, therefore, fire here is put for outward comforts.

But yet what fire are they? But kitchen-fire—*ignis focalis*, as the philosopher calls it; for it is fire of their own kindling, says the text; not that purest element of fire above. God is said to be light and fire, whom the saints enjoy, and are refreshed with his light, and 'in it see light.'

And the resemblance this way also will strongly hold; for a kindled fire hath two things common which go to the making of it, both which together are called fire:—

First, fuel, as wood or coals, &c.; secondly, that element that preys upon these.

Answerably, unto those carnal pleasures and delights, which wicked men enjoy and rest in, two things are also concurrent:—

First, the object, which is as the fuel: things earthly, and of this world; secondly, their fiery hot and burning lusts, which prey upon, and live upon this fuel. Both which make this fire here spoken of: in both which this resemblance will hold in many regards.

(1.) Because the fuel of these fires of their lusts and comforts is base: things only here below. What is the fuel of your kitchen fires? Things digged out of the earth, dung, wood, coal; so things on earth are fuel to their desires. Their lusts are therefore called 'members upon earth,' Col. 3:5; for all their comforts consist in, and their desires are after, earthly things, as their fair wives, children, houses, meat, drink: 'their god is their belly, and they mind earthly things,' Phil. 3:19.

(2.) Because when this fuel is taken away the fire goes out, so do men's hearts die when outward things are taken from them. When Nabal thought David might yet come and take his goods, 'his heart died within him.' For men live in the creatures, and out of them they die.

(3.) As fire is a consuming thing, Heb. 12:29, it leaves nothing but ashes; so are men's lusts, James 4:3. They ask to 'consume all upon their lusts.' All the pleasures they have, nothing comes of them, nothing of the strength they get by them; they do all for themselves, and with themselves all dies.

(4.) Fire is a devouring thing; a whole world would not satisfy it, if it were let alone to burn on. And one day this whole world you see shall be burnt up by fire, as a witch for enticing men. Even such are men's desires after pleasures; unsatisfied they are: and the more fuel is laid on, the more ye may lay on; they 'enlarge their desire as the fire of hell,' Heb. 2:5.

(5.) The pleasures which arise from the meeting and conjunction of this fuel and their lusts are but as sparks. Job calls sparks 'the sons of fire,' being engendered by it upon fuel; as pleasures are the sons of your lusts, when the object and they lie and couple together. And they are not long-lived, they are but as sparks, they die as soon as begotten; Col. 2:22, 'perish in the using;' and are but as 'the crackling of thorns,' they soon go out.

(6.) Smoke accompanies such fires, the fuel being muddy things: so doth much sorrow their comforts, Prov. 14:13, and they go out and end in smoke; as in the text, 'lie down in sorrow.'

So that, put these together, both that strange fire of their own righteousness, which is from and in nature, unchanged; and the kitchen-fire of outward comforts: these are the two main hindrances that keep all wicked men from Christ, and justification through him.

That whereas the covenant of grace hath these two main promises in it:—

First, That God himself, who is the 'God of comfort,' will be an 'abundant reward,' Gen. 15:1; and so by faith we take him to be, and are divorced from all comforts eke in comparison of him. And—

Secondly, That Jesus Christ his Son is made 'the Lord our righteousness,' Jer. 23:16; and therefore ere we take him to be so to us, we must be emptied of all our own righteousness by nature, that so God and Christ might be all in all to us. And therefore, as the first and main work of grace consists both in emptying the heart, and bringing it to nothing in its own righteousness, as also in regard of all outward comforts, that so 'no flesh might rejoice in his sight;' answerably unto these two there are found two main impediments in men by nature:—

First, Because in nature they find some sparks of civil goodness, they rest in them, and take them for grace, and neglect Christ. And—

Secondly, Finding also in this world themselves to be warmed with many outward comforts, being encompassed about with sparks, they content themselves with these. Thus so long as that young man had righteousness of his own, and possessions of his own, he cared not for Christ, nor communion with him, nor righteousness from him. Well, but (says Christ here) flatter yourselves with your own righteousness, and cheer yourselves with your own sparks, and walk on; but know, 'you will lie down in sorrow,' when 'the godly shall rest in their beds,' Isa. 57:2. You will lie bedrid in hell; or as a woman in travail, never to rise again.

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