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**THE GOOD OF
EARLY OBEDIENCE**

THE ADVANTAGE

OF BEARING

THE YOKE

OF CHRIST

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Or, The Advantage of Bearing the Yoke of Christ Early.

By MATTHEW MEAD.

Mat. 11.29. *Take my Yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek, and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.*

Ver. 30. *For my Yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

London, Printed for Nath. Ponder, at the Peacock in the Poultry near the Church. 1683.

This text has been initially updated from EEBO-TCP by Project Puritas (Logan West, with David Jonescue and Alex Sarrouf.) www.puritansearch.org

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Editor's Note - During the TCP Transcription Process, all the archaic text were hand transcribed according to visual representation; and as such, sometimes the letters s, l, f & t are misconstrued with each other, these letters regularly being almost illegibly similar in the original facsimiles. Though it is rare for these errors to remain post-edit, unfortunately they may remain if uncaught. My apologies in advance where this error does occur. Also, the symbol <H&G> signifies where Hebrew and Greek text were included in the original facsimiles. Since many times the archaic script in the original facsimiles renders them unintelligible, at least for this editor; and since a majority of readers will not be fluent in the original languages, their inclusion has been omitted. I would rather omit them altogether, then try to decipher them and get them wrong. Again, I apologize for this inconvenience to those who prefer their inclusion.

MADAM,

To the Right Honorable the Lady Diana Alington, the Blessings of the upper and nether Springs be multiplied.

Where great Debts are contracted by insolvent persons it is usual to compound for a little rather than lose the whole. The many great and undeserved favors you have conferred upon me have so far outdone, not only my power to merit, but my capacity to requite, that unless your Honor will admit me to some small composition, and so to pay as I am able by a grateful acknowledgment, I must always be in arrearage to your Nobleness, being no other way solvent then by hearty resentment.

I know Madam, it is no pleasure to you to hear of your name from the house-top, who have so carefully kept secret the works of your Right hand from the knowledge of your Left. Let them therefore stand recorded in the Prayers of your Favorites, and more durably in the notices of God until that day comes that shall both reveal them, and reward them. For the time of divulging such matters to the world (as Mr. Ambrose said in an Epistle to your Honorable Grandfather) will be best at the end of it, and best done by him who shall render to everyone according to his works.

In the meantime being importuned to make this discourse public, to whom should I Dedicate it but to your Honor? That you may not altogether miscarry in the purchase, who have bid so high for the unprofitable respects of one made very inconsiderable by the present complexion of times and providences, but much more by his own personal unworthiness.

The thing, Madam, which this treatise hath in design is to vindicate and promote (if God will speed it to that purpose) Obedience to the great Redeemer of the world in all, especially in young ones, in a true and timely subjection to his Yoke. It being the great and open sin of the present day, to profess him in word, but in works to deny him, by such as the Holy Ghost brands with the infamous Character of abominable, disobedient, and to every good work void of judgment. Never was that of the Prophet more verified then by the children of this Generation, He is despised and rejected of men. Not only by Jews, Heathens and Muhammadans, but (which is more sad) even by Christians (if they deserve that name) almost of all sorts. It is not only the sin of the poor, that they are foolish, and have not known the way of the Lord; but of the great men also, who though they have known the judgment of their God, yet they have altogether broken the Yoke, and burst the bonds. The wise slight Religion as a foolish thing; The Nobles of the Earth think themselves degraded by stooping to this yoke: The Rich men that should count all things dung for Christ, do prefer the dung and dross of the earth before this Pearl of price. The Voluptuary will not be persuaded to leave his swinish delights for all the pleasures of Godliness. Oh how few are the sincere followers of the Blessed Jesus! This is, and ought to be for a lamentation.

Our lot is cast in a very brutish age, wherein reason is buried in sense, judgment extinguished in appetite, and wickedness reigns with reputation; He who dares not be profane is a coward, and that is but a dull soul that cant burlesque the sacred Scripture, and make a jest in Bible. Or if he skills not to direct the poisonous arrow of a spiteful tongue at the Religion and Worship of Jesus Christ he is no ingenuous Archer. So that our times are much of the complexion of those which Seneca unmasking the face of their corrupt State, doth thus decipher, The news of Rome take thus, the Walls are ruined, the Temples not visited, the Priests are fled, the Treasuries robbed, old men are dead, young men are mad, Vices are Lord's over all; The Dictator faults the Consul; the Consul chides the Censor, the Censor

blames the Praetor, and because no man will acknowledge himself in fault, we have no hope of better times.

Madam, what an honor is it to you, when the days are thus evil, to be devoted in heart and soul to Jesus Christ! It is recorded to the everlasting renown of Josiah, that good Prince, that while he was young he began to seek after the God of his Father. So did your Honor. Goodness is no diminution to greatness. On the other hand it is charged as a reproach upon the Nobles of Judah, That they put not their necks to the work of the Lord. Greatness gives no immunity from service. Nay the higher God hath exalted you, the more you become a Debtor to his goodness. The God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways hast thou not glorified, was a sad charge brought against one greater than your Honor. It is the standing law of Heaven, To whomsoever much is given, of them much shall be required. Where your Honor allows the greatest wages, there you expect the greatest fidelity and service; and so doth the great God.

Wherefore Madam, let holiness to the Lord be written upon all your Honor, and all your enjoyments, whatever is entrusted with you ought to be devoted to him, or it can never be rightly enjoyed, nor duly improved. God hath honored you to be the fruitful mother of hopeful children, but remember Madam, that as they derive honor from your loins in regard of your Station in this world, so they derive guilt and pollution upon another account. And what is worldly honor stained with a damning guilt? which makes them children of wrath even as others.

There is a nobility that is Divine, and of a Heavenly Original, which hath Religion for the Root, and God for the top of the Kin. In comparison of which all other Nobility is but an empty shadow, and all worldly grandeur but as those apples that grow upon the banks of the dead Sea, which under a tempting outside contain naught but dust. This honor derives not from the first birth, but the second, and is peculiar to them only who are born not of blood, nor of the will of

the Flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. Would your Honor have those pleasant branches thus ennobled? I know it is the matter of your Prayers, and let me beg you to join thereunto your utmost endeavors by a strict and pious education; the common want of which hath stained the present age with as debauched a Nobility and Gentry as ever any time brought forth. And Madam, if to all this you shall add the winning motive of your own example, so walking in all the Precepts of Christ, and in all the virtues of the Holy Spirit, that they may be won into the ways of God by the beauty of your feet, O what an honor and rejoicing would this be to you in the near approaching day of Christ Jesus. How many children have been brought into love with the ways of God by the holy example of Godly Parents. And many more have perished by the contrary, who are now cursing the Parents that begat them, and the loins that brought them forth.

I no way doubt of your Honors ready acceptance of this Present, how mean soever it be; Seeing it is a great bravery of mind as well to accept little kindnesses (from them that have no better within their reach) as to confer great ones; For as by the latter you oblige love, so by the former you encourage duty. Thus the full Sea stocks Clouds richly, while they pay again but by drops. We have a pattern of it in God himself, who as he gives the greatest Boons, so he doth not disdain the least returns, though they are made in Mites. Goats hair and Rams skins are as acceptable an Offering from them that were no better provided, for the building the Tabernacle, as Purple and Scarlet, so as it came from a willing heart.

Madam, it is for the completing the Temple of God in your soul that this Offering is made; and though it is neither Purple nor Scarlet yet, such as it is, it comes from as willing a mind as ever Israelite offered, from him that brought Gold and Silver, to him that brought Goats hair and Rams skins. And if your Honor be dispositioned like my Master you will accept of payment in Mites, where it is the utmost and the All that is within the reach of a short arm. But though it cannot reach so far as I would, Prayer can; For how incapable soever

we are of other offices of respect and gratitude, yet in Prayers and good wishes we stand next to immensity and infiniteness. And it is nothing less then the great things of both worlds summed up in the blessed enjoyment of God himself, here much, and hereafter much more, that can be an answer to his Prayers who without ceasing bows the knee to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for this Blessing for you Madam, and your Honorable and Honored Relations, as becomes

Stepney, Nov. 15th. 1682.

Madam,

Your Honors highly obliged and humbly devoted Servant Matthew Mead.

THE EPISTLE TO THE READER

Good Reader,

Though thy concern lies not much in knowing the reason of the publication of this Treatise, yet it may not be amiss to give thee this short account of it. That in April 1674, A Gentleman (who was till then a stranger to me) came with an earnest request that I would undertake the Preaching of a Sermon yearly on every May-day to the younger people. I desiring to know his reason why to them, rather than to others? and why on that day rather than upon any other? he told me, that it had often been the grief of his Soul to behold the vicious and debauched practices of Youth on that day of liberty. And did hope that many might be induced, either by their own inclinations, or by the counsels of their Parents, or Masters, rather to spend their time in hearing a Sermon; then in drinking and gaming

&c. by which means many might be converted and saved. The design being so honest, and the reason so cogent, I was persuaded to comply with it: and began upon the following May Day, and so it hath been continued ever since; and I may say it, not in any boast, but to the praise of the glory of the grace of God, with great success.

On May-day 1680 I took the Scripture here insisted on for the subject of my discourse; and having then showed the great advantage of bearing the Yoke of afflictions, and also the Yoke of the Spirit in conviction of sin in youth; I did promise (God granting life and liberty) to treat of the Yoke of Christ in conversion in the next Anniversary course. But before that day came I was much solicited, both by young and old, (they best know why) to make public the first Sermon which I had so Preached; and it was fairly transcribed, and sent to me by several hands for that end; which yet I judged very improper: but to answer their importunity I did promise that when I had finished the subject, I would comply with their desires. And therefore finding that I could not compass my design in the second May-day course, I did for some Lord's days following insist on the same subject, till I had finished it: And that thou hadst it no sooner the Bookseller is accountable, and not I. However if it may be of any advantage to thy soul in breaking off the yoke of sin and lust, and bringing thee under the yoke of Christ; it comes in good time, and to good purpose. And when thou findest this benefit by it, then pray for him that loves thy soul, and desires thy Salvation, and therein is

November 15. 1682.

Thy Real Friend Matthew Mead.

THE GOOD OF EARLY OBEDIENCE.

It is good for a man that he bear the Yoke in his Youth. - LAMENT.
iii. 27.

CHAPTER I.

Somewhat Proemial. The Yoke explained, what it is Literally taken,
what Metaphorically.

The Apostle tells us that great is the Mystery of Godliness; and it is so, not only in credendis, the things which are to be believed, but in agendis, the matters that relate to practice. There are Mysteries in the Precept as well as in the Promise. If a man be commanded to cast his burden upon the Lord, then he himself hath none to bear; and yet the Lord Christ lays a burden upon every Believer; where he is a Redeemer, he sets the soul free from every Yoke it is under, and if the Son make a man free, he is then free indeed. And yet none are more under the Yoke than the Lord's Freemen being not without Law, but under the Law to Christ. When he takes off one, he puts on another, Take my Yoke upon you, Matth. 11.29.

Though Christ breaks our Fetters, yet he brings us into Bonds; though he delivers us from thralldom and slavery, yet not from duty; he redeems us from the power of sin, but not from the power of the Precept: and therefore to argue from liberty to licentiousness, is a kind of Logic found only in the Devil's School, Shall we continue in sin that Grace may abound? God forbid. The right reasoning is from mercy to duty, Ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your Body, and your Spirits, which are God's, 1 Cor. 6.20.

Redemption and service are, in the design of the Gospel, linked together, That we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life. The freedom purchased by Christ makes service necessary; for he quits us of our burden, but not of our obedience; he doth not set us free from service, but changes our work and our Master, As ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness, unto holiness: So that ye are Servants still. It was the interest of the Flesh and fleshly lusts that was served before, but now it is the interest of God and holiness; the freedom then is from the Government of the God of this World, who rules in the Children of disobedience, unto a voluntary submission and resignedness to the Divine conduct; from the brutish drudgery of sin, to the excellency of such an Empire, whose Precepts carry their own reward with them, besides the Glory that ensues. So then the Yoke that hath a curse in it, that Christ hath took off, but the Yoke of obedience that he hath called us to put on; and herein he hath excellently accommodated things to the great advantage of man. For as it is his misery and burden to be under the former Yoke, (which, what it is, I shall show anon) so it is as much his interest and happiness to be under the latter; and therefore the earlier he takes it up, the sooner he begins to be happy. It is good for a man that he bear the Yoke in his Youth.

I shall not speak anything of this Book in general, only a little about the manner of penning it, which is somewhat unusual; each Chapter (the last only excepted) being penned according to the Order in which the Letters stand in the Hebrew Alphabet, as some of the Psalms of David are. For what reason the Spirit of God should direct the Penman of it this way, it doth not appear. Jerome labors to find out great mysteries in it, but doth but beat the Air. This way of writing seems to be very useful for the help of the memory, and may seem to hint as if God would have such Scriptures peculiarly remarked and remembered, and that is the best reason I can give.

But whereas the first, second and fourth Chapters begin with a single Alphabet, the several Verses beginning with several Letters in their Order, this third Chapter consisteth of a threefold Alphabet, every three Verses in course beginning with the same Letter.

This Text, which I have pitched upon, falls under the Letter [H&G] which Jerome makes to stand for H&G , which signifies Good; and accordingly the 25 th , 26 th , and the 27 th Verses do all begin in the Hebrew with the word Tobh.

So in the 25th Verse, Tobh Jehovah Lekovau, Good is the Lord to them that wait for him.

So the 26th Verse, Tobh vejahhil vedumam. It is good a man should both hope and quietly wait.

And so here in the Text, Tobh Laggebher Ki-jissa gnol bingnoraiu. Good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.

The only difficulty in the Text that needs explaining is, What Yoke it is that is here meant.

The Yoke is sometimes taken Literally, and sometimes Metaphorically.

A Literal Yoke is an Instrument of Wood or Iron fitted to the Necks of Creatures, either to tame them, or work them, or punish them. These are the three chief uses of the Yoke:

First, It is for the taming of wild Beasts, and making them tractable, The Yoke and the Collar bow down the hard Neck, Eccles 33.25. Ephraim complains of himself, As a Bullock unaccustomed to the Yoke, Jer. 31.18. that is, untamed and unruly.

Secondly, It is an Instrument of labor, by which Beasts do draw burdens, Deut. 21.3. Take a Heifer that hath not drawn in the Yoke.

And hence ye read in Scripture of a Yoke of Oxen, 1 Sam. 11.7. Luke 14.19.

Thirdly, It is an Instrument of punishment, Deut 28.48. Thou shalt serve thine Enemies in hunger and in thirst, and in nakedness and in want of all things, and he shall put a Yoke of Iron upon thy neck, until he hath destroyed thee.

These are the uses of the Literal Yoke.

But then there is a Metaphorical Yoke, and so it is used in Scripture, and that both in a Civil, and a Religious sense.

First in a Civil sense, and so it is used two ways.

First, For a Condition of Marriage: Wedlock is called a Yoke, (and it is so too truly to many, that know no more how to bear it, than how to break it.) In this sense many take that of the Apostle in 2 Cor. 6.14. Be ye not unequally yoked together with Unbelievers. And hence a Husband or a Wife is called a Yoke-fellow. But this is not the Yoke in the Text, for it is not good for a man to bear this Yoke too soon, as many do that make more haste than good speed, coveting the condition before they understand the duties of the relation, and so marry in haste and then repent at leisure.

Secondly, Labor and obedience of Servants to their Masters is called a Yoke. Let as many Servants as are under the yoke, count their Masters worthy of all honor, 1 Tim. 6.1. [under the yoke] i. e. called to be Servants; indeed every Calling is a Yoke. And certainly it is good for everyone to bear this yoke in their youth. It is an excellent thing that young ones should be bred up in some suitable Calling, and thereby inured to labor and industry early. For I know none exempted from that Law of God, In the sweat of thy brows shalt thou eat thy bread.

God made not the World to be a Nursery of idleness; Creatures void of life are serviceable in their places. The Sun is called Shemesh,

from a Chaldee Root, which signifies to minister; because the Sun is, in ministering light, a Servant to the whole World. The Angels are always working, and so is Jesus Christ, and so is God himself. Christ says, The Father worketh hitherto, and I work, John 5.17. Nay the Devils are never idle; so that an idle person cannot find a pattern either in Heaven or Hell. God who hath appointed a time for everything under the Sun, never did allow any time for sin and sloth. Though he says, H&G, Be careful for nothing; yet he hath nowhere said, H&G, Do nothing. There is a threefold care mentioned in Scripture, the care of the head, which is providence; the care of the hand, which is diligence; and the care of the heart, which is diffidence. Now though the care of the heart be forbidden, yet the care of the head and the hand is commanded. To be diffident then, and distrustful, that is a sin; but to be provident and diligent, that is a Duty.

The Lacedemonians made idleness actionable in their Courts, and by Solon 's Law such were to suffer death. And our Law supposes all to be of some Calling, not only Men but Women, and the young Ladies too; and therefore it calls them, during their Virgin estate, Spinsters. But alas! the viciousness and degeneracy of this Age hath forfeited the Title, many can card, but few can spin; and therefore you may write them, Carders, Dancers, Painters, Ranters, Spenders, rather than Spinsters. Industry is worn out by pride and delicacy, the Comb and the Looking-Glass possess the place and the hours of the Spindle and the Distaff; and their great business is to curl the Locks, instead of twisting Wool and Flax: So that both Males and Females are prepared for all ill impressions, by the mischief of an idle education.

Indeed meaner persons are forced to put their Children to Trades for an after subsistence, but the Nobility and Gentry of the Nation are in this thing the shame of it; it is reckoned below a Person of Quality to be a Mechanic; and therefore how many, that might otherwise have been useful in their Generation, are bred up in idleness, and so fit only to be reckoned among the Vermin of the Earth! whilst they live only to eat what others earn, and instead of proving the Pillars, they

prove the Caterpillars of the Nation: and it is seldom but that idleness and wickedness go together. Thou wicked and slothful Servant, said our Lord Christ, Matth. 25.26. And I pray who are the most vicious and debauched part of the Nation, but young Gallants, who have no Callings to yoke them? Who haunt the Drinking-houses, the Play-houses, the Brothel-houses, so much as they? Who are the Corrupters of others, the Scoffers, the Duelers, so much as they? So greatly doth an idle life expose to the Devils malice, and dispose to the Devils service. It is good therefore that everyone should bear this Yoke in their youth, that young ones of all sorts should be trained up in some honest Calling. For

1. This will more fit them for hardships and sufferings. Idleness causes delicacy and tenderness, and that is no suffering quality. It will be dreadful when the Lord shall pass over your fair Neck, as it is said of Ephraim, Hos. 10.11. I passed over upon her fair Neck; that is, I put a Yoke upon her, viz. a Yoke of suffering, an Iron Yoke. And if such a day should come upon England as upon Ephraim, Ah! how will those Necks that have been chained with Gold and Pearl, be able to wear an Iron Yoke? or those tender feet that must not touch the dirt, be able to wade after Christ through blood?

It is storied of Alice Driver how resolutely and bravely she suffered for Christ; when they put the Iron Chain about her Neck, to fasten her to a Post to be burned in Queen Mary's days, she gloried in it, This, said she, is the finest Neckerchief that ever I wore, blessed be God for it. Now she was one who had been used to hard labor, being bred up to drive her Fathers Plough. Hard breeding fits us for hard sufferings.

2. It prevents many temptations. Idleness is the Back-door for all temptations to come in at. It tempts the Devil to tempt us. It is a good Rule one gives for the avoiding sin and temptation, Be always employed, that when Satan comes he may not find thee at leisure. Many have been kept from great temptations by being diligent in their Callings, and many by idle diversions have fallen into great

temptations and snares. Dinah wanders abroad, and is deflowered before she comes home; Tertullian tells of a Christian Woman who going to see a Play, was there possessed by the Devil; and when he was asked (by some who came to her, and set themselves to pray him out) how he durst possess one that was a Christian? He answered, I found her in my own Ground. Oh how should this warn young ones to take heed of the Play-houses? These are the Devils Ground, and what he finds upon his own Ground, he will possess as his own. He is the Lord of that Manor, and being so, the Waifs and Estrays are all his. Let young ones therefore take up the Yoke of some lawful Calling early. But this Civil Yoke is not the Yoke in the Text.

Secondly, The Yoke, as Metaphorically taken, is used in a Moral or Religious sense; and so there is a threefold Yoke which it is not good to bear, and a threefold Yoke which it is good to bear.

There is a threefold Yoke which is not good to bear,

The Yoke of Mosaical Ceremonies,

The Yoke of Antichristian Impositions,

The Yoke of sin and lust.

First, The Yoke of Mosaical Ceremonies. This in its day was a strict Yoke, a heavy Yoke, a Yoke (as the Apostle Peter says) which neither we nor our Fathers were able to bear, Acts 15.10.

But this Yoke the Lord Christ hath freed us from, the Ceremonial Law was abolished by him, and had no use after his death; but by accident, as he who builds a Vault lets the Centrels stand till he puts in the Keystone, and then pulls them away. So that now the Rule is, Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again in the Yoke of bondage, Gal. 5.1.

Secondly, There is the Yoke of Antichrist, which is made up of human inventions and impositions in the Worship of God; on which

foundation all the Will-worship, Superstition and Idolatry, which at this day obtain in the World, do stand.

This is a heavier Yoke than the former, for that had once the sanction of God, and there the authority made the subjection reasonable, though burdensome; but this never had, and therefore more grievous, because herein we are made Slaves to the lusts of men, whereas in that we were Subjects to the will of God.

And therefore to be imposed upon by Ceremonies of men's devising, when we are actually freed by Christ from the Ceremonies that were once of God's appointing, is a very heavy Yoke, a Yoke which one says is in the Imposer, tyranny; and in the Persons imposed upon, burden and bondage. And therefore a Yoke which without sin (in transgressing the Precept of our Lord Christ, and his Apostle) we may not submit to.

Because hereby we own a power in the Imposers over conscience, which God never gave to any; and so abet them in their sinful usurpations upon the Prerogative of the Lord Jesus Christ, who alone is King and Head of the Church, and hath the Government upon his shoulders.

And also because we make ourselves to be what, in things appertaining to the worship of God, we are commanded not to be, viz. the Servants of men, Ye are bought with a price, be not ye the servants of men, 1 Cor. 7.23.

This then is another Yoke, which we ought not to bear,

When once human inventions become Impositions, and lay a necessity upon that which God hath left free, then may we lawfully reject them as Plants of man's setting, and not of God's owning, and which he will therefore in his time assuredly root up,

Matth. 15.13.

Thirdly, There is the Yoke of sin and lust. For though Sinners are said to be Children of Belial, that is, without Yoke; yet none under such a Yoke as they, for as the service of Christ is perfect freedom, so to be free from righteousness is the basest thralldom. If sin breaks one Yoke off, it ever puts another on, They have broken the Yoke, and burst the Bonds, Jer. 5.5. there is one Yoke cast off, and then it follows in the next Verse, Their transgressions are many, their backslidings are increased, there is another Yoke put on. As in conversion Christ breaks off the Yoke of sin and Satan, and puts his own upon a man; so the Sinner breaks off the Yoke of God, and subjects himself to Satan's Yoke: and therefore some say, wicked men are called Children of Belial, making Belial the name of the Devil. And hence Sinners are said to be taken captive by him at his will, 2 Tim. 2.26. And he is said to work (that is, with power and success) in the children of disobedience, Ephes. 2.2. And this is the Reign of Satan in the soul of a Sinner; for as the Lord Christ reigns in the hearts of his people by the power of Grace and righteousness, so Satan reigns in the hearts of wicked men by the power of sin and lust.

Now it cannot be good in any sense to bear this Yoke, because it every way tends to the hurt and mischief of the soul.

1. As it breaks off the Yoke of God, which is everyway suited to the good and advantage of man. For the commandment is holy, just and good, Rom. 7.12. [holy] as it is the expression of the will of the holy God; [just] in that it commands nothing but what is equal and fit to be obeyed; [good] as it promotes the advantage and happiness of the soul that obeys it.

2. As it enslaves the Creature to the basest bondage, and most unreasonable vassalage in the World. O what a noble Creature was man while he did bear the Image of God, lived in his will, and enjoyed a constant fellowship with him! But alas, How is the Gold become dim! and the fine Gold changed! Lam. 4.1. How hath sin debased his Excellency, defaced the Image of God, shut him out of

favor, and out of fellowship? So that now he is become a Slave to Satan and all manner of lusts.

And can it be good to bear this Yoke? What! to oppose God? to be a Slave to sin? to reject the Reign of Christ? to resist the Spirit? to slight the Grace of the Gospel? to gratify the Devil? and to undo thy own soul? O think of that word, He that sins against me, wrongs his own soul, Prov. 8.36. And where lies the wrong? He refuses the Yoke of Christ, and so lays himself under the wrath of Christ, and ye perish from the way, if his wrath be kindled but a little, Psal. 2.12. And what greater wrong can anyone offer to his own soul, than to lay it under a necessity of damnation by a willing subjection to the Yoke of sin, rather than that of Christ? Therefore it is so far from being good, that it is the greatest evil to bear this Yoke, Be not ye the Servants of sin.

But then there is a threefold Yoke which it is good for a man to bear in his youth. There is,

The Yoke of affliction;

The Yoke of the Spirit in conviction of sin;

The Yoke of subjection and obedience to Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER II.

Afflictions called a Yoke. In what sense they are good, and for whom.

1. Afflictions may be called a Yoke, and so they are often in Scripture, Lev. 26.13. I am the Lord your God, which brought you forth out of the Land of Egypt— and I have broken the Bonds of your Yoke, and made you go upright. He speaks of the great afflictions with which

Israel was so oppressed and burdened in Egypt, that their backs were bowed down, and they were even sunk and broken under them: and this God calls their affliction, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, Exod. 3.7. and Deut. 26.6, 7. The Egyptians evilly entreated us and afflicted us, and when we cried to the Lord, he heard our voice, and looked on our affliction and oppression.

And this seems to be the Yoke intended in the Text, at least to the Church of the Jews that were then in Babylonish bondage, which the Holy Ghost calls a Yoke, Jer. 27.12. Bring your necks under the Yoke of the King of Babylon. And Jer. 30.8. It shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of Hosts, that I will break his Yoke from off thy neck, and burst thy bonds. And accordingly the Church here calls her present affliction and misery by reason of her captived state, a Yoke, Lam. 1.14. The yoke of my transgressions is bound by his hand. [The yoke of my transgressions] that is, the punishment procured by my transgressions; as if he should say, God hath laid upon me a heavy Yoke of affliction as the just reward of my sin.

Now this is a Yoke that it is good for a man to bear in his youth. Afflictions have in them matter of real advantage. This seems a Paradox to sense; and no wonder, for even good men can hardly make sense of it. Therefore let us a little inquire,

In what sense afflictions are good, and

For whom they are good.

Quest. 1. In what sense are afflictions good?

Answ. They are not good in themselves, they are not bona, though they may work in bonum; they are not good things, though they may work to good ends.

In their own nature they are evil, and so called in Scripture, Amos 3.6. Is there any evil in the City, and the Lord hath not done it? Isai.

45.7. I make peace, and create evil, I the Lord do all these things. Mic. 1.12. The inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good, but evil came down from the Lord unto the Gate of Jerusalem.

That which is a fruit of sin, a part of the curse, introduced upon the breach of the first Covenant, must needs be in itself evil. But so is affliction. It is evil in itself, and evil to the Creature, evil in its nature, and evil in its tendency. But yet as afflictions are ordered and directed by God, and under the management of his Spirit, so they are good, they serve to good purposes.

But I shall give a more distinct Answer to the Question in four gradual Conclusions.

1. Nothing Man mistakes more about than the matter of good. This is most evident from the differing opinions of the Ancients about it; which all show that man is acted herein very much by fancy and present appearances: insomuch that if God should give a man his own wish, he would ruin himself with evil under the show of good. Brine preserves many things which would rot in Sugar, and yet sense is all for pleasing the sweet tooth. But no wise Body will give a sick man what he desires, but what the Physician directs. As God sometimes in judgment pleases a man to his ruin, (Psal. 106.15. He gave them their request, but sent leanness into their souls.) So he sometimes in mercy crosses him to his advantage. We are short sighted, and distempered with passions; and therefore call that good which would be our bane, and deprecate that as evil which would be a real benefit.

Doubtless, Joseph could not but regret at, and (being a good Youth) pray against his Brethren's unnatural cruelty, as having nothing in it in appearance but evil and vassalage. What? for a young Stripling to be fold for a Slave? to be bartered away out of his Father's bosom into a strange Country, never like to be heard of more? then cast into Prison, and exposed to all severities? Can there be any good in this? Sense and opinion say no: But pray consider, How had he been

raised to such a price, if he had not been first made so cheap? how had he been made a Prince by Strangers, if he had not been made a Slave by his Brethren? nay, how many had perished for bread, had not he been sent for merchandise into Egypt? So Joseph afterwards acknowledges, Gen. 45.5. Ye sold me hither, but God sent me before you to preserve life. And Gen. 50.20. As for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass as it is this day, to save much people alive.

God many times takes away for our good, strips us for our advantage, casts us down, and seemingly casts us off, and all for our benefit. Opinion says, with old Jacob, All these things are against me, Gen. 42.36. and yet they were all for him; and therefore; Good is to be estimated, not by its suitableness to sense, but by its reference to the soul. That is the truest good which promotes the interest of the better part; no man's condition can be made good by any outward circumstances, while the case of his soul is desperate; for that is the better part of us: and therefore good men have always valued themselves more upon their inward endowments, than any outward acquisitions; and have set more store by a Dram of Grace, than by all outward comforts.

Good is to be judged by its conducency to the chief good. God is the chief good, and our chief good is in the enjoyment of him; and therefore whatever tends to the promoting of our enjoyment of God, that is to be reckoned as good, be it in itself pleasant or ungrateful, sweet or bitter. For as nothing is good, but what is from the chief good; so nothing is so, but what conduces to the fruition of him: and therefore

That may be good in its use which is not good in its nature. Afflictions may be regretful to the flesh, because of present smart; but they may be very conducing to the soul, because of after benefit. No affliction at the present seems to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them which are exercised thereby, Heb. 12.11.

The end puts a loveliness into those means which otherwise have no loveliness in them. Thus you launch a part to ease the whole, and cut off a limb to preserve life. We are not so much to consider what things are in themselves, as what they are in their tendency and end; Physic must have time to work.

Quest. 2. For whom are afflictions good?

Answ. The Text answers the Question indefinitely, and an indefinite is of the nature of a universal, [It is good for a man] that is, for every man: all men come under one of these denominations they are either good or evil, now afflictions are good for both.

First, They are good for a good man, or else God would never lay good men under them; but we see them that lie nearest to his heart to be most under this Yoke. God gave to Esau Mount Seir to possess it, but Jacob and his Children went down into Egypt, Josh. 24.4. and yet Jacob was loved, and Esau hated, Mal. 1.2, 3. The good Figs were sent into the Land of Chaldea for their good, Jer. 24.5. He for our profit, Heb. 12.10. This Yoke is not only profitable but necessary, and it is the wisdom of God to suit his Providence to our necessities, For a season ye are in heaviness, if need be, 1 Pet. 1.6. Not else. A tender Father doth not use the Rod, but when there is need; he provides with delight, but he punishes with regret. God hath a treasure of mercy, and a treasure of wrath, the treasure of mercy is of his own filling, but the treasure of wrath is of our filling; and therefore we are said to treasure up to ourselves wrath against the day of wrath, Rom. 2.5. that is, by our sinning against God.

There is more or less of all sin, where yet the work of conversion is really wrought. There is much lust to be mortified, pride to be subdued, the World to be crucified, the will to be made more docile and resigned, the affections to be weaned, many remains of sin to be purged out; and this God doth by afflictions. By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin, Isai. 27.9. He brings them into deep waters, not to drown them, but to

cleanse them. Gold is not cast into the fire to be consumed, but to be refined; so that the fire takes nothing from it but the dross. Nor doth affliction take anything from a good man but his sin.

And as it is necessary for the purging out of sin, so it is for the exercising and improving of Grace; it is a Fining-Pot to faith, 1 Pet. 1.7.

The Promoter of humility, 2 Cor. 12.17.

The incentive to godly fear, Psal. 55.19.

The Worker of patience, Rom. 5.8.

A Rack for confession of sin, Psal. 32.4, 5.

A Goad to repentance, Jer. 31.18.

A School of obedience, Heb. 5.8.

An improvement of all holiness, Heb. 12.10.

Thus what the outward man loses, the inward man gets; if he be straitened in the Flesh, he is enlarged in the Spirit. It is said of the Children of Israel, that the more they were afflicted, the more they multiplied and grew, Exod. 1.12. And so doth Grace in every good man, it grows by affliction. When the North Wind blows upon the Garden of the Spouse, then her Spices flow forth, Cant. 4.16. The biggest Fish are in the salt Waters and they are the most growing Christians that are most in the salt Waters of affliction.

Secondly, Afflictions are good for carnal and unconverted men, and that many ways.

First, They many times obviate those evils which, through the corruption of our natures, are occasioned by worldly prosperity. Good men are many times made worse by outward successes, and

therefore no wonder if evil men are so much more. Let favor be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness, Isai. 26.10.

Outward prosperity causes great indulgence to the Flesh, which is an utter enemy to Virtue. The beginning of all obedience is the mortifying the Flesh, which no natural man can endure, especially when nourished by ease and prosperity; for then reason is most commonly drowned in sense, and judgment extinguished in appetite.

It tempts a man to take up his rest in present comforts, like the Children of Reuben and Gad, who when they found the Land of Gilead was a place for Cattle, Numb. 32.1. they sue to Moses that that may be their portion, This Land is a Land for Cattle, and thy Servants have Cattle; wherefore, say they, if we have found Grace in thy sight, let this Land be given to thy Servants for a possession, and bring us not over Jordan, ver. 4, 5. Though Canaan was the promised Land, and the Blessing lay in a Portion there, yet they desire to take up on this side Jordan, without seeking ought in the Land of promise.

It hinders our enquiries after God, and becomes a temptation to set light by him and his Precepts. Job, speaking of the prosperity of the wicked, makes this the sad effect of it, Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways; what is the Almighty that we should serve him? and what profit should we have if we pray unto him? Job 21.14, 15.

Nay, it provokes to down right Atheism. And this is the reason of Agars prayer against riches, Lest I be full and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? Prov. 30.9. Thus the prosperity of fools destroys them, Prov. 1.32.

It puffs up the heart with pride and scorn. They are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men; therefore pride compasseth them about as a Chain, Psal. 73.5, 6.

Now these and such like mischiefs are often remedied by early affliction. By being inured to wants and abatements, we are made to

see the emptiness of the Creatures, what lying vanities they are. The soul is hereby put upon seeking after God, In their afflictions they will seek me early, Hos. 5.15. By this means the soul is debased and laid low. And this the Holy Ghost makes to be one fruit of early bearing the Yoke, in the next Verses to the Text, He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath born it upon him. He putteth his mouth in the dust, Lam. 3.28, 29.

Secondly, Affliction is enlightening. It is good for discovery. There are many excellent Lessons learned in the School of affliction.

1. It discovers a man to himself, and makes him see what a poor, frail, inconsiderable thing he is, according to that of David, Psal. 9.20. Put them in fear, O Lord, that they may know themselves to be but men. To be but enosh, poor, weak and miserable men. Affliction makes us know ourselves. Caligula and Domitian (two Roman Emperors) in their prosperity would be God's; but when it thundered, they were so terrified, that then they knew they were but men. Prosperity makes a man a Stranger to himself; no man knows that pride, that impatience, that lust, that unbelief, that frowardness, that is in his heart till affliction comes to search him. God led Israel forty years in the Wilderness to know what was in their hearts, that is, to make them know, Deut. 8.2.

2. It is a means to discover the vileness of sin to the soul. When the Patriarchs were distressed and in adversity, then they saw (and never till then) the greatness of their sin in selling their Brother, Gen. 42.21. If they be bound in Fetters, and holden in Cords of affliction, then he shows them their work and their transgressions that they have exceeded, Job 36.8, 9. Nothing discovers the vileness of sin more than the sufferings of Christ, and the afflictions of the Creature.

3. God by affliction discovers himself to the soul. In the Word we hear of God, but in affliction we see him, I have heard of thee (says Job) by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye sees thee, Job 42.5. It is said of Manasseh, 2 Chron. 33.13. Then Manasseh knew that the

Lord he was God. Then! When was that? When he was caught among the Thorns, and bound with Fetters, and carried to Babylon, till then he knew not the Lord.

Thirdly, Affliction is good as it is preparatory to Grace and Conversion. What excellent Vessels have been formed by the hand of the Former of all things in the Furnace of afflictions! It is preparatory to conversion several ways.

1. In that it makes us more serious. When we are out of the noise of worldly allurements, then conscience is apt to reflect and make us bethink ourselves. If they shall bethink themselves in the Land whither they are carried captive, 2 King. 8.47. When was it that the Prodigal came to himself, but when he was pinched and almost pined with Famine, Luke 15.16, 17.

2. It is a means to reduce our wanderings. Man is a straggling Creature, very prone to wander from God and lose himself. He is never weary of following his sins till God hedges up his way with Thorns. God hath two Hedges which the Scripture mentions.

The Hedge of protection, Job 1.10. Isai. 5.5. and

The Hedge of affliction, Hos. 2.6. I will hedge up her way with Thorns.

The Hedge of protection is to keep his people from danger, the Hedge of affliction is to stop them that wander. The one is to fence his people from suffering, the other is to stop Sinners in the way of sinning, and to put them upon returning. So when God had hedged up Israel 's way with Thorns, then She resolves to return, I will return to my first Husband, for then was it better with me than now, Hos. 2.6, 7.

3. It opens the ear to Discipline, Job 36.8, 10. If they be held in the Cords of affliction, —Then he opens their ear to Discipline. There is the outward ear of the senses, and the inward ear of the soul; the

outward ear is seldom stopped, but the inward is often, and that is the ear intended here, the ear of the heart: this is naturally stopped against the counsels of God. Pride, ignorance, unbelief, impenitency, love of sin, prejudices and sensual delights, are the Ear-Wax that so stop the Sinners ear that he will not hear the voice of the Charmer, charm he never so wisely, Psal. 58.5. Till the ear be unstopped, there is no receiving the word; therefore God puts the end of his Rod into the ear (as Christ did his finger into the deaf man's, Mark 7.33) and so unstops it, and opens it to Discipline. And thus the Rod makes entrance for the word.

4. It makes way for convictions to stick and abide upon the heart. These are very often stifled in prosperity. The noise of the Timbrel and the Harp drown the voice of conscience. Man is naturally like the wild Ass, which (the Prophet says) is used to the Wilderness, that snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure, in her occasion who can turn her away? they that seek her, will not weary themselves, in her month they shall find her; that is, when She is great with young, so big, and near her time, and full of pain that She can hardly stir. So the Sinner, though stiff and stubborn, intractable and unteachable, and (like the wild Ass) snuffs at any that shall reprove him, refuses to hear, yet in his month he may be found; if God brings him into straits and distresses, this tames him; this was the month in which the consciences of Joseph 's Brethren found them; when they were in distress themselves, then conscience smote them for the wickedness done to Joseph, Gen. 42.21. We are verily guilty concerning our Brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.

5. It stirs up the heart to pray, and seek after God. They that never pray, will pray in affliction. The Heathen Mariners call every man upon his God when they are in a Storm, Jon. 1.5. Sea-men for the most part are none of the devoutest sort, not given much to praying, they will swear twice where they pray once, yea ten oaths to one prayer; and yet Storms and Tempests make them run to God, They that go down to the Sea in Ships, they cry to the Lord in their trouble,

Psal. 107.23, 28. And hence comes that Proverb, He that cannot pray, let him go to Sea. When the Storm brings them to their wits end, (ver. 27.) then they'll cry to God; when they can no longer help themselves, then they come to God for help.

As extremity is God's opportunity, so it is the time of man's importunity. At other times we are lame in Duty, but the Rod makes us find our legs, and then we run to God, Lord in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a Prayer when thy chastening was upon them, Isai. 26.16. Joab would not come to Absalom at his Call, but when he set his Barley-Field on fire, then he came. Christ had never heard of many, if their necessities had not brought them; when Palsies, Possessions, Fevers, &c. came upon them, then they came to him.

6. It teaches them to see the emptiness of the Creature, and what a vain thing the World is. In our ease and prosperity we are apt to surfeit by excess in sensual fruitions. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, are the young man's Trinity. Hence that of the Apostle, 1 John 2.14, 15, 16. I write to you young men, (though the expression there hath a spiritual sense) and what doth he write unto them? Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world; for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father. This is a rare Lesson for young men, but how seldom do any learn it till they come into the School of affliction! How have I known many young ones wholly given to pride and pleasure, but when God hath brought them under the Rod, fettered them with afflictions, made their Bed upon the Brink of the Grave; O how have they then cried out of their follies, their misspending precious time, their neglecting God and their souls, their regarding lying vanities, and so forsaking their own mercies; and what strong resolutions have they then made, never to return to these follies again! And these things are great Preparatories to conversion.

Now then if afflictions obviate those evils which through the corruption of our Natures are occasioned by prosperity, if they are enlightening, and helpful to great discoveries, and if they are preparatory to Grace and conversion; then surely it must be good for a man to bear the Yoke of affliction early.

CHAPTER III.

Showing the difference between the Yoke of the Spirit and the Yoke of Christ.

What the Spirits Yoke is. Why convictions are compared to a Yoke. Why Sinners must come under the Yoke of the Spirit. Why it is good to come under it early.

The next sense in which I am to speak of this Yoke is that of conviction of sin, to make way to the last Notion of it which more especially design to insist upon, and that is the Yoke of Gospel obedience and subjection, the one is the Yoke of the Spirit, the other is the Yoke of Christ. These two are not the same, but very different Yokes, especially in these four things:

First, The Yoke of the Spirit is grievous, the Yoke of Christ is not grievous, 1 John 5.3. the Yoke of the Spirit is very heavy, the Yoke of Christ is very light, Matth. 11.30.

Secondly, It is the heaviness of the Spirits Yoke which makes Christ's Yoke easy. It is not easy to all; no, they that never felt the Spirits Yoke, to them Christ's Yoke is a burden And therefore when Christ says, My Yoke is easy, it points to them whom he calls to come and take it up; and who are they? Why, the heavy laden and weary, ver.

28. They who are wearied by the Spirits Yoke, shall thereby find ease under Christ's Yoke.

Thirdly, The Yoke of the Spirit is but for a time, and then to be taken off, and never put on again; but the Yoke of Christ is always to be kept on, never to be put off; the soul is under a perpetual obligation to Duty and obedience to Christ Jesus.

Fourthly, The Yoke of the Spirit is to prepare us for the Yoke of Christ; for Christ's Yoke can never be put on, till the Spirit by his Yoke hath fitted the neck for it. The soul will never obey Christ till it be conquered to Christ, and that will never be till the Spirit in conviction put his Yoke and Fetters upon it.

I shall now speak somewhat of the Spirits Yoke; and if ever the Lord give such another Call to this Work, then I shall speak of Christ's Yoke more largely. And in speaking of the Yoke of the Spirit in conviction, I would insist a little upon these four things:

First, That the Spirit hath his Yoke.

Secondly, Why the convictions of the Spirit upon the soul of a Sinner are compared to a Yoke.

Thirdly, Every Sinner that shall be saved must come under this Yoke of the Spirit.

Fourthly, Therefore it is good to come under it early, and why?

First, That the Spirit hath his Yoke. There is such a thing upon the consciences of Sinners at one time or other as the Yoke of the Spirit. As the Spirit hath his joys and comforts, so he hath his Yokes and Bonds; as he hath a liberty which he brings some into, so he hath a thralldom which he brings some under. And it is first bondage, and then liberty. He is a Spirit of liberty to none, but to whom he is first a Spirit of bondage.

And if you ask me, What this Yoke of the Spirit is? It is that state he brings the Sinner into, and holds him in, before his conversion, to prepare him for his conversion; and that is a state of sensibleness of sin and wrath, which flows from the convincing work of the Spirit. The Spirit of the Lord, wherever he comes to work a saving change, doth first put his Yoke upon the Sinners neck; that is, he doth convince the soul of the evil of sin, and of its liableness to the wrath of God, and so fills it with fear and horror; so that the poor Creature looks upon itself as utterly lost and undone so long as it abides in that state. This is the Spirits Yoke: It is called so in Scripture, Lam. 1.14. The Yoke of my transgressions is bound by his hand, they are wreathed and come upon my neck; the Lord hath delivered me into their hands from whom I am not able to rise up. Into their hands, that is, into the hands of sin, and she was not able to rise up from under them, and why? Because the Spirit had bound them upon her as a Yoke.

Secondly, Why are the convictions of the Spirit compared to a Yoke?

First, A Yoke is very heavy and burdensome. So is sin when once the conscience is truly convinced of it, Mine iniquities are gone over mine head, as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me, Psal. 38.4. And therefore a soul under the sense of sin is said to be heavy laden, Matth 11.28.

Secondly, A Yoke bows the Back by reason of its weight. Hence is that expression of the kindness of God to Israel, Lev. 26.13. I have broken the Bonds of your Yoke, and made you go upright; implying that the Yoke causes a man to bow and stoop under it; so doth conviction of sin, it bows the soul under it, I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly, I go mourning all the day long, Psal. 38.6.

Thirdly, A Yoke is a galling, wounding thing; so is conviction: O how it wounds with the sense of sin, and dread of wrath, and a wounded Spirit who can bear?

Fourthly, A Yoke is a taming thing. It tames the wildest Beast; so conviction tames the most unruly Sinner, though he be never so raging in his lusts, yet when the Spirit of God doth but set sin close to the conscience; O how pliable is he! So it was with Saul, he breathed nothing but threatening's and slaughter against the Disciples of the Lord, Acts 9.1. but Christ no sooner smites him with a word from Heaven, but how tame and pliable is he! He trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? v. 6. And hence the convictions of the Spirit are fitly compared to a Yoke.

Thirdly, Every Sinner that ever shall be saved must come under this Yoke of the Spirit, he must be brought to a conviction of his lost estate. There is a necessity for this, and I will show you why?

Reas. 1. Because it is essential to sound conversion. What is conversion but a turning from sin to God? and how can a man turn from sin without a true sense of sin? or how can he turn to God till he be made to see and feel the want of God? therefore it is absolutely necessary.

Reas. 2. It is the constant method of God with all that are capable of the work. First, He shows man his sin, then his Savior; first his wound, then his cure; first his malady, then his remedy; first his danger, then his Redeemer. Thus God began with Adam and Eve, he first opens their eyes to see their sin and misery, their nakedness and shame, and then makes them a promise of the seed of the Woman. God will have sense of misery go before the participation of mercy, He look upon man, and if any say, I have sinned, and it profited me not; he will save his soul from going down to the pit, and his life shall see the light Job 33.27, 28. The Israelites are first stung with the fiery Serpents, and then the Brazen Serpent is set up for them to look to for healing. Peter 's three thousand Converts were first pricked in their hearts, and then he applies the promise, Acts 2.37, 39. The [Jailer] is first struck with a Spirit of trembling, and then Jesus Christ is held out to him for salvation, Acts 16.29, 31.

Reas. 3. God will not frustrate and make void the use of the Law. There would be no conviction of sin, no sight of the misery of natural state, but for the Law; therefore say S t Paul, I had not known sin but by the Law. How could he? what should discover it to him? Sin had not been sin but for the Law, and therefore nothing can discover it but the Law, which is Index sui & obliqui, for sin is a transgression of the Law.

The Spirit himself could not fasten this Yoke upon the Sinners neck, but by the bond of the Law; for sin is not imputed where there is no Law. Look how the Needle goes before to pierce the Cloth, and so makes way for the Thread to sew it; so the Law goes before to break the heart, and so makes way for the Gospel to heal it. The Spirit makes use of it as a School-master to bring us to Christ. Bonnerges makes way for Barnabas, and John for Jesus.

Reas. 4. The soul lies under no promise of good from Christ, till it come under the Yoke of the Spirit. Then it is sensible of sin, and sensible Sinners lie under the promise of Christ. There is not one promise in all the Gospel made of Christ to a Sinner, as he is a Sinner; if there were, it would be in vain. For, as such, he could not receive it, nor can it belong to him, for he is under another Covenant.

Reas. 5. Without this he can never set a true estimate upon the blood and Grace of Jesus Christ. The Pearl of Pardoning Grace shall never be cast before Swine that wallow in their sins. Though Christ be free of his blood, yet we shall see the want of it before we have it, that we may know the worth of it when we enjoy it. He discovers himself in such a way as the Sinner may prize him most; and when is that, but when sin lies with the greatest load upon conscience? When the Yoke of the Spirit is heaviest, then redemption by Christ is sweetest. When he sees his Case at worst, then he prizes Christ most. When he is made to know how wretched his state is, then he considers how precious the blood of Christ is.

Reas. 6. Till the soul comes to bear the Yoke of the Spirit, it can never be brought to close with Christ upon Gospel terms. It is sense of sin and misery that must bow the soul to God's conditions of mercy. The reason why so many Sinners perish under the Call of Christ, is not because they totally reject him, but because they don't make a right close with him; they don't come up to God's terms. There are stated Conditions which everyone that would have Christ, and benefit by Christ, must come up to; and what are they? Why, he that would have Christ, must have whole Christ, Christ in all his Offices, not only as Priest, but as King and Prophet. And this necessarily supposes a renouncing all sin and lust, a resolute owning and adhering to his Truths and Ordinances, and an unfeigned resignation of heart and soul to his will in all things. This is the right receiving of Christ. Now there are but few that can come up to this; they would have Christ, but they would not part with their lusts; they would have a justifying Christ, but not a sanctifying Christ; a Christ to pardon and save them, but not to purge and cleanse them. There is such a close League between the natural man and his lust, that till conscience be convinced, and sin embittered, the soul will not be divorced; and so long Christ cannot be received: therefore there is a necessity that every Sinner that would be saved, should come under the Spirits Yoke.

Fourthly, It is good to come under the Spirits Yoke early, to bear the Yoke in a man's Youth. A man's Youth may have a twofold respect, either to the earliness of profession, or to the earliness of being.

First, To the earliness of profession. Our first entrance into the ways of God is called in Scripture our Youth, I remember the kindness of thy Youth, that is, of her first espousals to God, as the next words explain it. It is a blessed thing when our profession of God and Religion begins in sound and thorough convictions. It is good to bear the Yoke of conviction in the Youth of our profession: For that profession of Religion that is not founded in conviction of sin, will never hold out; it cannot last long; it is Seed sown in stony ground, which though it may spring up for a while, yet when tribulation or

persecution comes, because of the word, it will wither away for want of depth of Earth to take root in, Mat. 13.20, 21. It is good therefore to found an early profession in sound convictions.

Secondly, It may respect the earliness of being. And that seems rather to be the sense of the place. Vatablus renders it, from his Youth, taking H&G for, H&G early impressions upon the conscience by the convictions of the Spirit are a great good to the soul. It is good to bear this Yoke early, for three reasons.

Reas. 1. Because the sooner it is done, the easier it is done; the longer we are before we come under it, the harder it will be to bear it. The longer thou continuest in sin, the harder it will be to bear repentance. If thy conscience be so charged with guilt, that thou darest not look into it at ten or twenty years old, what will it come to if thou lettest it run on till fifty or sixty. The longer the Debt stands in the Book, the heavier the account when we come to reckon for all the arrears of so many years actual sins, added to the grand Debt of original sin. Therefore it is good to bear this Yoke in your Youth. Strength to bear it is then greatest, and the burden to be born is then lightest. Guilt of sin increases by lying, and new guilt daily added to the old, makes the burden still the heavier; therefore it is good to comply with the spirit of God early.

Reas. 2. The sooner it is begun, the sooner it will be done; the sooner this Yoke is put on, the sooner it will be put off: For it is but for a time that the soul bears it, but how long or how little while is uncertain. Paul lay under it three days and nights; the Goaler (for ought I can find) not above an hour; the three thousand in Acts 2. not above the length of one Sermon. But some nowadays are held days, and months, and years, according as the Case requires. But the sooner we come under this Yoke, the less while it is like to lie.

Reas. 3. How rich do such grow in Grace that by early conviction pass through the new Birth early. He that sets up soonest is like to get the fairest estate if he improve his opportunities. If one go to be an

Apprentice when he is a man, there is a double inconvenience in it. First, His service will be much more irksome and tedious. Secondly, The prime of his days will be gone wherein he should have been trading for himself, had he been his own man. Though the work of the Spirit be better late than never, yet it is an unknown loss the soul sustains by a late work.

He loses much joy and peace, the thought of his living so long without God becomes many times a new wound when the old is healed, the after pains of the new birth do abide upon some to their dying day. And in this Case there is but little comfort though the work be real.

He loses much sweet communion with God;

He loses many rich experiences;

He loses a great accession of Grace. Growth in Grace is a work of time; and he that hath but little time, can make but little improvement.

He loses many opportunities of service;

Nay, he loses much in the degrees of Glory. Hadst thou had more time to sow, thy Harvest would have been greater; for as a man sows, so shall he reap; therefore he that spends the best of his time in the service of the flesh (if he should be converted at last, which yet few are) he is like to prove but a feeble Christian.

The more our opportunities of service are if improved, and the more our seasons of communion are if used aright, the richer must we needs be, both in grace, experience and comfort: therefore it is the most thrifty course to be an early Convert, to bear the Spirits Yoke in our Youth.

CHAPTER IV.

Containing some useful counsel and directions to persons of several denominations, with respect to the Yoke of the Spirit.

There are three sorts of persons I would speak somewhat to by way of counsel and direction in this matter.

First, To such as have born the Yoke of the Spirit with good success, to whom the Spirit of bondage hath at last become the Spirit of adoption; who are passed from a state of fear and terror into a condition of hope and comfort. Your Duty lies chiefly in these three things, be thankful, be humble, be fruitful.

First, Study thankfulness, and give the Glory of this work to the Spirit of God. We are very apt to ascribe too much to means, to this or that Minister, alas! they are but poor Instruments, Who is Paul, and who is Apollo, but Ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? They have but the place of Instruments, God is the great Agent; and therefore all supernatural effects are to be ascribed to him alone, Neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase. And therefore the Apostle Paul having called the Church of Corinth his Epistle, in 2 Cor. 3.2. he doth in v. 3. call them the Epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with Pen and Ink, but with the Spirit of the living God. Ministers are but as Pens, it is the Spirit of the living God that writes his Law in the heart by them, and thus they become the Epistle of Christ: and therefore let him that glorieth glory in the Lord. Is there not a cause? Especially if it be considered,

1. What a heart thine was when the Spirit of the Lord first took it in hand; how hard! how stubborn! how dead! how obstinate! how long was the light opposed that shined in darkness, and the attempts of

the Spirit frustrated! how great were the resistances made by it against Grace! and how many the strong holds of Satan which were pulled down to bring about the Conquest! Think how often the Spirits motions were slighted, his counsels set at naught, his strivings resisted. Think how often he knocked, how loud he called, before he could be heard; think how much unbelief, how many confederacies with corruption, what strong lusts, what enmity to God and holiness, lay in the way to obstruct the Spirits design. O what a mighty power did he put forth to make sin a burden, and to fasten his Fetters upon the soul, without which thy resistances had never been conquered, nor thy thoughts brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And hast thou not cause to be thankful?

2. How many miscarry under the same convictions which have issued in a sincere conversion to thy soul. Many by their sights of sin and Hell have been driven into utter despair, as Cain and Spira. Many have laid violent hands on their own lives, as Judas; many have stifled, and sinned away their convictions, and thereby have provoked the Spirit finally to withdraw, and give them up to hardness of heart; many have mistaken their convictions for conversion, resting in them, and so perishing in the place of the breaking forth of children. Now that others should eternally miscarry under those means that have been blessed to thy conversion, that they should perish under the same convictions which have been to thee the pangs of the new birth. O what mercy is this! While some despair and others presume, thou art brought by a sight of sin to close with Christ upon Gospel terms. And hast thou not cause to be thankful?

3. This Yoke of the Spirit being once taken off, shall never be put on again; thou shalt never come under it more: Doth not the Scripture say as much, Rom. 8.15. Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear. In whomsoever the spirit of bondage once becomes a spirit of adoption he is never a spirit of bondage more in that soul. If after he hath once sealed our adoption to us, he should again impress

fears of eternal wrath upon us, he would herein be contrary to himself.

Object. But are not many of the Children of God, after Grace wrought, full of fears and apprehensions of Hell and wrath?

Answ. We must distinguish between bondage by desertion, and bondage by the Spirit in conviction. A Believer under desertion may be in bondage by his own spirit, but not by the spirit of God. When God doth suspend the wonted influences of Grace and comfort, a man's own conscience may fill him with fears of Hell and dread of wrath; but this is not from the suggestions of God's spirit, but from the mistake of his own. He can never be a spirit of bondage more. And is not this cause of thankfulness?

4. How great the advantage is that comes by complying with, and yielding to the spirit in convincing work. For where he is complied with in the beginning, he carries it on to perfection. If he convinces of sin and the soul fall under it by humiliation and repentance, he will convince of righteousness too, and so raise it up again by faith and dependence. Nay, by an early compliance with the strivings of the spirit when he first comes to discover to thee thy lost estate, thou hast secured his presence forever, and he shall carry on this work of conviction so long as there is any one lust remaining. A Believer hath need of the convictions of the spirit so long as he lives. It is a mistake to think the convincing work of the Spirit is over when it hath discovered to a man his lost estate, and so brought him to a close with Christ; there is a great deal of convincing work yet to be done; as there is a sinful estate, so there is a sinful frame of heart. Now though the Believer can no more need the convictions of the Spirit as to the former (for his estate is changed) yet he always needs them as to the latter. Though he was convinced of the filthy nature and damning consequences of sin to prepare him for Christ and conversion, yet there are convictions of necessary use to the carrying on and completing the work of sanctification.

There is a great deceitfulness in sin, more than the Believer ever yet saw; and therefore he wants conviction of that. There is a great power in remaining lusts to draw the heart from Christ, he wants further conviction of that. There is a gradual, secret hardening of heart which in-dwelling sin works to even in the regenerate, he wants further conviction of that. Nay, how many secret, spiritual lusts, hidden and close corruptions are there in the heart, which at first entrance into a state of Grace the Believer never saw, they lie in the heart undiscerned till the Spirit comes in with further light. So that a Believer always needs the convincing work of the Spirit, it is essentially necessary to the perfecting of Grace and holiness. Now he that yields to the convictions of the Spirit at first, doth thereby secure them to the last. He shall never cease enlightening, striving, counseling, so long as there is any one lust remaining. His influences shall abide till he hath got the mastery of every sin, and judgment be sent forth to victory over every corruption. He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you, John 14.17. O what cause of thankfulness have such as have born the Spirits Yoke with success!

Secondly, Your Duty is to be humble. Remember your Bonds; so doth the Church, Lam. 3.19, 20. Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the Wormwood and the Gall, my soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me. One excellent means to cure spiritual pride is to look often back to the days of your soul distresses: therefore God when his people were settled in the promised Land, often remembers them of their wilderness state, that they might not pride themselves in their present possessions, Deut. 8.2. Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee in the Wilderness to humble thee. And ver. 3. He humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger. And ver. 14, 15. Beware lest thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery Serpents, and Scorpions, and drought, where there was no water—that he might humble thee. No man will be lifted up under his present mercies, that doth but seriously and frequently reflect upon his lost estate and the means and manner of his deliverance. O think often of the sighs

and sorrows, the tears and terrors, the griefs and groans of thy sinking Spirit in the Day when the Arrows of God stuck there: How long thou hast formerly lain at God's foot, begging for one Drop of the blood of Christ to pardon sin, one Dram of Grace to secure thy Estate, one glimpse of comfort to refresh thy wearied and heavy laden spirit; and then be proud if thou canst.

Thirdly, Labor to be fruitful. This is the great end of the Spirit in all his convictions. He convinceth of sin, to break off the Sinner from it; he convinceth of righteousness, that the Sinner may seek after it; and he convinces of the necessity of holiness, that he may get it and grow up in it: so that ye sin against, and frustrate the whole design of the Holy Ghost in his work in the heart without this. For ye are therefore made free from sin, and become servants to God, that ye might have your fruit unto holiness, Rom. 6.22. And the same Apostle tells you (cap. 7.4) Ye are become dead to the Law by the Body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that ye should bring forth fruit to God. Labor therefore to be fruitful, for this is that which secures the Spirits influences to your great advantage, Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit, John 15.2.

Secondly, This Doctrine affords matter of counsel to such as never were under the Spirits Yoke. I would commend to such three things especially.

First, Be persuaded of the necessity of a true and sound conversion. Think often of what Christ so solemnly averreth, John. 3.3. Verily, verily I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God. And in order to this, think seriously what a miserable state an unconverted state is: It is a state of enmity to God, it is a state wherein all the guilt of all the sins that ever you committed (the least whereof deserves Hell) lies upon the soul, and binds it over to eternal damnation. It is a state wherein the blood and righteousness of Christ cannot avail us, for he pardons none whom he doth not change and convert, he comes (wherever he comes) by

blood and water. It is a state which mingles a curse with all your blessings, To the unbelieving is nothing pure. It is a state of death, for every unconverted Sinner is spiritually dead, he cannot do any one act that is spiritually good. It is a state wherein the Sinner is not only liable to damnation as an Heir of Hell, but he is condemned already, the Law condemns him though the final Sentence be not yet passed upon him; and if he dies in that state (without a real conversion) God will most certainly judge as the Law judgeth; so that he is as sure to be damned as ever he was born. And all this the Word of God plainly attests. And is not there a necessity of a sound conversion? Is such a state as this, a state to be rested in? No, not for a day, Arise, escape for thy life—lest thou be consumed.

Secondly, Hearken no longer to the Devils suggestions and counsels; his great design is to keep thee secure in a carnal condition, to ward off all serious thoughts of spiritual and eternal concernment: and he hath innumerable methods and devices for the carrying on of this design. Sometimes by fascination of the senses with carnal pleasures, sometimes by encumbering the mind with worldly businesses; (as in Luke 14.18, 19, 20.) so that we have no leisure for God and our souls. How often doth the Spirit knock, but cannot be heard! how loud doth he call, but receives no Answer! how freely hath he tendered his counsels, but they have been set at naught! Satan by the noise of bewitching pleasures, or encumbering cares, makes the Sinner turn a deaf ear to all the Spirits calls and counsels.

Or if the Sinner do at any time bethink himself of his soul and salvation, then he labors to persuade him there is no danger, he is secure as to that by what Christ hath done and suffered for him; if he doth sin, so do the best that live; and if he begs forgiveness, God is full of mercy. Thus he keeps men from repentance and salvation, by persuading them they are safe already; and if he can but hide their danger from them, (which he industriously endeavors to do) he knows he hath them fast enough: For who will mind the Physician, that knows of no disease he hath? who will think of turning back that concludes he is in the right way? who will stoop to the convictions of

the Spirit that is persuaded his sins are pardoned, and his condition safe? Thus as Nebuchadnezzar put out Zedekiah 's eyes, and carried him captive to Babylon, so doth Satan blind Sinners to their eternal destruction.

Thirdly, Do what in you lies to come under the convictions of the Spirit. As you value your souls, and would have the way of the Lord prepared into your hearts, be willing to be made truly sensible what a lost state you are in. For you must know, that it is one thing to be a Sinner, it is another thing to be convinced of it; it is one thing to be lost in our condition, it is another thing to be lost in our apprehension.

There is a great difference between a state of bondage, and a Spirit of bondage. Every Sinner is in a state of bondage, but few come under the Spirit of bondage. The state of bondage is a great curse, the Spirit of bondage may be a real blessing: for the Spirit of bondage is to deliver us out of a state of bondage. It hath been so to thousands, and therefore why not to thee? Therefore do what in you lies to come under the convictions of the Spirit.

Object. But have you not said, that every Sinner is dead in sin by nature? And if so, then what can a dead Sinner do to obtain the Spirit, and the convictions of the Spirit?

Answ. There is somewhat in the order of means that men may do towards the obtaining of the Spirit of God. For though every man in a natural state is dead spiritually, and therefore can do no spiritual act; yet he can do the acts of that life he hath. He is a living man, though he be dead in sins; and God commands us to show ourselves men: that is, by acting rationally, though we cannot act spiritually. Though we cannot do anything to compel the Spirit, because he is free, yet we may use those means in which God is wont to vouchsafe his Spirit. As for instance,

First, There is an attendance upon the Word preached. And this is the great Ordinance of God for the convincing and converting Sinners, the way by which the Spirit doth ordinarily work upon the souls of men. Though he is not tied to means, yet God hath appointed them, and he will put honor upon his own appointments. How many thousands were pricked in their hearts, and so convinced to conversion by that Sermon of Peter, Acts 2.37. How was Lydia converted, but by attending to the things that were preached by Paul? Acts 16.14. These weapons are mighty through God to the pulling down of strong Holds, 2 Cor. 10.4. The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul, Psal. 19.7.

Now this is every man's duty to attend upon the Word, and there is no Sinner but is able to do this as well as any other natural or moral action. Who is not as able to go to a Sermon as to a Play? And to frequent God's House as well as a Drinking-House? and to read God's Book as seriously as a News Book?

Secondly, There is a diligent intention of mind to be exercised in attending on the Ordinances of God, that we may understand and apply the things revealed as the counsel of God concerning us. And this every man that hath the use of reason is able to do. In other matters we can weigh things, and consider them according to their weight and importance, and why not in things that concern our souls, and our everlasting happiness? Cannot a natural man reason thus? Either these truths of the Word of God signify something or nothing; if nothing, why hath the wise God ordained them to be thus earnestly pressed? If they do signify anything, why should they be thus sinfully slighted?

Thirdly, It is a Duty to pray over what we hear, and to beg success upon the Word for the ends whereto God sends it. And is not this in the power of every natural man? There is no man of reason but hath praying abilities, many indeed have their excuses, they cannot pray; but this is but to shift off Duty, and to excuse one sin by another. You never saw a hungry Beggar but could pray; nor a Child of five years

old, but when the Rod is at his Back can pray; and cannot the Sinner cry to God? When you go to hear, can you not pray that God would open your eyes to see the wonders of his Law? Cannot you beg of God that the Word may take hold of your heart, and pull down all the strong Holds there? Can you not plead with him that he would send his Spirit to accompany the Word to your heart, that sin may be discovered, and your hard heart broken, and that you may be made to see the need of Christ, and so brought to believe in him for pardon and salvation? These are no other than what every natural man hath power to perform, by the same assistance with which he lives and moves; and who knows what God may do in a way of Grace and mercy when the Sinner is found thus doing?

I do not (dare not) say with the Papists and Arminians, That if we use our natural power to do our utmost, God is bound *ex congruo* to give Grace; but yet this I may say, That such is the goodness of God that he seldom, if ever, fails to give Grace to that man that doth to the utmost of his abilities in the use of means endeavor to obtain it; nor had ever any cause to complain upon this account.

And therefore let young ones hearken to this counsel, and as you love your souls do what in you lies in the use of all God's appointed means to come under the Spirits Yoke. For consider,

First, You can never be brought from under the Yoke of sin and lust, but by coming under this Yoke. Till you are weary of sin, you will never forsake it, and you will never be weary of sin till the Spirit of bondage hath made it a burden to you.

Secondly, You can never see the need you have of Jesus Christ till you are brought under the Yoke of the Spirit; and till you do see your need of him, you will never hunger nor thirst after him: and so you will be excluded from all benefit by his righteousness, and then you must perish. For the Scripture discovers no way of escaping wrath to come, but by being convinced by the Holy Ghost first of sin, and then of righteousness.

Thirdly, You can never take upon you Christ's Yoke, which is the great command of the Gospel, unless you have been first under this. There is (as I said before) the Yoke of the Spirit, and the Yoke of Christ, the Yoke of the Spirit is in conviction of sin, the Yoke of Christ is in obedience, and the one is preparatory to the other; you can never submit to Christ's Yoke until the Spirits Yoke have fitted the neck to it, and so it becomes easy, My Yoke is easy, Matth. 11.30. It is not easy to the sinner that is at ease, but to the weary soul it is. Then any Yoke but the Yoke of lust, any burden to be delivered from the burden of sin and guilt. But who will walk in the narrow way that never entered in at the strait Gate? Who will account subjection to Christ freedom, until he hath first been wearied under the slavery of sins Dominion? And this is a fruit of the convincing work of the Spirit. And will you not come under his Yoke? But when? It must be done out of hand, delay in this matter is very dangerous.

1. In regard of the indisposition it works unto. The longer sin hath possession, the more it will strengthen itself, and harden the heart against conviction; and the harder the heart the greater the danger; for growing hardness improves itself into a judgment. Hardness persisted in provokes to hardening.

2. In regard of the uncertainty of our duration. Who knows how few hours there are between him and eternity? You that refuse the Yoke of the Spirit as a work fit for riper years, 'pray what security have you for the number of your years? Hath God said you shall not die next sickness, or next Voyage to Sea, or the next time you go to Bed, or walk abroad? A hundred die young to one that lives long, and is it not then a hundred to one but you may? And how if you should die in an unconvinced and unconverted state? Consider what your eternal condition must then be. O be willing therefore to come under this Yoke of the Spirit early.

3. Here's matter of instruction to such as are at present under the Spirits Yoke, made sensible of sin, and of their lost state, and cry out of Hell and wrath, &c.

First, Take heed of discouragement. To mourn under this condition, that is a duty; but to be discouraged and despond, that is a sin: For it obstructs the soul in that which is its duty, it benumbs and weakens the working hand. The Spirit of the Lord hath no hand in this, he sets sin home upon the heart to humble us and break us and lay us low; but not to bring us to discouragement and despair, unless it be in ourselves: and therefore that is the print of the Devils foot. It is one of his subtleties to rivet his temptations into our convictions. When the Spirit of the Lord discovers sin in its guilt and filth, to out us of ourselves, and show us our need of mercy, then he labors to sink us down under the despair of mercy: therefore let not thy sense of sin cause thee to draw false Conclusions, which in this Case is too common. For though thy Case be dark, it is not desperate; though it is uncomfortable, it is not incurable; though it is sad, yet it is not singular. For,

First, This is the way of God with all Sinners to whom he hath a purpose to show mercy. The Wilderness is the way to the Land of promise, I will allure her, and bring her into the Wilderness, and there speak comfortably to her, Hos. 2.14.

Secondly, This lays thee under the Promise. For that promises are not made to Sinners in their sins, but to Sinners made sensible of their sins; so that though thou art a Prisoner in a Pit where there is no water, Ezek. 9.11. yet thou art a Prisoner of hope, ver. 12. God invites such as thou art, the tenders of Christ and Grace have a peculiar respect to thy condition.

Thirdly, This is that which prepares the way of the Lord into the heart. He comes not till the mountains be laid low, and the way prepared for him, and nothing doth this like sense of sin, and sight of a lost estate: So that there is mercy even in being under the Spirits Yoke. And therefore,

Secondly, Do not be unsensible of the mercy of being under the bondage of the Spirit. though it is not a Case that hath comfort in it,

yet it is a Case that hath mercy in it. And no present misery of any condition should make us to overlook the mercy of that condition.

You see sin in its filthy nature and damning guilt, and thereupon are filled with dread and fear; and is not this a mercy? Though to do sin is the most unprofitable work, yet to see sin is the most profitable sight. For so long as sin is unseen, Christ will be unsought. The remedy is never desired till our misery be discerned and felt.

Your conscience is full of trouble, and you are weary, and cry out under the burden of your soul-troubles; and is not this a mercy? How shall the burden of sin be removed, if conscience be not troubled under it? The more the Sinners conscience is at peace, the more sin is in power, The strong man armed keeps that house, Luke 11.12. Besides, it is the design of God that sin shall be the trouble of every Sinners conscience sooner or later, here or in Hell. Hell is full of troubled consciences, there is not one soul there but lies under terror of conscience for sin; for that is the worm that never dies, Mark 9.44. And is it not a mercy to be troubled for sin here rather than in Hell? Here the trouble is but for a season, there it will be forever. Here the end of your trouble for sin is peace and comfort. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning, Psal. 30.5. But in Hell your trouble will end in desperation and everlasting horror. Whatever therefore your troubles are, yet reckon it for a mercy that God hath brought you to a real sense of your sin and misery, for that this is the only way to drive you out of yourselves to Christ. You had been undone but for this undoing.

Thirdly, Do not be weary of the Spirits operation in his carrying on the work of conviction; lest by growing weary of his work, you make him weary of working. There are two things Sinners express a great weariness under, viz. the Word, and the Rod. To sit long under the Word, or to lie long under the Rod, O what a weariness is it! Now to be weary of these is to be weary of the Spirits work; for by these he calls and knocks and strives to make his voice to be heard: and therefore they often go together, and hence you read of chastising

and teaching, Psal. 94.12. The Rod prepares us for hearkening to the Word, and the Word teaches us to understand the Rod; and therefore the Spirit sometimes uses them together. He binds them in Fetters, and holds them in Cords of affliction, and then shows their work and their transgressions, that they have exceeded, and so opens their ear to discipline, and commands that they return from iniquity. Why then should any be weary of the Spirits work? And yet that it is so, is most evident. For why do Sinners so many ways stifle the motions of the Spirit in the soul? sometimes looking on spiritual troubles as mere melancholy fancies, and as such shake them off? Sometimes they are stifled by shame, lest others should think them mad and distracted. Sometimes they are stifled by declining that Ministry that deals most with the conscience, and will not let them alone in sin. Sometimes by running into idle debauched company, that scoff away the troubles of a convinced conscience. Sometimes by over business in worldly matters, The cares of this World choke the Seed, and it becomes unfruitful, Matth. 13.22.

And is not this a great sin? (it is murder to destroy a Child in the womb.) I charge you young ones with this sin this day before the Lord. And I will prove you guilty of it: For what is the reason that the Word preached hath so little success, that so few of you are converted from your sins and lusts to Christ? I tell you this is the reason, You have stifled the motions of the Spirit of God in your souls, you have resisted and quenched him, you have broken his Yoke from off your neck; and do ye understand what ye do? Do ye know the mischief of this sin?

It drives the Holy Spirit out of the heart. You say to him depart, you are weary of his striving to make you weary of sinning.

It greatly gratifies Satan. For his design is to harden the heart against the impressions of the Spirit, and so lead Sinners to a Hell through a Fools Paradise.

It provokes the Lord to give you up to your own hearts lusts and vile affections. And I am persuaded that it is the Judgment that many of the young Generation of this day lie under.

It provokes him to take away the Gospel. And I am afraid that this Judgment is at the door; for why should God continue it to a Generation that slight and reject it? And woe to such as shall be found to have had a hand in sinning away the Gospel.

It is this sin that makes Hell hot indeed. It will be one of the saddest reflections in that state for a damned Sinner to recall the many sweet motions of the Spirit, which in his day of Grace he had. In such a Sermon how was my heart touched, and my conscience awakened! But all came to nothing. In such a sickness, how did the Spirit of God deal with me, and set sin home, and made it a burden! What promises and resolutions did I then make to shake off sins, to leave my former wicked courses, but it came to nothing! Had I then yielded to the strivings of the Spirit, and hearkened to his calls and counsels, I had never felt these flames. But my slighting God, breaking the Spirits Yoke by resisting and quenching his motions, this is that which hath brought this endless misery upon me. O what a dreadful thing is it to be weary of the Spirits work, when he comes to convince of sin?

Quest. But when may a man be said to be weary of the Spirits work?

Answ. First, When he cannot endure an awakening, convincing Ministry, nor searching truths; but declines those Doctrines that interrupt him in the way of his lusts, and disturb the quiet of his conscience; as Felix did Paul 's Sermon of righteousness and judgment to come, because it made him tremble; the Doctrine came too close to his conscience, and therefore he dismisses the Preacher to a fitter season, Acts 24.25.

Secondly, When he is over-hasty for peace and comfort, then he is weary of the Spirits Yoke. This is the Case of most, they are no sooner

under the sense of sin, but they must have comfort. The Arrows of the Almighty are sharp, and when they go deep do cause an unspeakable smart, no wounds to the wounds of God in the conscience, A wounded Spirit who can bear? Prov. 18.14. In this Case it is very natural to cry out for comfort. But to seek the cure for a wound before it is searched and cleansed, is to make the remedy worse than the disease. Unseasonable comfort is ever unsound comfort. And when it comes before the Sinner is fit for it, it is then unseasonable; and such comfort is from Satan, not from the Comforter; for he first makes the soul fit to receive comfort, and then applies it.

Quest. When is the soul prepared and fit to receive comfort?

Answ. Five things must concur to make up this meetness for comfort:

First, The heart must be truly broken and humbled under a sense of sin. Comfort is proper for Mourners, and therefore the promise is made to such, I will restore comfort to his Mourners, Isai. 57.18. Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Humiliation fits for consolation.

Secondly, When weariness of the burden of sin drives the Sinner to Christ. Many run to Christ under their convictions, that yet are not fit for comfort; for it is smart that drives them, and not guilt; sorrow, and not sin; and therefore they seek more for peace and ease than for pardon and righteousness. Though such may desire comfort, yet they are not fit for it, for rest is for the weary and heavy laden.

Thirdly, When it is made freely willing not only to come to Christ, but to close with and receive him upon his own terms; that is, as a Prince to rule, as well as a Priest to redeem and save; when it is as willing to submit to the Duties of his Yoke, as to reap the benefits of his Cross; as desirous to be sanctified as saved; to be freed from sins reigning power, as well as from its damning guilt. Then is it fit for comfort.

Fourthly, When the Work of conversion is actually wrought in the soul, then it is fit for comfort. A state of sin cannot be a state of comfort, There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked, Isai. 57.21. The Spirit of God cannot be a comforting Spirit where he is not a converting Spirit. Could he be supposed to work peace without Grace, he would harden the Sinner in sin, instead of turning him from it; and so contradict his own design, which is first to work Grace, and then peace; first, he converts, and then he comforts.

Fifthly, When a man makes conscience of Duties, and uses all means for the obtaining comfort, as if it were to be obtained by doing, and yet at the same time depends upon the Spirit for comfort, as if he had done nothing. Some look to their Duties for comfort, and so slight the Spirit, whose work is to give comfort; and others look that the Spirit should do all, and so sinfully neglect those means by which comfort comes in. Means without the Spirit cannot comfort, and the Spirit in the neglect of means will not; but when a man depends upon the Spirit in the use of means, then he is fit for comfort.

But if the heart be not broken, if sin be not a burden, if the will be not bowed to Christ by converting Grace, it is not prepared nor fit for comfort; the season of comfort is not yet. And therefore to desire it without laboring for a meetness for it, is to be weary of the Spirits Yoke.

Thirdly, Then a man is weary of the Spirits Yoke, when he uses improper remedies, skins over the wounds the Spirit makes in the soul with wrong Plaisters; turning from a loose conversation to a profession of Religion, and so by an empty form of godliness bringing in a delusive peace, to the undoing of his soul. Know this, That nothing can administer true quiet to a wounded conscience, but the blood of Jesus, Rom. 5.1. It is the cunning of Satan to hurry a troubled Sinner to an empty profession of Religion, that so he may take up short of Christ and conversion. He is for any work, but a saving work. Take heed therefore of using improper remedies for the cure of soul-wounds; and (which is a necessary caution in this place)

take heed of imprudent Guides, and unskillful Conductors of thy soul in this Case. There needs one of a thousand to be an Interpreter in this matter. All that take upon them to be Preachers, are not fit for this work; they do not skill how to deal with a wounded conscience; some make the wound too wide, some bind it up too soon, some use improper remedies for healing.

There are many spiritual Mountebanks as well as natural, that poison sick souls, as others do sick Patients. Of all things therefore take heed what spiritual Physicians you go to when you are under a wounded conscience, and sick of sin: for he that shall bind where God looseth, or loose where God binds, is unskillful in the word of righteousness, and knows not how or when to apply either the terrors of the Law, or the comforts of the Gospel.

Fourthly, Then a man is weary of the Spirits work, when he breaks off his Yoke. Such were they in Jer. 5.5. They have altogether broke the Yoke, and burst the bonds. This is done by stifling the Spirits motions, refusing his counsels, blotting out the impressions he makes. Indeed a state of conviction is not a state to continue in; therefore we ought to labor in the use of God's appointed means to get out of it. Though it is a mercy to be brought under the Spirits bonds and bondage, yet the mercy is not with reference to the state itself, but to what follows; therefore it is good to pass through it, but not to continue in it.

Convictions are like travailing pangs, which are a mercy, as being greatly helpful to the forwarding the birth; but if they continue ever long, they spend natural strength, and destroy the Mother and the Infant too. Hence that of God to Ephraim, Hos. 13.13. The sorrows of a travailing woman shall come upon him, he is an unwise Son, for he should not stay long in the place of breaking forth of Children. To stay long in the birth destroys both the birth and the Bearer too. The captive hasteneth that he may be loosed, and that he should not die in the pit, Isai. 51.14. But yet take heed of making more haste than good speed. Though it is a Duty to labor to get from under the

state of bondage, yet it is a sin to break the Yoke of the Spirit of bondage; therefore take heed of this. The present Duty is to wait the Spirits season, To everything there is a season; there is a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up: this is the Spirits season. And then it follows, There is a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance: that is your season. His killing and breaking time, is your weeping and mourning time; but when his healing time comes, then is your time to laugh and dance. Be willing therefore to be slain by the coming of the Commandment, and to lie dead under the Spirits wounds, till the healing and reviving time comes. Is there not a promise that the Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings? and that he that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him? And therefore do not dare to use any indirect means in hopes of relief; he that would see a good issue of this work must stay the time; It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.

4. While you are under the Yoke of the Spirit, give diligence to make a right use of it, by improving your convictions while you are under them, lest the Spirit cease his work and leave you, and so your convictions die, and wither, and come to nothing. This is a very common case; for whence is it that convictions do so seldom end in conversion? Many are convinced, and yet few converted: they have many and strong convictions, yet perish under them: they are made to see their lost estate, and yet never come to Jesus Christ. Now whence is this, but from the slighting and not improving their convictions? Of all duties therefore be sure make Conscience of this, when the Spirit strives, then do you strive, when he works, then is your time to work. I pray consider four things.

First, What a price to get wisdom this work of the Spirit puts into our hands: and shall it be a price in the hand of fools, that have no heart to it? no desire to obtain it? The strivings of the Spirit time your seasons of grace: For though every day is a time to repent and believe

in; yet a man hath not his special seasons and opportunities for this every day. Opportunity is more than time, it is the nick and season of time, it is time fitted for action, a conjunction of time and means together to bring a thing about. When God shows a man his undone condition by reason of sin, and makes a tender of Christ to him, and the Spirit strives with him to bring him to accept the tender, then is his season. As the Lord said to David, 2 Sam. 5.24. When thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry-trees, then thou shalt bestir thyself, for then shall the Lord go out before thee.

Secondly, Consider how easy the conversion is of those sinners that comply with and duly improve the seasons of the Spirit. All things are easy in the Spirits seasons. Great births are brought forth with easy travail. How came Sarah, barren Sarah, to have a Son at ninety years old? why God came according to the time of life, and Isaac is born. So when the Spirit comes according to the time of life, when his season is to bring life to a dead Soul, then it lives; you must know that Isaac was not so much the Son of Abraham's loins as of God's promise, begotten by the Power of God making good the promise; and therefore called a child of promise, Gal, 4.28. So is every Believer; born, not of the will of the flesh, but of God. By the power of God put forth through the promise. And hence all things in conversion become easy. How difficult soever they are to the Creature, yet in the Spirits season they are easy, because of a Divine power.

How hard a work is it to repent and turn from sin! a very difficult duty; therefore compared to cutting off a limb: But yet in the Spirits season how easy is it. Zacchaeus, says Christ, make haste, and come down: here is the season of Christ upon his Soul; and how easily is his repentance brought about. Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have taken ought from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.

How hard a work is the work of believing! no duty more difficult. It is easier to keep all the commands of the Law, than that one command

of believing: And yet when the season of the Spirit comes, how easy is it. For now all things concur to bring it about, the Commandment comes, the eyes are opened, sin is made burdensome, the need of Christ is felt, and by these means the Spirit draws, and then the sinner runs.

Ah how easy are all things in conversion made by the Spirit's seasons to the Soul that complies with them and improves them!

Thirdly, Consider this is the highest and last of means for conversion. (1) It is the highest, it is that which puts efficacy into all other means, which without it can operate nothing. It is that which can make the weakest means as successful against the proudest lusts, as the Rams horns were against Jericho, though her walls reached to Heaven. (2) It is the last means that God ever uses to convert sinners, he hath appointed no other means to succeed this; and therefore if you sin against your convictions you quench the Spirit, and he may be so quenched as never to be kindled again, and then your conversion becomes a thing impossible. And therefore

Fourthly, Consider what a mischief it brings upon you not to improve the convictions of the Spirit.

Is it not a mischief when all the Ordinances and means of Grace are rendered fruitless and unsuccessful? This is an effect of not improving the Spirit's convictions.

Nay, is it not a mischief to turn the edge of that Word against your Souls, that was designed against your sins? This is a fruit of not improving the Spirit's convictions.

Is it not a mischief when the heart grows harder and harder under softening means? This is a fruit of not improving the Spirit's convictions.

Is it not a mischief to be delivered up to a cannot in believing? Why he that improves not the convictions of the Spirit, provokes him

finally to depart, and then the sinner is delivered up to a cannot in believing. Therefore they could not believe, Joh. 12.39.

Is it not a mischief when the Oath of God seals up a persons, or a people's destruction? Why thus it is when the convictions of the Spirit are not improved. I sware in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest, Psal. 95.11. And who were these? They were a people that had long resisted the strivings of the Spirit.

O therefore be diligent to improve your convictions while you are under them. And if you ask me how they must be improved? I shall give only this one answer: and that is

By hastening to Jesus Christ for pardoning and converting Grace. You never improve your convictions aright till you are brought by them to a saving close with Jesus Christ. In conviction of sin the Soul is pursued with the avenger of blood, and if he overtakes him, he slays him: there is no escaping but by fleeing to the City of refuge. So Christ is called, Heb. 6.18. the word H&G there used, doth import two things; (1) An apprehension and sense of impendent danger putting a man upon flight for deliverance, lest the evil feared should overtake him. (2) Speed and diligence in that flight to the place where he expects to find succor and safety. And where is the place of safety for a sinner under guilt, and pursued by the Curse of the Law, and dread of the wrath of God, but only in the Lord Jesus Christ? Hence is that counsel of the Holy Ghost, Turn ye to the strong hold ye prisoners of hope, Zech. 9.12. O make haste to Jesus Christ, so did Zacchaeus when Christ called him, Luke 19.5. He made haste, and came down and received him joyfully, v. 6.

You that are young, and have had early strivings of the Spirit, early convictions of sin, see that ye improve them by an early seeking after Jesus Christ, otherwise the Spirit may cease striving, and depart and never return again; thy convictions may die and never revive again; thy day of Grace may be sinned away, and then it can never be recalled again. Other things a man may lose, and recover them again.

He may lose his health, and recover it again; he may lose his estate, and recover it again; but if thy day of Grace be once lost, thou canst never recover that again, no, not for any price, thou canst not pray it back again, nor weep it back again. Esau 's tears come too late, Heb. 12.17. no sorrow, no repentance will recover it; and therefore blessed are they that have improved the Yoke of the Spirit into a saving union with Jesus Christ, that by being made to feel the burden of sin, and the weight of God's wrath, and so seeing their lost and undone state as in themselves, have been outed of themselves, and made willing to accept of Christ upon God's conditions, and in God's season, and so have believed in him to the saving of their Souls.

CHAPTER V.

The Doctrine laid down

Christ hath his Yoke. What it is. The Nature and Properties of this Yoke. Why the Commands of Christ are called a Yoke.

When I entered upon these words the last year on this occasion, I told you of a threefold Yoke, that it is good for a man to bear in his youth.

The Yoke of Affliction.

The Yoke of Conviction by the Spirit.

The Yoke of Subjection to Jesus Christ.

The Yoke of Affliction I have spoken to, and showed you the good of bearing that early. I have also spoken of the Yoke of Conviction of sin, and have showed you that everyone that would be saved, must come under this Yoke of the Spirit; and that this Yoke is necessary to prepare the Soul for the Yoke of Christ. I now therefore am to speak of this Yoke. And the Doctrine upon which I shall found my discourse shall be this.

Doct. That it is good for young ones to come under the Yoke of Christ early.

I shall speak to the Doctrine in these parts.

1. That Jesus Christ hath his Yoke.
2. Why are the Commands of Christ called a Yoke?
3. Why is it the concernment of everyone to take up the Yoke of Christ in his Youth?

4. Remove some stumbling blocks out of the way of this duty.

5. Bring home all to ourselves by application.

1. That Jesus Christ hath his Yoke. For he is a King, as well as a Priest and a Prophet. As he redeemed us by his Blood, so he rules us by his Power. As he is a Priest upon his Throne, so he sits and rules upon his Throne. And therefore in Revel. 1.13. he is described as clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. These long garments were especially used by two sorts of persons, Kings and Priests (as you may see by comparing Isai. 22.21. with Mark 12.38.) So that it sets out his Dominion jointly with his Satisfaction and Intercession. These Offices are forever united in Christ; they may be distinguished, but cannot be divided. He is a Priest to none where he is not a King; there can be no sharing in his Mercy but by submitting to his Authority. The benefit of his Death and Blood is limited to the acknowledgment of his Scepter. Where Christ cannot be a Head, he will not be a help; where he cannot rule, he will not relieve; where he can be no King, he will be no Jesus. Those mine enemies that would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me, Luke 19.27. Slight his Power, and you incur his displeasure; reject his Authority, and you become Traitors to his Crown; and that is death without mercy. He pardons none whom he doth not rule, saves none that do not submit.

But here are two Questions.

1. What is this Yoke of Christ?

2. Why is it called a Yoke?

Quest. 1. What is this Yoke of Christ?

Answ. It consists of his Commands, especially those Conditions which the Lord Christ puts upon every soul in order to the obtaining of that Salvation and Glory which he hath purchased. For Christ hath not so purchased Salvation for any, as that they should be saved

merely upon the account of his Death. There were certain Terms and Conditions of Salvation agreed upon between the Father and the Son in that Covenant of Redemption that passed between them, and none can be saved by all which Christ hath done and suffered, but upon these Conditions, and they are, Self-denial, Faith, Repentance, taking up the Cross, Obedience, all the necessary duties of Religion. These are the unalterable Conditions of Life and Salvation; and these Conditions of Salvation are the Yoke of Christ. Take my yoke upon you, Mat. 11.29. And this Yoke is variously expressed in Scripture, sometimes it is called a Way: The way of the Lord, Prov. 10.29. The way of righteousness, Prov. 8.20. The way of holiness, Isai. 35.8. The good old way, Jer. 6.16. The way everlasting, Psal. 139.24. Sometimes it is called a Burden, Mat. 11.30. Revel. 2.24. Sometimes it is called a Rule, Gal. 6.16. Phil. 3.16.

But most commonly this Yoke is called a Law, and so points to the Sovereignty of God over man in common with the rest of the Creatures. For all Creatures that ever God made are under a Law. The most glorious part of the Creation of God was the human Nature of Christ, and yet that was made in a state of subjection to a Law; Made under the Law, Gal. 4.4. The Scriptures speak of three Heavens, the airy Heaven, the starry Heaven, and the third Heaven, called the Heaven of heavens, Deut. 10.14. and all the Creatures in each Heaven are under a Law.

Look into the Heaven of heavens, there dwell the Angels and blessed Spirits in a state of Glory, but yet it is a state of subjection and obedience; they are all under a Law; they have many immunities we have not. They are freed from all infirmities of the flesh, from the necessities of meat and drink, freed from dying; but they are not freed from homage and duty to God. They are under a Law there: Psal. 103.20. Bless the Lord ye his Angels that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word. Their state of Happiness doth not exempt them from obedience, therefore they own themselves our fellow-servants, Revel. 19.10. I am thy fellow-servant: And that petition in the Lord's Prayer, Thy will be

done in earth as it is in heaven, shows that they are under a Law of obedience, though in a glorified state.

Look into the starry Heaven, and all the Host there are under a Law; Sun, Moon, and Stars observe their courses, and vary not from their appointed motions, He hath made a decree which shall not pass, Psal. 148.6.

Look into the lower Heaven, and you shall find a governing Law there: Psal. 148.8. Fire and hail, snow and vapor, stormy wind fulfilling his word. Who can govern the wind that blows where it lists? or give a Law to an unruly tempest, that bears down all before it? and yet these fulfil his word. He makes the storm a calm, Psal. 107.29.

Look lower to that raging and unruly Element, the Sea; no Potentate on Earth can bridle one wave. Xerxes presumed he could tame the Hellespont, but it knew not his power, nor felt his wrath; neither could his three hundred stripes allay the fury of its waves, nor his fetters, thrown in, bind it from raging.

It is storied of Canutus our Danish King, that when his Courtiers would have flattered him into a belief of a kind of Omnipotency in him, he caused his Chair to be set by the Sea-shore at time of flood, and sitting down commands the Sea thus, I charge thee come not upon my Land, nor wet my Robes. But the Sea coming on, without regard to his Command, made him glad to retreat, whereupon he cries out, How vain and weak is the power of Princes.

None but God can set bars and doors to it, as it is Job 38.10. And what are these bars and doors? not the sands, nor banks, nor rocks, so much as the Law of Heaven; for so it follows in the next words, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further, and here shall thy proud waves be staid, v. 11. This is the bound it cannot pass over, other banks and bounds it can, and hath passed, as in Noah's Deluge, History reports of many sad inundations of the Sea, no bound can

hold it but this Law of Heaven: Thou hast set a bound that the waters may not pass over, that they turn not again to cover the earth, Psal. 104.9.

So that all Creatures are under a Law according to which all their motions are guided and governed. Now these Laws differ according to the differing nature of the Creatures that are under them, all are not capable of Moral government, but Man is, being a creature fitted with intellective and elective powers; Therefore the Law by which he is governed is the Moral Law, with the superaddition of God's revealed will to all that are under the Gospel.

And the will of God is revealed two ways, in his Word, and in his Works. The one is voluntas de nobis, God's will concerning us: The other is voluntas in nobis, his will in us, to be done by us; in the one consists our active obedience, in the other our passive; active obedience respects his Precepts, passive respects his Providences; and obedience is as truly manifested in the one, as in the other; in patience as in Holiness; for as in Holiness we own God as the supreme Law-giver, so in patience we own him as the supreme Lord, who hath absolute Dominion over all Creatures and all Events. And this is the Yoke of Jesus Christ.

And it hath six essential Properties belonging to it, which do so describe the Nature of it, as that it may be distinguished from all other Yokes.

First, It is a pure Yoke: and needs it must; for it is a Yoke put on us by that Law which is a Transcript of the Holiness of God. The Apostle James calls it, pure Religion, Jam. 1.27. And it is so, whether you look to its Precepts or its Promises.

First, To its Precepts, The commandment of the Lord is pure, Psal. 19.8. Holy, just, and good, Rom. 7.12. No Doctrine so holy, no Precepts so pure.

Secondly, To its Promises: They are pure Promises.

First, In regard of the matter of them: they do not flatter us with sensual delights and brutish pleasures, but secure to us an undefiled inheritance; not a Turkish Paradise full of swinish sensualities, but a sinless felicity made up of visions of God and likeness to him.

Secondly, In regard of the end and design of them, which is to purify the heart, and promote the sanctification of the whole man. He hath given us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature, 1 Pet. 1.4. No Religion in the World can rightfully lay a claim to this Character of a pure Religion, but the Christian Reformed Religion.

Compare it with the Religion of the Jews, the most like to be a perfect Religion of any, because it was a Religion of God's setting up; but yet that had its imperfections, their Sacrifices, wherein it chiefly consisted, could not make the comers thereto perfect; and therefore it is done away.

Compare it with the Religion of the Heathens: And how corrupt hath that been in all ages and in all parts? What a numberless number of God's have been found among them? Some worshipping dead men for God's. Some worshipping dumb Creatures. Some worshipping Sun, Moon, and Stars. Some worshipping Herbs and Plants. And some worshipping Devils, it is a filthy Religion making God's of them who made themselves Devils.

Compare it with the Muhammadan Religion, and what is that, but a mixture of Jewish, Heathenish, and Popish vanities, little of truth to be found in it. A Religion not known in the World till 600 years after Christ. A Religion devised by Mahomet that Impostor, and made up for the most part of foolish Precepts, and as ridiculous rewards, designed chiefly to gratify the flesh.

Compare it with the Popish Religion, and how much more pure is it than that both in Doctrine, Worship, and Discipline?

Their Doctrine is impure: It is in many things contrary to the Scriptures, as about Venial sins, Merits of Works, Supererogation, forbidding to Marry, their seven Sacraments, Purgatory, &c.

And in some things it is contrary to reason and sense, as in that ridiculous Doctrine of Transubstantiation.

Their Worship is impure, witness their Prayers to Saints and Angels; their Image-worship, their making their public Prayers in a Language the people understand not; their Masses, their denying the Cup in the Lord's Supper to the people.

Their Discipline is impure; for whereas the Church is to be governed by Christ his Laws only, they have contrived a Discipline of their own, and make their Canons and Constitutions to take place of the appointments of Jesus Christ; thus the man of sin sits as God in the temple of God, 1 Thess. 4.4. O what a corrupt, filthy Religion is that of Rome! an intolerable Yoke, and therefore our Forefathers did righteously cast it off, and never let us their children anymore put it on.

Secondly, This Yoke of Christ is a spiritual Yoke, it reacheth the soul as well as the senses. There is an intra as well as an extra, an internal power binding the heart, as well as an external that aweth the outward man. The Laws of men have no spiritual power, they govern the outward man, but cannot reach to the heart and conscience. A man may love sin, meditate mischief, think treason, and yet liable to no human Law without overt-acts: But Christ's Law reaches the inwards, it is the discerners of the thoughts and intents of the heart. It binds the soul to its behavior, as well as the senses: so that a man may be a transgressor of the Law, though he refrains all open wickedness. For the Law is spiritual, Rom. 7.14. and therefore requires not only outward obedience in word and deed, but inward, in mind and heart.

Thirdly, It is a strict and absolute Yoke, it lays the soul under an absolute subjection, allows of nothing to be done but what is according to the will of God; what God doth either command or warrant; nor doth it abate ought of what God would have performed. Though the Grace of the Gospel passes by many sins, the free gift is of many offenses to justification, yet the Precepts of the Gospel allow of no sin: Though the young Man kept many commands, yet because he failed in one thing (one thing thou lackest) all was nothing.

The Covenant of Works did not require a more strict obedience, when it was for life, than the Law of Christ doth. It leaves the Creature no liberty for the least sin. It is a yoke of absolute subjection without conditions or reserves; and when we give up ourselves to the government of the Divine will, it is to a subjection that is absolute; we are to have no other God, he is to be Lord alone. If you have a servant, and bid him do this or that, it may be he will tell you, it is not my work, it was none of my bargain; I am content to serve in the Chamber, but not in the Kitchen; or to be your Steward, but not to serve in the Stable. But the yoke of Christ admits of none of these conditions, for the Law is indivisible. You may number the commands, but you may not divide them, for they are but the various significations of the same Divine will. The Precepts of the Gospel are not to be taken disjunct, but completive, not singly, but all together; and so they make one entire Law of Righteousness: And therefore he that willfully slights any one command of Christ, breaks the yoke; he violates totam legem, though not totum legis, the whole Law, though not every command. As he that breaks one link, breaks the whole chain. Or as he that breaks a man's arm, wrongs the whole man, though he doth not break every limb.

Fourthly, It is an extensive Yoke. It comprehends the whole of man's obedience. It prescribes every duty; we have no need to run to human inventions to direct our obedience; both the credenda and the agenda, whatever is to be believed and done in order to life eternal, is prescribed in the Word. Thy commandment is exceeding broad, Psal. 119.96. Will you see in a few things where the latitude of it lies?

First, It reaches from Heaven to Earth. It directs our carriage and behavior to God and man, and teaches us to keep a conscience void of offense towards both. The grace of God that brings salvation—teaches us to live righteously, and godly in this present world. Holiness to God is not enough without Righteousness to man, nor righteousness to man without holiness to God; that obedience doth not answer the end of the command that is not extended to both; some will make conscience of the first Table and not of the second, and some are second Table Christians but not first. Some are strict in their devotions, but very unrighteous in their dealings. They will not bow to an Idol, nor allow of the inventions of men in the worship of God, but yet make no conscience of breaking the commands of God that are given to govern their dealings with men; they will not neglect an Ordinance, nor swear an Oath, but yet will lie and deceive, be uncharitable and cruel, forgetting that command of God to deal justly and love mercy. As if that Law of loving thy neighbor as thyself, were abrogated, to let in a liberty for self to compass its own ends upon all, without regard to any.

On the other hand, some are very just and equal in their dealings with men, but very neglectful and regardless of God; they will not bow down to a Harlot, but yet will bow down to an Idol. They will not defile their bodies with fornication and uncleanness, and yet, in love to an unclean worship, drink daily of the wine of Babylon's fornication; they will not wrong their neighbor of a farthing, and yet stick not to rob God of all that trust, love, fear and worship that is due to him; they will not lie nor deceive among men, and yet love a lying and deceitful Religion. This is the fashion of the world, to be in with one duty, and out with another. Some labor to keep conscience void of offense to man, but not to God; and some labor to keep conscience void of offense to God, but not to man; but the yoke of Christ extends to both, it lies equally on both shoulders, and teaches how to keep a conscience void of offense both towards God and man.

Secondly, This Yoke is extensive in regard of the subject. It reaches to every man, and to everything in man.

First, To every man; to every age of man, young and old, children and fathers, tender years and gray hairs, it doth not only lay duty upon young shoulders, Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, but upon old ones too, They shall bring forth fruit in old age.

To every Sex; male and female, young men and maidens, as David says Psal. 148.12. and therefore the fourth Commandment is, Thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant.

To every Estate; this Yoke of Christ reaches duty to them that are out of the Yoke, and under the Yoke; to the unmarried and to them who are married. As the unmarried are to care for the things of the Lord, so are the married also, 1 Cor. 7.29. And therefore it is charged as a great sin upon him who, when he was invited to the Wedding-supper, refused the Call of Christ upon that pretense, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come, Luke 14.20.

To every degree and rank of men; high and low, rich and poor, great and small, Kings of the earth and all people. The Law of Christ lays the same Yoke upon all. There are none below it because of their meanness, none above it because of their greatness. Some plead privilege and exemption from human Laws, and therefore they are compared, as Solons Laws were, to Spiders webs, wherein the lesser flies are entangled and held, but the great ones break through. But there are none can plead privilege, or pretend immunity from the Law of Christ; for it extends to every man.

Secondly, It extends to everything in man. To the outward Members and inward Faculties.

To the Eye; He that looks on a woman to lust after her, committeth adultery in his heart, Mat. 5.28. To the Ear; Incline your ear, and come to me, hear and your souls shall live, Isai. 55.3. To the Tongue; Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, Ephes. 4.29. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt,

Coloss. 4.6. To the Hands; Let him that stole, steal no more, but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth, Ephes. 4.28. To the Feet; Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path, Psal. 119.105.

And to the inward Parts also.

To the Understanding. Through thy precepts I get understanding, Psal. 119.104. To the Will. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, Psal. 110.3. To the Conscience, for that is guided by the Word, and accuses or excuses according to the Word. Conscience is a rule ruled, but it is the Law of God that is the rule ruling. To the Affections. It teaches us what to love and what to hate; what to desire and what to eschew. How to rejoice and how to mourn; what to hope after, and what to fear.

God is to be the object of some affections, as love, desire, hope, joy, and delight. And sin of others, as anger, hatred, sorrow, and fear: and both sorts are under the directions of the Word.

Nay it extends to the very Thoughts. To worldly thoughts, carking thoughts, Matt. 6.25, 28, 31, 34. To vain thoughts, Jer. 4.14. To evil thoughts, Matt. 9 4. And so brings every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, 2 Cor. 10.5. Thus everything in man comes under the Yoke of Christ.

Thirdly, This Yoke of Christ is extensive as to the Commands, it reaches to every Command.

First, To relative Precepts as well as absolute. It doth not only teach us to hear, and pray, and repent, and believe, and love God, and serve him, but it extends to every relative Duty. It teaches men subjection to Rulers, and Rulers their duty to their Subjects. It teaches Parents how to govern, and Children how to obey; it teaches Masters how to command, and Servants how to submit. It instructs the Husband how to love, and the Wife how to be subject. It teaches

Ministers how to guide and watch, and their People how to obey and submit. It lays a special Law upon every person to fill up his relation with all becomingness; it allows no churlish, sour, morose carriage in Superiors, to them that are beneath them, nor any unfaithfulness, or disobedience in Inferiors, to them that are above them.

Secondly, It reaches to positive Precepts as well as negative, and so provides against our sinful omissions, as well as against our carnal practices. Negatives in Religion are not sufficient, though few go farther; like the Pharisee, Luke 18.11. not oppressive, not unjust, not unclean: But alas this will not serve turn; the barren tree, that bears no fruit, is as well cut down (Luke 13.7.) as the tree that bears evil fruit (Matt. 3.10.) The rich man was cast into Hell, not for oppressing Lazarus, but for not relieving him; he did not exercise cruelty, but he showed no mercy. Not only the evil servant is cast into Hell for persecuting his fellow-servant, (as many now a-days do) but the slothful servant hath the same doom that hid his talent in a napkin.

Our obedience should carry a correspondency with God's mercies, which are not only privative but positive. He hath not only delivered us from Hell, but called us to his Kingdom and Glory. And Christ is not come only to save us from death, but come that we might have life. God promiseth Abraham to be his shield and his exceeding great reward, Gen. 15 1. A shield, to keep off all evil; an exceeding great reward, in the communication of all good. Thus Grace is entirely dispensed in positive mercies as well as privative; and our obedience should be proportionable. We should not only abstain from sin, but exercise ourselves to godliness. Therefore every command of God is positive as well as negative, it hath a Precept as well as a Prohibition, if not in express terms, yet in sense and meaning. When he forbids sin, he doth therein command all contrary duties, that we may as well own God, as abandon lust; and keep up a fellowship with him, as well as break our confederacy with corruption.

Thirdly, It reaches to commands for suffering as well as commands for doing. For you must know that the Cross of Christ is a part of the

Yoke of Christ. If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me, Matt. 16.24. We are called to the fellowship of his sufferings, and a conformity to his death, as well as to the likeness of his resurrection. As there are some Commands to direct our obedience, so there are other Commands to try the truth of our obedience. Such was that to Abraham to offer up his only Son; and therefore we are not to think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try us, but to rejoice in as much as we are partakers of Christ's sufferings, 1 Pet. 4.12, 13. Then we bear the Yoke of Christ becomingly, when the excellency of the Pearl of price makes us willing to sell all to make the purchase; when we prefer Christ and his Cross before all worldly enjoyments, as Moses did, esteeming the reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, Heb. 11.26.

Fourthly, The Yoke of Christ extends to the manner of our obedience as well as to the matter. For it is not enough that the thing we do be good materially, unless it be so formally. A man may do the same thing that is commanded, and yet it may be so far from obedience, that he may sin in the performance. The matter may be good, and yet the circumstance may turn all to sin.

Four things must concur to make an action truly good, and an act of obedience. The Principle, the Rule, the Manner, and the End.

1. There must be a right Principle; there can be nothing well done without it: though there may be much performance, yet there can be no obedience. There may be much doing, but little duty. For actions can rise no higher than the Principles that produce them. Many do duties from self-love, carnal fear, &c. here the Principle spoils the performance; the corruption of the Principle corrupts the action. The Apostle hints the true Principle of all obedience in 1 Tim. 1.5. Charity out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned.

2. There must be a right Rule; for how can a man go right without a sure guide? The reason of all that false Worship that is practiced in

the world is, making use of false rules; he that hews by a crooked line can never make straight work. There are many false rules set up by men of ignorant and corrupt minds, such as these.

Custom and Example of others; this is very unlike to be a right rule, because the way to Hell is most beaten. The most are found in the broad way that leads to destruction. If this be a right rule, a Popish Idolater, a Mahemutan, a Heathen hath as good a rule of Worship as we.

Some set up their good meaning for a rule, but a very false one; The Apostle Paul had this rule to guide him in his highest enmities to Christ. I verily thought with myself I ought to do many things contrary to the Name of Jesus of Nazareth, Acts 26.9. The greatest persecution and opposition that can be made against Jesus Christ and his Disciples and Followers, may be guided by this rule; The time comes (and truly it seems to be now come) that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth God service, John 16.2. Maximinian the Persecutor thought the blood of Christians to be the most pleasing Sacrifice to his God's . O sancta simplicitas! said John Huss, when, being to be burned, he saw a plain Country-fellow, busier than the rest in fetching [sticks.]

Some set up their lusts for a rule; as most men set up their lusts for a rule of life, so some men set up their lusts for a rule of Worship. For what else is the meaning of that in Jerem. 50.38. It is a land of graven images, and they are mad upon their idols. What is this madness, but only a vehemency of inordinate affection, which carries men head-long after a thing without rule or reason? It is the rage of lust, and such was this madness here, they are mad upon their Idols. An idolatrous Worship makes a mad world where-ever it is set up.

Lust (take it as an act, for so I now consider it) is nothing else, but a vehement desire. And it is either good or evil as the object is, for there is the lusting of Grace, as well as of the flesh. But it is mostly in

Scripture taken in a bad sense, for those inordinate desires that transgress the Laws of reason and the rule of the Word.

And these lusts are divers. There are fleshly lusts (1 Pet. 2.11.) which lead to the satisfaction of brutish appetite. And worldly lusts, (Tit. 2.12.) so called, because stirred up by worldly objects. And there are also spiritual lusts which are conversant about spiritual things. Hence false Worship is called Whoring, Hos. 9.1. Thou hast gone a whoring from thy God. Jer. 3.2. Thou hast polluted the land with thy whoredoms. And it is called Adultery, Jer. 13.27. I have seen thy adulteries, because there is as much sinful lust in false Worship as in carnal Adulteries and Whoredoms. How foul must that man's path be whose lust is his rule and guide. Walking after their own ungodly lusts, Jude v. 18. The true Disciple of Christ hath a better rule, he is not guided by his lust, but by the will of Christ. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace shall be upon them and mercy, Gal. 6.16.

Some set up the Laws and inventions of men for a rule; but this cannot be a right rule, because the Author is fallible. Human Laws may serve the ends of Civil Society, and converse with man; but are not suited to establish a Communion with God. He will not be beholden to man's wisdom to direct his Worship he counts it a vain service when men's posts are set by his posts, and their Laws mingled with his Precepts. In vain do they worship me teaching for doctrines the commandments of men, Mat. 15.9. Heathens shall rise up in judgment against such Christians; God, saith Socrates, will be worshipped with that kind of Worship only which himself hath commanded.

These therefore are all false rules, and however men may please themselves in squaring their lives by them, yet they are but so many by-ways to lead us off from our own happiness. No man can truly obey God that walks by a wrong rule in what he performs; and therefore all false worship condemns those who practice it of deceit and hypocrisy. They pretend to make the will of God the rule of their

worship, and yet set up a rule of their own. And he cannot be upright in the way, who walks by a crooked rule.

3. The manner must be right. It is not enough that it be bonum, unless it be been. The manner of doing what we do is as much as the matter done. Most men miscarry herein, they take up in the bare performance of a duty, rest in the opus operatum, the work done. Like the blind Papists who bead out their Prayers, and serve God by tale. The heart must be watched in every duty, for it is the frame of the Spirit that makes up obedience. And therefore the Precept doth not only prescribe the Quid, but the Quomoch. It doth not direct the matter only, but the manner too. Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently, Psal. 119.4. Cursed is he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully, Jer. 48.10. He may do the work of the Lord, and yet be cursed for not observing the manner as well as the matter. It is not hearing the Word, unless we take heed how we hear, Luke 8.18. It is not prayer if it be not fervent prayer. Giving is not Charity unless there be a drawing out the soul to the hungry, Isai. 58.10. Eating and drinking at the Lord's Table is not eating the Lord's Supper, unless it be done worthily, that is, by a believing soul in a believing frame. Love to God is not love, unless it be with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might, Deut. 6.5. Whatever duty we do, it is not serving God, unless we are fervent in spirit serving the Lord, Rom. 12.11. It is another matter to serve God than the world thinks of. Slightness of service implies a degrading God in our conceptions; it is a sign we have cheap thoughts of him when everything serves the turn.

4. There must be a right end. A man may lose the prize by shooting short, as well as wide of the mark. Shechem submits to be circumcised, but not as it was a token of the Covenant of God, but as a token of his desire to be in Covenant with Jacob's daughter; and so his end was to gratify his lust. Jehu destroys the house of idolatrous Ahab, a good work, a work to which he was anointed and called of God, and yet God threatens to avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, Hos. 1.4. A strange thing, that God should anoint

Jehu for that work, to shed the blood of the house of Ahab, and bid him go and do it, and declared his approbation of it, Thou hast done well in executing that which is right in mine eyes, nay rewarded him for doing it, 2 Kings 10.30. and yet that after all this God should avenge it upon his house. What should be the reason of this? Because though the work was good, yet his end was bad. It was not zeal for the Lord of Hosts, that was but in pretence, his end was to get the Kingdom. Plainly then, a man may do what God requires, and yet in the doing of it serve his own ends.

Now the Yoke of Christ directs our ends, which is, in all things that God be glorified, 1 Cor. 10.31. So that in all these instances it appears to be a very extensive Yoke, and so must the Christians obedience be: Ye are my friends, if you do whatever I command you, Joh. 15.14.

Fifthly, (And it follows from the former) It is a laborious Yoke. Indeed there is a blessed rest our Lord Christ hath promised to all that put on this Yoke. Matt. 11.29. Take my yoke upon you—and ye shall find rest to your souls: that is, a rest from the dominion of sin, from the condemning power of the Law, from the accusations and charges of Conscience. But it is not a rest from labor, that is the privilege of Heaven, they rest from their labors, Revel. 14.13. Here we labor to enter into rest, Heb. 4.11. The very notion of taking up the yoke, imports labor and diligence. And so do all those employments to which the Christian calling is compared in Scripture: It is compared to running a race, to wrestling, to fighting. All works that call for the utmost strength, skill, and industry. The more strings an Instrument hath, the greater art and skill is requisite to handle it well. A Christian hath more to do than ever Adam in Innocency had, his state is better, but his work is greater. Adam was to obey the Law only; but the Christian is to obey both Law and Gospel.

First, He is to keep the whole Law, it is to be his Rule as much as it was Adam 's, though not upon the same Sanction, and severe Conditions. Which Command may I break upon the privilege of interest in Christ? or refuse to obey as a part of Gospel-liberty? And

if every Command of the Moral Law requires obedience, as it doth, how great is his Duty! But this is not all. For

Secondly, He owes obedience to the Gospel too: For this is more peculiarly the Yoke of Christ. And how many Duties go to make up Gospel-obedience! There must be believing in Christ, repenting of sin, denying ourselves, renouncing the world, crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts; cutting off the right hand, plucking out the right eye, cleaving to the truths of Christ, contending for the Faith, praying in the Spirit, watching in all things, resisting temptations, growing in grace, worshipping God in the Spirit, abounding in hope, rejoicing in Christ Jesus, &c. O how laborious a work is it to take up the Yoke of Christ! Indeed Christ says it is easy, Matt. 11.30. my yoke is easy: but this is in opposition to grievousness, (1 John 5.3.) not to diligence and industry. Christ quits us of our burden, but not of our duty.

Sixthly, The Yoke of Christ is a lasting Yoke; not to be worn at pleasure and then laid off. I have given you statutes and judgments, says Moses, Deut. 4.5. as the Lord commanded me; and then v. 9. Take heed lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life. And Isa. 59.21. My words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed— from henceforth and forever. The meaning of this promise is, that his people shall never want the guidance and direction of his Word, and therefore they should always follow the guidance of it. David begs to be taught the Statutes of God for this very reason, that he may keep them to the end, Psal. 119.33. There is no exemption from Duty, no room for intermissions in our obedience. Upon those words of Solomon, Eccles. 3.1. There is a time for everything, a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to weep, and a time to laugh, &c. One hath this observation, That there are two things Solomon allots no time for, viz. for sin, and for serving God. He allots no time for sin, because that ought never to be committed, he allots no time for serving God, because that ought never to be neglected. Sin is never in season, and obedience never is out of season.

It is not enough to show our respect to the Command at one time and not at another, it must reach to all times; Psal. 106.3. Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doth righteousness at all times. And this seems to be the sense of that 119. Psal. 96. verse. I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy commandment is exceeding broad; the breadth of the Command is set in opposition to the finiteness of all Creature-perfections; it is therefore exceeding broad, because it engages to that duty that is never thoroughly finished so long as we are in this world. Therefore we are never to be weary of well doing. Why should we? Is not Christ as sweet always at first? The Commands of God as equal? The ways of God as lovely? Heaven as desirable as ever? However the Yoke of Christ be always the same, yet a Christian, in regard of himself, hath more reason to keep it on, than he had at first to take it up; because by reason of use he hath had his senses exercised to discern between good and evil, Heb. 5.14. He hath had such tastes of God in the course of his obedience, as he was a stranger to at the first entrance. His experiences are now greater. Christ upon trial is sweeter, and the recompense of reward is nearer. Your salvation is nearer than when ye first believed, Rom. 13.11. Therefore there must be no declining; The righteous shall hold on his way. He that hath once put his hand to the plow, must not look back; this Yoke, being once put on, should never be put off till God take it off, which e're long he will do; and instead of a Yoke upon the neck, put a Crown upon the head, and so reward your present obedience with an eternal blessedness.

Thus you have an account what the Yoke of Christ is. It consists of the Commands of Christ, which are the Conditions of our Salvation. And this Yoke is pure, spiritual, absolute, extensive, laborious, and lasting. That is the first thing. I will be briefer in the next.

Quest. 2. Why are the Commands of Christ called a Yoke?

Answ. 1. With respect to the corrupt nature of man.

2. With respect to the nature of the Commands themselves.

1. With respect to the corrupt nature of man which accounts them so. They are the lusts of the flesh that make Duty a Yoke, or else the Precept would be a Law, but no Yoke. As it is the soreness of the foot which makes the shoe a burden, which otherwise would be a help. The Angels in Heaven are under a Law, but not under a Yoke; and so are glorified Saints; for in them there is no manner of unsuitableness to, or regret at the will of God.

Man with respect to the Law of God is to be considered either as carnal, or converted, unregenerate, or born again.

First, As carnal and unregenerate; and while he is in that state, the Law of Christ is not only a Yoke, but an intolerable Yoke; flesh and blood cannot bear it, because of that enmity that is between the Law of God and his lusts. He is under the prevalency of a quite contrary Law, the Law of Sin; and where the Law of sin rules, the Law of Christ can take no place; He is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be, Rom. 8.7. How can an evil tree bring forth good fruit? How can darkness have communion with light? How can the old nature do the works of the new creature?

The carnal mind can never bear Christ's Yoke, because of that opposition that is in lust to the Divine Law; it is not only averse to it, but adverse; it doth not only draw the heart from God, but opposeth him. Christ commands one thing, and the flesh another; the Command says, Mortify the flesh; Lust says, Make provision for the flesh; the Command is for self-denial, Lust is for self-pleasure; Christ is for obedience and holiness, and therefore Lust says, This man shall not rule. Because the Law opposes lust, therefore lust opposes the Law, it cries out, The burden of the Lord, it complains of hard sayings, and grievous commands.

Secondly, Man is to be considered as in a regenerate state, which yet is but the imperfection of Grace; for though the new creature hath a perfection of parts, yet it hath not a perfection of degrees, there are remains of corruption in every part; though lust be dethroned, it is

not ejected; though it hath lost its regency, yet it retains a residence; it hath a great power, though not a reigning power; it hath the power of a Tyrant, though not of a King; and often captivates, though it don't command.

Now though so far as Grace prevails, the command of Christ is no Yoke, no burden, no task; it is a pleasure and delight; it is no more a Yoke than it is to an Angel in Heaven, or than it was to Christ. Is it a Yoke to a man to eat and drink, to take his meals, and satisfy his hunger? No more is it to the renewed nature to obey the will of God. I delight to do thy will, O my God, Psal. 40.8. yet so far as corruption remains unsubdued and unmortified in a child of God, so far the commands of Christ are a yoke still; for though with the mind he serves the Law of God, yet with the flesh he serves the Law of sin, Rom. 7.25. the body of death will not bear the yoke of the Lord of life. And this is the reason why the Soul so oft cries out and complains of it, because it opposes and hinders that subjection to Jesus Christ, which the Soul longs and labors to come up to. He would be holy as God is holy, that he might stand complete to all the will of God; but he finds a Law, that when he would do good evil is present. Rom. 7.21.

2. The commands of Christ are called a Yoke with respect to the nature of the commands themselves, which lay the strongest obligation upon the Creature, both as to Sin and Grace.

First, As to Sin: it enjoins the mortifying every lust, and that upon pain of eternal death, Rom. 8.13.

Secondly, As to Grace; it requires the getting of grace, the growing in grace, the exercise of grace, and that through the whole course of our lives.

No such tie upon the Soul as the Yoke of Christ; therefore some say Religio is à religando, it is the tie of God upon the Soul; till a man

comes under the power of the Precept, he is H&G, we are not H&G but H&G, not without Law but under the Law to Christ, 1 Cor. 9.21.

CHAPTER VI.

Hold's forth the Reasons of the Doctrine.

2. Why it is the concernment of everyone to take up the Yoke of Christ in his Youth.

Reas. 1. Because of the Call of God. He doth not call us to bow to his Yoke, to submit to his Authority, to obey his Commands only, but to do it early; as he states our duty, what we shall do, so he times it, when it must be done. And therefore it is as much a sin to let slip the time, as to neglect the thing. Not to do what God commands is a sin, and not to do it when God commands it, is another sin. If God says, Today, go work today in my vineyard (Mat. 21.28.) Today if you will hear his voice harden not your hearts (Heb. 3.15.) Why then to put it off till the morrow, is a sin, and so the adding of one days neglect to another, is the adding of sin to sin: For it is a repeated slight to the Call of God. Now to show you the force of this reason, do but consider who it is that calls, and what the Call is.

First, Who it is that calls, it is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.

1. It is God the Father; he that made thee, and gave thee thy being. And this, one would think, should be obligation enough to duty. He that gave thee thy being calls for thy obedience: especially considering he made thee for this end; other Creatures were made to serve thee; but there was no end of thy being but to serve God; and therefore thou hadst another make than other Creatures. He

stamped a greater excellency upon man than upon the rest of the Creatures: Every Creature bears some impression of God, but no Creature on earth but only Man bears the likeness of God. In other Creatures there are vestigia Dei, but in man only there is imago Dei, there you may see his footsteps, but here only his image. Other Creatures are formed of earth, but Man is partly earth and partly Heaven; the dust of the earth is married to the breath of God. And why such an excellent being, but to fit him for the end to which God designed him, viz. Duty and Service.

And is it not reason that God who gave thee thy being should have thy obedience? That he who gave thee a reasonable Soul should have a reasonable service? Creation is an obligation to service. Hence that of Solomon, Eccles. 12.1. Remember thy Creator. He that was not made by himself should not live to himself. He that cannot cease from depending on God as a Principle, he ought not to cease from intending God as an end, that he may be the object of our obedience, as well as the Author of our being.

2. It is God the Son, the Lord thy Redeemer.

First, It is he that took up flesh, came into thy Nature, was made Man, became thy Surety, bore the Curse due to thy sins, shed his Blood, laid down his life to ransom thy Soul, rose again for thy Justification, is gone to Heaven upon thy Errand. It is this Christ that calls thee to take up his Yoke; and is it not reason that we should bear the Yoke for him that bore the Cross and the Curse for us? Is it not reason that if we have the good of his Sufferings, he should have the glory of our service?

Secondly, It is he that with the Father hath stablished this as the great Condition of Salvation, bearing the Yoke: so that it is the standing Law of Heaven, Whoever will be saved must take up Christ's Yoke. This is the way to blessedness, and there is no other; bear the Yoke of Christ and be blessed; cast that off and Christ will cast you off, submit and be saved, reject it and Christ will reject you.

This is the unalterable condition of Salvation, and there is no other. Things are so settled in the eternal Compact between Father and Son about the case of man, that the Blood of Christ itself cannot stead us, nor the mercy of God (infinite as it is) benefit us, without this condition be performed by us. And therefore it is that Christ is so importunate in this Duty, that he calls and knocks, so many ways, by the Law, by the Cross, by Gospel-light, by the operation of the Spirit.

Thirdly, It is he that made this his great end in redeeming us, to restore us to obedience as well as to favor; and to render us capable of that service and duty which hath Glory and Blessedness annexed to it. Therefore his Blood is said to purge the conscience from dead works to serve the living God, Heb. 9 14. And this is made a reason of his bearing our sins in his body on the tree, that we being dead to sin might live to righteousness, 1 Pet. 2.24.

And who did he redeem? was it not young ones as well as others? Did he not shed as much blood, and pay as great a price for them as others?

Fourthly, It is he that hath purchased unto himself a fullness of Grace to be given forth for the enablement of thee for the susception of this Yoke, and the performing all the Duties belonging thereto; so that there shall be nothing wanting, if there be but a willing mind. The Lord Christ knows thy case, and the impotency contracted by sin; that thou canst not bear his Yoke without his strength, and influences of his Grace; and therefore he calls thee to partake of his fullness, that thou mayst be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might.

The wise God permitted the loss of man's self-fullness, that he might never more be anything in himself, but might glorify the Redeemer by an entire constant dependence upon him in fetching all from him as an indigent Creature. Mans first miscarriage was in a desire of self-sufficiency, and he hath been poor and naked from that very day. He would have a stock in his own hands, and he hath been a beggar

ever since. It was pride at the first that overthrew him, and ever since God hath left sin in him to humble him. He would have a happiness in himself, and therefore he shall have no happiness but by being outed of himself. He would live as an independent Being, and therefore to cure this, God brings him to an absolute dependence for all things; he shall have nothing but what he hath by faith and expectation, that he may thereby see what a beggarly indigent Creature he is, and so glorify the fullness of Christ. And it is the mercy of Christ that he hath a sufficiency of Grace for all that see their need, and trust to his supplies. And therefore it is all the reason in the world we should obey his Call, and take up his Yoke, who enjoins no obedience but what he gives strength and power to perform.

Fifthly, It is he into whose hand the Judgment of the World is committed, he is ordained of God, to be the Judge of quick and dead, Acts 10.42. And this is what you all profess to believe, you say in your Creed, that he is ascended into heaven, and from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead; and it is so, for the Father hath committed all judgment to the Son, John 5.22. He it is who disposes of all persons to their eternal condition, the power of life and death, salvation and damnation is in his hand. He is the Husbandman who appoints the reapers to gather the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but to gather the wheat into his barn, Mat. 13.30. He is the Bridegroom who takes the wise Virgins in with him to the marriage, but excludes the foolish. He is the man who travelling into a far Country, delivered his goods to his servants, to one five talents, to another two, to another one, and after a long time comes again and reckons with them, blessing and rewarding the diligence of the faithful, and dooming the unprofitable servant into utter darkness.

And is there not great reason then why everyone should take up his Yoke; especially considering that it is made up of those Laws that are the rules both of his Government and of his Judgment; as he rules by them, so he will pass Sentence by them, the same Laws that are now

given by Christ for a rule of life, shall then be the rule of Judgment. Our Lord Christ tells you so, John 12.48. He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him, the words that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. If you will not submit to his word to guide you, you must submit to it to try you; you may decline his Precepts, but you cannot decline his Sentence. You will not obey him when he says, Follow me, but you cannot resist him, when he says, Depart from me. It is most rational therefore you should submit to his Precepts, or ye cannot escape his wrath, Psal. 2.12.

3. God the Holy Spirit, he calls for thy obedience and for an early submission to the Yoke of Christ; and therefore it is that he begins his work in the Soul early. I know not, nor is it for me to say, how early, but certainly it is very early. There are none of you of any competent age but the Spirit of the Lord hath been dealing with you to bring you under the Yoke of Christ. The Gospel is the ministration of the Spirit, 2 Cor. 3.8. and the Call of the Gospel is accompanied with a work of the Spirit; where the Gospel calls outwardly, the Spirit calls inwardly, and this is the highest way of God's calling. There is no work of God beyond the striving of the Spirit in the heart: and doubtless the Spirit strives less or more with all under the word. He cannot be said to strive with all in the same manner, nor in all with equal power and efficacy; for then all would as well be brought under Christ's Yoke as those that are. But that he strives with all in one degree or other is evident. For whence is it that many are under such frequent and strong convictions? and that they are made to see sin, and feel the burden of it? convinced of their undone condition under it? convinced of the necessity and equity of obedience and a holy life? it is from the striving of the Spirit. And whence is it that many are brought to take up the Yoke of Christ formally and feignedly, that have no work of sound conversion wrought in their hearts? So did the stony ground hearer, he hears the word, and receives it, and what is the receiving it, but conforming to it? So did Simon Magus, he believed and was baptized, and so came under the Yoke of Christ. And whence is this but from the power of the Spirit put forth to

convince of sin, and of the equity of the ways of Christ? This doth it— Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves to thee, Psal. 66.3. The word which we render submit, signifies in the Hebrew to lie. Your Margent reads it feigned obedience, and to feign obedience when the heart is not right with God, is a lie.

And whence is it that many are wearied out of their lusts, and brought to a free and willing submission to Christ and his Yoke? but from the irresistible power of the Spirit.

And whence is it that many do resist the Spirit of Grace? How could he be resisted, if he did not put forth his power, and strive with the sinner? Resistance is a forcible opposition made by one against another in his onsets and attempts: So that it is most evident that the Spirit of the Lord strives with all, to bring them under the Yoke of Christ at one time or other. Now I pray do but consider what reason there is for your compliance with the Spirit herein.

First, Consider what his work and design is. It is to prepare the way of the Lord into the heart, to break the Yoke of sin, to destroy that confederacy with corruption, which will be the ruin of thy Soul, and so to captivate the heart to the obedience of Christ. Whatever means he uses, this is the end he pursues. If he wound us, if he break us, if he empty and out us of ourselves, it is but to bring us to a more ready and free subjection to the Laws of Christ. Wounds of Conscience are painful things, and spiritual troubles are grievous troubles, the burden of sin is a heavy burden; but so long as these things are under the management of the Spirit as instrumental to a ready obedience to the Lord Christ, there is all the reason in the world why you should undergo them.

Secondly, Let it be considered how uncertain his striving is, you don't know how long or how little while it will last. He begins early, but you know not how soon he may have done. If you refuse his calls, and repulse him when he knocks, you have no promise he will knock

again. To be sure, the more you resist him, the sooner you quench him, and where he is once utterly quenched, there he never strives again. Where it is quenched but partially and gradually, it is a very hard thing to kindle it again, as you may see Cant. 5.6. but where it is totally quenched it can be kindled no more. Alas who should kindle it?

The Saints cannot: Call now if there be any that will answer thee, and to which of the Saints wilt thou turn? (as Eliphaz said to Job in another case) Job 5.1. Could the wise Virgins kindle the foolish Virgins lamps when they were gone out? no they could not: Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out, Mat. 25.8. but alas they had none to spare: Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you, v. 9.

Can the sinner himself kindle it? no, that is impossible; he can quench it, but he cannot kindle it. He may sin away the Spirits motions, but he can never recover them again. That is plain in Prov. 1.24, 25. Because I called and you refused, I stretched out my hand and no man regarded, but ye have set at naught all my counsel, &c. Here is the Spirit quenched; and see how they strive to light it again, but in vain. Vers. 28. They shall call upon me, but I will not answer, they shall seek me early, but shall not find me. The sinner, you see, can quench the Spirit, but he cannot kindle it.

Can the Ordinances kindle it again? no neither. Alas how should they, when they have no life in themselves, but what the Spirit puts into them? Pray mind, if you at any time quench the Spirit in yourselves, you do thereby quench it in all the Ordinances; and then though the Word be otherwise the word of life, yet it is but a dead letter when the Spirit is quenched. None can kindle it again but God, and he will not. Where the sinner doth once totally extinguish it, God will never light it again.

Thirdly, If it once come to this, you can never come to Christ, never take up his Yoke. For this is a work that can never be done without the help of the Spirit. If he must help the Believers infirmities, then

sure he must cure the Sinners obstinacies; there is a yoke to be broke off, as well as a yoke to be put on; corrupt habits to be extirpated, or obedience to Christ can never be owned: And this is a work that none but the Spirit of God can effect. The yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing. Though that be spoken of the Assyrians yoke, yet it is typical of sins yoke, which none can free thee from but the Spirit of Christ; and therefore if the Spirit depart thou art undone, there is no possibility of conversion to Christ; thou art given up to a perpetual vassalage to sin and lust, and to an hardened refusal of all the counsels of God, and of all the ways of life. So that upon all these accounts it is highly reasonable that everyone of you should stoop to the Yoke of Christ early.

The Spirit of the Lord calls you to this, the end of all his motions and strivings is to bring you to this. And how little while he may strive you don't know. And if he once give over striving, the work can never be done.

Here then you see the reason why everyone should take up the Yoke of Christ in his youth, because of the Call of God. God the Father calls who made thee, God the Son calls who redeemed thee, God the Spirit calls who was sent to counsel and guide thee, to regenerate and change thee, to sanctify and make thee meet for Glory. And shall not the Call of God be obeyed? This one thing will make it appear to be the most reasonable thing in the world, viz.

The Covenant you are entered into; are not you entered into a Covenant with God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost? What is your Baptism but a token and pledge of it? Hereby God hath owned you for his; and hereby you are engaged to be the Lord's. And shall God take me into Covenant, and shall I refuse to take up Christ's Yoke? This is that will destroy your Covenant-interest. God expects that so soon as you come to years of understanding, to know your interest and duty, you should renew the Covenant of God upon your own Souls, and take hold of it for yourselves (as your Parents did for you before.) Now wherein doth your personal entering into Covenant

with God chiefly consist, but in your taking up the Yoke of Christ? Sure therefore this should be done early; if you refuse this, ye renounce your Covenant with God, you cast yourselves out by your unbelief, and then God will cast you out: Rom. 11.20. Because of unbelief they were broken off.

Secondly, Consider what this Call is. When you are called to take up the Yoke of Christ, you are called from a state of sin and misery to a state of true blessedness; from the vilest slavery and drudgery in the world, to a work of the highest pleasure and delight. No greater pleasure than in duty and obedience where the heart is right with God. You are called to holiness, 1 Thess. 4.7. God hath not called us to uncleanness, but unto holiness. And a life of holiness is the most desirable life in the world, it is the life of God; it is that life in which only a man can have communion with God; for a man must partake of the nature and life of God that would have fellowship with God; contrary natures can have no communion, He will not take the wicked by the hand. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord, Heb. 12.14. It is not meant only of seeing God in Heaven, but in this world also, for there is a seeing of God fiducially as well as beatifically, and the one is as necessary to the present state, as the other is to a state of Glory. And he that doth not see God in this world, shall never see him in the next. Now that which fits for present Vision and Communion is holiness. And your holiness lies in taking up the Yoke of Christ, and conforming to the Law and Will of Christ. This is that which you are called to: Nay when you are called to take up Christ's Yoke, you are therein called to partake of the glory and blessedness of Christ in Heaven. For though this Call of God begins in Grace, yet it ends in Glory.

There is a twofold end of God's Call with respect to sinners, the near and proximate end is the conversion of sinners to Christ, and a life of obedience; the remote and ultimate end is the bringing those to glory who are thus brought home by grace, and therefore the Call of God is said to be to glory, 1 Thess. 2.12.— who hath called you to his kingdom and glory. And 2 Pet. 1.3. called us to glory and virtue. To

virtue as the means, to glory as the end. The call begins in conversion, it is carried on in sanctification and obedience, it is completed in glory and blessedness. Whom he called them he justified, whom he justified them he also glorified: It is not said whom he justified them he also sanctified (which the order of things would seem to require) I conceive the reason is, because sanctification is included in glorification, for it is the beginning of glory; and therefore is so called in Scripture, We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord are changed into the same image from glory to glory, 2 Cor. 3.18. i.e., from one degree of grace to another, till grace be at last completed in glory. The eternal dignifying the soul with the glory of God is the ultimate end of the call of God.

So that to consider who it is that calls, and what this call is, adds a great force to the reason, why everyone should take up the Yoke of Christ in his youth.

Reas. 2. Because of the nature of sin, which gets great advantage by its continuance and uncontrolled possession. It insinuates itself into the affections by its enticing pleasures and deceiving delights; and when the affections are engaged, it is hard to disentangle them. What shall reduce that Soul from compliance with sin, which is linked to it by love and delight? The power and strength which sin hath in us is by its interest in the affections; hereby it steals into the Throne insensibly, and so gives Law to the whole man. And how shall a man stoop to the Yoke of Christ who is under the power and dominion of lust? No man can serve these two masters. Therefore it is good to shake off the Yoke of sin early, because of its encroaching nature; it goes on by little and little and by repeated and multiplied acts, it becomes a habit in the Soul; and it is a very difficult thing to remove a habit: as it is with a disease, which taken at first may be easily cured; but when by a long tract of time it hath corrupted the blood, and settled itself in the body, it is then turned to an ill habit, and then the remedies, which might have done at first, come too late. Bernard tells us of several steps and gradations by which a man

comes to the highest degree of sin; first sin is heavy, then less heavy, then light, then sweet, at length natural and unavoidable; so that what at first was difficult to be done, is at last impossible to be left undone. The carnal heart is the seat of lust, lust works to sinful acts, sinful acts repeated make a custom, and out of custom not resisted, issues necessity. Hence that of the Apostle, 2 Pet. 2.14. Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin.

Thus sin encroaches by degrees, and by multiplied acts gathers more strength, till at last it becomes unconquerable. Like many waters, which, meeting in one stream, swell to that greatness, that they overflow the banks and bear down all before them. There are three sorts of Sinners which rarely become true Converts.

Such as have long enjoyed the means of Grace, and are Sermon-proof.

Such as have made a profession of Religion and are fallen off.

And such as have long accustomed themselves to sin. And therefore how blind were the Heathens in their reasonings, who advised that young ones might have their fill of pleasure, as the best way to wean them from it. Alas they knew nothing of the corruption of nature, and of indwelling sin, of which this is a bait rather than a cure. Sensual things are so suited to brutish appetite, that you may as well go about to drown a fish by throwing it into the Sea, as to extinguish carnal desires by sensual delights; they may be cloyed, but never satisfied; they may be wearied in enjoying, but never weaned from lusting. Besides, these things interposing between God and the Soul, do render it so sottish and sensual, that it is wholly listless to any good: and how can it then take up the Yoke of Christ? Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the Leopard his spots? then may you that are accustomed to do evil, learn to do well, Jer. 13.23.

Reas. 3. The earlier the Yoke of Christ is taken up, the easier it will be. Anything is the more easily compassed by the earliness of the

undertaking. A plant that is newly set is more easily removed than one that hath taken root. Of all that were possessed with evil Spirits in Christ's time, it is observed that none were so hardly cured as they that had been possessed from their child-hood, Mark 9.21, 29. Satan will not easily quit his hold, especially where he hath had a long and quiet possession. How seldom doth grace graft upon a withered stock! That question of Nicodemus is not improper here, Can a man be born when he is old? Joh. 3.4. An old sinner is nearer to the second death than he is to the second birth. If you break a Horse to the harness, or a bullock to the Yoke, it is while they are young; if you teach one to write, or play on the Music, ye don't defer it till the fingers are grown stiff, but do it while they are more agile and nimble. It is a thrifty course to be an early Convert, delays make the work exceeding difficult. For

Hereby the mind is more blinded, the will more stubborn, the affections more soaked in sensual fruitions, and thereby more alienated from God. The Conscience more stupid and benumbed, till by custom in sinning it comes to be past feeling, like the hand that is hardened by much labor. And how hard must the conversion of such an one be! If it be a work of great difficulty to convert a hard heart which is in every man by nature, what a difficulty is it then to convert a heart hardened by custom and continuance in sin? Of all Sinners there is least hope of doing good upon those, who, by constant evil usages, have contracted such a hardness, that they can sin without fear, or regret of Conscience. Pliny says of the Tortoise, that she floats so long upon the water, till the beams of the Sun have so hardened her shell, that she cannot sink; so going on in sin under the Sun-shine of the Gospel, doth so harden the heart that it cannot repent. And this is the reason the Devil is for delaying repentance and a holy life, that so sin may take its advantages by deeper rooting and firmer habits. For these are the arms of the strong man whereby he makes the greater resistances against Christ, rooted prejudices against Religion are very hardly extirpated.

Reas. 4. Early obedience finds the kindest acceptance with God. I remember the kindness of thy youth, Jer. 2.2. God takes notice of the earliness of the work, as well as of the work itself; and hath a peculiar kindness for the kindness of our youth. It is true that a hearty resignation to God, and a serious embracing Religion by an unfeigned subjection to Christ, always finds acceptance with the Lord; Him that comes to me I will in no wise cast out. There is a double Negative in the Greek which serves to make the promise strong, and to encourage faith against all doubts and fears. I will not, not cast him out. The promise doth not only import the safety of the estate of such as are in Christ, but the welcome reception of all that come to Christ. As he will not cast them out that are once united to him, so, nor will he keep them out who desire truly to close with him whenever it be, sooner or later; whenever the heart is willing God is ready. A sincere obedience shall find acceptance at any time; but the earlier we come, the kinder shall be our reception, and the greater our welcome; and it must needs be so,

First, Because we resist the fewer calls and invitations of God, which are the expressions of his love and good will to sinners; and as nothing provokes God more than when his love is slighted, so there is nothing he is more pleased with than when the Soul is won by it to a readiness of obedience; and that which pleases God heightens our acceptance.

Secondly, We save God the labor (to speak after the manner of men) of using other means in which he less delights; there are methods which God doth not love to be found in the use of, which yet he is constrained to use for our benefit; he hath his thorn hedges to stop our course, reduce our wanderings, and bring us to himself: hence we read of his strange works and his strange acts, Isa. 28.21. Things which God delights not in, but is forced to by the stubbornness of the Creature, that he that will not hear the word and who hath ordained it, may be made to hear the rod and who hath appointed it, Mic. 6.9. Now by early embracing the ways of Christ, we happily prevent God

in that work which is so contrary to his disposition, as being more inclined to mercy than wrath.

Thirdly, We gratify him in the thing he loves; and that is, an early obedience. Under the Law all Sacrifices were required to be young. Deut. 15.19. All the firstling males that come of thy herd and of thy flock, thou shalt sanctify unto the Lord thy God. And Exod. 22.29. Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors. Mark, It must be the firstling of the herd, and the firstling of the flock, and the first ripe fruits, and the first liquors. And why? but to teach us, by these Types, how pleasing to God a timely conversion is; and that if we would present ourselves an acceptable Sacrifice to him, it must be by an early subjection to the Yoke of Christ. He loves a young Abijah, a young Josiah, a young Timothy, a young Saint for a Sacrifice. John is called the Disciple whom Jesus loved, Joh. 13.23. And why? did Jesus love none other of the Disciples but him? Yes, he loved them all, and that both living and dying; Joh. 13.1. Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them to the end. But yet he loved John above all the rest; and the reason that is given of it by some is, because John was brought to Christ early; of all the Disciples he was youngest when he took up the Yoke of Christ; he loved Christ first, and therefore Christ loved him best; and as he had the highest affection for him, so he made the greatest revelations to him. All which shows the gracious acceptance of his early obedience.

It addeth greatly to the value of a gift when it is given readily and at first asking. So when we give up ourselves to the Call of God without shifting and hucking, without demurs and delays, it puts a great value upon our obedience, and makes it the more accepted with God. Long standing off greatly provokes God, and grieves the Spirit, though we yield at last.

Many do by their lusts, as Pharaoh did by the Israelites, he refuses to let them go. Though God commands him, till Judgment terrifies him into some kind of compliance: and then he will let them go, but not far away, that he may fetch them back again; and when another

Plague comes, then he will let some go but not all; some must stay behind to be Hostages for the rest. He never consents they shall all go, till he is forced to it; so that it was not thank-worthy when he did consent: Many love their lusts more than Christ; and will not part with them, though at the Call of God, till by judgment upon judgment he makes them weary of their communion, and plagues them out of them; the smart of God's rod, the coming of the evil day, the wastes of nature, the decay of strength, the growth of diseases, the prospect of another world, the sense of a polluted nature, a corrupt heart, and a misspent life, the fore-tastes of the wrath of God; these, set home by the Spirit, may create such terrors in the conscience, as may weary a sinner out of his lusts, and bring him to Christ at last; but he shall not have that welcome as the early Convert hath. He shall be received and entertained, but not made so much of as if he had come sooner. He shall not have those comforts that an earlier Convert feels, who took up the Yoke of Christ early, and so hath walked in the fear of the Lord all his days. His own conscience shall upbraid him, and fill him with shame for the follies of a misspent life; if his bones are full of the sins of his youth, though they are pardoned in Heaven, yet he may carry the pain of them to the grave with him, and then he must needs lie down in sorrow.

Or if he meets with comfort in this life, it may be long first, and cost him many prayers and many tears, much wooing and much waiting. Though Christ, when he stands at the door and knocks, promises, that if any man opens, he shall sup with him, Revel. 3.20. Yet if Christ wait long for entrance, the Soul may be made to wait long for its entertainment. If his own Spouse deny him entrance, he will deny her his presence; if she suffers him to knock and call without admittance, he will suffer her to seek and sue for a time, without success, Cant. 5.2, 3, 6. Delay God and God will delay you; the longer you make him wait in the tenders of his Grace, the longer he will make you wait in the expectation of peace and comfort.

Reas. 5. It is the greatest business we have to attend to in the world, and therefore is to be most minded, and first entered upon. It is the

chief end of our being as creatures and as new creatures. Creation, Redemption, Regeneration, all bespeak us to this, and do fit us for this. This people have I formed for myself, they shall show forth my praise, Isai. 43.21. If God hath formed us for himself, then we are to live only to himself. Whether we live (says the Apostle) we live to the Lord, Rom. 14.8. And what is it to live to the Lord, but to take up the Yoke of Christ, making Religion the H&G, the chief business of our life? First seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, Mat. 6.33. Nothing can be of equal moment with this. All other work is but industrious idleness, and all labor but painful trifling while this is neglected. O how busy and solicitous are most men about present things! and yet how unconcerned about the service of Christ, and the salvation of their Souls. Which is as if a man that were shot through should mind to have the rent in his garment mended, but neglect to get he wound cured in his body. And yet thus brutish and besotted are the most of men, serious in trifles, but trifling in serious matters; busy like Domitian, in catching flies, but little concerned about Soul-concernments.

Reas. 6. This is the fittest and most proper season of Religion; there is no time like youth. The life of man consists of three parts, Infancy, Youth, and Old age, and of all, this is the most proper; and therefore the duty here is not commended to the first part of life, for Infancy is too soon to know God, when we cannot know ourselves; nor is it commended to the third, for Old age is too late to serve God when we cannot serve ourselves; but it is commended to the time of Youth, that being the most proper season for service and obedience. In infancy we are too young to obey, being but in our imperfect beginnings; in age we are too old to obey, being in our droops and declinings: youth therefore is the fittest time; Hence that of Solomon, Remember thy Creator, (that is, love, and serve him, for words of knowledge imply affection and practice) in the days of thy youth; in the Hebrew it is, in the days of thy choice. Youth is called the day of a man's choice, either because it is the choicest time of a man's life for any employment and service: or because it is that time which everyone would choose to live in; infancy is a burden, and old age is a

greater; we long to grow up that we may enjoy ourselves, but we fear to grow old lest we should be deprived of ourselves. Desire is the fruit of love, and yet there is one thing which all desire but none love, and that is old age; all desire to live to it, and yet no man takes pleasure in it. Or because it is a time wherein a man makes his choice; everyone then chooses his condition of life for the future. Infancy is too early to make a choice, for want of judgment to distinguish. Old age is too late to make a choice, for want of time and strength to pursue: no time therefore to choose either for this world or the next, either for our outward estate, or for our spiritual advantage and comfort, like our youth.

Reas. 7. Because of the danger of delays. It is very dangerous to defer so great and concerning a matter as your subjection to Jesus Christ is, and that

First, Whether ye look to the indisposition that delays work to. The longer sin hath possession, the faster it will rivet itself to the Soul, and so strengthen itself and harden the heart against conversion; and therefore he that is unwilling to be subject to Christ today, will be more unwilling tomorrow. Or

Secondly, Whether ye look to the uncertain duration of life; it is not only short at best, but uncertain; no man knows either how, or where, or when he shall die. I am old (saith Isaac) and know not the day of my death, Gen. 27.2. He hath no security of living another day; the body is subject to above three hundred diseases, and to as many thousand casualties. One hour may dispatch thee into another world as well as a year; a tile from the house may be as mortal as a disease; a fly, a hair, or a raisin-stone may end thy days as certainly as a Plague or Fever. One dies eating, another drinking, another laughing, another weeping, another walking, another praying, another cursing and swearing; one dies at an Ordinance of God, another at a Play-house, one of the Devils great Ordinances. One dies at Sea, another at shore. One asking a Seaman where his father died, saith he, at Sea; and where died your Grandfather? says he, at Sea; I wonder then,

said he, why you will venture to go to Sea. The Seaman asked him, Where died your father? He answered, In his bed; and where died your Grandfather? He answered, In his bed too; why then, said the Seaman, I wonder you will venture to go to bed. There is death in the bed as well as on board. Death will find a man where-ever he is; and how can a man that seriously considers the uncertainty of life, delay closing with the Call of God one moment, lest death surprise him in an unconverted condition? Would any of you be willing to go out of the world in a state of enmity to God, and to launch into Eternity in an unpardoned state? Hath God ever told you shall live to old age, that you dare defer your conversion till then? Hath God said you shall not die next sickness, or the next voyage you take, or the next time you go out of doors? Do not you see twenty die young to one that lives to old age? And why may not you? If God had told you that so many years you shall continue in the world, this might be a temptation to you to entertain your lusts a little longer, and put off the thoughts of turning to God till hereafter; but God hath in his Wisdom hid from us our last day, that we might thereby be stirred up to watch every day, and do the great work out of hand for which we came into the world.

Thirdly, It is very dangerous, if you consider the shortness and uncertainty of the day of grace; the time of life is short, but the day of grace may be shorter; it is the counsel of our Lord, Joh. 12.35. Yet a little while the light is with you, walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you. The words imply three things.

1. That the season of Grace is but short, it continues but for a little while.
2. That it is a great Duty to improve it while we have it. Walk while you have the light.
3. They that have it and do not improve it, may soon be deprived of it. Lest darkness come upon you.

There is a general and a particular day of Grace. The general day of Grace is when the Gospel is brought to a people, and the Ministry of it set up by God, whereby life and salvation is tendered to all in the blood of Jesus Christ.

The particular and special day of Grace is, when the Gospel is not only preached, and Salvation tendered, but when the Spirit of the Lord doth accompany it, and carry it home to the hearts of sinners, sometimes enlightening their minds, sometimes convincing their consciences, sometimes working inward fears and terrors from a sense of their undone condition, sometimes stirring up good affections and desires, sometimes working them to strong purposes and resolutions to repent, and turn and obey. Now where the Spirit doth thus inwardly strive with any sinner, that is his particular day of grace, his special season of finding and obtaining mercy. Seek the Lord while he may be found, Isai. 55.6. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation, 2 Cor. 6.2. If ever a sinner be converted and brought into obedience to Jesus Christ, this is the time. And it is very dangerous to neglect or defer our closing with Christ, for it is very uncertain how long or how little while the opportunity may be afforded. Who knows when his day of grace begins, or when it will end? As no man knows the number of his months; so, much less doth he know the length of his day of grace. It is not for you (as Christ says in another case) to know the times and the seasons which the Father hath kept in his own power. And the reason why God hides it from us may be, because he would have us lose no opportunity of saving our Souls, but embrace the first tenders of mercy, lest God should take our refusal, and never tender it more. If you repulse the Spirit of God when he knocks, you have no promise that ever he will knock again; and if he leaves off, you are undone forever. The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved, Jer. 8.20. God will not wait long upon a lingering sinner; he takes delays for denials, and so departs, and the day of grace ends. Most certain it is that the day of grace may be sinned away, and that whether you consider it in the general, or particular notion of it.

First, Take it in the general notion of it, for the enjoyment of the means of grace, and the Ministry of the Word and Ordinances; and this may cease. God may deprive a people of a converting Ministry and converting Ordinances, and may give them Statutes not good, as he did to Israel, Ezek. 20.24, 25. Because they despised my statutes, polluted my Sabbaths, and their eyes were after their fathers idols, therefore I gave them (or gave them up to) statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they should not live. It is a judicial process of an offended God because of abused mercies; they had the Statutes and Judgments and Ordinances of God which were just and good, and tended to life, as verse. 21. But because they slighted these, therefore he gave them up to the Statutes and superstitious Inventions of men, which were not good, but tended to death and destruction.

It is a dreadful judgment when for slighting and rebelling against the Statutes and Judgments of God, he gives a person or a people up to Statutes and judgments that are not good. And this seems to be the very judgment that God is giving this Nation up to at this day; we have slighted the Yoke of Christ, and therefore he is giving us up to the Yoke of Antichrist; we have been weary of pure Worship and Ordinances, and have been lusting after the Romish inventions, and therefore the righteous God seems to be giving us up to them, and saying to us as to that people, v. 39. As for you, O house of Israel, thus saith the Lord God, go ye, serve ye everyone his Idols. When men will not stoop to, nor own those ways of Christ which are for their good, it is just with God to give them up to those ways that are not for their good. When men receive not the love of the truth that they may be saved, for this cause God sends them strong delusions that they should believe a lie, and be damned, 2 Thess. 2.10, 11, 12. And these are the Statutes that are not good, and the judgments whereby they shall not live.

Sometimes he gives them up to a blind Ministry, the sword of the Lord is upon the arm and the right eye of the Idol-shepherd, insomuch that his arm is dried up, and his right eye utterly darkened,

Zach. 11.17. He closeth the eyes of the Prophets, and Rulers, and Seers together with a spirit of deep sleep, so that the vision of all is become as the words of a book sealed, which neither unlearned nor learned can read, Isai. 29.10, 11, 12.

Sometimes he gives them up to a profane and debauched Ministry; The Priest and the Prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, through strong drink they err in vision and stumble in judgment, Isai. 28.7. From the Prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land, Jer. 23.15. They cause my people to err by their lies and by their lightness, v. 32.

Sometimes he doth utterly take away his Ordinances, and means of Grace. Behold, saith the Lord, the days come that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread (which yet is a sore judgment, and makes the mother eat the child of a span long, Lam. 2.20.) nor a thirst for water, (for a draught whereof Lysimachus, to save his life, sold his Kingdom) but of hearing the word of the Lord. And this was the judgment of God upon Israel: We see not our signs, there is no more any Prophet, neither is there any among us that knoweth how long, Psal. 74.9. Amaziah and his Courtiers shall not need to pack away the Prophets, and forbid them preaching nigh the Court (as Amos 7.12.) for God will, as a woeful Plague to an unworthy people, remove them. And Israel shall be without the true God, and without a teaching Priest, and without Law, 2 Chron. 15.3. And this is what our Lord Christ so severely threatened, Mat. 21.43. The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. And how sadly hath this word been accomplished upon them for sixteen hundred years together. The seven Churches of Asia, as also those of Africa, (that vast Continent thrice as big as Europe) are sad instances of this. It is plain then that the day of grace in regard of the enjoyment of the Ordinances, may be sinned away. But

Secondly, The Sinners particular day of grace may be lost and sinned away; he may not only sin away the Ordinances, but the strivings of

the Spirit too; he may resist it till it is quenched, and so quench it, that it can never be kindled again. Many do in this sense out-live their day of grace, by sinning away the motions and strivings of the Spirit; for though he strives long with many, and longer with some sinners than others, yet he will not strive always: The Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man, Gen. 6.3. Nay the Spirit may not only cease striving when the Ordinances are removed, but he may cease striving while the Ordinances are continued, and then the day of grace is past, though the means of grace abide.

The general and revealed day of grace may possibly last as long as life lasts, and the sinner may sit under the Gospel-call all his days, and yet the secret and particular day of grace may be ended; the Spirit may never strive more, but leave the sinner to his lusts. This is denied by some, and hardly believed by any; let me therefore make it out, that so the danger of sinning away your particular day of grace may be a prevailing reason why you should mind Christ and his Yoke early, lest you defer it till it be too late. I shall therefore make out the truth of this five ways.

First, By the unerring evidence of Scripture instance. Was not Ishmael a sad instance of this truth? He was descended of a godly father, was in Covenant with God, had the Covenant-seal upon him, enjoyed all the means of grace; for Abraham was King, Priest and Prophet in his own house: And therefore he was not without the strivings of the Spirit; and yet for all this he is cast out of the Church, and out of Covenant. Cast him out, saith the Lord, Gal. 4.30. Now this casting out, is a cutting him off, and depriving him (as a just punishment of his scoffing spirit) of the means of grace, and especially of the strivings of the Spirit of God. And this was done when he was not above twenty years old. Oh what a dreadful instance is this! How should it awaken young ones that sit under the means of grace, and fill them with trembling. Here is Ishmael standing out against the strivings of the Spirit, and losing his day of grace at twenty years of age. So that his day of grace lasted but few years; for he was thirteen years old when he was circumcised, and so sealed

with the Covenant-seal, and therefore he was but seven years under the privileges of the Covenant.

Now how old are you? How long have you been sealed with the Covenant-seal? How long have you been under the means, and have had the Spirit striving with you? Surely much longer than ever Ishmael had; and therefore how dangerous is thy case, if thou art not yet come under the Yoke of Christ!

And what think ye of Esau? Did not he sin away and out-live his day of grace? Why else is it said, That he would afterward have inherited the blessing and was rejected. For he found no place for repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears? Heb. 12.16, 17. His time for the blessing was past and gone, he came too late, and so lost it; and was rejected, and no tears could recover it again. Now there is a great Mystery in this, and it instructs us in three great and concerning truths.

1. That by many the greatest blessings are less minded than things of smaller moment. Here's Esau preferring a morsel of meat before his birth-right.
2. To prefer temporal benefits before the greatest spiritual blessings, is an evident argument of a profane spirit. For therefore Esau is called a profane person, because he sold his birth-right (a Type of spiritual blessings) for a morsel of meat.
3. He that neglects to secure to himself spiritual blessings when they may be had, his judgment shall be, to seek and mourn after them, when it will be too late to find them. Esau first sells the blessing profanely, which God had bestowed; and afterward seeks it with tears and is rejected. And when was this that Esau thus profanely parts with his birth-right? It was very early, in the days of his youth. This is easily gathered from the story of his hunting, which ye have in Gen. 25.27. and so to the end of the Chapter, where it is said, that the boys grew, and Esau was a cunning hunter (v. 27.) and coming faint

out of the field (v. 29.) he desires his brother Jacob to feed him (v. 30.) Jacob offers him bread for his birth-right (v. 31.) Esau being very faint, (at the point to die, the Text says (v. 32.) sells him his birth-right for bread and pottage. Thus Esau despised his birth-right, v. 33. And this was very early, as soon as the boys were grown up. So that Esau survived his day of grace many years. The Spirit of the Lord left striving with him early. And was it not the sin of the poor Jews? Did not they out-live their day of grace? Oh that thou hadst known in this thy day the things which belong to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes.

Secondly, If a man may fall away from the Faith once professed, and that totally and finally, then may he sin away the strivings of the Spirit, and so out-live his day of grace. Though a man cannot fall away from the work of grace finally, yet from the word of grace he may; though he cannot utterly depart from faith implanted, yet he may from the faith professed. The Apostle says (1 Tim. 4.1.) That the Spirit speaks expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith. Now when a man comes to depart from the Faith, the word of faith (the Scriptures) and the profession of faith, and that finally, then the Spirit strives no more; for his Conscience (the next verse tells you) is seared with a hot iron.

Thirdly, It is evident in that God sometimes gives men up to their own lusts: Psal. 81.11, 12. My people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me (had no will to me, so the Hebrew) and what follows? So I gave them up to their own hearts lusts, and they walked in their own counsels. And what is it for God to give a man up to his lusts? but to let sin and corruption have the whole rule and sway in the Soul, without the wonted checks and restraints of the Spirit: This is called letting him alone in sin. Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone, Hos. 4.17. that is, let him take his own course, and pursue his lusts, till God deal with him once for all.

Fourthly, It appears in that judicial hardness of heart, blindness, and impenitency that he gives some up to, which renders all the

Ordinances utterly ineffectual; like rain falling upon a rock, that runs off without fruit. Nay in this case the Ordinances do not only not soften, but they harden; for where God hardens, everything hardens; every word, every rod, every Ordinance, every Providence; everything hath a commission so to do. Make the heart of this people fat, make their ears heavy, shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert and be healed, Isai. 6.10. Ye read in Rom. 1. of a threefold giving up: v. 24. God gave them up to uncleanness: v. 26. God gave them up to vile affections: v. 28. God gave them up to a reprobate mind. There is a gradation in this judicial process of God. Here is the practice of sin, and a giving up to that; then a love and delight in sin, and a giving up to that; and at last a senseless stupidity in sin, and then a giving up to that. And these are the three saddest judgments on this side Hell. God brought ten sad Plagues upon Pharaoh, but there was one greater than all, and that was a hardened heart. I have hardened his heart, saith the Lord, Exod. 7.13. And how is this done? How can God be said to harden a sinners heart? not by infusing any evil qualities that were not there before, but by withdrawing the striving of his Spirit, and leaving a man to be acted by his own lusts, which do quickly work to hardening the heart; and therefore that which is called a hardening the heart there, is by the Apostle here explained by giving up to uncleanness, to vile affections, to a reprobate mind. Which imports no more but a dereliction of the Spirit, a ceasing to strive any longer.

Fifthly, If a man may possibly commit the unpardonable sin, the sin against the Holy Ghost, then he may out-live the strivings of the Spirit, and sin away his day of grace. But this is possible for a man to do; so did those Pharisees and Scribes, Mark 3. They commit this sin, v. 22. And the Lord Christ charges them with it, and tells them they shall never be pardoned nor saved by reason of it, v. 29, 30. So that they out-lived their day of grace. Therefore the thing is most evident, that a man may so long go on in sin, and so, far resist the Spirit, in his strivings with the Soul, as that his day of grace may be past and gone. It may be sinned away.

How long the Spirit of the Lord may continue to strive with a sinner before he gives over and strives no more, that I think is a question too hard for any man to determine; to say thus long the Spirit will strive, but no longer; thus long the sinners day of grace shall continue, but no longer, is beyond the skill of any man.

1. Because things that are purely arbitrary come under no rule.
2. The Scripture is silent as to any positive determination herein; God hath nowhere said how long it shall be; how long he will wait to be gracious. And where the Scripture doth not determine, who can? We ought not to have an ear to hear, where the Scripture hath not a tongue to speak.
3. It is most certain that the day of grace hath differing periods. It is not of the same length to all, one sinner hath the glass of his opportunity sooner run out than another. To some God calls, and sets open the door of grace for them, and if they will enter, well and good; if not, he shuts the door upon them and never opens it more. To others he shows much long suffering, he calls aloud, and strives much, and knocks often at the sinners door before he will take a denial. To some God lays the ax to the root of the tree, and says either bear or burn, either for fruit or fire. To others God comes looking for fruit one year after another before he gives the word for the cutting them down.
4. The patience of God doth not determine the thing. For that may be continued to a sinner when the Spirit hath given him over, and done striving with him; there may be a long day of forbearance where the day of grace is past. The Lord awaken sinners to consider this, for they are very apt to presume upon God's patience, and think that a season of repentance; whereas the repentance and conversion of the sinner doth not depend so much upon God's patience as upon the Spirits strivings. It is this that puts a price into our hands to get wisdom, this makes the season of grace; the patience of God may be for a contrary end, it may be only for the filling up the measure of our

iniquity. And therefore sinners may possibly live long under God's patience and forbearance, and yet the season of the Spirit's strivings may be at an end. But yet though none can say how long or how little while the sinners day of grace shall last, yet these two things may be safely said concerning it.

First, The greater the means of grace is, the shorter the day of grace is, the old world had not so great means, but then they had a longer day: My Spirit shall not always strive with man—yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years, Gen. 6.3. It is not meant of the days of his life, that he should live so long; but it is meant of the day of grace; so many years God would give them to repent in; so many years his Spirit should strive with them before judgment was executed.

The people of Israel had greater means than the old World, but then their day of grace was shorter: Forty years suffered he their manners in the wilderness, Acts 13.18.

And afterwards in Canaan still as their privileges were enlarged, so their day was shortened. Never were their enjoyments so great as by the coming of Christ in the flesh, but yet this shortened their day of grace the more; as you may see in that Parable of the Fig-tree, Luke 13.6, 7. And in that Commission which Christ gives to his Disciples, Luke 10.10, 11. Into whatever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go out into the street and say, Even the very dust of your city we do wipe off against you, notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh to you. As if he should say, Tell them this is their day of grace, which since they slight, God will shake off them as you do the dust of your feet.

The more lively and awakening the Ministry you at any time sit under is, the shorter your day of grace is; for it either converts or hardens; it either betters your estate, or makes it worse. If it be not a savor of life to life, it will be a savor of death unto death, 2 Cor. 2.16. It never leaves sinners as it finds them. If your spiritual estate be not bettered by it, the Spirit of the Lord will not strive long, and then

your conversion is impossible. There are three sad evils which the Gospel brings upon impenitent sinners.

Their Judge will be severer.

Their Hell will be hotter.

Their Season of Grace and time of the Spirits striving will be shorter. For he will finish the work, and cut it short in righteousness, because a short work will the Lord make upon the earth, Rom. 9.28.

Secondly, The more profligate and desperate in sinning men grow under the Gospel, the sooner will the Spirit cease striving. For a man may (and many a man doth) by his own sin shorten his day of grace, and provoke God to strive by his Spirit no more; Eliphaz, speaking of the sinners of the old World, says They were cut down out of time, and their foundation overflowed with a flood, Job 22.16. And therefore what shall we think of England 's Privileges? Will they last long? I am afraid they will not, considering the desperate wickedness of the Nation that reigns in all sorts, this may justly cause God to cut them down out of time, and cause a flood of judgments to overflow their foundations. The abominable pride, gluttony, drunkenness, uncleanness, swearing, lying, Covenant breaking, oppression, injustice, perjuries, together with the Errors, Heresies, Schisms, Blasphemies, Idolatries, and Atheism of the day; and I will add, the unrighteous persecution of the Ministers and Members of Christ for nothing but their adhering to the word and Kingly Office of Christ: these things, I fear, have brought the Nations day and mercies to a near period. And though I speak it with trembling, yet I must say it, That without a speedy repentance the Lord will shortly do one of these two things, either he will remove this generation from the Gospel, or else he will remove the Gospel from this generation.

Thus you see where the force of this reason lies, delay of so great a Duty is greatly dangerous, whether you look to the indisposition it works, or to the uncertainty of life, or to the uncertain duration of the

day of grace, which may be sinned away; and then if you would come to Christ, you cannot: Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer, they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me; for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: They would none of my counsel, they despised all my reproof. Salvation is not a thing to be had at your time, but at God's time; and God's time is now in your youth. Most agree that it is a reasonable thing that sin should be forsaken, that the Yoke of Christ should be taken up; but not so soon, it is too early; and this is it upon which most men perish; they slight God's time: When I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, Hos. 7.1. A man never discovers more iniquity, and more love to sin, than in setting light by God's time of healing. The foolish Virgins would fain have entered in with the Bridegroom, but when they should have entered, their oil was to get; and when they would have entered, the door was shut, Mat. 25.10. Ye read in Revel. 10.1, 2, 6. of an Angel that hath in his hand a little book open, and he swears by him that lives forever and ever that time should be no longer. This Angel is interpreted of Christ, and the little book in his hand is the Gospel, and it is said to be open, because he makes known the whole counsel of God for our Salvation; it is Christ that gives out the Gospel and means of grace; and it is he that limits the time of man's enjoying it, beyond which he cannot enjoy it, for he sweareth that time shall be no longer.

CHAPTER VII.

Containing the last Reason, viz. from the good of Obedience. It is a necessary good, a profitable good, an honorable good, a comfortable good.

Reas. 8. The last (but not the least) reason is what is hinted here in the Text; viz. the goodness of the undertaking; there can be no greater reason of obedience than the goodness of it. All true obedience springs from love, and the object of love is good, and when a man loves and obeys God because of the goodness of his Precepts, this is excellent. Thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loves it, Psal. 119.140.

There is nothing proves our regeneration and being made partakers of the divine nature like this, for then we have the same object of love as God hath. Purity and goodness is the object of God's love, and it cannot but be so, because of its suitableness to his nature; and therefore to have the same object of love with God, argues the Soul changed into the likeness of God. Carnal minds have no relish of heavenly things. They that are after the flesh savor the things of the flesh, Rom. 5.8. That man is undoubtedly born of God that loves the word because it is good, and obeys it because it is pure.

The great argument by which Duty and Obedience is enforced upon the Creature is the good of obedience. The Lord commanded us to do all these Statutes, to fear the Lord our God, Deut. 6.24. Hear it, and know it for thy good, Job 5.27. And Deut. 10.12, 13. What doth the Lord require of thee, but to fear him and to walk in his ways, and to love him and serve him with all thy heart and with all thy soul; To keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes which I command thee this day for thy good. And here in the Text, It is good for a man that he bear the Yoke in his youth.

And the great motive upon which good men labor to confirm themselves in heart and life to the precepts of God, is the goodness of them. The commandment is holy, just and good, Rom. 7.12. The mandatory part of the word hath an inviting loveliness. As the promises of pardon and eternal life suit with the hunger and thirst of the Soul and the natural desires of happiness; so the holiness and righteousness of the precept suit with the notions of good and evil that are in man's heart, and this draws forth compliance and

consent. I consent to the Law that it is good, Rom. 7.16. It is good for me to draw near to God, Psal. 73.28. There is no likelier means to prevail upon considering minds to come under the Yoke of Christ early, than to let them see how much duty is their real interest, and that obedience is not burden so much as blessedness, for that there is a universal good in Religion.

It is a necessary good, a profitable good, an honorable good, a pleasant good.

First, It is a necessary good. Nothing in the world is of equal necessity with this; there are many things useful, but this is that one thing needful. So our Lord Christ says, One thing is needful, Luke 10.42. and that is subjection to Christ. Martha was careful about his entertainment, but Mary sat at his feet; one was providing for her Savior, the other for her Soul; and this was the most needful work. Martha was cumbered with much serving, and this distracted her in her obedience, which was the one thing needful. It is more necessary to obey Christ than thus to serve him.

First, It is necessary by a necessity of Precept; that which is first pressed should be most chiefly endeavored, and that is the business of Religion: First seek ye the kingdom of God and his righteousness, Mat. 6.33. First, before anything else; and first, more than anything else. The Lord Christ here takes their hearts off from worldly cares by setting them upon a more necessary duty; for as the body is more than raiment, Mat. 6.25. so is the Soul more than the body; hence that of our Lord, Joh. 6.27. Labor not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth to everlasting life. God is a supreme Lord, to whom we all owe obedience, and this puts a must upon us as to duty; so it did upon Christ himself, I must work the works of him that sent me, Joh. 9.4. This laid that necessity upon the Apostle, 1 Cor. 9.16. Necessity is laid me. It is necessary God should be obeyed whatever his precepts are; his charge must be kept, and his will fulfilled, for he is Lord of all; he is not only a Savior but a Law-giver, and therefore obedience is as necessary as trust and dependence.

Secondly, It is necessary by a necessity of means. He that would arrive at a designed end, must pursue it by due and proper means. Eternal life and salvation is the end which the great God propounds to all, he would have all men to be saved, 1 Tim. 2.4. But how? by an absolute Decree? No, though many argue thus blindly: If God hath decreed me to Salvation I shall be saved, let me live how I list. God never made any such Decree: he hath as much decreed the means as the end; conversion and subjection to Christ are as much decreed as Salvation and eternal life. So that no man can be saved in an unregenerate state; what can be more positive and plain than that of our Lord Christ: Joh. 3.3. Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. He doth not say, he is not like to see the Kingdom of God, or he shall not see the Kingdom of God, but he cannot see the Kingdom of God. The Salvation of that man that cleaves to his lusts, and refuses obedience to Jesus Christ, is morally impossible; he must perish, and that upon a twofold necessity.

1. A natural necessity. For it is impossible that the holy God and unholy Sinners can dwell together. Did God burn up Sodom and Gomorrhah? drown the old World? cast Adam and Eve out of Paradise? and the Angels out of Heaven for their sins? and will he lay thee in his bosom in thy enmity and filth? Darkness and light may as soon incorporate, and contraries subsist together, nay God may as soon change his nature, and cease to be what he is, as save a man in his sins and disobedience. It is contrary to his Holiness; if holy David would not suffer wicked persons to dwell in his house, can we think the holy God will ever suffer them to dwell in Heaven?

2. There is a legal necessity that he that continues in his lusts and unregeneracy must perish, and that because of the Will and Law of God. As God wills the Salvation of all that will turn to God and obey him; so he wills the damnation of all that will not, but hold fast their lusts and refuse to return. As he hath made a Law that whoever will come to Christ, and take up his Yoke, shall find rest to his Soul, and shall live forever; so he hath declared it as peremptorily, that he that

slights Christ, and will not hearken to him and obey him, shall be utterly cut off; he shall perish in his enmity; it shall be worse with him than with Sodom and Gomorrhah; he shall perish under the forest of punishments, Heb. 10.29. And therefore there is as great a necessity that such should perish, as there is that God should be true to his word; for it is gone out of his mouth in righteousness and cannot return. If God says, No unrighteous thing shall inherit the kingdom of God, why then the wicked must be shut out. If God says, He that believes not shall be damned, Mar. 16.16. then damnation must be the portion of Unbelievers. If God says, Christ shall come in flaming fire taking vengeance on all that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of Christ, 2 Thess. 1.8. then the disobedient must be the objects of his eternal vengeance. If Christ says, He that denies me before men, I will deny him before my Father which is in heaven, Mat. 10.33. then it is impossible that he who doth not obey his commands, should have any benefit by his Intercession. For God will never repeal any of those righteous Laws he hath made concerning good and evil, Saints and Sinners, Heaven and Hell, Salvation and Damnation. And if so, what will be the end of them that obey not the Gospel? 1 Pet. 4.17. What will become of those rebels that hold a counsel together against the Lord and his Christ, that they may break their bands-asunder, and cast their cords from them? Psal. 2.2, 3.

There is therefore the same necessity of Holiness as there is of Salvation. Many think they may be saved without it; live as they list, and yet enjoy God at last. But what says the Scripture? Without holiness no man shall ever see the Lord, Heb. 12.14. There is the same necessity of taking upon you the Yoke of Christ, as there is of enjoying the presence of Christ. Is the eternal happiness of the Soul necessary? then so must the bearing Christ's Yoke be, for this is the means to the end; non pervenitur ad finem nisi per media. It doth not merit Heaven, but it is the way to Heaven. It is that which qualifies for glory. Heaven is the purchase of Christ's Blood, (a purchased possession, Eph. 1.14.) but how can you hope for the benefit of his Blood, if you do not stoop to his Yoke? He is the Author of eternal salvation to them that obey him, Heb. 5.9. Slight Christ,

and you ruin your Souls. We will not have this man to reign over us, Luk. 19.14. And what is the fruit of it? Christ will take you for the enemies of his Kingdom and Government, and will deal with you as such. Those mine enemies which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me, v. 27.

O Sirs! do ye know what ye do when ye despise and reject the Laws and Sovereignty of Christ? You despise his Mercy; ye dare his Justice; you slight his Love; ye trample his Blood underfoot; ye render mercy impotent; (He could do no mighty work, Mark 6.5.) you make the Lamb turn Lion; you lay yourselves under a necessity of damnation, for all willful refusers of Christ must perish.

Thirdly, It is necessary to preserve the rectitude of Nature; if a man would be under the government of mind and understanding, and keep reason in the Throne, and be able to subdue the inordinacy of appetite, he must come under the Yoke of Christ, nothing else can do it; Philosophy may give rules, but it is Religion that gives power. How like a brute is man that is led by sense, and governed by appetite; the glory of his Being is lost. A beast in the shape and figure of a reasonable Creature; man without, but brute within. There is no middle thing; every man is either a Saint or a Beast. If he don't conform to Christ, which is the truest improvement of mind and will, he is under the government of sense, and swayed by appetite; and what makes a man more a beast than this?

Fourthly, It is necessary to prove your right to, and interest in Christ. The pretense and claim to this is very common, but right and interest is very rare; therefore it is good to put things out of doubt: Let every man prove his own work, Gal. 6.4. Know ye not that Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? 2 Cor. 13.5. How may this be known? why the Apostle tells you, 1 Joh. 2.3. Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. And v. 5. Whoso keepeth his word in him is the love of God perfected; hereby know we that we are in him. Your obedience is the best test of your interest; nothing proves your relation to his Person like your subjection to his

Precepts. Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him, 1 Joh. 3.19. Many boast great things about their interest in Christ, and have great joys and transports flowing from it; and yet all may be but the birth of a dream, the fruit of fancy and fond opinion, and it is no other where subjection to Christ is left out. He that saith, I know him, and keeps not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him, 1 Joh. 1.4. That is a sharp rebuke of Christ to those false Disciples, Luke 6.46. Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Christ hates their pretenses of relation to him, while they slight his Precepts, and disown his Government.

Fifthly, It is necessary to show our gratitude to a Redeemer, which can no way be expressed as it ought, but by a dutiful subjection to his precepts. Let us not love in word and in tongue, says the Apostle, but in deed and in truth, 1 Joh. 3.18. We never express our thankful sense of redeeming love to the life, till we make his Laws the rule of our life. And thus doth David, Psal. 116.8, 9. Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living. The greatest love that ever God showed was to give Jesus Christ. And the greatest grace that ever Christ manifested was the grace of Redemption, when he gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, Tit. 2.14. And the highest obedience the Creature can act, is when it springs from a grateful sense of the Fathers love in giving Christ, and of Christ's grace in giving himself. When we lay the foundation of our obedience where God hath laid it, in the Blood of his Son; when we love God from a sense of his love to us in Christ, 1 Joh. 4.19. When mercy melts and wins us, Rom. 12.1. When the grace of God appearing teacheth us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world, this is excellent.

The Apostle says, That faith worketh by love, Gal. 5.6. And it doth so two ways; by way of gratitude, and by way of instrumentality. It first apprehendeth love, and leaves the impression of it upon the Soul, and so begets such a love in the Soul to God as works a dutiful

subjection to all his Precepts: This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous, 1 Joh. 5.3.

The end of Redemption is duty; Christ had no design to diminish the Sovereignty of God, or lessen man's duty in any of his undertakings; but to make us more capable of service, and to render duty more easy. There is mercy provided for our failings, but no relaxation of obedience; the Gospel requires as perfect holiness as ever the Law did, yet we have a double relief provided; by sincerity on our part, and mercy on God's. Though there be no indulgence by Christ: to the least sin, yet there is pardon provided for the greatest. Christ came not to be a minister of sin, to deliver us from obedience; but he came to deliver us from the slavery of obedience; not that we might not serve God, but that we might serve him without fear, Luk. 1.74. that is, with peace of Conscience, and joy of heart.

And therefore great is the gratitude we owe to Christ; and it can no way be expressed, but by a voluntary resignation to his will, and subjection to his Yoke.

Sixthly, It is necessary for the confirming our Faith in the promises of God. There is an inseparable connection between the Precepts and Promises; the one is as essential a part of the Covenant of Grace, as the other; there is, you shall, as well as I will. I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people, Heb. 8.10. I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them, Ezek. 36.27. There is obedience enjoined, as well as mercy promised. The Covenant is of God's contriving, not ours; he prescribes the conditions, and propounds the rewards, not we. Our work is entire submission and hearty consent, we are neither to alter nor debate. And in this Covenant our eternal happiness is secured by an unfeigned consent of will to take Christ; upon the conditions God hath prescribed; and what are they? Christ and his Yoke; that is, Christ to rule as well as to save, for he came not only to be a Savior, but a Law-giver: The Lord is our Judge, the Lord

is our Law-giver, the Lord is our King, he will save us, Isai. 33.22. As Law-giver, he prescribes the rule of obedience; as King, he rules by the Law he prescribes; as Judge, he will try us by the Law of his Government, and save those that have sought his precepts; and therefore our faith in the promise of eternal rewards must be supported by our faithfulness to the commands; the greater our obedience, the higher is our hope of acceptance: I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith, there is his obedience; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, there is his confidence.

Remissness in obedience makes a waste upon our Faith; let duty be omitted, or lust indulged, and Faith languishes; and needs it must, for sin in the conversation breeds doubts in the condition; and it is as natural to do so, as it is for a wound to cause pain. Could a man obey without swerving, he might believe without doubting; the strictest holiness is usually attended with the sweetest peace and the highest assurance: Isai. 32.17. The work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance forever. And therefore when any pretend to strong hope in God, and talk of their comfort in the Promises, and great assurance; and yet are careless and remiss in their walking with God, and slack in their obedience; those pretenses are much to be suspected, and the state of that man to be questioned. For sin doth as naturally breed fear and distrust, as obedience doth hope and peace. How can a man hope in God, when he doth not observe him? or expect mercy, when he provokes him to wrath by neglect of duty? Therefore Satan doth two works at once when he tempts us to the practice of sin; he stains our Souls, and he weakens our trust. He makes us fail in duty, and doubt of mercy, for sin leaves a guilt, and guilt causes fear; and the more our fear the less our faith; as the one strengthens, the other weakens; they are like the two Buckets of a Well, as one goes up, the other goes down. That sin that lessens our respect to the precept, will proportionably weaken our faith in the Promise; a man can never be much in dependence that is little in obedience: Therefore duty is necessary for the

maintaining our trust in God; the Soul never attains to true rest but by taking up Christ's Yoke, Mat. 11.29.

That is one branch of the reason why it is the concernment of everyone to take up the Yoke of Christ in his youth, because it is good. It is a necessary good, I have showed you in six particulars the necessity of it.

It is necessary by virtue of the Precept.

Necessary as a means to the great End.

Necessary to preserve the rectitude of Nature.

Necessary to adjust our interest in Christ.

Necessary to manifest our gratitude to a Redeemer.

Necessary for the stablishing our Faith in the Promises of God.

Now that which is a good of so great necessity ought to be our greatest concernment; we should mind it more than what is not so; there are many things that are not necessary; it is not necessary we should be rich, or great in the world; or that we should be gay and gaudy in our dresses; or that we should have the cap and knee of by-standers; or that we should wallow in pleasures and delights; it will not be a pin to choose e're long what part we have acted here; when the Scepter and the Spade shall have one common grave, and Royal dust shall be blended with the beggars ashes: but it is necessary we should be born again; it is necessary we should be acquainted with God, and make him our portion; it is necessary we should submit to the Yoke of Christ, and own his commands, and live to the Lord; there is nothing necessary but this. Therefore we ought to make it our business, to come under this Yoke early.

Secondly, Subjection to the Yoke of Christ is a profitable good. And there is no argument of greater prevalency than that which is taken

ab utili. A man will do anything that he is convinced is for his benefit; therefore God quickens us to a holy life by the consideration of our own benefit. Godliness is great gain. Though God, by virtue of his Sovereignty over us, might have imposed what commands he pleased without the least injustice; yet so gracious he is, that he hath not acted by Sovereignty, but with a respect to our advantage. Not one command of God but the interest of the Creature is greatly promoted by it. The most thrifty course a man can take in this world is to come under the Yoke of Christ early: Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding; for the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold; she is more precious than rubies; and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared to her. Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honor, Prov. 3.13, 14, 15, 16.

Religion is looked on by many with an evil eye upon this very account, as standing in the way of their profit; and as being an enemy to their particular advantages: What profit shall we have if we pray to the Almighty? Job 21.15. Most men follow Christ for the Loaves; no penny no Pater noster; no profit no prayer. Ye have said it is in vain to serve God, and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinances? Mal. 3.14. They look upon the service of Christ as a very poor trade, and thriftless employment; whereas it is a business of the greatest benefit. Nothing tends so much to our advantage as a life of godliness and obedience.

As for instance:

1. Is that profitable which sanctifieth every condition to a man? This Religion doth. To the pure all things are pure, Tit. 1.15. Religion sanctifies the heart and affections, and all things are sanctified to a sanctified heart.
2. Is that profitable which is beneficial to a man in all his circumstances? So is Religion.

If a man abound with the good things of the present life, Religion is of admirable advantage to direct the uses and enjoyment, to guard the heart from its snares by keeping the mind humble under it, and setting the affections above it. It teaches how to be full and abound, how to do good, how to make friends of Mammon. It makes outward prosperity to forward and promote our eternal interest by applying it to serve the honor of God, and others necessities as well as our own.

If a man be poor; Religion is no less useful to befriend a man in this case, by teaching contentment with a little; by working the heart to a full resignedness to the will of God; by teaching how to want and suffer need; by setting the heart upon things of a nobler nature, and more necessary concernment, upon God and heavenly things; by fixing the Souls dependence upon those promises made to godliness which do as surely entitle a man to present sufficiency's, as to eternal rewards. So that when the needy sinner carks and cares, murmurs and repines, robs and deceives for a supply of his wants, the good man having a sure interest in God, rests confidently upon the never failing supplies of an engaged Providence.

3. Is that profitable which brings its own reward with it? This Religion doth. In keeping thy commandments there is great reward, Psal. 19.11. The Prophet seems here not to intend the future recompense of reward which the obedient shall receive at last in Heaven; for that is a reward for keeping his commandments, (though it is a reward not of merit but of grace) but this is a reward in keeping his commandments. The full harvest will be hereafter, but yet the Christian hath a present reaping time; for God meets them that rejoice and work righteousness, that remember him in his ways, Isai. 64.5. Our Lord Christ tells Peter (Mark 10.30, 31.) That whoever hath left house, or relations, or lands for his sake and the Gospel's, shall receive an hundred fold now in this life. So that there is a reward in obedience as well as for it. As beaten Spices recompense the pains by their grateful smell, so the practice of Religion causes a sweet reflection upon the Soul, and is thereby its own recompense. Therefore David elsewhere speaks of what he had, as a reward of

obedience, as well as what he hoped for. Psal. 119.56. This I had, because I kept thy precepts. This I had, but he doth not tell you what; but that may easily be guessed at by the dealings of God with him: He had peace of Conscience; he had the quickening's of God; he had increase of grace; he had frequent communion with God; he had joy in the Holy Ghost; he had many great experiences, many deliverances and salvations; and all this was the fruit of his obedience. This I had because I kept thy precepts, to be sure it was some great Boon, because he mentions it so gratefully as a reward of mercy for his close walking with God. So that the obedient Christian hath not all in hope, there is much in hand; he possesses much, though he expects more. For godliness hath both the promise of this life, and of that which is to come.

4. Is that profitable which fills the Soul with such joy as nothing else can? This Religion doth. It reconciles the Soul to God, stamps it with his image, lays it in with Divine principles, whereby he is enabled to take the testimonies of God for his heritage forever, which become the rejoicing of his heart, Psal. 119.111. The Promises believed do not only create a joy in the Soul; filled with peace and joy in believing, Rom. 15.13. but the Precepts obeyed minister joy also: The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart, Psal. 19.8. So that the good man's joy arises from a double spring; Faith secures his interest in the promise, and so he rejoices in hope of the glory of God, Rom. 5.2. Holiness subjects him to the precept, and so he rejoices in his conformity to the will of God. I rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies more than in all riches, Psal. 119.14. This is a joy appropriated to the Children of God; none partake of this oil of gladness, but they who have the oil of grace in their vessels. Disobedient sinners are strangers to this joy, Prov. 14.10. Theirs is a joy arising either out of perishing comforts, the joy of corn and wine and oil, Psal. 4.7. or which is worse, out of sinful acts and objects: Who rejoice to do evil, Prov. 2.14. Now this is a poor, weak, unfruitful joy; it wets the mouth, but cannot warm the heart: In the midst of laughter the heart is sorrowful, Prov. 14.13. It is rather reveling than rejoicing, and therefore the Wiseman calls it mad mirth: I have said of laughter it is

mad, and of mirth what doth it? Eccles. 2.2. What satisfaction doth it afford? what profit doth it bring with it? Will it ease the smart of affliction? will it remove the fears and doubts of Conscience? will it bear us up against reproaches? will it help us against the fear of death and judgment? If not, then what doth it? it emasculates the spirits, discomposes the judgment, displaces reason, feeds the senses, and starves the Soul: and the end of that mirth is heaviness, Prov. 14.13.

So that carnal joy is but a cold armful, as one saith of a bad wife. Like Adonijah 's feast (1 Kings 1.9, 49.) that began in mirth, but ended in fear; or like Amnon 's entertainment at Absalom 's sheep-shearing, who met with death at the banquet. Solomon compares it to the crackling of thorns under a pot, Eccles. 7.6. where there is much noise, but little fire; much light, but little heat, and soon extinct. As Comets make a great blaze, but when their exhaled matter is spent, they end in a pestilent vapor. Such is the sinners joy, soon lighted and soon wasted; when his candle is put out (as it quickly will be) it leaves a stink behind. Woe to you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn, Luke 6.25. The sinner purchases his joy with guilt and shame, possesses it with an accusing vexing Conscience, and at last it is extinguished, if not in present terrors, yet to be sure in eternal torments.

But the joy of obedience and holy walking is another thing; it is a spiritual and heavenly joy, wrought by a spiritual power, drawn out by spiritual arguments, fixed upon a spiritual object, and serves to spiritual ends and uses, to give check to worldly lusts, to extinguish sensual appetite, and abate the relish of carnal pleasures, to support under losses, wants, reproaches; to fence against the quarrels of Conscience, to arm us against the fear of death and damnation. In all these things the joy of the Lord is the good man's strength, Nehem. 8.10. and therefore it is called strong consolation, Heb. 6.18. H&G, prevailing consolation. It is prevalent against all opposition, both from corruption within, and temptation without. It gives relief against all fears, doubts, and troubles; either it prevents them, or

prevents the mischief of them, by supporting the Soul under them. This is such a good, that as no good can match it, so no evil can overmatch it. A heart full of grace, and a conscience full of comfort, makes a man sit either for doing or suffering; it makes him insuperable under durance's, and unsatisfiable in duties; for that hereby every cross becomes tolerable and light, and every command delectable and sweet.

5. Is that profitable that at once serves our temporal, our spiritual, and our eternal interest and advantage? This Religion doth.

First, It serves our temporal interest. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you, Mat. 6.33. In the Christians Charter the World is put in as well as Heaven, and things present, as well as things to come, 1 Cor. 3.21, 22. It is said of Wisdom (that is Christ) Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honor, Prov. 3.16. And what doth Christ do with these blessings in his hand, but bestow them upon those that keep his precepts with their whole heart? And therefore the same thing is said of obedience, v. 1, 2. Let thine heart keep my commandments, for length of days, and long life, and peace (which comprehends all the rest) shall they add unto thee. Pray mind, they are in the hand of Christ, (for the Father hath put all things into his hand) and yet they are handed-out by the Commandments. How is that? why thus: Obedience to the commands qualifies us to receive the blessings of the Promise, and then Christ hands out to us the promised blessings. Unless these things were in the hand of Christ, obedience would never add them to us; and unless we are found in the way of obedience, Christ will never bestow them upon us; for we have no claim. It is Godliness that hath the promise of this life; and so it serves our temporal interest. Though the temporal rewards of godliness must be expected with much submission; yet, so far as they are good for us, they are as much secured to us as Heaven and Glory. He will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly, Psal. 84.11.

Secondly, Godliness serves our spiritual interest, and that is the thing we are chiefly to mind; the Soul is far more than the body, and therefore a spiritual good is to be preferred before a corporal. Religion serves our spiritual interest two ways.

First, It secures to us the chief good; that good that is comprehensively all good, and without which nothing can be good, and that is God. God with all his Attributes, God with all his Treasures, God with all his Promises; if we perform our part of the Covenant, God will not fail of his part: Ye shall keep my judgments and do them. And what then? ye shall be my people, and I will be your God, Ezek. 36.27, 28.

Secondly, It secures the life of the Soul. And that is more worth than all the world. This Christ intimates in that question, Mat. 16.26. What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Two things are here intimated.

1. If a man should gain the whole world with the loss of his Soul, it would be but a losing bargain.

2. When the Soul is once lost, nothing in the world can regain or redeem it. And therefore what so profitable as Religion, that secures the life of the Soul? All the gold in the world cannot secure the Soul, but grace can. Riches profit not in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death, Prov. 11.4. In the way of righteousness is life, and in the pathway thereof there is no death, Prov. 12.28.

Thirdly, Godliness serves our eternal interest. It tends to an everlasting blessedness. And herein the greatest gain of godliness consists, in that it hath the promise of the life that is to come, 1 Tim. 4.8. The Soul is immortal, and therefore cannot be satisfied with any perishing good; man that lives forever must have a happiness that will endure forever; and there is but one way to secure it, and that is

by an obedient subjection to the Yoke of Christ. This is the appointed means to that blessed end. Being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life, Rom. 6.22. God hath not absolutely promised Salvation and eternal life to any; but he hath annexed it to certain dispositions and qualifications, without which we shall never share in the blessing promised: Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the Law of the Lord, Psal. 119.1. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God, Mat. 5.8. So that holiness and obedience is a necessary disposition for eternal blessedness. For God will render to every man according to his works: To them who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, and honor, and immortality, eternal life, Rom. 2.6, 7.

And therefore it plainly appears how profitable a life of godliness is, in that it hath so direct a tendency to our temporal, to our spiritual, and to our eternal benefit. Why then should any one refuse to take up the Yoke of Christ in his youth?

Sixthly, Is that profitable which will abide by us forever? which is a durable good? Such grace and holiness is. As of evils they are the most detrimental that are most durable, and therefore sin is the worst of all evils, because it is durable; though the act of sin ceases, yet it binds an eternal guilt upon the Soul of the wicked, which shall never wear off. And besides, his corrupt nature and vicious disposition, his hatred and enmity to God remain in him forever. And therefore of all evils sin is the most detrimental.

So in genere boni, that is the most beneficial good that will abide by us forever; and such is grace and holiness. It shall abide in the Soul forever; and hence it is called the true riches, Luke 16.11. and durable riches, Prov. 8.18. It may be thy riches lie in houses, lands, money, ships, or the like. Alas these are not durable; yet a little while and thy title to all these things will be extinguished; but thy grace, thy love to God, thy holiness, thy conformity to his will, thy obedience, shall never be extinguished.

From all that hath been said, the benefit of Religion plainly appears; and that conclusion of the Apostle stands firm, Godliness is profitable to all things. And this is a second branch of the reason why everyone should take up the Yoke of Christ early, because it is a good so much conducing to our benefit.

As it sanctifies every condition.

As it is advantageous to a man in all his circumstances.

As it brings its own reward with it.

As it fills the Soul with such a joy as nothing else can.

As it serves our temporal, spiritual, and eternal interest.

As it abides by us forever. Therefore it is not in vain to serve God; it is every way for your benefit to be early Converts; and if so, who would not be religious early, and take up the Yoke of Christ in his youth, seeing God is such a rewarder of them that diligently seek him?

Thirdly, Subjection to the Yoke of Christ is an honorable good. The Heathens made Honor the effect of goodness, and the Egyptian Hieroglyphic painted it between humility and labor; and the Romans so placed their Temples, that he that would go to the Temple of Honor must pass through the Temple of Virtue. Nothing is truly honor to a man but Religion and Virtue. Prov. 22.4. By humility and the fear of the Lord (and that takes in the whole of Religion and obedience) are riches, and honor, and life. And therefore in Scripture good men are called Vessels of honor, 2 Tim. 2.21. And sanctification and honor are put together, 1 Thess. 4.4. That you should know how to possess your vessel in sanctification and honor. Nothing can be so great an honor to a man as Religion and Godliness.

1. This makes a man like God. The truest resemblance that man can carry to his Maker is in Holiness; therefore one says Godliness is

God-likeness, it is the image of God in man. Eph. 4.24. That ye put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. And what greater honor than to resemble God, especially in that which is the glory of all his perfections, and that is holiness? His holiness is his greatest honor and glory. Who is like thee, O Lord, among the God's? who is like thee? glorious in holiness. For this reason sin is the basest and most dishonorable thing in the world; it blots out the image of God in man. It robs him of his Holiness, and what is a man without holiness? Take holiness from an Angel, and he becomes a Devil: and man without holiness is like him.

2. The Word everywhere puts such a difference and distinction between the godly and ungodly as speaks Religion to be very honorable. Good men are called the precious, The precious sons of Zion, Lam. 4.2. Since thou wast precious in my sight thou hast been honorable, Isai. 43.4. And evil men are called the vile. Psal. 15.4. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned. Dan. 11.21. In his estate shall stand up a vile person, i.e., Antiochus. And Jer. 15.19. If thou take forth the precious from the vile. The righteous are called Wheat, and the wicked Chaff, Mat. 3.12. Others, reprobate silver; these, fine gold; others, dross; these, Jewels, Mal. 3.17. they briars and thorns, these a noble Vine. Nay good men are called the excellent of the earth, Psal. 16.3. Outward ornaments, or Titles of earthly Honor, (which set one above another in this world) without the inward ornaments of Grace and Holiness, are but like the Trappings of a Horse, or the Chains of Gold about the necks of the Midianites Camels, they advance not a man one step above the beasts that perish.

3. God himself honors such; and he is the fountain of honor: he whom God honors shall be honored indeed. 1 Sam. 2.30. Them that honor me will I honor, Psal. 91.14, 15. I will set him on high, because he hath known my Name— I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him.

4. True honor begins in Religion and ends there. When a man begins to own and serve God, there his honor begins. And when a man casts

off Religion, his honor is lost. He that despises me shall be lightly esteemed, 1 Sam. 2.30. Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown, Rev. 3.11. A Crown is a token of the highest honor; and what is the Christians Crown? He hath two Crowns, one present, one future; his future Crown is Glory. His present Crown is godliness and sincerity in Religion; if he falls from Religion, his Crown falls.

5. In that it is pretended to for by-ends, where nothing of the truth and power of it is. Having a form of godliness, but denying the power. What makes men hypocrites but because they would have the honor of Religion, though they have nothing of the truth of it. If a man would increase his trade, and draw custom, he pretends Religion. If a man would draw Disciples after him in broaching any new Opinion, he must be very strict, and seem very religious; for this gives a reputation to a person among the vulgar, that judge by appearances, and so promotes the Doctrine. Now if Religion were not a thing of great honor and reputation, men would never pretend to it, that are enemies to the life and virtue of it.

6. It is praised by them that love it not. He that fondly hugs vice, will yet commend virtue. The Drunkard will commend sobriety, he would not have his child or servant a drunkard. The Deceiver commends Justice; and though he practices deceit upon others, he himself would not be served so. He loves to buy by just weights and measures, though he sells by false ones. The Adulterer loves a chaste wife, and the filthy Strumpet would have her husband true to her bed, though she be false to his.

7. It puts honor upon a man in death. The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance, Psal. 112.6. The memory of the just is blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot, Prov. 10.7. No man dies in the bed of honor but he that perseveres in the ways of God whiles he lives, and dies to the Lord when he dies.

8. Christ will put honor upon him at last. When the wicked shall be cast out with shame and everlasting contempt from the glorious

presence of God with a go ye cursed, then shall the righteous be honored with a come ye blessed of my Father, &c. And shall shine body and soul with the glory of Christ forever.

O what an honor is it to be godly. Let no man be ashamed of Christ and his Yoke. What though Religion is scoffed at in the world, it is only by them that know nothing of it, and so are not fit to judge. The Moon is never the less bright because the dogs bark at it. It is sin that is the reproachful thing. Prov. 14.34. Sin is a reproach to any people. It is a dishonor, Prov. 6.33. It is a shame, Lest he walked naked, and they see his shame, Rev. 16.15. Sin is not a thing of good report; is it any reputation to a man to be a drunkard? unclean? proud? covetous? profane? Oh no. Sin hath an ill name in the world, among all, even sinners themselves, unless it be among the vilest Torys and Debauchees; and it becomes the more odious by their esteem and character. If there be any honor in sin, why do men hide it? Why doth it seek corners and the covers of darkness? They that are drunk are drunk in the night, 1 Thess. 5.7. The eye of the adulterer waits for the twilight, saying, No eye shall see me, and disguises his face— The morning is to them as the shadow of death, if one know them they are in the terrors of the shadow of death. Job 24.15, 17. And Solomon says of the young man void of understanding, that he goes to the harlots house, In the twilight, in the evening, in the black and dark night, Prov. 7.7, 8, 9. And why is not sin owned by its own name among its servants and abettors? But it must be painted with virtues colors, to render it taking. This speaks it deformed and ugly in itself.

Covetousness is condemned of all, I but frugality is a lovely thing: and therefore griping, and carking, and caring, and pinching, is not covetousness, but frugality. A proud person is contemned of all. I but neatness and decency is lovely, therefore she is not proud, but only loves to be neat and gent. To be a drunkard is a beastly thing, therefore it must not be looked on as drunkenness, but good fellowship, and a free use of the creature. Sin dares not be known by its own name, nor appear in its own complexion; this argues it to be a base and dishonorable thing. And needs it must, for what honor

can there be in sin that dishonors God? Can that bring honor to a creature that brings the greatest dishonor to his Maker? He that expects honor from sin may as well expect to make himself sweet by lying in a Jakes. Can that bring honor to a man that blinds his mind, besots his reason, degrades him below himself, and renders him a beast? Eccles. 3.18. That they might see that they themselves are beasts. Can that be honor to a man that defiles his Conscience, separates him from God, and at last damns his Soul? Ah what a base, shameful, dishonorable thing is sin!

Now all this sets off the honor of Religion, for that is contrary to sin. Young men! would you get a good name in the world at your first setting out? Would you have credit and repute abroad? Would you be honored of men, of good men, nay of God himself? Why the only way is to be sober, temperate to yourselves, just, righteous, merciful, good among men, devout, humble, holy and obedient to God. There needs no other excellency in the world to give honor and reputation to a man, than Religion in the power and practice of it. What Diogenes said of Virtue is most true of Religion, it makes poor men wealthy, old men happy, and young men honorable.

And this is a third branch of the reason why every man should take up the Yoke of Christ in his youth, it is good, as being honorable. It shall bring thee to honor when thou dost embrace it, Prov. 4.8.

Fourthly, Subjection to the Yoke of Christ is a pleasant good. Every man is drawn by pleasure and delight, especially young ones. And therefore as Satan makes pleasure the bait of sin, so the Holy Ghost makes it the motive to godliness. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, Prov. 3.17. The great objection against Religion is, the severity of its precepts, and thereby the unpleasantness of its paths; the life of Christianity is looked on as a sour and uncomfortable life; whereas there is nothing in it but what is pleasant and sweet, easy and light. And under these properties Christ commends it to us, Mat. 11.29. Take my yoke upon you, I but it is a heavy Yoke, and his Commands an intolerable burden. Now Christ seems to obviate such an

objection as this in the next verse, for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light, v. 30. And the Apostle tells us, His commandments are not grievous, 1 John 5.3. Not grievous in themselves, nor grievous to them that love him; if they are grievous to any, it is to them to whom sin was never grievous, whose hearts are so possessed by lust, that the Precept hath no place; it is a hard heart that makes duty hard, and the love of sin that makes obedience a burden. That I may make this a forcible Argument to draw young ones to take up Christ's Yoke, I shall make this out, That subjection to God is matter of pleasure. The whole of that task and duty which the Gospel requires of us is easy and delightful. This I shall endeavor to make out three ways.

1. Positively.
2. Comparatively.
3. By a Collation of Instances.

1. Positively. And there are three things to be considered, which will make out the Yoke of Christ to be truly pleasant and delightful.

First, The matter of his service. What doth the Lord require of us, but to fear the Lord, and trust in him, as David sums it up, Psal. 115.11. In Solomon's phrase it is, Fear the Lord, and depart from evil, Prov. 3.7. Our Lord Christ sums up all in one word, Love. Love to God and our Neighbor; this is the fulfilling of the whole Law. Zacharias comprises all in two heads; Holiness and Righteousness. Micah ranks all under three heads; To do justly, to love mercy, to walk humbly with God. The Apostles three Adverbs state the matter more distinctly; living soberly, righteously and godly. The grace of God (viz. the Gospel) that brings salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. Sobriety doth right to a man's self, Righteousness doth right to his Neighbor, Godliness doth right to his Maker. So that these three make up Christ's Yoke. They

comprise the whole of a Christians duty, and what unpleasantness is there in any of these duties? Consider them distinctly.

What truer pleasure than in Sobriety, which way soever it acts?

If it acts to moderate the judgment in Opinions concerning Religion; to keep it from being carried away with abounding and prevailing Errors; this must needs be sweet and pleasant, if the mischievous nature and consequences of Error be but a little considered. As it defiles the Judgment; obstructs Communion with God; gratifies Satan; fills with pride, self-conceit, contempt of others, strife and variance; racks and tortures the Brain to maintain and defend it. For if one Error be espoused many will follow; and he that maintains one, is bound to maintain all that depend upon it.

If it acts to bound the appetite in meats and drinks; it affords a great pleasure therein. For no man enjoys the creature with that delight and sweetness as he that enjoys it without excess. But who can express the mischiefs and maladies of gluttony and drunkenness, the pains and diseases they breed in the body, and the pangs and wounds they cause in the Soul?

If it acts to moderate the affections in the seeking and enjoying the things of this life; this must needs be a great pleasure and ease; as it frees the Soul from many anxious thoughts; many vexing cares; many snares and temptations; many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition; and pierce them through with many sorrows. So that sobriety is a great pleasure as it is the cure of spiritual giddiness, the bar of intemperance, the bridle of appetite, the check of inordinate affections, and the fence and guard of wisdom.

Next consider the duty of Righteousness, as it respects our Neighbor; and how pleasant and delightful is the practice of it! to be just in our dealings, faithful in our trust, merciful to the poor, true in our testimony, loving to all, always exemplifying in our practice that

golden Rule of Christ, Doing to others as we would that they should do to us, Oh how sweet and pleasant must this be.

But is there that pleasure in Unrighteousness? no, but the contrary. Who can reckon up the clamors it causes without and within? Who can number the troubles of strife and variance? How great is the pain of malice and envy! What torments and horrors do blood and murder fill the Soul with! Add to this, that while unrighteousness is the bane of conversation, which turns the world into a den of savage beasts, where one devours another; righteousness is the bond of human Society, which consults glory to God, honor to Religion, quietness to Conscience, and happiness to Mankind.

And the same may be said of Godliness; there can be nothing so truly pleasant and sweet. Look upon the knowledge of God in Christ, and how pleasant is that! The Scripture calls it life eternal. One part of the pleasure of Heaven consists in knowing God, and therefore this light must needs be sweet here. And if it be sweet to know him; how sweet is it to be united to him? And that whether ye consider the misery of a state of distance and enmity, in which God is a consuming fire, and we as briars and thorns: and this is the state of every man by nature, without God in the world.

Or whether you consider the objects to which all are united that are not in union to God. Their union is with their corruptions; they are in Covenant with sin; their Souls are glued to their lusts; some to pride, some to covetousness, some to uncleanness; and how transcendently sweeter must the pleasure of union to God be than this!

Or whether ye consider the nature of this union, as it is spiritual and indissoluble. It is a spiritual union; and therefore the pleasure of it is spiritual; it is not to be seen, nor felt, nor tasted by common senses, and therefore the natural man is so far from receiving it, that he scoffs at, and derides it. Such wisdom is too high for a fool, and therefore it is to him foolishness; but the more spiritual and sublime, the greater must the pleasure of it be to the Heaven-born Soul. It is

an inseparable union, which can never be dissolved; nothing can break it. Death itself, which can untie all other unions, that of friend and friend; that of man and wife; that of body and soul, which of all is the nearest; yet it cannot reach to dissolve this; though the Soul and the body part, yet God and the Believer part not, neither as to body nor Soul; for while the Soul is hereby taken up into a full communion, the body is not left alone in the grave: Death cannot separate from the love of God in Christ. Therefore ye read of the dead in Christ, 1 Thess. 4.16. Mark it, dead; and yet in Christ, though Dead. This is meant of the body, for the spirit dies not. The body is in union to God when rotting in the dust: therefore it is said to sleep in Jesus. O how sweet must union to God be upon this account, that it is indissoluble; though it had a beginning, it shall never have an end.

Or whether ye look to the many and great blessings which flow from this union to God. Such as pardon of sin, the grace of Adoption; the indwelling of the Spirit; a participation of all Grace; a title to all the Promises and blessings of the Gospel. Oh how pleasant and sweet must these things needs make out union to God to be.

And where there is this union to God, how delightful and sweet must all worship and service, and all obedience to his commands be. For by virtue of this union to God the Believer derives such power and strength from him, as makes every duty not only possible, but pleasant.

And where a man is much in obedience he is much in communion; and much communion with God brings in much comfort; and much comfort makes the life sweet and pleasant. Therefore no life to the life of godliness. Is there pleasure in living in Heaven? Why a life of godliness is a conversation in Heaven, our conversation is in heaven, Phil. 3.20. Hath God pleasure in his own life? why godliness is the life of God. As Holiness is the Divine nature; so the acting of Holiness is the Divine life: Now as the life of God, being the highest life, must necessarily be filled up with the highest pleasures and delights; so a Believer partaking of the life of God, which is of all the

highest, must proportionably partake of the pleasures of God, which are of all the greatest. And thus you have the first consideration which makes the Yoke of Christ pleasant; and that is, the matter of his service.

Secondly, Consider the state in which this service is commanded, and this Yoke enjoined to be put on; and that is a state of regeneracy and renovation. Without this, obedience is not only difficult, but impossible. The proud neck of nature cannot bow to the Yoke of Christ. We will not that this man rule over us. The tree must be good before the fruit can be good. Good works don't make a man good; they prove his state to be good, but they do not make it good; that is God's work. Hence that in Ezek 36.26, 27. A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh, and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them. So that it is first a new heart and a new spirit, and then a new life: first a good tree, and then good fruit: first spiritual habits, and then spiritual acts. In Creation every creature is fitted and furnished with such faculties and powers as are suitable to those actions which are proper to its nature. So it is in the new Creation: We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, Eph. 2.10. First a new creation, and then a new conversation; and this makes Duty a delight.

Things are easy or unpleasant according to the inclination and poise of our spirits. All pleasure and delight in doing arises from a suitableness between the heart and the work; if there be Precepts upon us and a defect of Principles within us, much may be done, but there can be little pleasure in doing. A sick man may eat and drink as a healthful man doth, but he hath no pleasure in it; all things are savorless and against stomach; he hath no delight in it. But it is for other ends, that nature may be supported, and life preserved; he cannot live without taking something. But a man of a sound body and healthful temper acts not only his judgment in eating, but his pleasure and delight, his appetite is stirred up by the sweetness that

he tastes in it. So it is with a regenerate man; sweetness becomes a motive to obedience, and duty is drawn forth by delight. I delight to do thy will, O my God. And mark whence this delight springs: Thy Law is within my heart, Psal. 40.8. The Law was not only his Command, but his nature; God writes his Law in the Word, and so it becomes our rule; but when he writes it in our hearts, then it becomes our nature. And this is it that makes obedience sweet and pleasant, because it is now natural. There is an inward Principle suited to the outward Precept.

Thirdly, Consider the pleasures with which this service is attended: It is not more natural for sin to bring forth sorrow and trouble, than for Religion to afford pleasure and sweetness.

It denies no lawful pleasure which others enjoy.

It affords pleasures which others cannot enjoy.

First, It denies no lawful pleasures which others enjoy; doth the sinner take pleasure in the creature? So doth the good man more truly; for Religion moderates the affections and teaches the right use of the creature, and thereby heightens the pleasure of the enjoyment, it curbs and restrains our excesses; and moderated affections make our fruition the more sweet; because hereby sin is excluded which imbitters the enjoyment. There is no pleasure which a wicked man sins in enjoying, but a good man may enjoy without sin; and where there is least sin there is most sweetness.

Nay farther, Religion spiritualizeth the enjoyment; and thereby a good man hath more sweetness in the creature than any other can have; as the Be hath more delight in the flower than other creatures can; because they have only the sweetness of the scent, but the Be hath the sweetness of the honey with the scent. Natural man hath only a natural sweetness; but the spiritual man hath a spiritual sweetness with the natural, and so enjoys a higher pleasure in the creature than any natural man can.

Secondly, Religion hath its peculiar pleasures which none but good men can partake of. It gives pleasure and delight in God, when the creature affords none. The sensual man is beholden to the Fig-tree, and the Vine, and the Olive; to the Field, the Fold, and the Stall; if these fail, his comfort fails. But the good man hath a never-failing Spring of delight when all these streams are cut off. Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls. Here are all his streams cut off; now where is his never-failing Spring? why it is in God. Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation, Habak. 3.17, 18.

No delight so sweet as delight in God. The dim light of Moon and Stars are a comfortable ministry in a dark night, and we are glad to walk by the light of them; but when once the light of the Sun breaks out, who regards the Moon or Stars then? Creature-comforts are pleasant things to a sensual Spirit that knows no better enjoyment; but when once God discovers himself to the Soul, and sheds abroad his love in the heart, what poor things are these then?

The pleasure of walking with God, and the pleasure of a witnessing Conscience, (without naming anymore) outvie all the pleasures in the World for sweetness and delight. And these are peculiar to Religion and a life of godliness; no stranger intermeddles with this joy.

1. In Religion and the practice of Godliness a good man walks with God. There is a twofold walking with God, and both exceeding sweet.

In Holiness and Obedience.

In Comfort and Experience.

First, There is a walking with God in Comfort and Experience; and this consists in sensible communion and fellowship with God. This is that our Lord Christ enjoyed much of: John 16.32. I am not alone, because the Father is with me. He had much of it in that Voice from

Heaven, Mat. 3.17. This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. He had much of it in the Transfiguration, Mat. 17.2. He was transfigured before them; this imports a wonderful letting forth of the glory of God upon him, and so speaks an high degree of communion. Moses had a great measure of this transfiguring communion in the Mount when his face shone; and Paul, when he says he cannot tell whether he was in the body or out of the body; but speaks as though he had been really in Heaven. These are extraordinary manifestations of God which are fitted only to special seasons; and though they are exceeding sweet, and fill the Soul with great transports of joy; yet they are not designed for continuance, nor allotted to many.

But there is a more ordinary communion with God which every good man may lay claim to: The Apostle John speaks of it as the undoubted privilege of every Believer, 1 Joh. 1.3. Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And Christ promises it to all that obey his Commands: John 14.21. He that hath my commandments and keepeth them loveth me, and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him. And v. 23. We will come unto him and make our abode with him. These expressions import a special presence of God, and peculiar emanations of his love, filling the Soul with such a sweetness and delight as none else can experience. Hence that of Judas (not Iscariot) to Christ, in v. 22. Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us and not to the world?

This is a comfort the world knows nothing of Indeed a Believer himself hath no security of enjoying it always. As one Believer enjoys it more than another; and the same Believer enjoys it more at one time than another; so sometimes he enjoys it not. God never promised to any man such a vouchsafement of his comforting presence as should know no interruption; for if so, then God would leave himself without a liberty to show his dislike of sin. That promise, Heb. 13.5. I will never leave thee nor forsake thee, secures to a Believer the duration of his union, but not of his communion; it

entitles him to the certainty of his presence, and care of his Providence; but not to the light of his countenance. It makes over to him the constant supports of his Power and Grace, but not always the actual possession of joy and comfort.

Secondly, There is a walking with God in Holiness and Obedience: Thus it is said Enoch walked with God three hundred years, Gen. 5.22. that is, by a holy conformity to his will. To live to the will of God; loving what God loves; hating what God hates; doing what God commands; this is the highest kind of walking and communion with God; for it is a communion with him in his own nature, which is holiness. Now thus every good man walks with God, and hath a daily communion with him, so far as holiness is in exercise.

How often may we hear the Children of God complaining of the want of communion with God! this arises from a mistake of the thing. They judge of fellowship by sensible fruitions; and of communion by comfort. So much as God gives out of the comfort of his presence, and the light of his face, so much communion they partake of. And where this is not enjoyed, there all communion is denied. Whereas communion with God may be maintained and yet present comfort may be left out. Though they cannot walk by the light of his countenance, yet they may walk by the light of his counsels. So did Job (Chap. 23.8, 9, 10, 11, 12.) Behold I go forward, but he is not there; backward, but I cannot perceive him; on the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him; he hides himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him. But he knows the way that I take, —my foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept and not declined. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips. Here you may see Job walking with God, when at the same time he cannot find him. He walketh by the light of his will revealed, when he cannot walk by the light of his face discovered; and so hath a communion with him in his counsels, though not in the light of his countenance. And this makes the Yoke of obedience pleasant, it is a walking with God; you have hereby communion with him in his Holiness, when you want the comforts of his presence; and this makes your way

sweet, though God doth not shine upon your path. This I take to be the meaning of that of David, Psal. 112.4. Unto the upright there ariseth light in darkness. Holiness yields a sweetness and comfort, when it may be the light of God's face yields none.

2. Godliness is attended with the pleasure of a witnessing Conscience. He that follows its guidance shall never want its witness. God leads man by a twofold guide; the Word and Conscience; the Word without, and Conscience within; the Word is a light to us, and Conscience is a light in us; the Word directs the Conscience, and Conscience directs the conversation. And he that follows the guidance of Conscience as it is guided by the Word, shall never want a witness to the goodness of his state and heart. He that opposes and violences Conscience, shall find it witnessing against him; but he that is guided by it, shall have it a witness for him. As the Spirit of God is first a Counselor, and then a Comforter; so Conscience is first a guide, and then a witness.

And what greater pleasure than the witness of a man's Conscience to the goodness of his conversation? As a condemning Conscience is the greatest torment, as being a degree of Hell; so a witnessing Conscience is the greatest comfort as being a first-fruits of the joy of Heaven. Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, 2 Cor. 1.12. A witnessing Conscience brings with it an unspeakable sweetness and comfort. As for instance.

First, What is it that satisfies a man when nothing else can? it is the witness of his Conscience. A good man is satisfied from himself, Prov. 14.14.

Secondly, What is it that gives confidence and boldness towards God? it is a witnessing Conscience. 1 John 3.21. If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God: H&G, we

have boldness; so the word is rendered in Heb. 10.19. Having, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

A good man hath a threefold boldness and confidence from a witnessing Conscience.

1. A boldness in Prayer, Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, Heb. 4.16. There are three things which together cause this boldness.

First, The Throne God is upon, to whom we make our requests: viz. a Throne of Grace and Mercy; Let us come boldly to the throne of grace, Heb. 4.16.

Secondly, The advantage we have by Jesus Christ at the right hand of God; Who ever lives to make intercession for us, Heb. 7.15.

Thirdly, The help of the Spirit; whereby we are enabled to call him Father; and who makes intercession in us, Rom. 8.15, 26.

2. Boldness and confidence in the midst of all dangers: He shall not be afraid of evil tidings, Psal. 112.7. Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, yet will I fear no evil, Psal. 23.4. The righteous is bold as a lion, Prov. 28.1.

3. Boldness and confidence in the day of Judgment: 1 John 4.17. That we may have boldness in the day of judgment. And how sweet must this be, to die and go to the Bar of God, confidently assured of the goodness of our case.

Thirdly, What is that which comforts and supports a man when all else (it may be) witness against him? It is a witnessing Conscience.

Sometimes men may witness against him, and falsely charge him, as in Jobs case; yet then Conscience supports him; in the testimony whereof he can appeal to God, as in Chap. 10.7. Thou knowest that I am not wicked.

Sometimes God seems to witness against him, Thou writest bitter things against me, Job 13.26. Yet then to the upright there arises light in darkness, Psal. 112.4.

Sometimes Satan witnesseth against a man; accuses him of hypocrisy and unsoundness of heart in the ways of God, as he did Job of serving God for by-ends, Job 1.9, 10. yet then Conscience supports him, as it did good Hezekiah, in the testimony whereof he appeals to God, Remember, Lord, how I have walked before thee with an upright heart.

Fourthly, What is that which fills the Soul with peace and joy when troubles and distresses are upon us? it is the witness of Conscience. This made Paul and Silas sing in the Stocks. This made the Martyrs triumph in the midst of the flames. As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing, 2 Cor. 6.10. O what a sweet thing is a witnessing Conscience! it fills a man with the richest and the most lasting peace.

1. With the richest peace; and therefore it is called the Peace of God: Phil. 4.7. The peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus. That this is the peace of Conscience is evident, in that it is said to keep the heart and mind. And it is called the Peace of God.

First, Because of the greatness and excellency of it; according to that Hebraism whereby things great and excellent are intitled to God. As the mountains of God, the Cedars of God, the increase of God, Col. 2.19, &c.

Secondly, Because he gives it. When he gives peace, who can make trouble? Job 34.29. All the world cannot give peace to a troubled Conscience. Solomon says, Money answers all things. But it can never answer the doubts and distresses of Conscience. It is God that speaks peace there, Psal. 85.8.

Thirdly, To distinguish it from the worlds peace, which is a carnal peace, an outward peace, a false peace; but the peace God gives is a

true peace, an inward and spiritual peace, John 14.27.

2. It fills a man with the most lasting peace: Therefore Solomon calls it a continual feast, Prov. 15.15. Not a feast for a day, as Nabal's was; nor for seven days, as Samsons was; nor for an hundred and eighty days, as that of Ahasuerus was; but a continual feast, without intermission and without end. A Heathen could say, H&G, A good man is always feasting, he hath the continual entertainment and delight of a quiet Conscience. He may meet with many troubles and sorrows and afflictions, but his peace and joy shall out-live them all. His estate may be wasted, his name reproached, his body burned, but his peace and joy cannot be touched. It lies out of the world's reach. It is from Heaven, and will abide in the Soul till it be consummated by the testimony of Christ in that heart-ravishing Sentence, Well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

Thus subjection and obedience to the Yoke of Christ appears to be a pleasant good, whether ye look to the matter of his service, or to the state in which this service is commanded, or to the sweetness with which it is attended. And thus you have the truth of it made out positively.

Secondly, That the Yoke of Christ is matter of pleasure and delight, may be made out comparatively.

1. Compare it with the Yoke of the Law, either Ceremonial or Moral.

First, Compare it with the Yoke of the Ceremonial Law, and Christ's Yoke is much easier than that. And this will appear,

If you look to the observances and impositions of one and the other. How numerous and chargeable were the observances of that Law; how many and how costly were their Sacrifices.

Some were gratulatory; appointed to express their grateful sense of mercies received: these you read of Lev. 7.12, &c.

Some were expiatory; these were appointed to atone for sin, to pacify God's anger, to remove guilt, and divert judgment; and how many and various were they. Some were to be of the herd, as oxen and heifers; some of the flock, as sheep and lambs, goats and kids. Some of fowl, as turtle-doves and pigeons. Some were to be of what grew out of the earth, as corn and wine, oil and spices. And of these, some were burnt-offerings; some meat-offerings; some sin-offerings; some trespass-offerings. And some of them were to be offered but once a year; some at their solemn Feasts, as the Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. Some every New-moon; some every Sabbath day; some were to be offered every day, and that both morning and evening, as the daily Sacrifice, and some according to special occasions, which were very many; for if any man did but touch an unclean thing, he must come and offer a Sacrifice.

From all which numerous observances that Yoke of Moses must needs be very burdensome; if we now were for every sin to offer a Bullock or a Lamb, what a burden should we account it: if Conscience did not make sin a burden, the charge and expense would; and so it did to the Jews, therefore it is called a Yoke, and that a heavy one, Acts 15.10. A yoke which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear. In calling these things a yoke too heavy to be born, it shows their observance of them was more because God commanded them, than because of any intrinsical good that was in them. They bore the Yoke till God took it off, but it was a very heavy Yoke.

But the Yoke of Christ is easy on this account; his commands are few and facile; not burdensome, but beneficial; as really our privilege as our duty. And therefore the Apostle Paul comparing the state of the Church then, with what it is under the Gospel, calls it Bondage, Gal. 4.3. when we were children, we were in bondage under the elements of the world: By the Elements of the world the carnal Sacrifices and Ceremonies of the Law are intended, by which, as by first rudiments, God did then instruct the Church in its minority. And accordingly he calls the state of the Gospel-Church a state of freedom. Gal. 5.1.

Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

O how sweet and easy is the service of the Gospel! The Covenant of Grace is made with us without those burdens and bonds which became their bondage; what a motive should this be to a willing and cheerful obedience. Christ hath therefore made us free that we should serve him freely. Our freedom from bondage by the liberty of the Gospel should strengthen our bonds to all Gospel-obedience.

Secondly, Compare the Yoke of Christ with the Yoke of the Moral Law as a Covenant of Works; and it will appear far more easy, if you consider five things.

First, The Law requires very difficult service, but contributes no assistance; so that a man's work is above his strength; and where duty is great, and strength little, it becomes a burden intolerable. If a man should be set to remove a mountain, to fetch a Star from Heaven, to keep out the Tide of the Sea, how impossible would this be. So is obedience to the Law in our present state of impotency: and hence it becomes a bondage and burden. Why is the Land of Egypt called the house of bondage to Israel, but because they were required to make the same tale of brick without straw, as before they did when straw was provided for them? So the Law requires the same obedience of fallen man in a state of weakness, as it did of innocent Adam in his full strength.

But in the Gospel-Covenant there is no duty enjoined but there is a power of performance vouchsafed: and no commandment can be grievous where the assistance is suitable to the service. That one command of believing is in itself more difficult than any precept of the Law: but if faith be the gift of God, then how easy is it to believe, whatever God wills is easy to be done when he himself works in us to will and to do. This makes the Yoke of Christ easy, that there is power conveyed with the precept: *jubet & juvat*. It is with us as with the man that lay at the gate of the Temple, who had been lame from

the womb, Peter commands him in the name of Jesus to rise up and walk, and immediately his feet and ankle-bones received strength, Acts 3.2, 6, 7. There is a power conveyed by the Precept. So it is here; and therefore we should do as the lame man did; How is that? the eighth verse tells you, He stood, and walked, and entered into the Temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.

Secondly, The Law required a righteousness vested in the person. It must not be another's doing but our own. The Law admitted of no days-man, no Mediator, no helper. Another's doing could no way be reckoned as ours, nor another's righteousness be any benefit to us. Every man must stand upon his own bottom.

But the Gospel-Covenant admits of a Mediator; one to come in between God and man; therefore he is called The Mediator of the New Testament, Heb. 9.15. and Heb. 12.24. Jesus the Mediator of the new Covenant. It admits of another's righteousness instead of our own, and allows us as real benefit by it as if it had been done in our own persons. He was made sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, 2 Cor. 5.21. As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, that is Law, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous, Rom. 5.19. this is pure Gospel. And hence Jesus Christ is styled, The Lord our righteousness, Jer. 23.6. And hence we are said to be accepted in the Beloved, Eph. 1.6. and to be complete in him, Col. 2.10. And how pleasant doth this make the Yoke of Christ to be.

Thirdly, Under the Law it was not enough that obedience was personal, unless it was also perfect and perpetual. Any one sin done at any time mar'd all; All his righteousness shall be forgotten, Ezek. 18.24. Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the Law to do them, Gal. 3.10. A man perished as really by the guilt of one sin as of ten thousand. The judgment was by one to condemnation, Rom. 5.16. that is, by one sin, for so the next words explain it; but the free gift is of many offenses to justification. The Apostle here commends the grace of the Gospel by comparing it with

the Law's rigor, The Gospel justifies from many offenses, when the Law condemns for any one. He that fails in any one thing is gone forever. Nothing is accepted but what is perfect. The best affections will not excuse failure in actions, nor desires to do, eke out the weakness of doing.

But under the Gospel, where there is a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath; where the arm is short, it is made up by uprightness of heart. Where the will is beyond the power, God accepts the will, and passes by the weakness. If a man sincerely desires and endeavors to do what he cannot do, the truth of affection is accepted for action, and God counts the desire of a man to be his kindness, Prov. 19.22. Though that plea of the Apostle, Rom. 7.18. To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not, finds no room under the Law, yet it is a good plea under the Gospel. O how sweet is this!

Fourthly, Under the Law there was no room for repentance. One transgression disannulled that Covenant, and no repentance, no sorrow, no tears could ever make it up again. Where personal, perfect obedience is the condition of life, there can be no room for repentance.

But this is one of the great privileges of the Gospel-Covenant, that failures in obedience may be made up by repentance. And hence it is that we are so often called to return with a promise of healing our backslidings. Did God ever call Adam under the first Covenant to return when he ran away from God? no never, but drove him out of Paradise. Gen. 3.24. So he drove out the man, and he placed at the East of the garden Cherubim and a flaming sword, which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life. But under the Gospel how frequently are we called to return and repent. Though the first Covenant was dissolved by one sin; yet many sins cannot dissolve the Gospel-Covenant. For the free gift is of many offenses to justification, Rom. 5 16. This makes the Yoke of Christ pleasant, that their failures and neglects may be repented of and find forgiveness. For God hath

exalted Christ to be a Prince and a Savior to give repentance and remission of sins, Acts 5.31.

Fifthly, The cords that bound on the Yoke of the first Covenant were threats and terrors. The Law requires obedience upon pain of a Curse: Cursed be he that makes a graven image, which is an abomination to the Lord, Deut. 27.15, Cursed be he that setteth light by father or mother, v. 16. Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things written in the Law to do them, Gal. 3.10. and this Curse is eternal death. But the cords that bind on the Yoke of Christ are not terrors, but love and mercy. I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present yourselves a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service, Rom. 12.1. And this makes the Yoke of Christ far more sweet and pleasant than the Yoke of the Law.

2. Let's compare the Yoke of Christ with the Yoke of Sin, and it will appear infinitely more pleasant than that can be. The pleasures of sin hold no comparison with the pleasure of Religion and godliness.

First, The pleasures of sin are sensual pleasures; such as gratify only the flesh, and please the brutish part; and the more any man gives himself up to them, the more he puts off man, and sinks down into the nature of beast; and therefore many Heathens have upon mere principles of reason abandoned sensual pleasures as inferior to them, and have judged him unworthy the name of a man that could spend one day in pursuit of them. But the pleasures of Religion are rational pleasures, they are such as are suited to the rules of right reason; pleasures that gratify the inward man, and feed the love and delight of an immortal Soul.

Secondly, The pleasures of sin are debasing pleasures: and this follows from the former. The more sensual any man is, the more doth he debase his nature. He is, like the Prodigal, feeding upon husks with the Swine, and hence it is that the Lord, by Amos, calls those Rulers in Samaria, Kine of Bashan, Amos 4.1. Hear this word,

ye kine of Bashan, that are in the mountain of Samaria. Because they forgot the Lord, and gave themselves up to their lusts and sensual pleasures, therefore he reckons them among the beasts; Kine of Bashan, more like beasts than men. The pleasures of sin are a very debasing thing. Hence the same word in the Hebrew which the Scripture uses for a sensual Glutton, is used for a vile person. This our son is a glutton. Deut. 21.20 H&G, if thou take forth the precious from the vile, Jer. 15.19. H&G There is the same word for both: and it intimates to us that no man is more vile than he that gives up himself to sensuality. And therefore the Apostle John writing to young men not to love the world, tells them, That all that is in the world is but the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life . He calls sinful pleasures Lust, because they are food and fuel for lust: and he calls them the Lust of the flesh, to intimate to us the defiling and debasing quality of them.

But the pleasures of Religion are ennobling pleasures. Take that one pleasure of communion with God for an instance, and there is nothing that doth raise and ennoble the Soul like it. I will set him on high, because he hath known my name, Psal. 91.14. As God is infinitely above all other objects, so the pleasure of communion with him must far transcend all other pleasures; and put a dignity upon the Soul, which no other communion can; and hence it is that the righteous is said to be more excellent than his neighbor, Prov. 12.26. As upon other accounts, so upon this, that he hath a more excellent fellowship, and lives upon more excellent enjoyments and delights. The perfection of the reasonable Creature consists in its communion with such a good as is above itself, and above all created Beings. And such is that communion the good man enjoys.

Thirdly, The pleasures of sin are deceitful pleasures: like those beautiful Apples that when touched are said to turn to ashes. They are not that in the fruition as they are in the expectation. Hence ye read of deceitful lusts, Eph. 4.22. and the deceitfulness of sin, Heb. 3.13. And one of sins great deceits lies in this, it draws the Soul to a compliance upon a vain hope of enjoying the pleasure it never finds.

The true nature of deceit lies in presenting things to the mind otherwise than they are. Sin never presents itself in its own colors, but takes up the shape of some virtue, covetousness is a wise thrift; excess and waste is liberality; Superstition is a religious devoutness, &c. And it ever flatters the expectation, and raises a false hope of delight and pleasure. And therefore the Wiseman says, The folly of fools is deceit, Prov. 14.8. Every man proposes a happiness to himself in all that he doth, and so doth the sinner; but seeking it in the way of his lusts he deceives himself, and so becomes a fool. Sin promises much, and the Sinner expects much; but he never finds what he expects, because sin never performs what it promises; and hence it is called a lying vanity, Jon. 2.8. There is no reality in it, it is res nihili, a thing of naught. The pleasure of sin is but the pleasure of a dream.

Two things make us think sin pleasant and delightful.

1. The subtlety of Satan's temptations; one part whereof (and not the least) lies in tempting to sin by the bait of pleasure; this was Satan's first device for the bringing sin into the world; how did he beguile our first Parents? but by a fruit that was pleasant to the eye, and desirable to make one wise, Gen. 3.6. And hence Satan takes advantage to loosen their hearts from God by insinuating secretly as if God envied the felicity of Mankind, and that it was merely an abridgment of their happiness God aimed at in forbidding them to eat of that fruit that was so beneficial, so pleasant, so desirable. God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God's knowing good and evil, v. 5. And by this bait of delight and pleasure were they caught and deceived. As Laban promised Jacob a fair Rachel, but laid a blear-eyed Leah in her room. So Satan promises pleasure and delight in sin, but performs in sorrow and disappointment.

2. A corrupted imagination, and a deluded fancy: and this is a fruit of the former, and Satan hath no small hand in it. For the office of the imagination being to supply the mind with variety of objects whereon to work, and to quicken, allure, and sharpen the will accordingly;

therefore Satan by corrupting this, bids fair for the corrupting the understanding and will also. He can inject strange species, and impress false images of things upon the fancy with such subtlety and ease, as shall readily gain them credit in the mind, and admittance in the will. And hence all that pleasure that the sinner hath in sin proceeds, it is the fruit of a deluded fancy and imagination; so says the Prophet, Isai. 44.20. He feedeth on ashes, a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand? A man may as soon stay his hunger with eating ashes, as find true pleasure in sin; and were not his heart deceived, he would easily see and say that it is a lie that he embraces and holds so fast.

But the pleasures of godliness are true pleasures; not windy and frothy delights, but substantial and real. Though the sinner expects more pleasure in sin than he finds; yet the good man finds more pleasure in the ways of Christ than he did expect. As Servants that are in good places, they meet with great vails besides their wages; so besides the recompense of godliness in the next world, it is rewarded with great pleasures and comforts in this. This I had because I kept thy precepts, Psal. 119.56. this experience, this peace, this joy: For the kingdom of heaven is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the holy Ghost, Rom. 14.17.

Fourthly, The pleasures of sin are pleasures that cause shame. And this arises from the former; for if the pleasures of sin are deceitful, they must needs cause shame. Shame is either from the disappointment of hope, or from unbecoming and unworthy actions. Now the pleasures of sin cause shame on both these accounts.

1. As they disappoint our hope, Job speaking of the troops of Tema that came to the dried brooks expecting water, and finding none, says, They were confounded because they had hoped, they came thither and were ashamed, Job 6.20. So the simple sinner betakes himself to his lusts, expecting pleasure, but meets with disappointment, and returns ashamed.

2. The pleasures of sin cause shame as they flow from unbecoming actions: *Pudor est conscientia turpitudinis*; it is a consciousness of somewhat that is base; a man may be ashamed either before God, or before others, or before himself. Taking pleasure in sin causes shame before all these.

First, Before God, and that both here and hereafter.

First, It causes shame here. Where there is any sense of God, and ingenuity of Spirit, consciousness of guilt puts the Soul to the blush when it would have to do with God in its approaches. O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, for our iniquities are increased, &c. Ezra 9.6. So it is said of the Publican, that when he went into the Temple to pray, he stood afar off, and would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, Luke 18.13. These are postures by which great shame and confusion of face is expressed. Or if any be hardened under sin as not to be ashamed here, yet

Secondly, He shall be ashamed before God hereafter. Many that now dare, though in their sins and lusts, make solemn approaches to God, will be ashamed and confounded to appear at the Judgment-seat of God. David says, The wicked shall not stand in judgment, Psal. 1.5. Indeed there are few that shall: The great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand? Revel. 6.17. Sinners that now are grown impudent in sin, that have a Whores forehead, that have took their degree in the Scorners chair, that are past shame, shall then be ashamed and confounded forever. And there are three things in the process of that day which shall cause it.

1. The discovery of sin which shall then be made. For all the wickedness that ever the sinner committed shall then be made known: God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or evil, Eccles. 12.14. There is not a closet-sin, nor the most concealed iniquity, but shall then be made public. God will then bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart, and then shall every man (that is,

every good man) have praise of God, 1 Cor. 4.5. But what shall become of sinners? sure they shall be ashamed.

2. The utter frustration of the sinners hope. So long as hope lasts shame hath no place: now many a man's hope lasts to the day of Judgment; they maintain a confidence of the goodness of their estate, which nothing but the light of that day can confute. So did they in Mat. 7.22. Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works. So did the foolish Virgins till the door was shut, Mat. 25.10.

3. The contempt that God shall put upon them when he shall eternally banish them his presence by the dreadful Sentence that he shall then pass against them: Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his Angels, Mat. 25.41. By the passing this Sentence they shall become the scorn and contempt of all the Saints and Angels in Heaven. Therefore it is said, They that sleep in the dust of the earth shall arise, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt, Dan. 12.2.

Secondly, Taking pleasure in sin causes shame before others. God by one means or other will bring such sinners to open shame: Jer. 13.26. I will discover thy skirts, that thy shame may appear. And Ezek. 16.37. I will gather all thy lovers with whom thou hast taken pleasure, and all them thou hast hated, and will discover thy nakedness to them, that they may see all thy nakedness. And to have the nakedness discovered is matter of shame.

Thirdly, Taking pleasure in sin causeth shame before ourselves. Conscience under guilt torments the Soul with the shame of its own folly. Hence that of the Apostle, Rom. 6.21. What fruit had you in those things whereof ye are now ashamed. Sin enticeth us before we commit it, and afterwards fills the Soul with horror and shame. So our first Parents, when they had sinned, they were ashamed, Gen. 3.7.

But who was ever ashamed of the pleasures and delights he found in the ways of godliness? A good man may be reproached and scoffed at for his strictness, by the Ishmael's of the day; but there can be no cause of shame. For shame, as the Philosopher defines it, is H&G. A certain grief and trouble in ingenuous minds about unbecoming actions, and such things as tend to our infamy and disgrace; now there is nothing dishonorable in Religion; it is only sin that can discredit and defame us; where there is no sin there is no shame.

Fifthly, The pleasures of sin are prohibited pleasures; they are forbidden fruit. If God hath forbid the doing of sin, then much more the taking pleasure in sin. For it is a greater evil to take pleasure in sin than it is simply to act sin; to delight in it is worse than to do it. To do sin may be only from weakness of grace; but to delight in sin, is from the strength of lust. As it is a greater argument of grace to delight in obedience than to obey; for a man may be much in the performance of duties, that yet may have no delight in duty. But where there is a delight in duty and obedience, there the heart is indeed under the power of grace. I delight to do thy will, O my God, thy Law is within my heart, Psal. 40.8. So it speaks the sinner more under the power of sin to delight in it than to do it: The more of the affection there is in sin, the more ready will the sinner be to comply with every temptation which leads to it. *Amor animae pondus*; and it is the cunning of Satan to suit his baits to our corrupt appetites and vicious dispositions, he loves to take the advantage of wind and tide, and when a man that delights in sin is tempted to sin, then he goes with wind and tide. Nay in this case a sinner needs no temptation; his own vicious disposition will supply the place of a Tempter; for the more any sin obtains upon the affections, the more of the nature of a temptation doth it carry in itself. Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed, H&G he calls it H&G, his proper lust, because though we have all a corrupt nature in common, yet every sinner hath a particular several inclination to this or that sin rooted in his nature more than to any other; and this is called his own lust. And how easily doth he consent when he is enticed by his own lust; he hath no power to resist or withstand; for the more a

man delights in sin, the more naturally his desires and vicious inclinations do run to it. And therefore God charges it as a high degree of sinning, and makes it a great aggravation of sin, to delight and take pleasure in it. They have chosen their own ways, (that is, bad) and their soul delights in their abominations, (that is, worse) Isai. 66.3. And God aggravates the sinfulness of Antichrists followers by this, That they had pleasure in unrighteousness, 2 Thess. 2.12. By all which the pleasures of sin appear to be forbidden pleasures, so that no man can enjoy any one lust but he must resolve to control God, to violate his Authority, and break his Command, and he that breaks this hedge, a serpent will bite him, Eccles. 10.8.

But where are we forbid to take pleasure in Godliness? Are spiritual delights forbidden fruit? May not a man rejoice in God? O yes! For

1. This is so far from being forbidden as a sin, that it is commanded as a duty. Delight thyself in the Lord, Psal. 37.4. Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice, Phil. 4.4.

2. It is the true Character of a godly man: His delight is in the law of the Lord, Psal. 1.2. I will delight myself in thy commandments which I have loved, Psal. 119.47. I delight in the law of God after the inner man, Rom. 7.22. This no unregenerate man can attain to: Will he delight himself in the Almighty? says Job of the Hypocrite, Chap. 27.10. He may do much, but this he cannot do. He may pray, and read, and hear, and make profession of God; but he cannot delight in God.

3. This makes us sharers in the very pleasures and joys of Saints and Angels in Heaven; for the joy and pleasure of that state is in God and Holiness.

4. This shall have a sure reward. Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thy heart, Psal. 34.4. Thou shalt delight thyself in the Lord—and I will feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father, Isai. 58.14. Sometimes delight in God is required as a

duty, but here it is promised as a reward. So that here is a double reward promised to delighting in God.

First, Such shall delight in God. They that make it their duty, it shall be their reward. As God sometimes punishes sin with sin, Hos. 8.11. which is a great punishment; so he rewards delight in God with delight in God, which is a great reward. They shall find such rich consolations, such abundant sweetness and matter of satisfaction in God and his ways as shall fill the Soul with delight. Thy comforts delight my soul, Psal. 94.19. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house, and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures, Psal. 36.8. That is one reward promised.

Secondly, I will feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father. That is literally the blessings of the land of Canaan, given for an inheritance to him and his seed; but this being a Type of Heaven, therefore it is the glorious inheritance above that is chiefly intended. So that these spiritual pleasures shall have a sure reward: And hence it appears, that though the pleasures of sin are forbidden fruit, yet the pleasures of holiness are not. They are lawful pleasures.

Sixthly, The pleasures of sin are dangerous pleasures, full of danger. What Solomon says of the Harlot, Her house inclines to death, and her paths to the dead, Prov. 2.18. is true of every sin; it is a way that takes hold of hell and death: Never any went on in it but have miscarried. And what pleasure can there be in a way so full of danger?

But in the pleasures of godliness there is no danger; no fear of miscarrying: A high way shall be there, and it shall be called the way of holiness, the way-faring men, though fools, shall not err therein, Isai. 35.8. Where there is life without death, there must needs be pleasure without danger; and so it is here, In the way of righteousness is life, and in the pathway thereof there is no death. O what dangers do men run into for the pleasures of sin! dangers of

Soul and body, dangers of present judgment and eternal torment; but here is pleasure without danger.

Seventhly, The pleasures of sin are disturbed pleasures; the smarting reflections and checks of Conscience do greatly interrupt the free enjoyment of sins delights. There are but few sinners but their pleasures in sin are attended with an upbraiding Conscience. The best part of a natural man is his Conscience; when will and affections are wholly for lust, Conscience many times takes part with God; when affections entice, conscience troubles, and gives such an amazing prospect of the dreadful consequences of sin, as doth very much abate its pleasures, and embitter its sweetness: Nay, many have been in great troubles and horrors for sin upon this account; the gnawing's of this worm within have been such, as have utterly extinguished the pleasures of sin for the present: Conscience reflects guilt, guilt causes fear, and fear hath torment, 1 John 4.18. And in this case the pain of sin is far more than the pleasure; for no man can act with much pleasure against the checks of his own conscience. And therefore many have been forced to find out ways to quiet conscience, or at least to silence its clamors, that they may have a more free and undisturbed enjoyment of their lusts; and this is that which hath made so many Hypocrites both among Papists and Protestants, taking up a little outside devotion, and taling over a few prayers to God, and then thinking this a full amends to him for what is past, and so sin upon a new score. Lust cannot be freely enjoyed unless conscience is silent, conscience will not be silent unless God be some way owned; and hence, though the sinner in his heart hates God, and the life of God, yet he is forced to mingle somewhat of the practice of devotion with a vicious conversation, that he may at once enjoy the sweet of his lusts, and yet quiet a quarrelling conscience. Or if custom in sin and a seared conscience have worn out the sense of such checks and regrets, the case is so much the worse: where-ever sin is practiced, and conscience not pained, the man is dead; past life, and past hope. Dr. Preston relates of one in Cambridge that falling into a great sin, his conscience was troubled, but having this temptation upon him, That if he did the same sin again, his

conscience would trouble him no more; he complied with the temptation, and ran into the same sin again; after which his conscience was silent, and from that time he went on in his lusts without trouble or control.

But the pleasures of godliness are undisturbed pleasures: Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace, Prov. 3.17. The sinner hath pleasure but no peace, but in the ways of God the good man hath pleasure and peace. And it must needs be sweet where pleasure is attended with peace. There is a twofold peace that doth attend the life of godliness, peace supernal, and peace internal: The one is a peace between God and Conscience: The other is a peace between conscience and a man's self. And where this peace is, the pleasure of the Soul must needs be an uninterrupted pleasure. Great peace have they that love thy Law, and nothing shall offend them, Psal. 119.165.

Eighthly, The pleasures of sin are distracting pleasures, and this arises from the contrariety of one lust to another. As all sins are contrary to grace, so some sins are repugnant and contrary one to another. Therefore you read of serving divers or differing lusts, H&G, and from the repugnant commands of differing lusts the service of sin must needs fill the mind with distraction, for in gratifying one lust the sinner displeases another; if he serves pride he displeases covetousness, &c.

But now in Religion there is nothing contrary. Virtutes sunt inter se connexae, there is a delightful harmony and correspondence among all the graces of the Spirit; he that acts one grace doth not contradict another, because of the harmony that is between them; and this makes the pleasure of godliness greater than the pleasure of sin can be, because it is a pleasure without distraction. Indeed the mind may be, (and too often is) distracted from the efficacy of indwelling lusts; but not from any contrariety in the graces of the Spirit, for one duty forwards another, and helps another, and makes another the more easy.

Ninthly, The pleasures of sin are wasting and expensive pleasures; they waste the strength of the sinner; And thou mourn at the last day when thy flesh and thy body are consumed, Prov. 5.11. They waste the estate, sin is a very chargeable thing; it cannot be maintained without great cost: Some men's lusts cost them more in a day than their families do in a year; many a man starves his wife and children to feed his lusts; and many a wife robs her husband to gratify her lusts; and by this means many a fair Estate hath been brought to a morsel of bread.

But the pleasures of godliness are not so; they neither waste the strength nor the estate. Not the strength, for though the youth faint and be weary, and the young men utterly fail, yet they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint, Isai. 40.30, 31.

Nor the estate, for though Religion calls for open-handedness, and honoring God with our substance; yet it calls but for a part, unless in extraordinary cases; but lust will have all: it is like the horseleech that always cries, Give, give; it is never satisfied. One lust is more chargeable to a sinner to maintain, than all the graces of the Spirit are to a Believer. Godliness never wasted any man, but one lust hath consumed many, Estate, and Body, and Soul, and all.

Tenthly, The pleasures of sin are confuted pleasures. The Word of God confutes them, it calls them folly, Prov. 15.21. madness, Eccles. 2.2. vexation of spirit, Eccles. 1.14. lying vanities, Jon. 2.8.

Good men have confuted them; by renouncing and disclaiming them, espousing the worst of Religion rather than the best of sin: Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season. Heb. 11.25.

Wicked men have confuted them; sometimes upon a dying bed; sometimes under convictions. Oh how have they cried out then against the accursed pleasures of sin; and of the folly and madness of

their hearts for delighting in such swinish lusts. Luther says, one drop of an evil conscience swalloweth up a whole Sea of worldly joy. So that the pleasures of sin have had many confutations.

But whoever confuted the pleasures of godliness? The Word of God never did; no, that commends and ratifies them: Her ways are ways of pleasantness, Prov. 3.17. Good men never did; no, they justify them, and that living and dying: Wisdom is justified of her children, Mat. 11.19. The enemies of godliness never did, nor could; they may reproach and scoff at the ways of God, but confute them they cannot.

Eleventhly, The pleasures of sin are depending upon the creature: a man must keep up a communion with carnal objects to maintain them.

But the pleasures of godliness are independent; that is, as to the creature; the Soul need not be beholden to any creature whatever to support and feed them; they flow from God himself. In the pleasures of sin the creature lets out itself, but in the pleasure of holiness God lets out himself, and all the creatures in the world cannot let out so much sweetness as God, nor such kind of sweetness as God doth. The creature communicates but to sense, but God communicates to the Soul.

Twelfthly, The pleasures of sin are unsatisfying pleasures, and needs they must, because they are unsuitable and disproportioned to the Soul, which is a Spirit; whereas the pleasures of sin are suited to sense and flesh. So that you may as soon make up a number with only cyphers, or make a meal of a shadow, as feed rational Spirits with sinful pleasures.

And this is the reason why the Soul makes such frequent diversions in its pursuit of carnal delights, and goes from one pleasure to another; it is not because it is better, but because it is new. Affectation of variety proceeds only from sense of want, and is a

confession upon trial that there is not in such an enjoyment what was expected.

But the pleasures of godliness are satisfying pleasures, Psal. 36.8. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; how so? thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures: and he that drinks of this river cannot but be satisfied, and satisfied abundantly: He that drinks of the water I shall give him shall never thirst more, John 4.14. The Soul takes up with these divine refreshments, and looks no farther; it cries out with Jacob; I have enough, Gen. 33.11.

Thirteenthly, The pleasures of sin are short and transient. They are not only vain but vanishing. The wicked man's prosperity is compared to a candle; now how soon is the candle of the wicked put out, Prov. 24.20. Therefore the triumphing of the wicked is said to be short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment, Job 20.5. This was one reason why Moses (and it was when he was grown to years of discretion too, Heb. 11.24, 25.) chose to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin, because they were but for a season, but momentary. Therefore fitly compared to the crackling of thorns under a pot, Eccles. 7.6. much noise, but little heat, and soon extinct. O what pleasure did the rich man take in his abundance! but how long did it last? He reckoned upon many years; but it did not continue many hours. Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee, Luke 12.20.

It is impossible that the pleasure of sin should last long when the life of the sinner is so short. Indeed many times the sinner out-lives all his joys and delights; they tarry not till he dies from them, but they die from him: sometimes pining diseases, sometimes continued crosses, sometimes a worm in the conscience extinguish these joys, and they are never kindled more. But if none of these do, to be sure death doth: for when that once comes, then farewell the pleasures of sin forever. Hell is too hot a Climate for wanton delights to live in; sin shall be so far from affording delight there, that the remembrance

of it shall greaten their torment. And therefore if the pleasures of sin do not die from us, yet we are sure to die from them; as Pope Adrian said to his Soul when expiring:

Quae nunc abibis in loca?

Nec ut soles dabis jocos.

Thou art now going where there is no pleasure to be found.

But now the pleasure of godliness is durable pleasure: it is not transient and fading. It is not water from a fading brook, but from a river whose springs fail not. Therefore the Holy Ghost had no sooner said, Thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures, Psal. 36.8. but he presently adds in the next verse, For with thee is the fountain of life. A fountain is always running, and yet is never exhausted. The river of pleasures which godliness affords, is fed from a fountain that is overflowing and ever flowing.

Fourteenthly, The pleasures of sin have a sad end. There is a sting in the tail of them; they are like the wine Solomon speaks of, that though it looketh pleasantly in the cup, yet at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder, Prov. 23.31, 32. The stolen waters of sin (how sweet soever they seem to be in the mouth) will be gall and wormwood in the belly, even bitterness in the latter end. So says Zophar, Job 20. 12, 13, 14. Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth, though he hide it under his tongue: Though he forsake it not, but keep it still within his mouth, yet his meat in his bowels is turned, it is the gall of asps within him. O that sinners would consider the end of sin. As Abner said to Joab, Knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end? 2 Sam. 2.26. Sensual pleasure goes out like a candle, and leaves a stink behind it; great damps and sore griefs in the conscience. Woe to you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep, Luke 6.25. In Isai. 5.14. it is said, Hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure, and he that rejoiceth shall descend into it: That is, he that lives in the

pleasures of sin, his present pleasure shall end in Hell: where there is punishment without pity, misery without mercy, sorrow without succor, mischief without measure, and torments without end. This is all you shall ever get by sin; a little pleasure and eternal torment.

But the pleasure of godliness as it is sweet in the way, so it is sweeter in the end. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace, Psal. 37.37. Christ keeps the best wine till the last. The pleasures of godliness that good men enjoy in the way, are not to be compared to the pleasures that they shall enjoy in the end. When the pleasures of sin shall end in the wrath of God and eternal misery; the pleasures of godliness shall be so far from being extinguished, that they shall be perfected . For holiness brings us into the full fruition of God at last, In whose presence is fullness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore, Psal. 16.11. So that we may say of the pleasures of holiness and the pleasures of sin, as Solomon says of wisdom and folly, Eccles. 2.13. Wisdom excelleth folly as far as light excelleth darkness. So do the pleasures of holiness excel the pleasures of sin.

And thus you have the pleasure of Christ's Yoke made out comparatively, viz. by comparing it (1) with the Yoke of the Law, (2) with the Yoke of Sin.

(3) I shall make it out by a collation of instances. And I will instance in the most difficult duties of Religion. If the most difficult and severe duties of Religion have a real pleasantness in them, then it must needs be good to come under the Yoke of Christ; but the most difficult duties of Religion have a real pleasantness in them. I will instance in three which I take to be the most difficult.

Repentance.

Mortification of Sin.

Bearing the Cross.

1. Repentance. This seems to be one of the most difficult and unpleasant duties which the Yoke of Christ lays us under. It is an afflicting the Soul, Ezra 8.21. And what pleasure can there be in affliction? It is a being ashamed and confounded for sin, Jer. 22.22. And what pleasure is there in shame and confusion? It is a rent and breaking the heart, Joel 2.13. Psal. 51.17. And what pleasure can a man take to have his heart rent and broken? It is an exercising indignation and revenge upon ourselves, 2 Cor. 7.11. And what pleasure is it for a man to be angry with, and take revenge upon himself? It seems therefore upon all these accounts to be a very difficult duty; and yet notwithstanding it is a duty full of pleasure and sweetness. And this will be manifest,

First, If you consider it in its spring and rise. The work of repentance, if it be right, hath for the spring of it the efficacy of the grace of the Gospel upon the Soul, melting it down at the foot of God. The sweet sense of the goodness and mercy of God in Christ thaws the heart, and causes it to melt into tears of godly sorrow for all sin done against such infinite love and tender bowels. That thou mayst remember and be confounded—because of thy shame when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord, Ezek. 16.63. The reconciled face of God shining upon a sinner makes him more ashamed of sin than any argument in the world can do. And there cannot but be pleasure in the exercise of this grace when it flows from so sweet a spring.

Secondly, If you consider how great a hand it hath in removing the burden of sin. Sin is such a burden as will sink the Soul down to Hell, if it be not removed. And if any man feel it not to be a burden, it is because he is dead in sin; but where there is any life, the burden is very great. Mine iniquities are gone over my head, as a burden they are too heavy for me, Psal. 38.4. Now repentance helps to remove the burden of sin; for when the Soul repents God forgives; and so the burden is took away. The pardon of sin is that which takes away the burden of sin: this Job intimates in that his expostulation with God, Job 7.20, 21. I am a burden to myself, why dost thou not pardon my

transgression, and take away mine iniquity? And there must needs be a sweetness in that which easeth the Soul of such a burden as sin is.

Thirdly, It is that which renders all sin remissible. Repentance and forgiveness always go together: true repentance shall ever find forgiveness; and this makes repentance very sweet and pleasant, in that it renders all sin remissible. Where-ever the Lord gives a heart to repent, there he hath a heart to pardon. So that a Soul that doth unfeignedly repent of all sin, may be assured of the forgiveness of all sin. Some call repentance a H&G, a bitter-sweet. It is a stormy voyage, but hath a rich return. At the entrance it is like our Savior's draught of vinegar and gall; but the conclusion is like the end of Jonathan's rod dipped in a honey-comb.

2. Another duty is Mortification of Sin; and this seems a very difficult duty. And indeed to flesh and blood it is so. What? to cut off the right hand, and pluck out the right eye? This is a hard saying. But yet to a regenerate Soul it hath real pleasure and sweetness in it. And needs it must, if you consider

First, The enmity that is between the new heart and fleshly lusts. There is not a greater enmity and contrariety between any things in the world, than between these two. Light and darkness, Heaven and Hell are not more contrary. And from this contrariety of the Spirit to the flesh, there is a constant lusting against it. Gal. 5.17. The spirit (that is, the new nature) lusts against the flesh. And what is this lusting? but a desire and endeavor to subdue and destroy lust and corruption within. Enmity delights in opposition. What greater pleasure than to conquer and get the better of an enemy? The reason why the mortification of sin is grievous, is because of the friendship that is between the heart and lust. Did we look on it as an enemy, (as it is the greatest in the world) the subduing of it would be a pleasure.

Secondly, If you consider the mischievous design that is carried on by sin. And what is that? but to destroy the Soul. Nothing less can

satisfy lust than the life of the Soul. What is said of the Harlot (Prov. 6.26.) that she hunts for the precious life, is true of every lust; which is therefore said to war against the soul, 1 Pet. 2.11. against the grace of the Soul, against the comfort of the Soul, and against the life of the Soul. Therefore he that loves his Soul cannot but take pleasure in mortifying of lust, which hunts for the life of it.

Thirdly, It is pleasant as it establishes a firm peace in the Conscience. That is the truest pleasure which ministers most peace and quiet to Conscience. He that gratifies lust, offends against the quiet of Conscience; but he that mortifies sin, consults its peace and comfort.

Fourthly, It is pleasant as a means to the end. Our eternal life depends upon the mortifying our lusts. Rom. 8.13. If ye live after the flesh ye shall die, but if ye through the spirit mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live. No mortification no Salvation. If there be no cutting off right hand lusts, there can be no standing at the right hand of Christ. Now we say, *Finis dat amabilitatem mediis*: The goodness of the end puts a loveliness into the means. How delightful then must the mortifying of sin be, when as the life of the Soul is secured by it?

3. Another difficulty is bearing the Cross. Many can follow Christ till they come within sight of the Cross, but can go no farther. Like the stony ground Professor, who endures for a while, but when persecution arises because of the word, by and by he is offended, Mat. 13.21. But where the kingdom of God is come with power into the heart, the Soul takes pleasure in the very Cross of Christ. I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake, 2 Cor. 12.10. And it is said of the Apostles (Acts 5.41.) They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

And thus I have made it out to you that obedience to Christ is matter of real pleasure, and that three ways, (1) positively, (2) comparatively, (3) by a collation of instances. I have instanced in the

most difficult duties of Religion, and have made it out that there is a real pleasure in them; and if in them, then in all. So that Religions worst is better than sins best; the worst of Christ's Yoke is easier than the easiest of sins bonds. As the Apostle says (1 Cor. 1.25) The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men; so the most unpleasant of Christ's ways are more sweet and delightful than the most pleasant of sins ways can be; and therefore it is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.

CHAPTER VIII.

Some Objections against early Obedience answered.

Now in the next place I shall endeavor to remove the stumbling blocks which Satan and a corrupt mind are wont to lay in the way of young ones, to hinder their complying with this duty of taking up the Yoke of Christ early; by answering such objections as are usually made against it.

Object. 1. The first stumbling block I shall name, and endeavor to remove, is about the unchangeable Decrees of God. Hath not God (say some) immutably fixed the eternal condition of every man? Hath he not chosen such as shall be saved, and passed by the rest? And who can resist his Will, or alter his Counsels which have been from everlasting? If God hath elected me to eternal life, his purposes shall stand; they can never be disannulled. My sin can never frustrate God's Election; and therefore my Salvation is sure. And on the other hand, if God hath shut me out of Heaven by the fatal Decree of his Preterition, all my duties and endeavors can never reach to reverse the Decree. And therefore these arguments for taking up the Yoke of

Christ early are of little force, and to little purpose. Now in answer to this Objection I would say these five things.

Answ. 1. We are not to look to the Decree of God for a rule of life, but to the Word of God. It is not what his secret purpose is, so much as what his revealed Will is. Secret things belong to the Lord, but revealed things to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this Law, Deut. 29.29. The Decree can neither be a rule of life, nor a ground of hope, but the Precept and the Promise. So far as the Precept is our guide, the Promise will be our encouragement. He that sins against the Gospel, and rejects the Yoke of Christ, no Decree can save him; and he that gives up himself to conform in heart and life to the will and word of Christ, no Decree of God shall ever hurt him.

2. Though the Decree of God be as determinate in other matters as in that of Salvation and Damnation, yet no man rests upon that. God hath fixed the period of every man's life; His days are determined, the number of his months is with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass. Now will any man neglect his meals because God hath determined his days? Will he say, If I eat and drink I shall live never the longer; if I never eat more I shall not die a day the sooner? There is no man so bereft of sense as to leave his life upon the decree of God without using means to preserve it; for

3. The Decree is not only of the end, but also of the means. Faith and obedience are as much decreed by God as eternal life. Hence ye read of being chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth, 2 Thess. 2.13. And the Apostle to the Ephesians says, God hath chosen us in him (viz. Christ) before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, Ephes. 1.4. Holiness is as much decreed as happiness. There is no such thing in all the Scripture as Election to Salvation separate from faith and holiness. The means and the end go together: the Scripture is not made up only of promises for the encouragement of hope, but of directions for the furtherance of holiness. And therefore

4. Though the Kingdom of Heaven be prepared by the Decree, yet it must be sought by an early diligence in duty. Though it is God's good pleasure to give it, yet it must be our work to seek it; though it be designed for us, yet it must suffer violence by us, and we must take it by force, or we shall never enjoy it, notwithstanding God's choice and Christ's purchase. The land of Canaan (a type of Heaven) was a land of Promise, but yet they cannot possess upon the promise, without fighting their way to the inheritance.

5. In the day of Judgment God will not proceed with men upon Election and Reprobation, but upon their obedience or disobedience to his Law. He will render to every man according to his deeds. To them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honor, and immortality, eternal life. But to them that are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness; indignation and wrath. It is said, God will judge the world in righteousness, Acts 17.31. Now righteousness in judgment is to distribute to everyone according to his works. God will vindicate the justice of his proceedings in that day by making the Word the rule of his Judgment to all that are under it, John 12.48. And every man's Conscience a witness in the case, Rom. 2.15.

Let no man therefore deceive himself by groundless conclusions about the secret Decrees of God, and so indulge himself in a sinful neglect of duty to the eternal ruin of his Soul.

Object. 2. Another stumbling-block that lies in the way of young ones to hinder their taking up the Yoke of Christ is this, That early Religion seldom comes to anything. They that mind Religion young, seldom hold out long. A young Saint and an old Devil.

Answ. The design of the Devil and wicked men in this Objection is to decry early holiness; as if it were time enough to seek after God and grace when we are dropping into the grave. Now to such I would say three things.

Answ. 1. This Objection is founded upon a notorious falsehood; for it supposes that true grace is utterly losable; that a Child of God may perish forever; which the Scripture doth expressly confute. Where the seed of God is once sowed in the heart, it never dies; it is never lost, nor plucked up; it remains in him, 1 John 3.9. Solomon says, Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it, Prov. 22.6. So that this Proverb of a young Saint and an old Devil is none of Solomon's.

2. It is true, that where a profession of Religion is taken up in Hypocrisy, it commonly ends in Apostasy. So that it may be said, A young Hypocrite and an old Apostate. But where do you find that any that truly feared God did ever depart from him? Obadiah feared the Lord from his youth: and as he began with God, so he ended. Josiah was good early; at eight years old; and he held it to the last: He turned not aside to the right hand or to the left. David was a young Convert, and he died an old Saint. Thou art my hope, O Lord God, thou art my trust from my youth, there is his beginning. My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever, there is his ending. I might instance in Samuel, Jeremy, John, Timothy, &c. these began with God in their youth; took up the Yoke early; and so they continued all their days. He that chooses God for his chief good and highest Lord at first, finds so much happiness in him, that he will never leave him at last. Besides, the Covenant of God is sure, and one branch of it is, I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me, Jer. 32.40.

3. Should not the great uncertainty of life silence this Objection? We have no security for another day; much less that we shall live till the keepers of the house tremble, and the grinders cease, and they that look out of the windows be darkened, &c. As Solomon elegantly describes old age, Eccles. 12.3. Our candle may blow out as well as burn out; One dies in full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet, his breasts are full of milk, and his bones moistened with marrow, Job 21.23, 24. And shall we be afraid of taking up the Yoke of Christ too soon? Or suppose you should live to old age, yet such as turn

their backs upon Christ while they are young, it is rare if ever they come to take up the Yoke of Christ when they are old; as a young Saint will never leave Christ, so an old Sinner will hardly ever embrace him.

Or if he would, it may be too late; his season of grace may be past. It is storied of Hannibal, that when he could have taken Rome, he would not; and when he would have taken it, he could not. And is it not the case of many? When they may find Christ, they will not seek him; and when they would seek Christ, they cannot find him: when they may have mercy, they don't prize it; and when they would have mercy, they cannot obtain it. He that in his youth reckons it too early to be converted, shall in old age find it is too late to be saved.

Object. 3. Another stumbling-block that lies in the way of young ones to hinder their taking up the Yoke of Christ, is the austerities of Religion; it is a work too severe for green years, and better suits gray hairs. Who doth not see what a melancholy thing Religion is ? it takes a man off from all his pleasures and delights, and dulls and besots the Spirits; and therefore when once a man takes up this course, never let him expect to see good day more. This is another stumbling stone, which I shall endeavor to remove out of the way by these four Considerations.

Answ. 1. Consider who they are that charge Religion with these severities. Are they such as ever were under the power of it? Have they ever lived over its precepts, and embraced its promises, and tasted its sweetness's? Are they such as can say they have ever made any serious trial of godliness? No, I know they are not; for if they had, they would pass another judgment; their own experiences would confute a thousand of these groundless pretenses. No man ever took up Religion in earnest, and heartily submitted himself to the Yoke of Christ, but hath found it quite another thing. It is good for me to draw near to God, Psal. 73.28.

And if this be the charge of such as never made a trial what Religion and a holy life is, why should any man regard it? For they speak evil of those things they know not. This wisdom is too high for a fool; and they condemn it because they do not understand it. And how unreasonable is this? Solomon says, He that answers a matter before he hears (i.e., understands) it, it is folly and shame to him, Prov. 18.13. and yet in Religion nothing more common; who were they that in the Apostles days accounted the doctrine of a crucified Christ foolishness? but such as understood least of it. And who are they that mock at the doctrine of imputed righteousness, of the testimony of the Spirit in Believers, and of assurance of Salvation, but the blind Papists who never felt the power and comfort of these things? And, *Quid iniquius quàm ut oderint homines quod ignorant?* Nothing more hateful than for a man to hate and condemn what he doth not understand. Therefore

2. Consider what is the judgment of good men in the case, who have inured themselves to a life of godliness; these are the fittest persons to determine the matter, having had their senses exercised to discern between good and evil. In other cases you do so; if you want advice about matters of Law, you will go to an experienced Lawyer; or if you advise about your health, you will consult the most experienced Physician. If you would be satisfied of such or such a Country, whom would you inquire of? such as write at random of it, but never set foot in it? Or would you not rather take the judgment of such as have seen it, lived in it, and known the Laws and Manners of it? these can speak by experience, and so can every sincere professor, John 3.11. We speak that we know, and testify that we have seen, and 1 John 1.3. That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life, declare we unto you. And what is their judgment in the case? why they have commended the life of Godliness as the most pleasant and delightful life in the world, and the fullest of true joy and sweetness. One day in thy Courts is better than a thousand elsewhere, Psal. 84.10. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace, Prov. 3.17. And how is Paul ravished with the

joys of a life of Godliness; hence he speaks his abounding consolations by Christ, and cries out, God forbid I should glory save only in the Cross of Christ, Galat. 6.14. And this is not the sense of David and Solomon, and the Apostle Paul only, but of all the Saints of God that ever lived; and they have not only said it, but have practically attested it, and that undeniably in this, that never any one of them when they once took up the Yoke of Christ, ever cast it off again, but have lived and died witnesses to this truth.

3. The sorrows and dejections that Christians are at any time filled with, are not from Godliness, but from want of more Godliness; not from Grace, but from the imperfection of Grace; their sins and failings are the only causes of their sorrows and troubles. Could they sin less they should have less sorrow; and it is a most righteous thing that where sin is committed it should be bewailed. If no man can live without sin, then how can it be that a man can love God and not mourn and sorrow for sinning against him? God will have every man living bewail and repent of sin at one time or other; if not here, yet in hell. And then the question is, which is best? here repentance ends in remission, but in hell it ends in desperation. Sorrow for sin now hath a blessing in it, it ends in comfort, Matt. 5.4. Psal. 126.5.6. But sorrow for sin hereafter greatens torment. This sorrow will have an end, but that is without end. What are those merry Greeks, that sported away their time and their Souls in this world, doing now in hell? they are repenting without hope, and sorrowing without end; weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth at their own folly and madness. And which is best, (the sinner being Judge) to go mourning to Heaven, where all tears shall be wiped away; or laughing to hell, where suffering and sorrowing shall be without end?

4. Why should a life of Religion be a dull and besotting life? what is there in it that should make it so? Doth it prohibit us any pleasures or delights? no, none, but what are incompetent to us as men; and which make us rather beasts than men. And for these it gives better pleasures in their room: Peace that passes understanding, inward satisfaction resulting from a witnessing conscience; comforts that

flow from an upper spring, from divine love manifested, and communion with God enjoyed. These are spiritual pleasures and delights, of the same nature and kind with those which in a fuller measure and greater degree of enjoyment do make up the state of blessedness. And hence it is called joy unspeakable and full of glory.

So that your joys and delights are not extinguished but raised: Religion doth not extirpate them, but transplant them out of Egypt that they may grow in Canaan. Religion spiritualizeth and sanctifieth your joys, but doth not extinguish them. So far then Religion is not chargeable with our droops and dullness's.

Are they any of the precepts of Religion that cause this? that cannot be; for there is no duty God commands but what hath a certain and direct tendency to the comfort and happiness of the creature. And therefore the promises are not only said to rejoice the heart, but the precepts too. Psal. 19.8. The statutes of the Lord are right rejoicing the heart.

Is it any Grace of the Spirit we are called to the exercise of, that is of a dejecting tendency? no, that cannot be neither, for Peace and Joy are the proper fruit of Grace, filled with peace and joy in believing. The highest exercises of Grace bring forth the sweetest Peace, and the richest Comfort, which is evident in this, that in Heaven where the Saints are in the highest exercise of Grace, there they enjoy the most perfect comforts and delights. Therefore if Religion prohibits no lawful delights; if its precepts impose no besotting services; if it improves those graces, the perfection whereof is attended with perfect joy and delight; then Religion is no melancholy besotting thing, there is nothing in it but what is desirable and lovely; and therefore, whereas the Objection says, farewell all good days when once young ones come to be Religious: I say, nay, the word of God says, they must never look to see good days till then. 1 Pet. 3.10, 11. He that will love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile; let him eschew evil

and do good. Let no man therefore be discouraged from taking up the Yoke of Christ upon this pretense.

Object. 4. Another prejudice that lieth in the way of young ones to hinder their taking up the Yoke of Christ early, is the difficulty of it. The duties Religion binds upon us are an intolerable burden; its laws are very rigid, and its precepts uneasy; it commands duty utterly contradictory to our affections and interests; to deny ourselves, to love our enemies, to bless them that curse us, to mortify our members, to cut off our right hand, and pluck out our right eye, &c. These are hard sayings, who can hear them? difficult duties and who can perform them? who can enter in at this strait gate, and walk in this narrow way without fainting?

Now I would obviate this Objection thus.

Answ. 1. Either this is the way to Heaven and there is no other, or it is not. If it be not, then the Bible is a lie, and the whole of Religion is a grand cheat; and God in all his precepts and promises is the greatest Impostor and Deceiver that ever the world knew. But who hath a forehead to assert this, which is the highest Blasphemy that can be imagined?

And if this be the way to Heaven, and there is no other; as most certain it is, Jesus Christ himself the true and faithful witness everywhere attests it, Matt. 7.14. Strait is the gate and narrow the way that leads to life. And verse. 21. Not everyone (not any one) that says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my father which is in heaven. Matt. 5.29, 30. If thy right eye offend thee pluck it out, if thy right hand offend thee cut it off, and cast it from thee, for it is better for thee that one of thy members should perish than that thy whole body should be cast into hell. Matt. 16.24. If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me; for whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. Matt. 18.3. Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted and

become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Most evident it is by these and a hundred Scriptures more, that there is no other way to Heaven but this; and if so, then no difficulties should deter us from it, how many and great soever they be. We should account no pains, no labor too much in so important a concern as this, which is the one thing needful. Nay, difficulties in the service of God should rather excite than discourage; will ye serve God with that which cost you nothing? consider that though the gate be strait, and the way narrow, yet it leads to life.

2. Hath not the service of sin its difficulties too? yea greater than any that are imposed by the Yoke of Christ? the commands of sin are unreasonable, brutish, full of contradiction, and therein full of difficulty, and slavery, as I have said; and therefore the carnal sinner is in this self-condemned, in that he objects the difficulties of Religion thereby to keep off the Yoke of Christ, and yet at the same time yields a willing obedience to his lusts notwithstanding all the difficulties that attend them, which are as great or greater than those of Religion can be.

Suppose that Religion doth call a man to part with all, as sometimes it doth: doth not lust do the same? and where one man hath sacrificed his all to Religion, many have sacrificed their all to their lusts. How many have drunkenness and gluttony undone? how many have been brought to beggary by pride and excess? how many have been brought to a morsel of bread by the whorish woman? Besides, whatever a man loses for God and Religion, God hath engaged to make it up again, Matt. 19.29. But if a man wastes all upon the service of his lusts, who makes up that again? there is none to make up his loss, but the waste will make guilt great, and his account grievous.

It may be you account it hard that Religion and the service of God require so much of your time; and doth not the world and lust require as much of their followers, and that for mere dreams and shadows? and why should it be more burdensome to live to God than

to the Flesh? or to spend time in seeking and serving God for eternal blessedness, than in seeking and serving the world for empty vanities, which either we cannot get; or if we do, we cannot keep?

Doth Religion at any time expose a man to sufferings, to corporal pains, and death? So doth lust much more. O how great are the pains of Hatred! the torments of Envy! that one lust of Uncleaness; what pains and miseries hath it exposed men unto, and where one dies a Martyr for Christ, thousands die Martyrs to their lusts, having their days shortened by excess in sin, besides the endless torments that follow after. So that they who complain of the difficulties of Religion, find greater in the way of their lusts; and therefore are self-condemned in that they serve them without complaining.

3. The difficulties of Religion do not arise from the nature of the Precept, but from the indisposition of the subject. It is the flesh that makes the commandment grievous. This indisposition of the Subject may be considered two ways.

(1.) As it is in its full strength and efficacy. And thus it is in all unregenerate persons, whereby every command of God is a burden. The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be, Rom. 8.7.

(2.) As being in part cured and taken away by a saving principle and habit of Grace wrought in the heart. And thus it is in all such as are converted to God; so that the power of Sin is in part broken, and the power of Grace in part set up: and hence the believer is acted by contrary principles; there is the new man and the old, the flesh and the spirit, the regenerate part and the unregenerate: and these are the two armies in the Shulamite which ye read of, Cant. 6.13. That is, the flesh with its lusts, and the spirit with its Graces opposing one another in the whole of a Christians obedience. There is a will and a will not; a delight and a regret in the same person about the same precept. So far as Grace is wrought, duty is easy; so far as Sin remains and interposes, obedience is a burden. Were sin fully

destroyed out of our natures and grace perfected, there would be no difficulty in any duty; no burden in obedience, because there would be a universal and complete suitableness between the heart and the work, as there is in Heaven between the will of a Saint and the will of God; so that it is remaining lust that makes duty difficult. Labor therefore to shake off sin, and beg of God to write his Law in your hearts, and then nothing in Religion will be difficult.

Object. 5. Another stone of stumbling to hinder young Ones from taking up the Yoke of Christ, is the scoffs and scorns that attend it. The serious professors of Christianity are a sect everywhere spoken against, Acts 28.22. One while they are Puritans and Precisians, another while Sectaries and Schismatics, another while Fanatics and Whigs; varying the phrase according to the mode of the times. And who can endure to be made the scoff and jeer of the age? by reason of this many are ashamed of Christ and his Yoke. Now to remove this stumbling stone, I would have these eight things seriously considered.

Answ. 1. This is no new thing. Have there not in all ages been some tongues set on fire of Hell from Ishmael's day till now? the Devil hath never been without his Instruments to vilify and throw dirt in the face of Religion, and of the servants of God who profess and own it. Was not holy David the song of the Drunkard? was not the Apostle Paul branded for an Heretic? Acts 24.14. a base fellow, Acts 17.18. a pestilent fellow, a mover of sedition, a sectary; nay, a ringleader of the sectaries, Acts 24.5. and yet one of the best men that ever lived in the World. Our Lord Christ himself, holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, as he was; yet was he not free from the reproach of wicked tongues. What was he but an enemy to the government, a friend of publicans and sinners, a glutton, a winebibber, a blasphemer; and what not in the censure of the Tories of that day? And shall the Disciple be above his Master, or the Servant above his Lord? It is enough for the Disciple that he be as his Master, and the servant as his Lord; if they have called the Master of

the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?

And why do they deal thus by Christ, but to lessen the number of his followers? if we let him alone, all men will believe on him, John 11.48. It is the Devils cunning to keep Religion and its followers under censure and reproach, that young ones may be kept from inquiring into it, and may suspect rather than search; and condemn that out of ignorance and upon vulgar clamor, which upon knowledge they could not but love and profess. The Devil doth by Religion as the Heathens of old did by its professors and followers, wrap them up in the Skins of wild Beasts, and then throw them to be torn in pieces and devoured. He burdens Religion with scandals and prejudices, and so makes many hate and decry it, who would otherwise see a Beauty in it and embrace it. This is the present design the Devil is driving on. He hath, as one says, tried the rage of the mighty, the knowledge of the learned, but these have not prevailed against Religion, therefore now he sets the Apes and Drollers upon it.

2. Hath not the Holy Ghost warned and instructed us in this beforehand, that there should be a scoffing generation in the last days? 2 Pet. 3.3. There shall come in the last days scoffers: but why doth he say in the last days shall come scoffers? Not because the foregoing days were free from this evil, for they have been in all ages (as I said before.) But the last days shall be more infested with them; that is,

First, They shall be more numerous in the last days than ever before. All ages have had them, but the last days shall abound with them. And it is so, for never was the number of scoffers at Religion so great as at this day.

Secondly, They shall be more notorious in the last days than ever before. And no doubt but this age hath out done all the former in the degrees of this sin; that is, with greater impudence of fact, and with more circumstances of guilt. Formerly it was done covertly, but now

openly; in all companies, upon all occasions, in all places, not only in Taverns and Play-Houses, but in Presses and Pulpits.

There are three sorts of persons that are great Enemies to Religion, and the last days shall abound with them. And they are, furious persecutors, subtle deceivers, and profane scoffers.

3 Who are they that thus make a scoff and jeer of Religion and its followers? are they men of wisdom and understanding? men of conscience and virtue? no such thing. But they are under one of these two Characters; either they are persons of great ignorance, or of great brutishness; men of blind minds, or debauched consciences.

First, Men of blind minds, and such as are ignorant of Religion; either of the power of its precepts, or of the sweetness of its comforts. Nazianzen speaks of some ignorant persons that condemned learning, because they had not the skill to attain to it. It may be said of Religion as was said of old of art, it hath no Enemy but the ignorant. Had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory, 1 Corinth. 2.8. So did men but know what Religion is, they would revere it, and not scoff at it. But the God of this world hath blinded their minds, 2 Cor. 4.4. And who values the judgment of a blind man? why then should anyone be discouraged from owning Religion by the scoffs of such as know nothing of it? or,

Secondly, They are sensualists; men soaked in sensual pleasures, and swayed by brutish appetite; swilling Sots, Debauchees, beastly Buffoons, men of profligate Lives and Consciences, 2 Pet. 3.3. who never had the least savor of the things of Religion: and are these competent Judges of the sweetness of the heavenly life? what do they know of the things they scoff at and reproach? ask them what Religion is, and they are not well enough catechized to make an answer. They understand the newest fashions, the wittiest Plays, the most taking Health's, the gentlest Oaths, (things suitable to their huffing humor) but as for the ways of God, they are far above out of their sight, Psal. 10.5. And therefore as brute beasts, made to be

taken and destroyed, they speak evil of the things they understand not, and shall utterly perish in their own corruption, 2. Pet. 2.12.

4. Consider why they scoff at Religion, and at them who profess and practice it?

First, Why do they scoff at Religion? but because it would restrain their lusts, and obstruct their sinful course which they are bent upon. And therefore they discountenance Religion that they may the better countenance their lusts. There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, 2 Pet. 3.3. mark, it is for the sake of their lusts that Religion is scorned and hated. It is from an evil life that any man reproaches Godliness; they hate the light, and come not to it, lest their deeds should be reprov'd, John 3.20.

Secondly, Why do they scoff at them that profess and own Religion? but because they will not be Beasts, nor offer violence to their Reason, nor stifle the convictions of their own Consciences, nor resist the spirit, nor put off the Image of God, and become as Devils. They mock at them for taking God for their chief good; for seeking his love and favor; for minding and endeavoring to save an immortal Soul; for laboring to avoid the wrath of God and the miseries of Hell, and to secure an everlasting happiness. For this is the great work and business of Religion; the Object of it is God in Christ; the Rule of it is the holy Scriptures; the End of it is the Glory of God in our own Salvation: and the whole work and business of it is to die to sin, to live to righteousness; to walk after the spirit, and not to fulfill the lusts of the flesh. To deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, Tit. 2.12. This is the sure way to that blessed end; ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life, Rom. 6.22.

This is the sum of the Christian Religion; and what is here to be ridiculed and made mockery? they that will scoff at men for being Religious, may as well scoff at the Seaman for using a Pilot to keep the Ship from Rocks and Sands; or at the blind man for walking with

a guide, that he may not fall into the Pit; or at the sick man for seeking a Cure when his life is in danger. They scoff at you for keeping the promise they have broken, and for endeavoring to make good the baptismal Covenant which they have violated. They have promised to renounce the world, to forsake the Devil and all his works, to abandon the lusts of the flesh, but have not done it, but are Covenant-breakers; and because you labor to be true to your Covenant with God, therefore they mock and scoff; so that the true reason of all is because you are not as vile as they, as false to God and to your engagement, they think it strange that you run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you, 1 Pet. 4.4. and is not this most irrational and worse than brutish? and why should you cease to act like rational creatures, because others act below the Brutes?

5. It is not you but God whom they hate and scorn; it is his name and honor they wound through your sides; and therefore the Apostle calls the reproach of Christians Christ's reproach, Heb. 13.13. For whoever scoffs at any man for that of God that is in him, scoffs not at man so much as at God. Were you a swinish Drunkard, an unclean Brute, a proud Huff, a hectoring Atheist, a Dam-me like themselves, they would hug and embrace you: so that the hatred and enmity is evidently against the Image and Life of God in you, and therefore against God himself. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own, but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you, John 15.19. Now if the holy God (who is able to frown the proudest sinner into Hell in a moment) is patient and long suffering towards these, and bears all their scoffs, and hard speeches, and indignities: why should you think much to bear them? especially when it is for his name sake. All these things will they do unto you for my name sake, John 15.21.

6. Set the respect of God against the scorns of the World. What though the World hates, so long as God loves? let them reproach thee, yet the holy God honors thee. If any man serve me, him will my father honor, John 12.26. He is not ashamed to be called your God,

Heb. 11.16. and if so, why should you be ashamed to be called his People? He accounts of you as the excellent of the Earth; and therefore you should set that against the mocks and scoffs of wicked men. Aliud iudicium hominis, aliud iudicium Dei; whose judgment is most to be esteemed, the righteous God's, which is always according to truth; or unrighteous man's which is blinded with prejudice and hatred of God and all his ways and People? and therefore the Apostle Paul flights the censures of men, and values himself wholly upon the approbation of God; With me it is a very small thing, that I should be judged of man's judgment, — but he that judgeth me is the Lord, 1 Cor. 4.3, 4.

7. These scoffs and reproaches which you undergo upon the account of Christ and Religion here, shall add to your Crown, and greaten your Glory in the last Day. Every degree of suffering for Christ now, shall then have its reward. He that hath promised to requite your well doing to a cup of cold water, hath also promised to recompense your sufferings to the least scoff or jeer. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, — rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven. Matt. 5.11, 12.

8. You that are ashamed to own Jesus Christ and his ways, and to put on his Yoke, because of the scoffs and jeers of an ungodly World; I pray think seriously on that word of Christ, Mark 8.38. Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the Son be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy Angels.

CHAPTER IX.

More Objections against early Obedience answered

Object. 6. Another stumbling block that hinders young Ones from taking up the Yoke of Christ, is the diversity of opinions, and the many differences which are found among the professors of Religion. I would take up the Yoke of Christ if I knew which was the right way. But how shall I that am young be able to judge? one is for this way, another is for that; one says, lo here is Christ, another says, lo he is there; and Christ says, believe them not. One pleads for this Doctrine, another for that, a third denies both. One is for this way of Worship, another for that, another is neither for this nor that, but above all. So that I see whom to avoid, but I see not whom to follow. Therefore till Professors are agreed, it is better to be of no side.

Answ. I confess it is a great advantage which Satan takes to prejudice young ones against Religion, by the differences that are among the professors of Religion. But I would have such consider five things.

1. A man may with as much reason disclaim the light of the Sun, because the Dials differ about the time of the Day, as disclaim Religion because of men's differing opinions about it. What is it in this World that men differ not about? all men differ in their reasonings; shall I therefore abandon my reason and become a brute? all men's faces differ; shall I therefore renounce humanity, because all are not of one complexion? all men's appetites and palates differ; shall I therefore refuse my meat till all palates relish one thing? because men differ in their fashions; shall I therefore cast off the use of raiment till all come to the same garb? how foolish and absurd is this! and is it not the same, because some men differ in some things of Religion, therefore to cast off all Religion?

2. Is this any new thing? hath it not been so in all ages of the Church? if therefore Religion had been disclaimed till the minds of all men had been united in the profession of it, it had long ere this been shut out of the World. The Scripture tells you, there must be heresies, 1 Cor. 11.19. it doth not say only, there will be heresies, importing the certainty of them; but there must be heresies, importing the

necessity of them: And we have a double reason rendered for this in the Word.

First, That they which are approved may be made manifest, 1 Cor. 11.19. they are the touchstone of sincerity. God loves to try the sincerity of his Peoples Graces, this being the glory of every Christian, and a disposition highly pleasing to God. Were there but one opinion in matters of Faith, one way of Worship among all Christians, to own this would be no great matter; but to own and cleave to the truths of God against all the errors that oppose them, to stick to the pure Worship of God against all the human Devising's and Antichristian Impositions of men: this shows the power of faith, the zeal of love, the greatness of self-denial, and the uprightness of the heart in all. As the Stars shine brightest in the darkest night, so do the Graces of the Saints (who are the lights of the world) appear in their greatest luster under the darkness of false Worship and error. That is one reason why there must be heresies.

Secondly, Another is this, for the detecting and insnaring of false hearted hypocrites. Hereby unsound Professors are discovered; error and heresy have a great hand in detecting hypocrisy. This is a time of temptation in which they fall away. So did they 1 John. 2.19. They went out from us (there's the discovery) but they were not of us (there's their hypocrisy) for if they had been of us they would no doubt have continued with us, but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

And as errors and heresies serve to discover unsound professors, so also to ensnare and destroy them; for there are damning opinions as well as damning practices. When men of bad lives and worse hearts grow weary of the power of truth, God suffers corrupt Doctrines to spring up that may gratify their lusts, and suit their vicious inclinations, and in a fond compliance herewith, truth suffers, lust thrives, and the soul perishes. This is the very reason rendered why God at the first appearing of Antichrist in the World, gave men up to his damning delusions; Because they received not the love of the

truth that they might be saved, for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all may be damned who have not believed the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness, 2 Thess. 2. 10; 11, 12.

Thirdly, Consider from whence these differences do arise; not from Religion itself, which is in all matters of faith and practice direct and certain; the rule which is the word of God is the same to all, and gives perfect directions to guide us to life and blessedness. The law of the Lord is perfect converting the soul, the testimony of the Lord is sure making wise the simple, the statutes of the Lord are right rejoicing the heart, Psal. 19.7, 8. And therefore the differences that are found among the professors of Religion, are either from the different measures of knowledge to which Christians have attained, or from their different capacities; or else (which is worse) from the Pride and Lusts of some of its professors, that will dare to be wise above what is written, setting their posts by God's posts, and teaching for Doctrine the Commandments of men: would men but allow Christ to be head of the Church, and sole Lord of Conscience, and receive the word at his mouth, and stoop to his Authority, and not set up their wills and inventions for a rule of Worship, the most of our differences would be at an end.

Fourthly, All differences in Religion are not inconsistent with Salvation; indeed errors in the fundamental Principles of Godliness are damning; and therefore all sincere Christians shall be kept from falling into such error; they have received the spirit of truth to guide them into all truth necessary to salvation; but it is possible that good men may fall into many errors; you read of some that hold the foundation, who yet build wood, and hay, and stubble upon it; yet these shall be saved as holding the foundation, though their works shall be burned, 1 Cor. 3.12, 15.

There are many that were of differing opinions when here on Earth, who are all of one mind now in Heaven. Therefore he that condemns

Religion because of the differences of them that fear God, shall be condemned to Hell as abiding in the estate of them that fear him not.

Fifthly, If differences in Religion be the cause why you own not Religion; then why do you not own it so far as all good men are agreed in it? though there is difference in some things, yet there are many (and they the greatest) things wherein they are all agreed. All are agreed that he that believes not, shall be damned; and why then do you not close with Jesus Christ? all are agreed that without sincere repentance, and a sound conversion there can be no Salvation; why then do ye not shake off your lusts, and turn from sin to God? all are agreed of the necessity of fearing God, and keeping his Commandments, of living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; and that without holiness no man shall ever see the Lord; and therefore why are not these things practiced which have an universal consent? if some lesser matters are accounted doubtful and disputable, yet these are things without all controversy. Sin must be forsaken, self must be denied, lust must be mortified, the world must be renounced, Christ must be your King and Lord, he must have his throne in your hearts, his commands must be obeyed, or you can never be saved. This is the plain way to Heaven, and there is no other but what runs into this. And to this you have the consent of all good men that ever heard of the Gospel.

Now if differing opinions about lesser matters have kept you off from meddling with them; why should not universal consent engage you to mind these great and necessary things, whereon your Peace, your Life, your Souls, your Eternal Salvation and Happiness do depend? especially considering this, that if you neglect the great things of Salvation, you can never hope to escape, nor find shelter from the wrath of God under so vain a plea as the differences about Religion.

Obj. 7. Another thing that hinders young ones from taking up the Yoke of Christ, is the easiness of repenting and turning to God hereafter. God is full of mercy and will not refuse or reject a penitent sinner at any time, no though at the last hour; witness the thief upon

the cross; how little time had he for repentance, and yet he obtained mercy; and why may not I?

Answ. This Thief may in a sense, be said to be a greater thief dead than living. The example of his repentance and conversion in a dying hour hath stole away many a purpose, many a season of grace, many a resolution, nay many a Soul, which hath taken encouragement from his late conversion to put off the great business of Salvation to the last.

Now to prevent this undoing and Soul-destroying mischief, I would say six things concerning this example.

1. This is an example without a parallel, and therefore not to be urged in this case. God did this once (as one says) that none might despair, and but once that none might presume. You have not such another instance in all the Scripture, which is a story of five thousand Years, and yet in all that time we have but one instance of a man that repented when he came to die; and will any man dare to adventure his Soul upon such an instance as that? you read Acts 27.44. that the Ship wherein Paul failed was ran aground, and yet not one man lost; some by swimming, and some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the Ship, they all escaped safe to land. Now would not that man be accounted a mad man that should run his Vessel a ground upon the encouragement of this success?

2. It is a pattern without a precept. Where is any command that encourages the dedicating our youth to sin and lust, and our old age to repentance? is there any precept of God that indulges to a youthful remissness in the great business of Religion? no not one, but the quite contrary. I dare not deny but God may be found in the last hour, but no man ought therefore to put off seeking him till then; because the rule is, Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the evil days come, and the years draw nigh when thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them, Ec. 12.1.

3. It is a precedent without a promise, show me one promise that ever God made to accept such a repentance as this. And therefore it is a very hopeless attempt, nay a down-right presumption, to expect mercy without a promise of mercy, or in a way not promised, is presumption.

4. It was a miraculous work upon a peculiar reason; to wit, to show forth his Godhead, even when his human nature was dying. There was never such a concurrence of works of wonder in any age of the world as at that time; the Sun losing his light; the Air darkened; the Earth quaking; the Rocks rent; the Graves opened; many Dead raised; and among the rest this was one, a Thief, while hanging upon the Cross converted; this was to manifest his deity under his greatest suffering, and to take away the ignominy of his cross: so that we may (as one says) almost as well expect a second crucifying of Christ, as a second conversion of this nature.

5. Was there not another Thief at the same time upon the Cross? and yet he repented not, though he had much means to help him in the work; his fellow recanting of his sin, becoming a true convert, reproving his sin, calling him to repent, owning the Lord Christ, praying for mercy; yet notwithstanding all this he repented not, but as he lived so he died, in his sins and lusts. And therefore thou hast greater cause to fear being cast off with the impenitent Thief, than to be received to mercy with this signal Convert; especially considering, that there is but this one instance in all the Bible, and for this one that was received to mercy, thousands and thousands have been cast off.

6. This Thief upon the Cross is an example pleaded but not imitated; and so we make that a dangerous temptation, which would otherwise be an encouraging instance. You that urge this for an example, do but imitate it, and then you will make a right use of it. For we don't find that this Thief was ever called to believe till then; and therefore so soon as he heard of Christ he believes in him, and ventures his Soul upon his righteousness. And God requires no more than that we

would answer his call, and accept the first tenders of Grace. If God calls when it is late, he will accept late conversion, and therefore Christ takes that for an answer in Matt. 20. when he asks them, why stand ye here all the day idle? and they answer, because no man hath hired us; but as soon as he calls, they come. Do you come in and believe in Christ at the first call, as the Thief here did? if God calls not till the eleventh hour, he that comes in at the eleventh hour comes in good time; but he that is called at the first or third hour, may come too late if he puts it off till the eleventh: if thou darest sinfully say, it is too soon today, it may be God may judicially say, it is too late tomorrow.

And therefore this instance of the Thief on the Cross is most ignorantly and impertinently urged, which doth no way reach the case of impenitent sinners under Gospel Grace, and the daily and loud calls of God. The Thief never put off the work of repentance and conversion (that we find) to the last hour; this thou dost. The Thief never purposed to repent hereafter, that he might thereby the better enjoy his lusts at present; this thou dost. The Thief came into Christ at the first call; but thou hast been often called and yet hast refused to come, and therefore what is this instance to thee? it doth not at all concern thy case, it is falsely urged and vainly pleaded. And therefore instead of encouraging thyself from this single instance of the Thief's being at last hour received to mercy, thou shouldst consider and tremble at that dreadful threatening of God against such as slight and stand out against the calls and offers of mercy, Prov. 1. from the 24. verse to the last. Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded; but ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh. And verse. 28. They shall call upon me but I will not answer, they shall seek me early but they shall not find me. And verse. 32. The turning away of the simple shall slay them; that is, their turning away from the calls of God and offers of Grace, will be their Condemnation at the last. And therefore remember this, it is seldom (if ever) that any adventure so near the brink of Hell, as to put off repentance and

closing with Christ to the last hour, thinking to come off safe, but that they drop in at the last.

CHAPTER X.

Wherein the reasons of slighting Christ are inquired into, and the evil of it aggravated.

Use of reproof to such as delay and put off the putting on Christ's Yoke. O what folly is this! and yet there is nothing more natural. Few there are that do downright refuse Christ, but many there are that put him off till hereafter; from one time to another, from childhood to youth, from youth to manhood, from manhood to old age, from old age to the death bed, till there is no room left for this great work. They while away one season after another, till the season of Grace is past and gone.

In the managing this use I will do three things.

1. Inquire into the causes why men deal thus with Christ.
2. Charge the sinner with such aggravations of this evil as may set home the reproof.
3. Propound some Considerations for a thorough conviction.

First, Let us inquire into the causes why men deal thus with Christ; whence is it that any do refuse his Yoke? break his bonds and cast his cords from him.

It may be reduced to these five heads chiefly.

First, Ignorance: This is one cause of all the slights that are put upon Christ; this our Lord Christ intimates in that passage to the Samaritan woman, John 4.10. If thou knewest the gift of God. A Soul that hath a right knowledge of Christ, cannot but own him and bow to him. They that know thy name will trust in thee, Psal. 9.10. Knowledge begets love, and love begets obedience. If you did but

know Christ, his undertakings for you, his relation to you, his dominion over you, you would not thus reject his Yoke and despise his Command. It is your blindness that is the reason of your disobedience. What is thy beloved more than another beloved? In 1 Cor. 2.8. the Apostle charges all their contemptuous carriage to Christ upon their ignorance; whom none of the Princes of this world knew, for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. Did you know Christ, you would not refuse his call, nor reject his Yoke. Oh how many that are accounted men of understanding and parts, and esteemed the wits of the age, yet are grossly ignorant of the mystery of Christ and the Gospel, and so, professing themselves wise they become fools. The God of this world hath blinded their minds, left the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the Image of God should shine into them, 2 Cor. 4.4.

Secondly, It is from that root of unbelief that grows in every carnal heart; men don't believe the things of the invisible world, the Glory to be revealed or the Misery threatened, and the necessity of Faith and Holiness for the securing the one and avoiding the other, and that is the reason. The Apostle says, we walk by faith and not by sight; but the generality of men walk by sight not by faith, their hearts are fixed upon present things, they cannot see afar off. Did men believe that sinful pleasures will end in eternal torments, that the lusts of the flesh cannot be indulged at any easier rate than the loss of the Soul; that there is no relief from the bondage and burden of sin but by a Savior; and that he is a Savior to none whom he does not rule, to none but them that obey him; you would hearken to his call, and come under his Yoke.

Most men are men of this world, as David calls them, they are for a portion in this life; Demas hath embraced this present world; and there is no greater token of a carnal unbelieving heart, than for a man to fix upon a present happiness, when God hath propounded an eternal felicity in another world. The good man is for the Yoke of Christ here, and a Crown hereafter; the unbeliever is for present ease

and satisfaction, and therefore takes up with the pleasures of sin that are but for a season.

3. It is from that general unconcernedness that is in men about the matters of the world to come. They put far from them the evil day; and things at a distance don't affect us; they are like the discharging a gun a great way off, we hear the report without concernedness, but the same set to our breasts and discharged, would make us tremble. A clap of thunder in a remote part of the Heavens doth not startle us so much as when it is just over our heads.

Next to the want of a sound belief, the want of a serious consideration, is the great cause why men dally with God. For as Faith makes invisible things evident, and future things present, so consideration makes them great, and gives them their due weight. Consideration is an intimate view of things; it ponders matters fully, their natures, events, and tendencies. It compares one thing with another, kind with kind, cause with cause, circumstance with circumstance, issue with issue, how they begin and how they end. Sin and lust are indeliberate and sudden, they must have a present compliance; they allow of no consideration, they consider not that they do evil, Eccles. 5.1. He considers not that the dead are there, and that her guests are in the depths of hell, says Solomon of the simple sinner, Prov. 9.18.

Consideration would break the force of lust, and spoil Satan's design. Would men but seriously ponder what sin is, and what the Soul is; how deceitful, how vain, how unsatisfying, how brutish the one, and how noble, how precious, how immortal the other, they would not stake and pawn them to every base lust as they do. Would they but consider of the nearness of death and eternity; that within a few days or hours they must be in Heaven or Hell; that there is nothing between but a little breath, which the next morsel he eats may stop; all hangs upon a small thread of life which the next disease may fret in sunder, they could not dally with duty, and slight conversion and a life of holiness as they do.

What is the reason that men are better upon a sick bed than at another time? that Jesus Christ is then prized, and repentance sought, and holiness desired, which in health were slighted and put off? the reason is, the sense of their condition; their case makes them considerate, and consideration gives death and eternity a near approach, and than they do make other kind of impressions than when we look on them at a distance. Had we but the same thoughts of these things in health as we shall have in sickness, we should labor for Grace and Holiness as much now, as we shall then wish we had. I tell you, you don't consider enough of the nearness of death and eternity; and he that puts the evil day far off, will put the Yoke of Christ off too, and so he is undone by his own security.

4. It is from the unsuitableness that is betwixt the things of Christ and the temper of a sinner. Christ's Yoke doth no way fit a carnal heart; and where there is unsuitableness there will be dislike. They savor not the things that be of God. A carnal heart is satisfied with carnal contentment's and delights; a rattle will please a child, and a toy be more welcome to a fool than a Crown. Every nature delights in things suitable to itself; and therefore it is that the carnal mind is enmity against God, that it neither is nor can be subject to the law of God; for how can spiritual things be suitable and relishing to a carnal heart? If Christ should come to the ambitious man, and say, follow me and I will give thee all the honor and grandeur of this world; or to the voluptuous man, and say, follow me and I will give thee all the pleasures of sense and flesh; or to the covetous man, and say, follow me and I will fill thy Bags and thy Barns; I will bless the Ship and the Shop; I will give thee the treasures of the Earth and the Sea; this would do more than all the motives of the Gospel. The young man had never left Christ as he did, had he but urged such an argument as this for his heart to close with. It is the base love of this present world that makes the call of the Gospel so unsuccessful and ineffectual; you may see it in that parable, Matt. 22.5. They make light of the tenders of Christ, and what is the reason? why the Farm, and the Oxen, and the Merchandise were in the case; these must not be left for Christ where lust hath the casting voice. O how sad is this! if Christ should

offer you riches and honors, you would come, and yet for Heaven and Glory you will not.

5. It is because they are deceived and beguiled, partly by the cunning of Satan who puts a false varnish upon things.

Partly by the deceitfulness of their own hearts, which turns them aside, that they cannot see and say it is a lie which they have in their right hand.

Partly from the delusive appearances of things; which, by reason of both the former, seem other than they are. Bernard distinguishes of four sorts of things.

1. Some things are good and pleasant: so is communion with God, for there is the chiefest goodness and the highest sweetness.

2. Some things are good but not pleasant, as repentance, and mortification, and self-denial.

3. Some things are neither good nor pleasant; as utter despair in the present State; it is a thing full of sin and sorrow.

4. Some things are pleasant but not good: and such are the delights of sin; they are sweet but not safe, they please but they deceive. It is the sweetness of sin that gives it countenance, it would never be committed if there were no pleasure in it. And herein the deceitfulness of sin consists; it allures by fair baits, and kills by a sharp hook; it tempts by its sweets, and destroys by its snares. Sin is like poison, very luscious but very dangerous; the pleasant taste invites, and the sinner cannot refrain, though that which is sweet in the mouth be in the belly bitter as wormwood. Many are so bewitched to their lust, that though they know it will cost them their Souls, yet they cannot renounce its pleasures.

Now these five things put together, namely, Ignorance, Unbelief, Security, Unsuitableness of spiritual things, and the deceitfulness of

Sin, are the causes why so many slight the Yoke of Christ.

Secondly, Let me in the next place, having showed you the causes of it, lay before you the aggravations of it, for it is a sin of a very heinous nature to put off and slight coming under Christ's Yoke.

First, it is base disingenuity; for we don't deal with God as we would have him deal with us. When we want any mercy we must be heard at first call; but God calls for duty again and again, and we hear him not. We are impatient if God delays us, and yet we make no scruple to delay him. When we have anything for God to do, that must be done speedily; In the day when I call, answer me speedily, Psal. 102.2. But when God hath anything for us to do, there we take leisure. If we would have mercy, that must be today; but if God calls for duty, we put him off till the morrow. Now this is basely disingenuous, that when we cannot bear God's delays, yet we make him bear ours, although the case is not the same; for we are bound to answer God's precepts, but he is not bound to answer our requests; and yet we make him tarry our sinful leisure in the business of duty, though we think much to tarry his holy leisure in the case of mercy.

Secondly, It is down-right disobedience; he that delays a duty transgresses the precept, and slights the divine Authority. The season is as much a part of the command as the thing commanded. If God says, return ye now everyone from his evil way (Jer. 18.11.) the now is as much a duty as the returning. If the Father says to his Son, go work today in my vineyard, Matt. 21.28. it is flat disobedience to defer it till tomorrow; for the time of working is as much a duty as the work itself.

Thirdly, It is the highest ingratitude; for Christ did not adjourn his love to us one day; his heart was to us from everlasting; I was set up from everlasting—rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and my delights were with the sons of men, Prov. 8.23.31. He gave himself in the Covenant of Redemption to die for sin, and redeem sinners from the first day that sin entered. And therefore he is said to

be a lamb slain from the foundation of the world, Revel. 13.8. Though he came not to die actually till the fullness of time, (Galat. 4.4.) yet in the decree of God the Father, and in the consent of God the Son, he was a Savior from the beginning; and his Blood was as efficacious to Salvation, before ever it was shed, as after; he was a Savior and Redeemer from the first entrance of sin; Adam, Noah, Abraham, and all the Saints that lived before his Incarnation were saved by his Blood as well as we. His love bears date from everlasting, and it breaks forth very early in the overt acts of it to particular persons. Christ begins with sinners early; who knows how soon? puts upon many of them a federal holiness early; seals them for his early; puts his spirits into them early; and calls them to an actual close with him early; it is hard to say how soon, but it appears to be very early in that many have been converted from their very childhood, as Samuel and Timothy, and others. O the earliness of the love of Christ! and shall we adjourn our obedience as if we were afraid of closing with him too soon? he took up our burden early; and shall we delay the taking up his Yoke for the last work of our lives? This is great ingratitude.

Fourthly, It is manifest injustice, and a fraudulent detaining of Christ's right. For whose you are, his your strength and service is; and are ye not the Lord's? hath he not redeemed you, and that both by price at the hands of God, and by power out of the hands of Satan? ye are the redeemed of the Lord, and therefore you are his; your time is his; your gifts and parts are his; your affections are his; your estates are his; your strength is his; your youth is his; your body and soul are his; your all is his; and therefore not to give up yourselves body and soul to him, not to love, and fear, and serve him, is a crying injustice. Nay, to delay it one day, one moment, is to deny him his right. Many boast of their honesty, they are just to all, and wrong none; yes, you wrong your redeemer, you are unjust to Jesus Christ, and that is the highest injustice in the world. To delay any man in that which is his right, is a great sin; the wages of the hireling must be paid at the day, and it must be done before the sun be set, Deut. 24.14, 15. It is a maxim in the Law, *minus solvit, qui minus tempore*

solvit; not to pay at the time is to pay the less, because there is so much advantage for improvement lost. Is it such a sin to detain a servants right? what is it then to detain our Lord's right? must we not withhold wages for a servants work till the sun be set? and yet dare we withhold doing our Lord's work till the sun of our lives is setting? O what base injustice is this!

Fifthly, It is altogether unreasonable, there is no man living can give a reason to excuse him from this duty. You cannot say it is the wrong way to Heaven; for it is the way the Lord Christ hath directed and chalked out. You cannot say it is a needless Yoke, for there is no Salvation without taking it upon you. You cannot say it is a dangerous Yoke, for it hath salvation certainly entailed upon it. You cannot say it is a fruitless Yoke, for it yields perfect peace and lasting joy to all that come under it. You cannot say it is an impossible Yoke, for as you have the command of Christ to undertake it, so you have the promise of Christ to help and enable you to bear it. So that you cannot give one reason why you should neglect it; and therefore he that refuses to take it up is without excuse. Whoever remains graceless in a day of Grace, will be found speechless in the Day of Judgment.

Sixthly, It is downright madness; for you refuse Heaven because you will not be holy. You will rather lose the eternal enjoyment of God than be made like God. You will rather choose to perish under the wrath of Christ, than you will consent to come under the Yoke of Christ. You will be contented to be damned, so you may go a pleasant way to Hell. And is not this madness to the height to choose rather to perish eternally than be tied to love and serve your maker and redeemer? O what a base and low opinion have you of God and Heaven! how can ye degrade and dishonor him more?

If a man should publish it as his opinion, that darkness is better than light; that Hell is rather to be chosen than Heaven; that he had rather be in an everlasting society with Devils and damned Spirits, than with God and Christ in the glory above; what would you say of such a

one but that he talked like a mad man? why then reflect upon yourselves a little, for, — *mutato nomine do te, Fabula narratur.* — you that prefer the pleasures of sin to the service of Christ; that will renounce your part in God and Christ and eternal happiness, to satisfy a base lust; that will stake your Souls for a few minutes of sinful delights; can any man be guilty of greater madness? do ye know what ye do, or what ye speak, when ye say in your hearts this lust shall reign, but Christ shall not reign? let us break his bonds, and cast his cords far away from us? this is treason against the Crown of Heaven; your Blood, your Life, your Soul must go for this. Those mine enemies that would not that I should reign over them, bring them out and slay them before me. The Lord open your eyes that you may see the madness of this; for most true is that of Solomon concerning sinners, Madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead, Eccles. 9.3.

Thirdly, Now having showed you the causes why so many do neglect taking up the Yoke of Christ; and laid before you the aggravations of the sin; let me lay down but three considerations, if the hardness of your heart will suffer you to take them in.

First, Consider what you will answer to Christ for slighting his Yoke; do ye believe there is such a day coming wherein the Lord Christ will sit in judgment upon every Soul, and in which everyone must give an account of himself to God; if ye do not, ye do not own the Bible; ye do not believe the Scriptures to be the word of God: for there is no truth more plainly attested in the Scriptures than this: See Acts 17.31. Rom. 2.5, 6. and chap. 14.10, 11, 12. 2 Corinth. 5. 10.2 Thess. 1.8, 9, 10. Heb. 9.27. James 5.9. Revel. 20. 12, 13. and many places more. And if ye do believe a judgment to come, pray tell me what you think the business of that day will be? will it not be to take an account how you and I have carried it to Christ? God hath sent him into the world to die for sinners, to bring life and immortality to light through the Gospel, to fix the terms and conditions of life and salvation: and these terms are subjection and obedience to Jesus Christ and his commands as King and Lord; and the business of that day will be to

take an account what compliance we have made with these terms; not whether we have professed him, and outwardly owned him; but whether we have closed with him upon the conditions of the Gospel. Now you that have refused or neglected taking up the Yoke of Christ, how will you answer it to Christ in that dreadful Day?

1. Will you say you were not called? that you cannot; for God hath called you many ways; many of you have had calls by your Parents in a Godly education; calls by instruction; calls by counsel; calls by correction; calls by Godly examples; many of you have been called by being placed in religious families under Godly Masters, or Godly Tutors and Governors. Many of you have been called by afflictions, by the voice of the rod of God; all of you have been called by the dispensation of the Gospel; for what is the work of Ministers but to call you to Christ to take up his Yoke?

Will you say you were too young? that you cannot; for others as young as you have heard his call, and obeyed, taking up his Yoke early. Besides, it is your duty to make it your first work, Matt. 6.33. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.

Will you say you have present concernments that must first be attended to? that you cannot; for there is nothing in the World of so great concernment as this. Besides, God hath made a promise of all other things to Godliness for this very reason, that we might be encouraged to an early practice of it, and to leave the neglecters of it without excuse, Matt. 6.33. 1 Tim. 4.8. Psal. 84.11.

Will you say, you expected a longer time in the World for this work? but how could that be? why should you expect what God never promised? or why should God lengthen your days for you to spend in the service of your lusts? you that would not repent of sin, and turn to Christ in the time that God gave you for that purpose; neither would you have done it if the Lord had lengthened your life to the age of Methuselah. Therefore your mouth will be stopped, and you found speechless in that dreadful Day of account.

Secondly, Consider you that will not come under the Yoke of Christ, must come under the wrath of Christ: You shake off this, you cannot shake off that. There is a twofold dispensation of wrath to these Sons of Belial; one in this World, the other in the World to come.

1. That in this World lies in giving them up to their own corrupt wills, and lusts of their own hearts. And this is wrath to the uttermost, as it is called 1 Thes. 2.16. There can be no greater expression of God's wrath in this world, than to give a man up to his own lusts. And when a man sits under Gospel-seasons, and hath sin discovered, Christ tendered, faith and obedience pressed upon him, and yet will not hearken to the voice of God herein, nor leave his lusts for Christ, that man is very near to this judgment. See Psal. 81.11.12. My people would not hearken to my voice, Israel would none of me, so I gave them up to their own hearts lusts, and they walked in their own counsels. This is a dispensation of wrath in this world.

2. There is a dispensation of wrath in the next world, and that lies in the pouring out of eternal vengeance. Now I pray consider this: you can refuse present obedience, but can ye refuse eternal vengeance? you may say, I will not come under Christ's Yoke; but can you say, I will not come under his wrath? You read of some that call for the mountains to fall on them, and hide them from the wrath of the lamb, Revel. 6.16. but all in vain. How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation? Heb. 2.3. mark, if we neglect; he doth not say, if we reject and renounce it; if we scoff at, and deride it; if we oppose and persecute it; no, but if we neglect it; the word is H&G, the same as in Matt. 22.5. They made light of it. If we make light of, let slip, shift off, take no present care of our salvation, what then? how shall we escape? that is, there can be no escaping the wrath of God. It is somewhat like that expression, Rom. 2.3. Thinkest thou this, O man, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?

Thirdly, Consider where will you lay the blame of your destruction? you cannot lay it upon God; for he gave Christ to redeem and save you. You cannot lay it upon Christ; for he would have gathered you,

and you would not; he never cast you off till you cast him off. You cannot lay it upon the spirit; for he would have convinced, and converted, and sanctified you, and you have resisted and quenched him. You cannot lay it upon your ministers; for they have set before you life and death, and declared to you the danger of sin, and the necessity of holiness, but you would not believe their report. You cannot lay it upon your ignorance; for either you do know your duty, and then your disobedience is inexcusable; or you might know it if you would, and so your ignorance is inexcusable. You cannot lay it upon your want of leisure and time: for you have time to spare for your lusts, for your sports, and pastimes, and pleasures, and why not for Christ? so that you can lay the blame nowhere but upon a cursed corrupt Heart, thy destruction is of thyself, Hos. 13.9.

CHAPTER XI.

Wherein the trial of our state is pressed with seven reasons for it.

USE 2. Of examination. If it be the great concernment of everyone to take up Christ's Yoke early; then the question is, what progress have you made in this duty? what Yoke are you under? that of sin, or that of Christ? for all men, young and old, rich and poor, high and low, bond and free, are under one of these Yokes, either the Yoke of sin, or the Yoke of Christ. These are the two great Lord's of the world, and have the most extensive rule and dominion; and therefore as ye read of the rule and Government of Christ, so you read of the rule of lust, and the dominion of sin; and of being servants of sin, and servants of righteousness. Now whose Yoke are ye under? no man can be said to be under both; no man can serve these two masters. He that is under the Yoke of sin is free from righteousness, Rom. 6.20. And he that is under the Yoke of Christ is free from sin, Rom.

6.14. Can ye make it out that ye are under the Yoke of Christ? this is a question of very great importance, and therefore every man should labor to be satisfied about it. And that for these seven reasons.

1. Because everyone of us are naturally under the Yoke and thralldom of sin; not only ignorant of God and Christ, but enemies to God and Christ; and not only enemies by natural depravation, but by actual opposition; enemies by wicked works, Coloss. 1.21. serving divers lusts and pleasures, Tit. 3.3. Every man naturally is the servant of sin (Rom. 6.17.) till he be made free by Christ, and brought under his Yoke by the power of converting Grace. Now what do ye know of this in yourselves? can ye say, being made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness? Rom. 6.18.

2. So long as a man is under the power of sin, he is in a state of wrath. The reign of sin subjects the soul to the wrath of God; and no wonder, for it is the highest contempt and affront the creature can put upon God to give up himself to the dominion of sin; he that doth sin, transgresseth the law; but he that subjects himself to the power of it, contemns the law, and despises the Authority of him that gave it; and there is nothing can lay man under the wrath of God more than this.

3. Because many there are that deceive themselves about the Yoke of Christ, thinking they have put it on, when they are mistaken. Few will deny that subjection to Jesus Christ is a duty; but the misery is, they undo themselves with a self-deluding confidence that they have taken the Yoke of Christ upon them when they have not. Many bless themselves in the goodness of their condition, and the uprightness of their hearts with Christ, when it is no such matter. Solomon says, there is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness, Prov. 30.12. This was the case of Laodicea; she thought herself rich, her state good, her interest firm, her heart right, when it was quite otherwise; wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, Revel. 3.17. who better

persuaded of the goodness of his case than Paul, and yet he was an utter enemy to Jesus Christ at the same time? Rom. 7.9.

4. To be deceived in a matter of this moment is a thing of very dangerous consequence. If you take counterfeit money for true, the loss is not great; but if you take common Grace for saving Grace, a hypocritical obedience to Christ, for subjection to the Yoke of Christ, a deceit in this matter is as much as the soul is worth. It is an undoing mistake; the foolish virgins that went out to meet the bridegroom, thought their hearts had been right with Christ; that they had had oil enough in their lamps, and of the right kind, till the coming of Christ discovered the mistake; and it was such a mistake as proved their utter undoing.

5. It is a good argument of the goodness of thy condition, and of thy sincerity of heart to be willing to come to the touchstone. Some are great enemies to trying Doctrines; they cannot endure the searches of the word; but cry out against such preachers as censorious; these men will take God's work out of his hand, and be judges of men's hearts and states, say they. This is a very great sign of an unsound heart; they come not to the light lest their deeds should be reprov'd. Tertullian says of Heretics, they are *lucifugae scripturarum*, they cannot endure to be tried by the word. So it is with an unsound professor.

6. The knowledge of this is of great use, living and dying.

First, It is very useful in life, it is that which you will be forced to have recourse to a thousand times before you die. When temptations or desertions are upon you, the sense of the uprightness of your heart in your walking with God will be an admirable support. So it was to Job, when he was under the hidings of God, and had lost the wonted comfort of the light of his countenance, he comforts himself in his own uprightness. He knows the way that I take, —my foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept and not declined, neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips, Job 23.11, 12.

Secondly, It is of great use in death. For what is it that can support the soul in a dying hour, but a sense of interest in Christ evidenced by the uprightness of the heart in walking with him. This was that Hezekiah had recourse to when the sentence of death was upon him, Isai. 38.3. Remember O Lord how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which was good in thy sight. O it is a blessed thing in a dying hour to have a witnessing conscience to the sincerity of our obedience. For if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God, 1 John 3.21. It is of great use therefore to put this matter to the trial. For,

7. The day is coming when God will put it to the trial. The fire of that day shall try every man's work of what sort it is. It is not the livery of Christ, nor the badge of baptism, nor the name of a Christian, nor outward profession of Religion that will stand us in that Day. It is not saying Lord, Lord, but doing the will of God that will then stand us instead; not a profession of Christ, but an unfeigned subjection to him. Christ is said in that Day to separate the sheep from the goats, and to set the sheep at his right hand, and the goats at his left. The one for a blessing, the other for a curse. And who are the sheep? why he tells you John 10.27. they that hear his voice and follow him; and to these he gives eternal life, v. 28. And who are the goats? but carnal sinners that will have their lusts rather than Christ; that cast off his Yoke, and will not have him rule over them. And what is their doom? bring them out and slay them before me.

There will be but two sorts of men in that day; saints and sinners; obedient and disobedient; subjects and rebels; the great question then will be, whose servants you have been? to whom have you lived? to the world? to lust? or to Jesus Christ? and according to this, so shall your sentence be; as you have lived, so shall you be judged, see Rom. 2.6, 7, 8. And therefore as ever you would be able to lift up your heads in the Day of God's trial, it concerns you to try yourselves.

CHAPTER XII.

Several Rules for the knowledge of our state laid down, both negatively, and affirmatively

Quest. HOW may a man know whether he be under the Yoke of Christ or not?

Answ. I will answer the question first Negatively.

1. Negatively. There are some of whom it may be said without the least rashness of judgment, or breach of charity, that they are far from the Yoke of Christ; professed rebels to his Government and Authority. They carry the tokens of Death and Damnation in their foreheads: the Holy Ghost reckons them up in several places of Scripture, one is in 1 Cor. 6.9, 10. Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God, Revel. 21.8. The fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second Death. These are all sons of Belial, they are not under the Yoke of Christ. I beseech you consider a little, if any of these sins be chargeable upon you, your case is desperate; you are actually shut out from any claim in Christ. You may know, as certainly as if God had told you from Heaven, that you are in a lost undone condition; the Holy Ghost calls all such children of disobedience, because of these things the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience, Ephes. 5.6.

2. Such as are scoffers at Godliness, and make a mock of Religion. This is one of the reigning sins of this Day, 2 Pet. 3.3. There shall

come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts. Mark, while they scoff at Godliness, they live in ungodliness, walk after their own lusts; they will not leave their lusts, and therefore scoff at Religion because that opposes their lusts. Now what says the Scripture? Judgment is prepared for scorers, Prov. 19.29. 2 Chron. 36.16. These therefore do openly declare they are not under the Yoke of Christ.

3. Such as have a secret enmity against the power of Religion; they have a form of godliness, but deny the power of it, 2 Tim. 3.5. These can be no subjects of Christ's Kingdom, for the Kingdom of God is not in word but in power.

4. Such as have their secret reserve in closing with Christ; they will not let Benjamin go; some sweet sin, some profitable lust they will not part with. These are not under the Yoke of Christ, for he that comes to Christ, and hates not father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be my Disciple, Luke 14.26.

5. Such as live in the sinful neglect of God's worship, that slight hearing the word, restrain prayer before God; have no regard to their Souls. Such are not under the Yoke of Christ; for he that is of God heareth God's word, John 8.47. No man that slights the word and worship of God, can be under Christ's Yoke; for it is the word that fastens this Yoke.

6. Such as give up themselves to carnal pleasures and delights, that are lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, 2 Tim. 3.4. These were never yet under the Yoke of Christ, for they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts, Gal. 5.24.

7. He that trusts to his own righteousness, and looks to find acceptance for that, was never under the Yoke of Christ; for this is a plain rejecting of Christ, it puts him out of office; a man makes a Savior of his own duties, and so as other men perish by their sins,

this man perishes by his duties. None do reject Christ more than these, Rom. 10.3. Going about to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted to the righteousness of God.

8. Such as see no need of any strength for duty but their own, can do all without any supernatural aids and divine incomes; such were never under the Yoke of Christ. For that will show a man his daily need of divine power for every performance.

9. He that never felt the burden of sin, was never under the Yoke of Christ. For none else are called to take it up, Matt. 11.28, 29.

10. Such as maintain an ungrounded confidence of the goodness of their condition, without any experience of a change made in them, are persuaded their state is safe, but cannot show one good ground for it; these are not under the Yoke of Christ.

O that you that are young would lay these things to heart, for now we are upon the search, I pray therefore look everyone inward; is it thus with you? for let me tell you, whoever is under any one of these Characters hath never yet took up the Yoke of Christ. They shall be reckoned among the enemies of Christ that have rejected his Yoke, despised his Authority, and as such they shall perish, except by a timely conversion they be brought to close with and submit to him.

2. Affirmatively. How may a man know when he is really and indeed under the Yoke of Christ? how may he come to a knowledge of the goodness of his state, by the truth of his Subjection to the Lord Christ.

Give me leave to answer the question,

First, More generally.

Secondly, More particularly.

First, More generally. There are some things that will greatly contribute to this, and without which he will never attain to a well-grounded satisfaction in this matter; and therefore they are very necessary to be considered, and made use of in this inquiry.

Rule 1. One is a full and deliberate conference with your own hearts. He that makes a judgment upon slight inquiries, and sudden inconsiderate answers, is very like to be deceived; judgment ought not to be pronounced but upon a full hearing, and a through debate; *ad pauca respicit, qui cito pronunciat*, it is not judgment, but fond opinion that is passed upon a matter, without hearing all that is fit to be said about it, therefore so great a matter as this is should not be determined but upon mature deliberation. As it is said of counsel, *omne consilium in festinatione captum, stultitia est*; all counsel taken in hast is folly. The same may be said of judging ourselves, all hasty precipitate judgment is folly; the way to come to a rational certainty is to make a full inquiry. Hypocrites and carnal sinners overlook what is evil, and judge by any good they find; and weak Christians overlook what is good, and judge themselves by the evil that is discovered; this is judgment upon hearing but of one side, and he that doth so is an unjust Judge, though he should happen to pass a just judgment ; there must be a searching out the case, that neither sin may be passed by on the one hand, nor grace overlooked on the other.

Rule 2. Another thing in this inquiry is the light of the spirit; this is very necessary in such a work. Solomon says, The spirit of a man is the candle of the Lord, *Prov. 20.27*. But the spirit of the Lord is the light of this candle, without which he cannot see into the inward parts of the belly: It is this that brings to light the hidden things of darkness, and makes manifest the counsels of the heart, *1 Cor. 4.5*. What is the meaning of that Prayer of David, *Psal 139.23, 24*. Search me O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me. He doth hereby beg for such a measure of the spirits light and aid (which searcheth all things *1 Cor. 2.10*.) as may enable him to such a search of his heart, whereby he

may be fully assured of the goodness of his estate. You will never be able to come to a true knowledge of your state and heart but by the spirits light and help.

Rule 3. Another means is frequent and repeated trials. It is not enough for a man that would be satisfied of his spiritual condition, to bring his heart to the touchstone now and then; it must be done often, according to the variety of conditions, occasions, and temptations. In our Law, a man can be but once tried for one fact, because his life shall not be always in hazard. But in spiritual matters the oftener we are brought to the bar, the better; frequent trials do not hazard our case, but tend to put it out of hazard. How should a man know much of his spiritual state that seldom converseth with his own heart?

It was a good rule, *Tecum habita*. A man's business lies most within doors; and therefore he should often descend into himself. David's counsel is, *Commune with your own heart upon your bed*, Psal. 4.4. The word in the Hebrew is, *speak to your own heart*; the expression is not limited, and therefore may take in all those ways of speaking by which a man may keep up a secret, inward and profitable communion with his own soul. And this is advised to be done upon the bed; which notes *Retiredness* and *Frequency*.

First, *Retiredness*. In the bed a man is retired from the distracting noises and hurries of the World, and so is at leisure for the work.

Secondly, *Frequency*, As oft as a man lies down upon his bed, he should go down into his heart, and call himself to account every night where his heart has been, and what it hath done every day.

Rule 4. Try till the matter be fully determined, and you come to a rational and well-grounded satisfaction in yourselves, that so you may have an answer in readiness to put all doubts and scruples to silence.

Rule 5. Another way is by observing and fixing upon the fittest seasons. There is a time for everything; there is a time to try, and a time to trust without trial; a time to look inward, and a time when it is more proper to look upward. Every time is not a fit season for this work; sometimes the Soul is beclouded, tempted, deserted, defiled by new sins, and these are times wherein it is set against itself; and now all is naught, all is Hypocrisy; *praejudicium tollit iudicium*, it is commonly seen so. When Heman is under the hiding of God, how is judgment blinded, and all Grace is hid. If David be under a cloud, presently he is cast off. He that looks upon his face in a broken glass will appear a most deformed creature: As he that walks in a dark night, is apt to think every bush a Thief; he fancies nothing but objects of fear and terror; so it is in this case. And therefore in such a condition it is better to call upon the Soul, as David did, to trust and wait. Multiply direct acts of Faith more, and reflect less. It is an excellent piece of wisdom to take the proper season for every duty.

Rule 6. If upon good evidence thou art able to prove the sincerity of thy heart to Christ, don't question the goodness of thy state because of the Hypocrites carnal confidence. The foolish Virgins thought their Oil as good as that of the wise, but the Oil of the wise Virgins was of the right kind notwithstanding that. Many a corrupt Judge passes a wrong sentence, but a righteous Judge, that guides himself by evidence and Law, may do right for all that. Many a man may be rich in a Dream, but what then? may not therefore a waking man know what his Estate is, or whether it be his or not? The Turk is confident of his Religion; the Jew as confident of his; the Papist is certain of his to an infallibility; and yet this doth not hinder but that a Protestant may certainly know that he is in the true way, and that they are woefully deceived and given up to believe lies.

Rule 7. Be sure to make use of a right rule to judge by, for *Rectum est index sui & obliqui*; No man can make a true judgment but by a right rule; if that be crooked or false, the judgment that is made by it must needs be wrong. If the touchstone be not right, you can never judge of the metal.

Before I show you which is the true rule, let me warn you against some false rules which many try and deceive themselves by.

First, Some measure themselves by themselves; such the Apostle speaks of 2 Corinth. 10.12. They measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves with themselves. But he charges this practice with folly, says he, they are not wise, H&G. They never come to understand their case; alas how should they? the obliquity of the person is hid in the crookedness of the rule. For a man to be his own rule and standard is great folly, and yet nothing more common than to judge a man's self by the presumed goodness of his own heart; though it is the greatest cheat and impostor in the World: The Holy Ghost tells us so, the heart is deceitful above all things, Jerem. 17.9. You read of deceitful riches, Matt. 13.22. deceitful weights, Mic. 6.11. deceitful witnesses, Prov. 14.25. deceitful Prophets, Jerem. 23.26. deceitful tongues, Psal. 52.4. a deceitful Devil, Revel. 20.3. but the heart is deceitful above them all; Satan himself could never deceive a man if his own heart did not deceive him. It hath a thousand deceits: It paints sin with the color of virtue: It hides from a man the evil that is real, and flatters him with a good that is seeming: It persuades a man he hath the good he hath not; and if there be any good, that the good he hath is greater than it is: It presents him with common Grace for saving: It makes him take education for conversion, and moral virtues for Gospel Holiness: It is endless to trace the heart in its several deceits; and therefore for a man to measure himself by himself, when the heart is so deceitful, must needs be a false rule of judgment.

Secondly, Some measure themselves by such as come short of their attainments; thus did the Pharisee in Luk. 18.11. God I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, nor as this Publican; and this was the false rule that deceived him. Alas, what is all this? nature may be refined and yet be but nature; and when all is done it giveth one man no more advantage of another than tame Beasts have of wild. A tame Beast is as much a Beast as they that are wild. We may not be so bad as the worst, and yet may

be worse than we think; and we may be better than some, and yet not be so good as we ought.

Thirdly, Some make a judgment of their condition by the judgment of others. If such as are Godly, wise, and discerning do approve and commend them, this puts all out of doubt, and makes them confident of their good condition. Nothing blinds a man more to himself than the applause of others; for this holds him in a pleasant dream of an imaginary excellency, and puffs him up with an opinion of those virtues in himself, which he is an utter stranger to. Alas what is the judgment of others about the truth of my Godliness, that I should value and judge myself by that? How often have good men been mistaken in their opinion and judgment of others. The Disciples judged Judas to have been as sincere, and true to Christ as themselves, and could suspect themselves as soon as him; nay rather than him. And therefore when Christ tells them one of you shall betray me, they everyone cry out, Lord, is it I? they little thought that Iscariot had been such a Judas. How was Peter deceived in Simon Magus, and the Apostle John in the false Disciples; and never knew what they were till their Apostasy detected their Hypocrisy, 1 John 2.19. Men judge by what they see, and that is only what appears. Now a man may be one thing in appearance, and another thing in reality. Our Lord Christ speaks of some that are in sheep's clothing, and yet are inwardly ravening wolves. The Optics say *solae superficies videntur*, we only see the surface of things; and it is true, who can see another man's inside? who can tell what principle I am acted by in the worship of God? or say what my aims and ends are? they may be right or wrong, true or false for ought any other man knows. Many shall in that Day, when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, be condemned for Hypocrites that have passed through this World with an applause for Eminent Saints; for secret sins may be retained under an open profession of holiness, and men judge by the profession that is made, because they see not the secret lusts that are indulged. This is therefore a false rule to judge by.

Fourthly, Some make outward reformation the rule to judge of their subjection to Christ by. If they leave their open wickedness's, their scandalous practices, and live soberly in the World, this is a rule by which they judge their case good. Now this is a false rule to judge by.

For, 1. Open sins may be reformed, and yet heart lusts may be reserved, and so the Soul is in as dangerous a condition as ever. An impostume in the Bowels may as surely kill a man as the plague in the flesh. Where sin is outwardly forsaken, and yet secretly beloved, there the Disease is not cured but struck in; and so is as mortal as before. It is not the refraining sin that weakens it, but the withdrawing the heart from it. It is a less evil to do sin and not love it, than it is to love sin and not do it; for the doing sin may possibly be from weakness of Grace, but the love of sin is always from the strength of lust.

2. A man may, as to outward acts, let all sin go, and yet be a secret enemy to Christ; for the Enmity (as the Law says of treason against the King) lies not in overt acts, but in the depravedness and corruption of the heart; and what is it for all lusts to be restrained, unless the heart also be subdued to Christ? A Dog tied up from doing harm is a Dog still. There may be a cessation of arms between Enemies, and yet the quarrel may remain, though the War cease. A sinner may lay the weapon of sin out of his hand, and yet the enmity against God still remain in his heart. And therefore for a man to measure his Religion from an outward reformation only, is to judge by a false rule. Not but that an outward reformation is necessary, (for though a man may have a bad heart under a strict life, yet to be sure he cannot have a good heart with a bad life.) But this is not enough, for the outside of the cup and platter may be cleansed, and yet the inside remain unclean and filthy.

Fifthly, Some make a profession of Religion the measure of their subjection to Christ, they reckon a cleaving to his worship and ordinances, to be a taking up of his Yoke. Indeed it is required that all that believe in Christ should make a profession of him; it is a part

of the homage we owe to Christ to stick to his worship and ordinances, to hold fast the faith and not deny his name. But yet for any man to judge of the truth of his subjection to Christ, by making an outward profession of him, is a very wrong rule. For,

1. How common is it to have the form separated from the power: This, the Apostle tells us, is one of the sins that shall abound in the last Days, and that shall make the times so perilous, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof, 2 Tim. 3.5. H&G. It is not H&G the true form, for *forma est per quod res est id quod est*. The true form of Godliness consists in an inward change, by a work of Grace; and is that which denominates a man a godly man, for *forma dat esse rei*. And therefore it is not H&G, but H&G, which signifies an outward show, a formality, a vizard, or mask of Godliness; and what is that but a profession; so that a man may wear the vizard of a profession all his days, and yet be an Enemy to the power of Religion.

2. That profession of Religion which may consist with a state of spiritual death, can be no true measure of a man's subjection to Christ. Now a man may maintain a high profession and yet be dead in sin; thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead, Revel. 3.1. alive to the World by an outward show, but dead to God for want of the substance. What a lively professor was Judas, and yet in a dead estate. There is never an ordinance of the Gospel but a man may be found in the use of it, and yet be all the while dead in sin. No outward means of Grace did ever, nor can it, by any virtue or power of its own, quicken one dead Soul. How many sinners abide all their days under the loud calls of the word preached, and yet perish in their lusts; so that to many it is so far from working life, that it superadds a second death. To some we are a savor of death to death, 2 Cor. 2.16. and therefore a profession of Religion is but a crooked rule to judge of your subjection to Christ by.

These are necessary cautions for carnal and ignorant persons that are apt to misjudge their state and condition by errors on the left hand. There are other cautions that are as necessary for weak believers,

who are as apt to err on the right hand, by judging their case by false rules also; whereby instead of true peace, their souls are filled with groundless troubles. I will name but four.

First, One is degrees of Grace, Grace in improvement; this many make a rule to judge their case by. And because Grace is weak and little, therefore they judge it is false and counterfeit, and they have no Grace. Now this is a false rule to judge by; for it is not the quantity of Grace that proves the state, but the quality. Will any man say a penny is not silver because a crown piece is bigger? you do not judge of it by the bigness but by the goodness. Will any man say it is not Day unless it be noon? you don't judge of the Day by the height of the Sun, but by the light of it. We should try ourselves as God tries us, not by the scale, for then we should be found too light, there would be a Mene Tekel upon the best of us; but he tries us by the Touchstone; if Grace be true Grace, if Obedience be sincere, it is owned and accepted, and shall pass the approbation of God though it be little, yea though never so little. Thus saith the Lord, as the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith destroy it not for a blessing is in it, so will I do for my servants sake, Isai. 65.8. He will not despise the day of small things, nor should we. We should eye the weakness of Grace so as to labor to improve it, but not so as to misjudge ourselves because of it. If we would press forward, the way is to overlook attainments and leave them behind us; but if we would know our state, the way is not to overlook, but to set them before us. Our comfort lies in the increase of Grace, but our salvation lies in the truth of Grace; for God hath not promised salvation to such a measure, but he hath promised it to Grace in any measure. Therefore though a man ought not to rest satisfied with his Grace if it be never so much, yet he ought not to be discouraged though it be never so little. For though little Grace possibly may not afford much comfort, yet it proves the goodness of our state, and secures our Souls.

Secondly, Another rule is, comparing themselves with Saints of the highest attainments; and because they are not come to their pitch and stature in Grace, therefore judge they have no Grace. As

Hypocrites think their condition good, by comparing themselves with such as come short of them; so weak believers think their case bad, because they judge themselves by such as have outgone them.

This is another false measure, for as in nature, so in Grace, growth and stature is various. Some are but children, some are strong men, some are aged and full of years; different growths, but the same life; of various statures, but one in kind. So it is here; some are children in Grace, some are strong men, some are fathers, 1 John 2.12, 13. here is Grace differing in degree but of the same kind. The green fig is of the same nature with that which is ripe; and the tender grape with that which is ready for the press. In Christ's Orchard, (that is his Church) there are trees of various growths, Spikenard, and Saffron, Calamus and Cinnamon, with all trees of Frankincense, Myrrh and Aloes. Brightman makes these to set forth the several sorts of Christians; some are newly sprung up, these are the Spikenard and Saffron, Herbs that do appear but little above the ground. Some are of a middle stature, these are the Calamus and Cinnamon. (Trees of about two Cubits high.) Some are tall and eminent in Grace, these are the trees of Frankincense, Myrrh and Aloes; trees of different growth, and yet all of the Lord's planting. Some are Lambs, and some are Sheep, and yet all are of the same flock of Christ. Shall any one then say, I have no Grace because I have not so much as another? Is not thy faith true faith, because it is not so strong as Abraham's, who against hope believed in hope? or wilt thou question the truth of thy obedience, because thou canst not offer thy Son as he did? May not God be thy God, though thou canst not call him as David did, God my exceeding joy? wilt thou deny the truth of thy dependence, because thou hast not the Apostle Paul's assurance? mayst not thou be under the sanctifying work of the spirit as well as he, though thou hast not the witnessing work of the spirit as he had? though the spirit is magnus in magnis, as Austin says, yet he is not parvus in minimis; though his work be great in some of his children, yet it is not little in any; and therefore is to be owned in all. Shall a Child deny its being because it is not a Man? the great Oak was once a little Plant, nay a small Acorn. The blessing on man in the first Creation, was, increase

and multiply: In the second it is, grow in grace; so that it shall grow, for there is a blessing in it. And therefore for believers to compare themselves with Saints of the highest attainments, and to make those things to be a measure of the truth of Grace, which are evidences of Grace in its growth and strength, this is a false measure.

Thirdly, Another false rule of judging by, is much corruption; because they find much filthiness in their natures, strong lusts stirring within, and too often breaking out into actual sins, therefore they conclude they have no Grace. Now this is a false rule to judge by. For,

First, There is no believer but by this rule would condemn his own state. For where is that man that hath not much indwelling sin, which too often breaks out into actual sin? indwelling lust may be mortified in some more than in others, and the habits of corruption more weakened, but yet there is much in the best. Look on Abraham, a great believer, the Father of the faithful, and yet how much sin did he discover, once in Egypt, Genes. 12.13. another time in Gerar, Genes. 20.2. Look on Moses a man of great Grace, and yet how much doth corruption break forth; in that fourth chapter of Exodus, what unbelief doth he discover, what plea's to excuse his unwillingness to go on God's errand. One while, who am I that I should go to Pharaoh? another while, they will not believe me; then I am not eloquent; at last, send by whom thou wilt send; as much as to say, I will not go; so that the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses. The like you may see in Samson, what corruption doth he discover, insomuch that if the spirit of God had not put him into that Catalogue of believing worthies, Heb. 11.32. you would hardly have judged him one; and yet Samson is recorded for a true Saint, though he had much corruption.

Secondly, God will not reject little Grace if it be true, where there is corruption though it be much. If there be but little Gold in the Ore and much dross, yet the Refiner separates the dross and preserves the Gold. It is said of Christ, his fan is in his hand; and what is the

use of the fan, but to cast out the chaff? the chaff is more than the wheat, but Christ will not suffer the least grain of wheat to fall to the ground. Satan hath a sieve in his hand and he sifteth us; Christ hath a fan in his hand, and he fanneth us; now the use of the sieve is to let out the best and keep in the worst; the fan casteth out the worst and keepeth in the best. Satan's work is to sift us, Luk 22.31. Satan hath desired to sift you; that is, to countenance sin and destroy Grace. But Jesus Christ he fanneth us, that is, he purges corruption out of us, and nourishes and preserves Grace in us; so then, though your Grace be never so little, it shall be preserved, and though your corruption be never so much, it shall be destroyed. And therefore,

Thirdly, You ought to be humbled under sin, and make it matter of mourning, but not to deny your Grace though under much and great sin. There is a great deal in sin to humble us; it divests us of our spiritual privileges, it spoils our communion with God, that should be matter of humbling; it dishonors honors God, and grieves the spirit, that should be matter of humbling; it defiles the soul and wounds the conscience, that should be matter of humbling; but though every sin ought to be bewailed, yet our state is not therefore to be condemned.

Fourthly, Another false rule of judging is by the frame of their hearts; because upon search they find their hearts dead, carnal, listless to duty, wandering from, or distracted in duty, hence they give it against themselves, and judge their state carnal because the frame of their heart is so. And no wonder that it is so (though it ought not to be so) if you do but consider three things.

1. The goodness of a believers state will give him no acceptance with God in any duty, unless the frame of the heart be right in it. A carnal frame shall do more to spoil a duty, than a spiritual state can do to give it acceptance; this is most evident by that of the Apostle, 1 Cor. 11.29, 30. He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment (H&G) to himself: There is a worthiness of state, and a worthiness of frame; now every believer hath a worthiness of

state, in an Evangelical sense for every ordinance, and therefore for the Lord's Supper; but yet he may be unworthy in regard of the frame of his heart; and where it is so, an unworthy frame shall do more to bring judgment, than a worthy state can do to prevent it; therefore it is said in the next verse, for this cause many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.

2. God may carry it to a believer under a carnal frame of spirit in duties, as if he were no believer; when he comes to God in a carnal frame, God may carry it to him as if he were in a carnal state, he may shut his ear and reject his services.

3. A believer may enjoy as little peace when the frame of his heart is not right, as if the state of his soul were not right; for it is common with such a one to judge of his state by the frame of his heart. If his heart be dead and carnal, he judges his state to be a dead carnal state; but this ought not to be, for by this rule he will be forced to condemn himself a thousand and a thousand times over, even as oft as he finds his heart out of frame. And where a believer judges his state to be carnal, he can enjoy no more of the peace of his state (though it be spiritual) than if it were carnal. But this is a false rule to judge by, For

First, A carnal frame is one thing, and a carnal state is another; many a man may be found under a very carnal frame, and yet his state be spiritual and good. It was the case of Christ's own Disciples, therefore he tells them Matt. 18.3. Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of Heaven. The Disciples were converted as to their state, but yet they were in a carnal frame, for they were contending among themselves about a temporal Kingdom, which they expected Christ would set up; and who should be greatest in it; (so Mark explains it chap. 9.34.) therefore our Lord tells them, they shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven without a new conversion: they must be converted from their carnal frames, as well as from a carnal state; hence you may learn, that a man may have a right to Heaven and yet be very unfit

for it; there must be a double right, *jus haereditarium*, and *aptitudinarium*, a right of inheritance, and a right of fitness; in our first conversion we derive a right of inheritance, for then our state is changed; but a right of fitness lies in after conversions, by which our carnal frames are subdued. We need but one conversion as to the former, but we need many as to the latter.

First, Because this (though the former cannot) is a conversion that may be lost; a man may be in a quickened frame today, and under deadness tomorrow; he may be spiritual in this duty, and yet carnal in the next.

Secondly, Because it is a conversion that admits of degrees; a man cannot be less or more converted as to his state, but as to his frame he may; there is no one believer more born of the spirit than another, and yet one believer may be more spiritual than another; and he that is so, yet considered as to the measure of spiritual mindedness which is attainable, and which he is appointed and called unto, may himself be said to be carnal, and may be filled with complaints because of the shortness of his attainment. This I take to be the meaning of that complaint of the Apostle, I am carnal, Rom. 7.14. Doth he therein condemn his state? no, that had been sin. But he bewails the frame of his heart, that in such a spiritual condition into which by Grace he was brought, he should have in him such a carnal disposition and frame of spirit.

Secondly, A Believer is not to judge himself by what is unfixed and mutable; for so the frame of the heart is; what more volatile and unstable? now caught up to Heaven, anon sunk down to the Earth: now like the Chariots of Aminadab, agile and swift to run the way of God's Commandments; anon like Pharaohs Chariots that drove heavily having their wheels took off: or like the wheels in Ezekiel's Vision, that sometimes went, and sometimes stood still: one while the acts of Faith are high, another while giving way to Unbelief. Oh how inconstant are the frames of good men's hearts! look on David, and now his mountain stands strong; and the next word is, thou

didst hide thy face and I was troubled. At one time you shall find him rejoicing in God; at another, why art thou cast down O my soul? was it not so with Peter? Lord though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. And by and by, I know not the man: so that he who judges himself by the frame of his spirit, will change the opinion of his state as often as the frame of his heart changes. And therefore when you find your hearts dead and carnal, your duty is to make this matter of mourning, but you ought not to make it matter of doubting. You must pray, and strive, and use all God's means for the removing it, but you ought not to judge your state by it, lest you deny the Grace of God in you because of it. This is another false rule of trial. Many more I might instance in, but these may suffice to show you how carnal and ignorant persons are apt to misjudge their state by false rules on the one hand, and how weak believers are apt to misjudge theirs by false rules on the other, and to caution you on both sides.

And now I come to show you which is the true and right rule you are to judge yourselves by, and that is, the word of God. I do not mean the moral Law, that is not a proper rule to try weak Grace and imperfect obedience by, for that condemns for the least sin; Cursed is everyone that continues not in all things written in the Law to do them, Galat. 3.10. The Law indeed is a rule to know sin by; I had not known sin but by the Law, Rom. 7.7. and to know our natural and undone estate by, Rom. 7.9. It enlightens, convinces, accuses, condemns, and kills; but it is not a rule to judge our estate in Christ by, or the truth of our Grace by. For by the Law nothing is Grace but what is perfect, nothing goes for obedience, though our sincerity be never so great, if our failing be never so little. And therefore he that tries himself by this rule must needs condemn all the Grace of God in him as no Grace, because it is not perfect Grace; he must be continually tormented in his own spirit about his state, because the least sin subjects him to the wrath of God. A Believer is under the Law for conduct, but not for judgment; it is the guide of his path, but not the judge of his state. The Believer is bound to obey it, but he is not to stand and fall by it. It is a rule of life, and for the substance of it, it is moral and eternal, and can no more be abrogated than the

nature of good and evil can be altered. And therefore it obliges Believers as much as others, though upon other motives, and to other ends, for they are not to expect life and favor from it, nor fear the death and rigor that comes by it; the Law hath no power either to justify a Believer or condemn him, and therefore can be no rule to try his state by. We should labor to live to the precepts of the Law, but try our state by the rule of the Gospel; for that is the rule we are to stand and fall by. And it is a comfortable rule, for in the sense of it affections go for actions, and endeavors for performances; so that if our affections be real, and our endeavors sincere, the rule adjusts our state, and gives us confidence before God.

The ready way to come to a right determination about our condition, is wisely to apply to ourselves those Characters and marks which the word lays down concerning state and state; for it describes both the natural and spiritual man, it characterizes both a state of Nature, and a state of Grace; it shows by positive signs who are subjects to his Yoke, or Rebels to his Government. So that it is easy for a man by a right use of this rule to make a judgment what his state is. As a wicked man by applying the characters of the natural state, may certainly know that he is out of Christ, an enemy to him, and that his condition is a lost condition; for the works of the flesh are manifest, Galat. 5.19. So would the good man but wisely apply the marks of Grace to his own heart as he finds them laid down in the word, he might certainly know that his state is good; for the fruits of the spirit, are as manifest as the works of the flesh.

As God is principium essendi, the cause of the being of Grace; so the word of God is principium cognoscendi, the rule by which we judge of the truth of Grace; and therefore to the law and to the testimony, Isai. 8.20. Solomon says, The commandment is a lamp, and the law is light, Prov. 6.22. as a lamp it is the guide of our way; as a light it is the trial of our state. And so the former verse clears it, when thou goest, it shall lead thee, there it is a lamp to guide us; when thou awakest it shall talk with thee, there it is a rule to try us.

Try your state therefore by this rule, and believe nothing either for or against yourselves, but according to the word of God. This is the rule God will try us by, and therefore we should try ourselves by it. The judgment of God concerning us will be according to the word, John 12.48. Rom. 2.16. So should ours be.

But in making use of the word for a rule of trial, it will be your wisdom to observe these three directions.

1. You must take negative and positive signs together; Many judge themselves by negative signs only, and not by positive, but this is to deceive themselves; for negative holiness can never commend us to God, whose commands are positive as well as negative. A man may abstain from that which is positively evil, and yet be but negatively good. So did the Pharisees, Luke 18.11.

2. In trying yourselves by the word, you are not to look so much to the habit and principle of Grace in its being, as to the properties and effects of Grace in its working; for properties best prove principles, and effects bear witness to their causes. That which constitutes godliness is the habit and principle of Grace; but that which evidences godliness is the properties of it. We do not know the internal forms of things, but their natures become known by their properties and effects. Our knowledge is for the most part *à posteriori*, from effects; the principles of Grace in us are not evident to us, but by the motions and effects of them in our souls and lives.

3. In judging your estate by the word, you are not to look for perfect signs in yourselves, I mean such as do exactly answer to the latitude of the Law; for these are not to be found in any Believer upon earth. And if we look for such signs, we shall be so far from receiving any satisfaction concerning our state, that the more we try, the more we shall distrust; the more we prove our subjection to Christ, the more we shall disapprove it. We are to look for true signs but not for perfect; for such as are common to the weakest believer, not for such as are above the strongest. The least grace discovered in a believer, if

sincere and true, is a sure sign of his good estate in Christ; though it be not enough to satisfy his desire, yet it is enough to satisfy his judgment; though it be not sufficient to fill up his measure in Christ, yet it is a sufficient sign to make out the truth of his interest in Christ. And that is the seventh general rule laid down for the carrying on the trial of our state, that we be sure to make use of a right rule.

Rule 8. As the word of God must be your rule, so Conscience must apply it, and give testimony according to it; for the word of itself proves nothing but as conscience applies it, and argues from it. The word doth nowhere say, this or that man is converted to Christ, is a child of God, and in a state of salvation; no, but it describes that state to which salvation is promised; and then Conscience evidences that to be our state; and so infers a certainty of salvation from the word. The word lays down things in plain propositions, Conscience makes the assumption, and then draws the conclusion: The word says, Any man that is in Christ is a new creature; there is the proposition: now the good man's Conscience (helped by the spirit as I shall show anon) that makes the assumption; thus, but I am in Christ; and then draws the conclusion, therefore I am a new creature. The word says, They that are Christ's sheep hear his voice and follow him: Conscience says, but I hear his voice and follow him; and thence concludes, therefore I am one of Christ's sheep. And this is that wherein the true testimony of Conscience doth consist; in giving evidence according to the rule laid down, and by that either condemning or acquitting. Hence that of the Apostle, He that believes on the son of God hath the witness in himself, 1 John 5.10. truly so hath the unbeliever too; for Conscience by the light of the word witnesseth against him if he would but hear it. The word says, the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God: but says Conscience, Thou art unrighteous; and thence concludes, therefore thou shalt not inherit the kingdom of God. And hence the Apostle speaks of a condemning Conscience, 1 John 3.20. If our hearts condemn us. It witnesseth in the sinner to condemnation, and in the Believer to justification.

Object. 1. But you will say, if it be thus, why doth not every Believer know his own state? why are they so often calling the goodness of their state into question, and so full of doubts and fears about their condition? if they have a witnessing Conscience, why is it thus?

Answ. It is possible they may have witnessing Consciences, and yet may know little of the goodness of their state. For,

First, They may not possibly be acquainted with their own Consciences, nor keep up a communion with their own hearts as they ought. It is no new thing for a good man to be a stranger to himself, who might otherwise be satisfied from himself.

Secondly, They may have Conscience witnessing to the goodness of their state, and yet not credit the testimony. As a bad man is deaf to the testimony of his Conscience when it witnesseth against him, from the power of self-love; so is a good man to the testimony of his conscience when it witnesseth for him, from the power of jealousy and suspicion. He can look forward to apprehend the right object, but cannot look inward to apprehend his own act. He can believe the testimony of the word, but cannot believe the testimony of his own Conscience though it speaks according to the word; though he hath truly received Christ, yet he will not receive the testimony of Conscience witnessing to his state in Christ.

Thirdly, Many may have witnessing Consciences, and yet Conscience may not witness; its witnessing act may for a time be suspended; and this is frequently so. Partly from the contraction of new guilt; when sin is committed, Conscience is silenced; guilt spoils the testimony. Partly from the hidings of God; for Conscience speaks no peace to us, unless God speak peace to that. And therefore it is very possible that a good man may not always know his own state, and yet he may have the witness in himself. And would he but be careful to keep Conscience clean from guilt and defilement, and be diligent to attend to its testimony, he would quickly attain to satisfaction in his spiritual state? for Conscience purged and sanctified is a faithful

witness that will not lie, especially when joined in its testimony to that which is the great witness of all, and that is the spirit. The spirit bears witness with our spirits that we are the Children of God. And that brings me to the last general rule to be observed in this trial.

Rule 9. The way to come to a true satisfaction about your state, is, to call in the assistance of the spirit of God, beg his testimony; for there is no witness like his. And that,

First, Whether ye look to the clearness of it; no testimony can be so full. It is such a testimony as removes all perplexing doubts and fears, H&G; what room for questionings and hesitancies against the spirits testimony? Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his spirit, 1 John 4.13. No witness so satisfying as this; if God should send an Angel from Heaven, as he did to Daniel, to tell us we are greatly beloved, it would not be so full and satisfying as this.

Secondly, It is a sure testimony, and that,

1. Whether you look to the object of his testimony, the work of God in the heart; he never witnesses to the goodness of that state where there is not a work of Grace wrought; and therefore to talk of comforts and ravishing joys from the spirit, without a true conversion to Christ first wrought, is a meet self-delusion; the spirit of God hath no hand in it: and so to boast of the comforts of the spirit while we walk not in the counsels of the spirit, it is a mere pretense; there is no such thing found among Christians as this. The spirit witnesses to his own work, and therefore cannot be deceived in the object of his testimony.

2. If you look to the nature of the testimony, for it is the witness of him who is truth itself, and therefore he is called the spirit of truth, John 16.13. the testimony that he gives to the goodness of a believers state is infallible and certain.

Thirdly, It is a prevailing testimony that bears down all the testimonies that can any way be brought against us. As the intercession of Christ in Heaven for us, prevails over all charges that are brought there against us; sin may charge, and Satan may charge, and the Law may charge, but yet the intercession of Christ prevails against all, and silences all; Who is he that condemns? it is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us, Rom. 8.34. So is the testimony of the spirit in the heart, a prevailing testimony; the believer hath many adversaries, wicked men, whose tongues are set on fire of Hell, reproaching, traducing of them, and ready to witness falsely against them. And Satan is not wanting to bring in new charges against them; but this blessed witness of the spirit in the heart, prevails against and carries the Soul above all.

Fourthly, It is an abiding testimony, that lasts till testimonies shall be needed no more. There would be no need of witnesses if things were clear, and not apt to be called in question; but so it is with the work of God in the heart, it is ever and anon called in question; and hence arises the need of the spirits testimony. There will be no need of this way of witness in Heaven, for there is no doubts, nor fears, nor calling our state into question, but during the present state it is necessary, for new hidings, and new tempting's, and new sinning's, will cause new doubting's, and questionings concerning our state; and therefore the testimony of the spirit shall abide, and out last all our doubts and fears.

I know this testimony may be, and is sometimes suspended; a good man may not have it at all times; it is rare that any one hath. Sometimes (nay too often) he sins it away; sometimes for wise ends God takes it away; for it is an arbitrary privilege, but he that hath had it once really, shall never lose it finally; though it may be suspended, it shall never be totally lost; for it is an abiding witness, and therefore he that hath it, is said to be sealed to the day of redemption, Ephes. 4.30. this sealing is not to be taken for the regenerating work of the spirit, but for his witnessing work; for it is a sealing that follows after

believing; After that ye believed ye were sealed with that holy spirit of promise, Ephes. 1.13. and this seal shall never be broken off; it shall abide to the Day of redemption. And therefore above all things beg the testimony of the spirit concerning your condition; for neither the word of God, nor Conscience can evidence the goodness of our state, without the witness of the spirit; nay, the highest measure of Grace wrought in the heart, cannot of itself be an evidence of the goodness of our state without the spirits testimony; as Grace cannot act itself without the spirits help, so nor can it evidence itself without the spirits light; as the being of Grace is from the work of the spirit renewing, so the evidence of Grace is from the work of the spirit witnessing. And therefore in this work rely much upon the testimony of the spirit.

And thus I have answered the question more generally.

CHAPTER XIII.

Shows the truth of our subjection to Jesus Christ by some things necessarily antecedent to it.

Secondly, I come now to a particular and distinct answer to the question, How a man may know that he is indeed under the Yoke of Christ.

There are two ways by which you may make a judgment of yourselves.

A Priori.

A Posteriori.

1. By such things that always precede it, and are antecedent to it, or causal of it.

2. By such things as are the natural effects and consequences of it.

First, By such things as are antecedent to it. For you must know that taking up Christ's Yoke is not presently done; it is not the next work of a carnal sinner: there are many things to be done in him and upon him before this work can be done by him. No natural man as such can bear Christ's Yoke; it is impossible, and that will appear in two things.

First, There is a deficiency of strength to it.

Secondly, There is an utter enmity against it.

1. There is a deficiency of strength and power to it. Sin hath made such a waste upon the nature of man, that it is utterly impotent to any good: and hence every duty is an intolerable burden, because there is no strength to bear it. So the natural man is described, as one without strength, Rom. 5.6. While we were yet without strength, Christ died for the ungodly; and the eighth verse explains the sense of it; While we were yet sinners Christ died for us: So that to be a fallen sinner, and to be without strength are the same thing. No sinner can take up Christ's Yoke, because of a deficiency of strength for it; there can be no obeying Christ but by a strength received from Christ, Surely shall one say in the Lord I have righteousness and strength.

2. There is an utter enmity against it. You cannot more truly give a description of a carnal sinner by anything, than by his enmity to God and Christ; and therefore it is the usual phrase of Scripture to call sinners God's enemies. Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies, Psal. 110.2. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the Kings enemies, Psal. 45.5. Those mine enemies, that would not I should reign over them, Luke 19.27. When we were enemies we were reconciled to God, Rom.

5.10. The Covenant and friendship that was at first between God and man being broken by sin, an enmity must needs ensue upon it. It is the business and design of sin to make and keep enmity between God and the creature, and mark how the Apostle demonstrates the truth of this enmity in natural man to God, Rom. 8.7. The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the Law of God, nor indeed can be.

It is not subject, and it cannot be subject to the Law of God.

First, It is not subject to the Law of God, and this is a plain conviction that there is an enmity. That which opposes God, and the Law and rule of God in the heart, what is that but enmity? for as friendship consists most properly in willing and nilling the same things; so enmity doth most properly consist in an opposition of will, in willing and nilling the contrary. So that for the will of man to lie contrary to the Law of God is an undeniable proof of enmity against him. Who were they that said, Let us break his bands, and cast away his cords from us? Psal. 2.3. He tells you verse 2. they were such as set themselves against the Lord and against his Christ. And are not they enemies?

Secondly, As it is not subject, so the carnal mind cannot be subject to the Law of God. And why? for five reasons.

First, Because of the blindness of the mind; sin hath put out that light that should guide the soul, and conduct it to God. A dark mind is ever accompanied with a disobedient heart. There is none that understands, Rom. 3.11. and what follows? They are all gone out of the way. So Ephes. 4.18. Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them. He that hath nothing of the light of God, can have nothing of the life of God; and where there is no sharing in the life of God, there can be subjection to the Law of God.

Secondly, Because of the corruption that is in the will, which sets it against everything of God. We will not that this man reign over us, Luke 19.14.

Thirdly, It is from the disorderedness of the affection, they are all depraved, no love for God; and where there is no love to God, there can be no subjection to the Law of God.

Fourthly, Because of the spirituality of the Law of God; The Law is spiritual, says Paul, but I am carnal, Rom. 7.14. And what he speaks of his frame, is true of the natural man's state, it is carnal; and how can a heart that is carnal be subject to a Law that is spiritual?

Fifthly, Because it is under the prevailing power of a contrary Law, the Law of sin and lust rules in every carnal heart; they are under the Dominion of sin, and therefore cannot be subject to the Law of God; these are the two Masters that our Lord Christ says no man can serve, Matt. 6.24.

Every natural man is wholly under the power of sin, and how then can he be subject to the Law of God? And if he cannot be subject to the Law of God, then much less can he be subject to the Yoke of Christ. If the carnal mind hath an enmity to the former, it must needs have a greater enmity to the latter; because the Law of Christ lies more contrary to his inclinations than the Law of God doth. The Law of God was once written in the natural man's heart, the Law of Christ never was; there are some notions of the Law of God still left in the heart, and somewhat in every man that doth less or more side with it, and lead to it. But there are no notions of Christ, nothing in man that dictates the least duty with respect to Christ and the Gospel.

So that you see plainly it is not the sinners next work to take up Christ's Yoke. He must first be prepared for it, for till then he will never be brought to a free and full subjection to Jesus Christ. It is the disposition of man never to come to Christ but at second hand; no

man comes to Christ firstly and immediately, till he comes under some such preparations as carry constraint and compulsion in them. Compel them to come in.

Though the soul when it doth come, it comes freely; it is a free act of the will; there is no forcing a sinner to come to Christ against his will; if he comes it must be freely; yet he is always compelled to come before he doth come: Jacob's Sons went down freely into Egypt, yet they were under a great compulsion, the Famine drove them. The Prodigal returned most freely to his Fathers house; and yet he was under compulsion, he must have starved else, Luke 15.17, 18. I perish with hunger, I will arise and go to my Father.

I will arise and go; there he comes freely.

I perish with hunger; there is the compulsion.

None ever came to Christ merely upon the tender of Christ, but as under some compulsion; now what is that which compels a sinner, one that hath been a blind sinner, a rebelling sinner, to come to Christ and take up his Yoke? they are those preparatory works which are done upon the heart of a sinner by Christ and his spirit; till which, no sinner ever doth or can submit to him, or own him.

Now I shall reduce these works, which I call preparatory for subjection to Christ, to three heads, and speak a little distinctly to each of them, that so you may know how to make use of them in the trial of your state.

The first is, The enlightening the mind.

The second is, The convincing the Conscience.

The third is, The inclining the will.

1. There is a saving illumination of the mind. There can be no coming to Christ out of the darkness of a natural state, till the light of God

break in to show us the way. Spiritual things cannot be discerned by natural light. The natural man receives not the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned. The object is supernatural, God in Christ, and the mysteries of the Kingdom; and therefore cannot be discerned but by a supernatural light; In thy light we shall see light. By nature we know little of God, but nothing of Christ, or the mind of Christ, till God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness shine into our hearts. The first creature that God made in the World was light, and the first work of God in the soul is light. The will of man is H&G, a rational appetite; it is acted by the guidance of the mind, and therefore God deals first with the mind and understanding of man. And hence it is that Christ is made a Prophet as well as a King: he doth not subdue the will merely by an unaccountable power, but by a saving light.

And because the mind must first be enlightened in this work, therefore Christ first appears in the office of a Prophet; not only revealing the will of God, as a rule of obedience, but enlightening the mind to see the reasonableness of complying with the rule. He doth not only bring light unto the soul by the revelation of the word, but he brings light into the soul by the communication of his spirit. We have received the spirit of God that we may know the things that are freely given to us of God.

This I call a saving illumination; for that light which the Lord works in such as are brought home to Christ, is of a saving nature, and hath saving effects.

First, It is in its own nature as saving as any Grace in the will or affections; for it is a work of the same spirit, and wrought for the same end, to bow the soul to Christ. It is an essential part of that Image of God after which we are renewed, Colos. 3.10. And have put on the new man which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him.

So that this light differs not only gradually but specifically from the highest light that is in hypocrites and formal professors. A hypocrite may have much notional knowledge, great measures of light in spiritual things, from the common work of the spirit; but in the highest degree of it, it is not saving; for as to saving light, so he is in darkness until now.

Secondly, It hath saving operations and effects, and that both as to believing and obeying.

First, As to believing. They shall all be taught of God, and what then? every man that hears and learns of the father, comes to me. This coming to Christ is believing; and this believing is the fruit of God's teaching, so that this is a saving operation.

Secondly, As to obedience. As it is said of the two blind men whom Christ cured, that as soon as they had received their sight, straight way they arose and followed him. David says, the sun arises and man goes out to his labor till the evening, Psal. 104.22, 23. when the sun of righteousness arises in the heart, it is so. So that this is a saving operation.

Now let this be a rule of trial for young ones; have you been prepared for subjection to Christ by a saving illumination? do you know anything of being called out of darkness into his marvelous light? can you say, I was blind, but now I see? the soul that is savingly enlightened, it sees that in sin it never saw before, it sees that in Christ it never saw before. That soul is far from the Yoke of Christ, that was never enlightened with the light of Christ.

2. The second thing is the convincing of the conscience. Where the soul is brought to take up the Yoke of Christ, it is the fruit of through convictions. There must be a threefold conviction wrought upon the sinner before ever he will stoop to Christ. A conviction of sin, a conviction of righteousness, and a conviction of judgment, this is through conviction; and all conviction short of this leaves the soul

short of Christ. And therefore when ever the spirit of God comes to convince the soul to conversion, he convinces of all these, as you see John 16 8. When he is come he will convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.

First, He convinces of sin. This is the next end of illumination. He sets up a light to see sin, and then applies the guilt of sin to the Conscience: for though a man lies under the infinite guilt of sin, and the dreadful wrath of God for it, yet till the spirit of God do set this home upon a man's Conscience, he never sees his condition, nor considers with himself what to do. No, it is the being pricked at heart that causes this, Acts 2.37. When they heard this they were pricked in their heart; and what then? then they cry out, men and brethren what shall we do? And therefore the spirit first deals with a man about his sins; so he did to the first sinners, he opens their eyes to see their nakedness and shame, their sin and misery, before the seed of the woman is promised. There is one instance instead of a thousand, and that is of Paul; I call it so, because he tells you that Jesus Christ set him up for a pattern in his dealing with sinners. And therefore look how Christ dealt with him to bring him under his Yoke, and so he deals with all.

Now the first great work upon Paul was conviction of sin. The Spirit of Christ by the word, set sin home upon his Conscience, and there the work began. This is meant by the coming of the Commandment, Rom. 7.9 When the commandment came, sin revived and I died. You may see it more particularly expressed in Acts 9.3, 4, 5, 6. There shined round about him a light from heaven, and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? and he said, who art thou Lord? and the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest, it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me do? Here's a light and a voice; there shined a light from heaven, and he heard a voice; this did the work. Here's illumination and conviction. The light makes the blind eye to see, and the voice makes the deaf ear to hear. The voice comes through the light. And what

says the voice? Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. There are two things in this voice.

First, It singles out the person, and applies guilt in a particular manner. Saul, Saul, why dost thou persecute me?

Secondly, It singles out a particular sin, and that is his persecuting Christ in his Saints. And upon this the conviction sticks, and fills him with terror; he falls a trembling and is astonished, and cries out, Lord what wilt thou have me to do?

Now pray mind; the manner of Christ's dealing with Paul was exemplary; it was to be a pattern. He tells us so, 1 Tim. 1.16. For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe. It is as if he should say, look how God dealt with me; singled me out, stopped me in the heat of my wickedness, applied guilt particularly to me, and so made me see myself lost: So he will deal with all such sinners as he brings home to Christ. I am set up for a pattern.

So then there are these two things in conviction as we may learn from this pattern.

1. A singling out the person, charging sin particularly; thou art the man. And indeed where conviction of sin is thoroughly wrought, the word is as particularly applied to the soul as it was to Saul, when it called him by name; and it is this that is called the coming of the commandment. It comes home, and singles out the sinner, as if it said, thou Thomas, thou John.

2. There is in conviction most commonly a setting home some particular sin upon the Conscience. For we say Generalia non pungunt; convictions don't lie in a general charge. Indeed in the progress of the work all sin is set home: for the spirit is a spirit of judgment, and therefore every sin must come under the judgment of the spirit. He holds the glass of the Law before the sinners eyes till he

makes him see all; not only the sins that break out, but the lust that is within; not only the wickedness of his life, but the plague of his heart, and the sin of his nature. But yet he first begins with some particular sin. And usually (though the methods of the spirit are herein very various) he begins with some chief sin.

Thus when Christ would deal effectually with the woman of Samaria, he begins with that which was her chief sin, her living in Adultery; The man thou now hast is not thy husband. Thou hast had five Husbands, and yet after all thou livest in Adultery. This word struck her to the heart, and by this she was led into a sight of all her sins; for said she (v. 29) Come see a man that told me all that ever I did. Thus he dealt with those Jews, Acts 2.23, 37. and thus with Paul as I showed you. And indeed there is admirable wisdom and grace in this.

That sin which is a man's chief sin he will stick fastest to, and part with all other to save the life of that; and therefore the work of conviction is never effectual till a man be made thoroughly sensible of that.

Besides, that sin that a man loves most, he will act most, and that wounds Christ most. Now the spirit takes that arrow that wounds the heart of Christ most, and makes it fall upon the head of the sinner that shot it against him. Thus God happily out-shoots us in our own bow, whilst the arrows of our sins that wound Christ's heart, are taken and made the arrows of the almighty to stick in us and drink up our spirits.

This is the usual way of the Lord. Nor can it be proved out of the Scripture that any who have arrived at capable years, have ever been called home to Christ any other way than by conviction of sin first. It may be with some it hath been in a more secret and gentle way; or it may be the remedy hath been propounded together with the discovery of the malady; so that some have not been able to distinguish of things: yet this doth no way enervate the truth of what we affirm.

And though we read in Scripture of some that were effectually brought into Christ, whose convictions we read nothing of; as Lydia, and Zacchaeus, &c. yet it doth not therefore follow that they were not convinced of sin before their receiving Christ, because their convictions are not mentioned. It must necessarily be supposed, for that no man can close with Christ without a sight of the need of him; and no man can see the need of Christ with a sight and sense of sin. They that be whole need not a Physician but the sick. And Christ says, he came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance, that is, sensible sinners. This is that which prepares the way of the Lord into the soul, and makes straight in the desert a high way for our God.

Here then you have another rule to try yourselves by. Have you ever been prepared for a close with Christ by a through conviction of sin? hath the Spirit of the Lord been at work in your hearts? have you ever felt the commandment come with power? have you ever been made to see yourselves lost? thus it hath been less or more with all that are brought to take up Christ's Yoke; conviction of sin must first make us weary of sins Yoke, before ever we can take up Christ's Yoke.

Secondly, Nor is this enough to bring the soul to Christ; but there must be a conviction of righteousness, as well as of sin; or else the work would be spoiled, and to no purpose, save to bring the soul to despondency. The spirit would not only be a spirit of bondage but a spirit of despair; and therefore he doth not only convince of sin, but also of righteousness; both of the need the sinner hath of it, and of the fullness of it.

First, Of the sinners need of it. And indeed when a man is thus sick, it is easy to show him the need of a Physician. Only the misery is, we are apt to use wrong remedies. When a disease is desperate we run to such Physicians as are next; like the poor woman with her bloody issue, runs from one Physician to another, and what is she the near? why the issue of her purse was dried up, but not her issue of blood; she spent all she had upon them, and yet grew worse. And it will

always be so in these maladies; no created medicine shall avail in that disease, which Christ himself will have the honor of curing. And therefore purposes, resolutions, legal repenting's, self-righteousness, and all self-devised means which the sinner is wont to run to for ease in this case, shall be in vain and to no purpose.

This is another degree of the spirits work, whereby all the proud helpers do stoop under him, as it is Job 9.13. he makes him see himself lost, and no help at hand; that so he may go for help where God hath laid it; I have laid help upon one that is mighty. And indeed nothing so convinces the soul of the need of Christ's righteousness, as the experienced insufficiency and emptiness of all other remedies. Then shall they know that I am the Lord, when is that? when all her helpers shall be broken, Ezek. 30.8. And for a poor thirsty soul to find all brooks dried up and failing, oh what would he then give for one draught of this living water?

Secondly, He convinces of the fullness of this righteousness, that there is enough in it to justify and save the vilest of sinners that lay hold of it. For it is an infinite righteousness, so that no sin can exceed it; and it is an everlasting righteousness, so that no sin can waste it. And indeed there is nothing becomes a more suitable encouragement to a soul made empty, and naked, and stripped off all, than to see a fullness of righteousness in a Redeemer. For that is the first question an undone sinner makes about Christ. What is he? what hath he done? what is the virtue of his blood? is he able to save and recover such an undone wretch as I am? justice I dread, but cannot satisfy it: mercy I need, but cannot merit it: I have an unsupportable burden of guilt, but cannot remove it: can Christ remove this curse, and make my peace with God? can he be a City of refuge to me from that avenger of blood that pursues me?

Now in answer to all these solicitous inquiries of a soul distressed by sin, the spirit convinces of righteousness; of the infinite fullness and satisfactoriness of it, by an undeniable argument, for that it hath

satisfied the infinite justice of God, as appears evidently in this, that he is gone to the Father, and ye see him no more.

Here then you have another rule to try by; they that have taken up the Yoke of Christ, are such as have been made to see the need of the righteousness of Christ. That this, and none but this can stead the soul.

Now pray consider, have you that are young ever been convinced of righteousness? may be you have been convinced of sin; alas, what is that without this? you have felt the wound, but have found no plaster: and however you have skinned it, it is far from healing. Have you ever been made to see the need, the fullness of Christ's righteousness? that your all as to life and hope lies there? that this righteousness hath fulfilled the law of God for you? that this righteousness hath satisfied the justice of God which you could never have done? that this righteousness hath not only redeemed you from Hell, but hath purchased for you all Grace and Glory; Grace here and Glory in Heaven? and that this is the righteousness you must be found in, if ever you are taken into favor with God? this is the true notion of being convinced of righteousness. Now what do you experience of this work of the spirit? for let me tell you, it is not enough to be convinced of sin, but it must be of righteousness also: this is as needful as that to bring you to Christ. Many are convinced of sin, and what do they under such convictions? why they betake themselves to repenting's, and hearing, and praying, and reforming, and then think the wound is healed, and their state safe. Ah poor creatures! this (though good in its designed and appointed use) if this be all they have to trust to, it is as surely a way of perishing as any other. Why then do so many betake themselves to this way, and rest in it? alas it is because they never were convinced of righteousness; and they that were never convinced of the righteousness of Christ, never yet took up the Yoke of Christ.

Thirdly, Nor is this enough to bring the soul into subjection to Christ, to convince it of sin, and then of righteousness; but it must be

convinced of judgment too. What is that you will say? not to meddle with the various senses that others give of it. By judgment here I understand the work of grace and sanctification in the Believer. And indeed I see not how any other of those senses that are commonly put upon it can so well agree with it as this: for the office of the spirit here is to carry on the work of conviction so as to put honor upon Jesus Christ in all his offices. In convincing of sin he puts honor upon him as a Prophet; in convincing of righteousness he puts honor upon him as a Priest dying for sin; and in convincing of judgment, he puts honor upon him as a King renewing and working Grace in the heart. And the Holy Ghost uses the same word in the same sense elsewhere. As in Matt. 12.20. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment to victory, till the work of sanctification be prevalent over all lusts and corruptions. So that by judgment the work of sanctification is intended; and the following words clear it, for then the Prince of this world is judged. And indeed there is as great need of conviction of judgment as there is either of sin or righteousness: for if a man be not convinced of sin, he will never be weary of it: if he be not convinced of righteousness, he will never seek it: and if he be not convinced of holiness, he will never labor after it. When once a man is convinced of righteousness, the next work is believing in Christ: and when once he is convinced of holiness, the next work is taking up the Yoke of Christ. And therefore wherever any soul is brought to take up the Yoke of Christ, it is the fruit of the spirits work convincing of the necessity of holiness.

So then here is another rule of trial. They that have taken up the Yoke of Christ, are such as have been made to see a necessity of holiness as well as of righteousness. That it is not enough to be pardoned, and to have their persons accepted; but they must be changed, their natures renewed. Indeed no man will take up Christ's Yoke without such a conviction as this. Convince him of righteousness, and then he will seek to be saved by Christ; but if he be not convinced of the necessity of holiness, he will never be brought to obey Christ.

Many a man is convinced of sin, and yet not convinced of righteousness; that man never comes to Christ. And many are convinced of sin, and of righteousness, and yet are not convinced of judgment; these see the need of the blood of Christ to take away guilt, but they see no need of the Grace of Christ to renew their hearts; and these will never take up the Yoke of Christ. But when the spirit of the Lord carries on the work to a through conviction, both of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment, then it is that the soul is made willing to take up the Yoke of Christ. And this brings me to the third preparatory work, whereby a man is fitted to take up this Yoke.

3. The third thing is the inclining the will. There can be no taking up the Yoke of Christ till this be done: for wherein lies our subjection to Christ? but in a consent of will to take him for our Lord as well as our Savior; and yielding a ready obedience to his laws, as well as relying on his merits. And herein the most difficult part of conversion lies, to bring the will to a free subjection to Jesus Christ. There is no part so vitiated and corrupted by the fall as the will. The blindness of the mind, the stupidity of the conscience is not so great as the obstinacy and rebellion of the will. By nature we are willingly subject to no Law but the Law of the members; to no will but the will of the flesh. Israel would none of me, Psal. 81.11. H&G, had no will to me; We will not have this man to reign over us, Luk. 19.14. Ye will not come to me that ye might have life, John 5.40. It is not subject to the Law of God, nor indeed can be, Rom. 8.7. There is that enmity and opposition, that reluctancy and stoutness of spirit against Christ and his ways, such proneness to evil, and averseness to good, such strong prejudices, such deep reasonings, such solicitations of Satan, such downright rebellion, that a voluntary subjection to Christ is an impossible thing, till God puts forth the all conquering arm of his power, and subdues the soul to himself.

So desperately bent is the heart of every natural man against Christ, and so strongly under the impulsion of indwelling lust to vicious practices, that neither the promises of life and salvation can allure it, nor the threatening's of Hell and Damnation deter it: no fear, nor

hope, no danger, nor reward can stop it till an Almighty power do it. And therefore to talk of moral suasions as sufficient to subdue and bring the will over to Christ, is an idle dream of such as either never felt the day of Christ's power in their own souls, or else contradict their own experiences. There is no power can reach to pull a man out of the hands of his sin, but the power of the spirit of God. As no man can convert himself, so no means can reach to do it; by the same reason that any one man perisheth in the enmity of his will to Christ and holiness, all men would if left to themselves; because there is the same original enmity to the things of God in all as there is in any.

And therefore the government of Christ in the soul is not by choice and consent first had, but by power and conquest. As it was with Israel, God promiseth them the land of Canaan for a possession; but it was not a land uninhabited, that they might go and possess at pleasure, without anymore to do; no, but the Canaanites and the sons of Anak dwelt there, and had it in possession; and therefore if they will have it, they must fight their way into it. Thus it is here, the elect are Christ's by donation, given to him by the Father; and his by right of Redemption, for he died for them, and bought them with a price; but yet Satan hath the possession, and by the power of sin and lust detaineth Christ's right; So that if Christ will be possessed of his right, it must be by conquest. And therefore his first entrance into the heart is by way of victory. Hence ye read of one sitting upon a white horse, with a Bow, and a Crown, and he went forth conquering, and to conquer. Rev. 6.2. This is the Lord Christ. He is said to sit upon a white horse.] a horse betokens war: a white horse, betokens victory and triumph. And he is said to have a Bow and a Crown,] the Bow is an instrument of war; the Crown is a token of Government. The Bow stands before the Crown, to show us that where-ever Christ reigns in any heart, it is by conquest and victory first obtained; The Bow makes way to the Crown.

Every Soul is first a Captive to Christ, before it is a Subject. Bringing into captivity every thought, to the obedience of Christ. 2 Cor. 10.5. We never submit to his Scepter, till we are first overcome by his

power. They shall be a willing people in the day of thy power. Psal. 110.3. It is a mighty power that brings the sinner to a submission and resignedness of will to Christ. The Soul is first Captivated by his power, and then freely submits to his terms. This Royal Fort of the will is never yielded up, nor the everlasting doors of the heart set open for the King of glory to come in, till his power makes way for his presence: and therefore this King of glory is said to be The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Psal. 24.8. It is his mightiness makes him appear glorious. We should never own him, nor open to him as King of glory, if we did not feel his might by way of victory. He always first makes his entrance as the Lord strong and mighty, and then the everlasting doors are set open to him to come in as King of glory.

So that it is manifest that the Government of Christ in the heart is first by way of conquest. Not that this is done by any violent compulsion (it implies a contradiction that the will can be compelled) but by a supernatural power sweetly attemper'd, in its manner of working, to the nature and disposition of the will; whereby the obstinacy is cured, the enmity taken away, and the will brought over to a free submission to Jesus Christ. Thus God works in us to will. So that it is an act of omnipotent Grace in regard of God; and yet the will hath still the dominion of its own act. It is not forcibly compelled, but worketh by a self-motion, to that to which it is actuated by the power of Divine Grace. And when the mind is thus savingly enlightened, and the Conscience effectually convinced, and the will by the powerful quickening of God sweetly framed for a full conformity and obedience to the divine will, then is a man thoroughly prepared and fitted to take up the yoke of Christ.

And this is one way by which you may make a judgment in this matter. If the mind hath been savingly enlightened. If the Conscience hath been effectually convinced of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. And if the will, by a powerful touch of God, hath been thoroughly subdued to the Divine Will, then are you brought under

the Yoke of Christ. And this is a judgment, a priori, by such things as always precede an actual subjection to Christ, and are causal of it.

CHAPTER XIV.

Shows our subjection to Christ by such signs as are the Genuine Effects of it.

2. We may make a judgment a posteriori. By such marks and signs as are the natural effects, and proper fruits of subjection to Christ. Effects bear witness to their causes; the reflection of the Sun-beams upon the Earth proves its shining, without looking upward. And this, to weak and less discerning Christians, may be the most proper measures to try their State by. Who desires a better proof of Life than Sense and Motion? or better Knowledge of a Tree than by its Fruits? if the Tree be good, the Fruit will be good. By their Fruits ye shall know them.

Now there are two things which are the constant effects, and natural fruits of this Yoke of Christ; and they are, dying to sin, and living to God. Putting off the old man, and putting on the new. Crucifying the Flesh, and Sowing to the Spirit. And where ever a man is brought into subjection to Jesus Christ, these are the inseparable effects of it by which it may be known.

First then, take the temper and disposition of the heart towards sin for a rule of trial. He that bears Christ's Yoke, will no longer bear sins Yoke. Where the one is once put on, the other is daily putting off. There is an irreconcilable odds, in every man that is under the power of grace to sin and lust, and it appears

1. In searching out of sin, let us search and try our ways. Though a good man knows much evil by himself, yet he desires to know more. Though he sees many lusts and corruptions in his heart, yet he is sensible that there are many he sees not; for who can understand his errors? as we know but in part of the things of God, so we know but in part of the things of our own hearts. First convictions discover much, but not all; they leave much sin undiscovered; and of the sin that is discovered, there is much evil in it that is not. Hence that of Job, (chap. 13.23.) How many are mine iniquities and sins? make me to know my transgression and my sin.

It is a great mistake to think the convincing work of the spirit is over when once it hath discovered to a man his sinful estate, and brought him to close with Jesus Christ, there is need of conviction in order to Sanctification, as well as in order to Conversion. There are sinful frames of heart, as well as a sinful estate; and though a Believer need the convictions of the Spirit, but once as to his sinful estate, yet he needs them always as to the carnal frames of the heart. Therefore he cries out, that which I see not teach thou me. Job 34.32. As there is a height and depth in the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, so there is also in the lusts of the heart. And as it is the light of the Spirit which shows us the unsearchable riches of the former; So he also discovers to us the unseen filthiness of the latter.

And this is a great reason why many good men complain of sin more after Conversion than they did before; and still the more they grow into acquaintance with their own hearts, the more they complain of indwelling lusts. It is not because their lusts increase, but because their light increases. Not because they sin more, but because they see more of sin. As other Graces of the Spirit, so that of Light, is a growing thing; and the more the light of the Spirit is increased, the more of the evil of sin is discovered. But notwithstanding their complaints of what they see, yet still they desire to see more. Though a Believer finds delight only in the fight of his graces; yet he finds a profit in the knowledge of his sins. There are two things which testify aloud to the goodness of our state. One is when we desire to feel

more of the Grace of Christ; the other is, when we desire to know more of the hidden lusts of our own hearts. The one makes us more humble and thankful, the other makes us more vigilant and watchful. This is one thing the hypocrite fails in; he never searches to know his secret sins: he prides himself in his seeming graces, but he never searches to know his hidden corruptions. He may boast with the Pharisee (Luke 18.) of his Fasting and Praying; but he cannot truly pray with David, Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me, and see if there be any wicked way in me. Psal. 132.23, 24.

2. This enmity in Believers against sin appears in the confession of sin, whereby the Believer accuses and charges himself before God. For this is a great blow to sin. Confession is an act of mortification. By our Law no man is bound to accuse himself, but by the Law of God he is. He shall confess that he hath sinned, and shall bring his Trespass Offering. Lev. 5.5, 6. The Offering for sin is not enough without the confession of sin, only acknowledge thine iniquity that thou hast transgressed against the Lord. Jer. 3.13. The Antinomians are against the Confessing of sin in the Children of God; and we have others leavened with the same Spiritual Pride; they look upon it as a servile work, below the dignity of a Christian State. But till a Believer get above the committing of sin, how can he be above the confession of sin? it is a duty as needful as the labor of the pump is to the leaking vessel; what the Ship leaks in, the pump must cast out. And therefore this hath been the practice of good men in all times, not only of David, and Ezra, and Nehemiah, and Daniel, &c. in the Old Testament, but of Believers in the New Testament. We find not only young converts at this work, Mat. 3.6. Act. 19.18. but the most eminent Saints, Rom. 7.14, 18, 21. it is an indispensable part of true Repentance.

In some cases it is a duty to confess our sins to man, Jam. 5.16. as in case of public scandal to the Church. Or of private injury to our Neighbor. Or in case of Spiritual Troubles; that so we may have the advantage of good men's Prayers and Counsels. But it is in all cases necessary to confess sin to God. It is a great Glory done to him. It

puts honor upon all his attributes. My son (said Joshua to Achan) give glory to the Lord, and make confession to him. It is the way to stop the progress of sin. While it is concealed it is out of the reach of those means that should give check to it.

It is the most rational way to cure Soul troubles, and settle our comfort. Sin is like an impostume while it is gathering it is painful, but when it is broke or lanced, and runs, then there is ease. Or like a wind locked up in the Earth, which causes great Earthquakes, till it finds a vent; and then the Earth is quiet.

It commends the virtue of Christ's Blood, when we open to him those mortal wounds which none but he can cure.

It puts an edge upon prayer; he that hath no sin to acknowledge; hath but little mercy to beg.

It is the next way to forgiveness. If any say I have sinned, and it profited me not, he will deliver his Soul from going into the pit. Job 33.27, 28. In the first Covenant it was, He that commits sin shall die. But in the second Covenant, he that confesses sin shall be forgiven. 1 Joh. 1.9.

Confession speaks out such a sensibleness of sin, as works the Soul to a ready compliance with any terms of deliverance. And a heart brought over to submit to God's remedies, is in a fair way to a cure. Though sin be a desperate Disease, yet it is never deadly where the Patient is ready to use God's Medicines.

This confession leaves such a dread of sin upon the heart, that it dare not return to it as it was wont. I do not say but that possibly a Believer may, through the prevalency of lust and temptation, fall into the same sin he hath confessed to God; yet it shall not prevail as formerly. But it is not every kind of Confession that speaks out an enmity to sin. It is possible a man may often confess sin, and yet never forsake it; but persist in it all his days; and perish in it at last.

Saul confessed, and yet perished. Judas confessed his sin, and yet lost his Soul. Therefore

It must be free and voluntary, not forced and extorted.

It must be in sincerity and uprightness of heart.

It must be with brokenness of heart. I will declare mine iniquity, I will be sorry for my sin.

It must be with a hearty resolution against sin.

This is another thing the Hypocrite comes short in: he cannot thus confess sin: he flatters himself in his own eyes, till his iniquity be found to be hateful. Psal. 36.2. He covers his Transgression as Adam, by hiding his iniquity in his bosom. Job. 31.33.

3. This odds in Believers against sin appears in the hating of sin. There is odium abominations, and odium inimicitiae. One is a hatred that causes aversation: the other is a hatred that causes opposition. Both ways the Believer hates sin.

(1.) He turns from it as being a thing offensive and loathsome to the Spiritual Appetite, and Renewed Will. No natural man can thus hate sin, because there is a suitableness between the Heart and Lust. He may possibly hate that which is sin; but he cannot hate it as it is sin; for then he would hate all sin. One of a tenacious [greedy] humor may hate pride and prodigality. One that is prodigal and profuse may hate Covetousness. And yet he may not hate sin formally considered; though he hates that which materially considered is sin. This kind of hatred of sin is usually for the sake of some other sin: it is only a reserving the affections for some Lust that suits him better. So that it may be said of Lust in this case, as is said of the Sea; what ground it loses in one place, it gains in another. Whilst he hates one sin, he loves another; whilst he turns from one, he cleaves to another. He cannot hate sin as sin; this is peculiar to Believers. There is no Hypocrite in the World that can unfeignedly hate every sin: he

cannot say with David, I hate every false way, but the Believer can, and doth: I don't say that he ceaseth from all acts of sin; that is impossible, so long as Grace is imperfect, and he carries a body of death about him: but he hates all sin; and darling sins above all, as being the worst of sins: for these are they whereby God hath been most dishonored, the Mind most blinded, the Heart most bewitched, Satan most gratified, and the Soul most wounded.

To dislike some sins and not others is not hatred. If the heart be right with God, the same reasons that induce us to hate one sin, will induce us to hate all. God hates all; and wherever the Divine Nature is wrought, it shows itself in suitable dispositions. It is a Universal Principle, which as it inclines the heart to all good, so it sets it against all sin. And it must needs be so, or else how can a man be said to be in subjection to Jesus Christ: for one sin keeps possession for Satan as well as a thousand.

And this discovers many that would prove their subjection to Christ by their hating sin, when as they do not hate all sin. There is ever some lust in reserve, of which they say as Jacob of his beloved Benjamin, He shall not go. Or as Naaman of his bowing to Rimmon, when I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing. Now suppose a Woman should love her Husband better than a thousand, and a thousand men; yet if there be any one that she loves and embraces, and desires more than him, would ye not say she was a harlot? yes, as really as she that prostitutes herself to all that pass by. He that indulges to any one sin was never yet truly under the Yoke of Christ. Though a Believer may possibly fall into many sins, yet there is no Believer but hates every sin.

And let me tell you, I know not a surer sign of a man's being under the power of Grace than this. For what else is it that can make a man loath that sin that he loved as himself? Many a man may be angry with sin, but that is consistent with love. Many a man may forbear sin, for fear of shame or punishment. But this is not to hate sin as

sin. When sin is loathed as being a violation of God's Law: a contempt of his Authority: contrary to his Nature; an Enemy to his Service and Honor: a grief to the Spirit: this is to hate sin as sin: and he that thus hates sin, must necessarily hate all sin: for all sin violates his Law, is contrary to his nature, opposes his Service, and grieves his Spirit.

Secondly, as he hates it with a hatred of abomination; so he hates it with a hatred of enmity: and this appears in a vigorous activity against sin.

1. He prays against it. Order my steps in thy word, and let not any iniquity have dominion over me. Psal. 119.133. Prayers and Tears are the Christians Weapons; not only against the malice of enemies without, but also against the mischief of sin within. He don't pray against his sin, as it is said Austin did in his Natural State, who was afraid that God should grant his request. He prayed one thing, and desired another. But he prays as David did, wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Psal. 51.2. Oh the sighs and groans that a gracious heart sends up to God, under the load and burden of sin. We groan being burdened. Hence that of the Apostle, Rom. 7.24. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death! never did poor Prisoner more long and wish to be freed from his chains, then the Believer doth to be rid of his sins. None can know what the wrestling's of a gracious heart are with God against Corruption, but they that have been wearied with the burden of it.

2. He mourns and sorrows under it as the daily burden of his Soul. Grace softens the heart, and then sin makes it mourn. They shall be on the mountains like Doves of the valleys, all of them mourning, everyone for his iniquity, Ezek. 7.16. And this is sorrow of the right kind There is a great deal of sorrow caused by sin that is not right; therefore the Apostle speaks of being made sorry after a Godly manner. I rejoiced not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to Repentance, for ye were made sorry after a Godly manner. 2. Cor.

7.9. H&G, ye sorrowed according to God. And it is known from all other sorrow.

By its object, and that is sin. Sin more than anything: and special sin more than any sin.

1. Sin more than anything; more than suffering, more than affliction, more than Hell. Nothing in the world causes that sorrow in a gracious heart as sin doth. Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight, says the poor prodigal, Luk. 15.21. he doth not say, I am full of wants, ready to famish for bread, but here is his wound, father I have sinned. So as it was with David. 2 Sam. 24.10. I have sinned greatly in that I have done, and now I beseech thee take away the iniquity of thy servant; He doth not say take away this judgment, this pestilence: nay, he is willing to bear it, ver. 17. Lo, I have sinned and done wickedly, but those Sheep what have they done? Let thine hand be against me. He is willing to endure the smart, so as God would remove the guilt. He would quietly bear his hand in chastisement for sin, so that his heart were but towards him in the pardon of sin. It is not smart but guilt that is the chief cause of sorrow in a gracious heart.

Now the hypocrite cries out more because of smart then guilt. Punishment causes sorrow, when sin doth not. Pharaoh is under a plague of Frogs; and he presently calls for Moses and Aaron: and what must they do? Intreat the Lord that he may take away the frogs from me. Exod. 8.8. he doth not say, that he may take away my sin from me: he was very sensible of the plague of frogs, but had no sense of the plague of his heart. So that here you see the difference between David and Pharaoh: David is for the taking away of sin rather than of judgment: Pharaoh is for the taking away of judgment, but not a word of the taking away of sin.

2. True sorrow for sin is more for special sins then for any other sin. Though all sin is matter of sorrow, yet special sins above all: And it must needs be so, for by these God hath been most dishonored. By

these he hath so often broke with Jesus Christ. By these he hath given the deepest wounds to his own Conscience. By these Satan hath so long maintained his power and rule in the Soul. And so easily ensnared and overcome him.

The hypocrite never sorrows for his special sins. His sorrow as it is feigned, so it is either for some petty sins, or such as are common to him with others. But he feels no remorse for his bosom lusts: nor comes near to that which is the chief cause of controversy between God and his Soul. His beloved lust lies secure in his heart, without the least disturbance or notice taken of it.

3. He maintains a constant conflict against sin. And this is a natural effect of hatred; for hatred stirreth up strife, Prov. 10.12. hence ye read of striving against sin. Heb. 12.4. H&G it is a military word, and implies an opposing and fighting as against an enemy, to whom a man is resolved not to yield. And the enemy is here said to be sin; which is the greatest enemy in the world; and makes the fiercest war: for it wars against the Soul. 1 Pet. 2.11. against the grace of the Soul: against the peace and comfort of the soul: against the life and salvation of the Soul. Hence it is that the life of a Christian is a continual warfare. The Age that men observe in Civil Wars is from sixteen years old to sixty: but this war commences from the first moment of taking up the Yoke of Christ, to the last moment that a man lives in the world. Every man that is born again, is born a man of strife (as Jeremy speaks in another sense) he keeps up H&G, a truceless war with sin; what is the company of two armies in the Shulamite, but the lusts of the Flesh, and the Graces of the Spirit, in continual conflict, and opposition of each other? So the Apostle explains it. Gal. 5.17. The Flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the Flesh. And mark the Tense; it is not said it did lust; viz. at the first working of grace; or it will lust; viz. when grace is come to more strength and maturity; but it lusteth, in the present Tense, and so it notes two things.

(1.) That so soon as ever Grace is wrought in the heart, it shows itself in strifes and contests with lust and corruption; it lusteth against the Flesh, or else it is not Grace.

2. That this contest once begun will never end, so long as any one lust remains in the heart. Nor can it, for this hatred of sin wrought by grace in the heart is so radicated in the new nature, and so essential to it, that as grace is increased, so this hatred is heightened; and needs it must, for all hatred springs from love; amor odii causa, it is love to God and Christ which works to hatred of sin; and therefore as love grows stronger, so our hatred of sin still grows greater; so that this contest can never end, but in the death and destruction of every lust.

Other enemies a Christian can love, and pity, and forgive and pray for; but he hath no pity for sin. It is a hatred wrought by the Spirit of God, which is full of indignation and revenge. What indignation it wrought in you, yea what revenge. 2 Cor. 7.11. Hence it is that he is so conversant and constant in the use of Ordinances: his great end is to subdue and weaken lust under all.

First, He uses the word to this end, for this is the sword of the Spirit, Eph. 6.17. and in conflicts either with corruption within, or with Temptation without, there is none to that. No man was ever overcome either by Corruption or Temptation so long as he kept close to the word. I write to you young men, because ye are strong, and have overcome the wicked one. 1 Epist. John 2.13. Here is an evidence of their strength, their overcoming the wicked one. But where lies their strength? that is intimated, ver. 14. I write to you young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one. The abiding of the word in the heart implies the power and virtue of the word taking hold of the heart; and there it is mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds. 2 Cor. 10.4. The abiding of the word in the heart includes every part of the word, precepts, promises and threatening's; and the Believer makes use of all to subdue lust.

1. The Precepts of the word, where all sin is forbidden. Hath God forbid sin, and shall I indulge to it? ought not his word to be my rule? can I be true to God, and transgress his Precepts? what is sin but a transgression of the law? and shall I dare to invade the rights of God, and deny his Sovereignty? Thus his heart stands in awe of the word. Psal. 119.161.

2. The promises of the word, he makes use of them to encourage hope; and hope purifies the heart. 1 Epist. John 3.3. Hath God made such promises, so many, so great, of this life, of that to come, and all to encourage the Soul to die to sin, and shall I live in it, and so frustrate my hope in the promise? Hath God so often promised Heaven and Glory to such as mortify sin, and shall I live to the Flesh, and die? Thus having these promises, he labors to be cleansed from all filthiness, both of Flesh and Spirit.

3. He makes use of the threatening's of the word as an incentive to fear, for by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil. Prov. 16.6. Thus the law of his God is in his heart, so that none of his steps shall slide, Psal. 37.31.

Secondly, He uses the Sacraments for this end, both Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

1. His Baptism, he reflects upon it as a token and seal of that Covenant, wherein God hath made himself over to him to be his God: and in which God requires a forsaking of all sin; and by his owning this Covenant he hath taken God for his God, and devoted himself to live to his will; and therefore looks upon himself as strictly engaged against every lust; and for this cause labors daily to put off the body of the sins of the Flesh. Col. 2.11.

2. The Lord's Supper, here by Faith he sees Christ Crucified for sin; and how can this but make him hate sin, and heighten his rage and indignation against it; shall Christ die for my sins, and shall I suffer any lust to live, that had a hand in his death? Besides this Supper is a

solemn renewing of Covenant with God; and no man can renew Covenant with God, but he must solemnly engage to hate and renounce all the lusts of the Flesh. Thus the Christian uses and improves every Ordinance to carry on the contest against sin, that so he may mortify, and destroy it.

4. His hatred of sin appears in his purposes and resolutions against it; The Covenant with Hell and Death is now broken, and he resolves never to say a confederacy to the lusts of the flesh anymore. When he is at any time surprised by sin, as sometimes he is, he hates it the more; and it causes him to issue out a practical decree for God, like that of David, I said I will take heed to my ways that I sin not. Psal. 39.1. When once a man hath truly taken up the Yoke of Christ, the resolve and bent of his Will is never to sin more. Though a Believer cannot promise absolutely not to sin, yet he may fully purpose not to sin; So did David, I am purposed, my mouth shall not transgress. Psal. 17.3. No man can be said to hate sin that doth not purpose against it; and he that doth not hate sin, his heart is not right with God.

And this is one of those fruits of subjection to the Yoke of Christ, whereby judgment may be made a posteriori. Now I would to God that young ones would try themselves by this Character. What is the disposition of your heart towards sin? do ye make it your work to search out sin? do ye labor to know more of your secret lusts, and carnal frames, and deceitful hearts? this everyone that is under Christ's Yoke doth?

Do ye accuse and charge yourselves home before God for sin? and is it done freely, and in sincerity, and brokenness of heart? this everyone that is under Christ's Yoke doth.

Do ye hate sin with a hatred of abomination, I so as to loath and turn from sin? and is it from all sin? and do ye hate it with a hatred of enmity? do ye pray against it? do ye mourn under it? do ye keep up the spiritual conflict, striving against sin? and using means of Grace,

and Ordinances to keep down sin? this everyone that is under Christ's Yoke doth.

Is the bent and resolution of your soul against sin? have you taken up fixed purposes never to live to the lusts of the flesh more? thus everyone that is under the Yoke of Christ doth. By this then everyone may make a judgment whether ever he hath taken up the Yoke of Christ, or not.

2. It may be known by living to God in a course of Holy Obedience. Whoever hath truly put on the Yoke of Christ makes it his work and business to live to Christ; there is such a Principle of grace infused, that obedience becomes natural. And this obedience is an infallible sign of your subjection to Jesus Christ, and therefore a fit medium to try your State by. For

1. What better Testimony can there be of our subjection to Christ than that which evidences the work of holiness in the heart? Now obedience in the life is a sure evidence of the work of holiness within. It is the natural fruit of the feed of God sowed in the good ground of an honest heart. Holiness is an inward frame, obedience is an overt act proceeding from it. Holiness is the Divine Nature planted in us; Obedience is the fruit that grows upon that Root. Holiness is our Conformity to the nature of God; Obedience is our Conformity to the will of God. And nothing can prove our participation of the divine nature, like our subjection to the Divine Will. Holiness is the being of the Spiritual Life in us; Obedience is the operation of that Life according to the degrees of it in the Soul. For there is a great difference in the degrees of Spiritual Life in Believers; it is variously Communicated; to one more, to another less. All Believers have it, but some have it more abundantly, Joh. 10.10. and according to the measure of the life of holiness in us, such is our strength to obey: and according to the strength of our obedience, such will the evidence of our subjection to Christ, and his Yoke be.

2. What greater evidence can there be of our subjection to Christ, then that which is the proper and essential act of the new creature? and that obedience is. It is not more essential to the eye to see, nor to the ear to hear, then it is for a renewed heart to obey God. A Believer doth but act his nature in obeying: and that appears from that pleasure and delight which (so far as renewed) he takes in it. Acts of nature are acts of delight; hence that of the Apostle Rom. 7.22. I delight in the law of God after the inner man. And that of David, I delight to do thy will O my God. And whence this delight arises the next words tell you. Thy Law is within my heart. Psal. 40.8. The principle of grace within makes obedience to the law of God a delight, and delight in obedience to the law of God proves the truth of that Principle within. All delight in doing arises from a suitableness between the Principle and the Precept; the heart and the work. If there are precepts enjoined us, and a defect of Principles in us, much may be done, but there can be no delight in doing: the commands will be grievous.

But it is not every kind of Obedience that can prove the truth of our subjection to Christ. A hypocrite may go far in the outward part of obedience; he may have a form of Godliness: and what is that? but a resemblance of a Christian in all the outward lineaments of Godliness. He may be able to do all external acts of obedience in common with Believers; But there are some things essential to Believers as such, the goodness whereof doth adhere intrinsically to this work done: as to love God, to fear God, to trust in God, to delight in God. These mingled with our outward duties make them to be obedience of the right kind; and these no hypocrite can attain to, and therefore cannot perform any one act of true obedience. For obedience consists in a full conformity to the will of God as revealed in his word from a Principle of holiness within.

Many profess subjection to Christ in word, but deny it in works; calling him Lord, Lord, but not doing the things which he says, Luk. 6.46. And many have flexible knees, but stiff necks: bowing the former to the name Jesus, but will not bow the latter to the Yoke of

Jesus; being abominable, disobedient, and to every good work reprobate. Tit. 1.16. There is no such Testimony of your being under the Yoke of Christ, as conformity to the will of Christ.

By this then you may make a judgment in this matter. When the spies returned from searching the Land of Canaan, they brought with them a cluster of Grapes, and Pomegranates, and Figs; Numbers 13.23. and when they came to give an account of their search, they showed them the fruit of the Land; and said, surely it flows with milk and honey, and this is the fruit of it. ver. 27. q. d. the Land that yields such good fruit must needs be a good Land. The fruit of being under Christ's yoke, is dying to sin, and living to God in a Holy Obedience. And by these two Characters your State may certainly be known. The heart that yields such fruit is surely a good heart. Pray observe that of the Apostle, Rom. 6.16. Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

It is not being Baptized into the name of Christ, nor taking up the outward profession of Christ and Religion, that can distinguish between the servants of Christ and Satan. Here is a surer rule; He that obeys sin is the servant of sin; and he that obeys Christ is the servant of Christ.

CHAPTER XV.

Exhorts to thankfulness to God who inclined the heart to this Yoke.
The wisdom of taking up this Yoke manifested.

The last use shall be of Exhortation: and I shall direct it to two sorts of persons.

1. To them that have taken up the yoke of Christ in their youth.

2. To such as have never yet taken up the yoke of Christ to this day.

1. To them that have taken up the yoke of Christ in their youth; that have made it their work to mind Religion early; to remember their Creator in the days of their youth. There are three duties I would commend to such, by way of direction.

1. The first is thankfulness. Though this contributes nothing to God, yet it is that which he is delighted with. It shows the honesty and integrity of the heart in ascribing effects to their proper causes. Thankfulness diminishes the creature to himself, and magnifies God. It shows a man looks upon himself as nothing, and God as all. Therefore bless God and be thankful for this great mercy. Is there not a cause? For

1. How came you to take up Christ's yoke? Time was when ye were the servants of sin, other Lord's had dominion over you. Time was when you were slaves to lust; How came you to take up the yoke of Christ? It was not natural; for by nature we are enemies to grace and holiness. It was the fruit of the wisdom of God impressed upon the Soul; it was he that gave thee counsel to make this choice; and therefore bless him. So David says in the like case, I will bless the Lord who hath given me counsel. Psa. 16.7. Counsel for what? to take the Lord for his Lord; and that implies taking up his yoke. O my soul thou hast said to the Lord, thou art my Lord, ver. 2. thou art my Lord; that implies subjection; Thou hast said thou art my Lord, that implies a Covenant resignation. So that here he chooses God for his portion and chief good, and for his highest Lord; and how he came to make this choice he tells you, ver. 7. It was the Lord that counseled him to this; and therefore he resolves the praise and glory shall be to him; I will bless the Lord who hath given me counsel. Go you and do likewise: bless the Lord who hath persuaded and overpowered your

hearts to close with Christ. For no man comes to Christ except the Father draw him. Joh. 6.44.

2. It is the wisest choice that ever you made to choose Christ for your Lord, and to put yourselves under his yoke. It may be you think you chose wisely in other matters. In your yoke fellow, in your calling, in your dwelling, &c. but you never showed such wisdom as in this. When Job asks, (Chap. 28.12.) where shall wisdom be found, and where is the place of understanding? and having told you where it is not, not in Silver and Gold; not in Voyages to Sea; Not to be purchased with all Riches; nor found in the land of the living; He tells you none know what, nor where true wisdom is, but God, ver. 23. God understands the way thereof, and he knows the place thereof: and it is he that directs us to it. ver. 28. Unto man he said, behold the fear of the Lord that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding. There is no man truly wise but he that fears God and keeps his Commandments. See wherein the wisdom of this taking up Christ's yoke is manifest in six particulars.

1. It is manifest in this, that the best and wisest of men in all Ages have done it: they have rather chosen Obedience to Christ in the meanest services, then to be found in compliance with lust. What did David mean when he said, I had rather be a door keeper in the house of my God, then to dwell in the Tents of wickedness? Psal. 84.10. It was a wise preferring the meanest service of Christ, before the greatest pleasures that wicked men enjoy. And what meant Moses to refuse to be called the son of Pharaohs Daughter, and to choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, then to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt? Heb. 11.24, 25, 26.

What was the meaning of this, but only to show that he preferred the worst of Christ's Yoke before the best of sin? And what made the Apostles forsake all and follow Christ, but to show that wisdom is justified of her children; and that they were ready to sacrifice all for the service of such a Master? And what made those primitive Martyrs

(Heb. 11.) suffer such mocking's, scourging's, bonds, imprisonments, tortures, &c. but their faithfulness to Christ and his ways? And if the best in all Ages have taken up Christ's yoke, then this makes the wisdom of this practice manifest: Great reason therefore you should bless God for, and give him the glory of your professed subjection to Christ.

2. The wisdom of taking up this yoke of Christ is evident in that it is such a yoke, all the duties whereof commend themselves to every man's choice. It was not so in the Precepts of the Old Covenant; a great part of those Laws had little in them to commend them to a man's choice, (so long as their symbolical nature was not understood) save what the authority of God in commanding their observation gave to them. Circumcision, legal washings, sacrifices, &c. were but beggarly Elements when the command of God for their observation was taken off; therefore the Apostle calls them a yoke of bondage, Gal. 5.1. Which shows that their observation of them was more because God commanded them, than out of any intrinsical goodness which was in them. They obeyed them, not out of love of the thing commanded, but out of love to that God who commanded them. But now the precepts of the Gospel, and the things commanded there are desirable for themselves. If they had not been enjoined, to love God, to fear him, to worship him in Spirit, to be righteous, godly, sober, chaste, temperate; to be meek, patient, and contented, &c. these are amabilia pro se, lovely in themselves, and tend to the peace and satisfaction of the mind; besides their relation to a future happiness. And there is no man that acts up to the dictates of a considering mind but would choose these things, though you should suppose him under no express command thereunto.

3. The wisdom of taking up Christ's yoke appears in this, that whatever your work is, your help is greater than your work, and your succor greater than your service. That which makes any duty difficult and burdensome is, when it masters our abilities for performance. Now this cannot be said of any work Christ calls us to; For as thy work is so shall thy strength be. If God calls out one St. to greater

services than another, he will furnish him with more strength and help than another. I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. 1 Cor. 15.10. His work was great, and his help was great. He abounded in labor, and God abounded in grace. He did more than all, and he received more than all. And if you would know what helps Christians have in the way of obedience; They are these,

1. They have the help of the Ordinances of Christ; and it is a great power and strength that is derived from them to the soul that sits daily under them. The way of the Lord is strength to the upright. The Ordinances of Christ are not empty things: though they have no fullness of their own, yet they give out much from the Fountain; They go from strength to strength, How so? Everyone of them in Zion appears before God. Psal. 84.7.

2. They have the help of the prayers of all the Saints. For as the prayers of every Believer are directed to the good of all the Church of Christ; So the prayers of the whole are designed for the good of every member. There is a mutual traffic in Heaven by the prayers of Saints one for another; if one Believer be in temptations, in darkness, in sufferings and troubles, All the Saints of God are wrestling for his relief. So the Church did for Peter when in prison, and their prayers did more to release him, then all jailers and fetters could do to detain him. Mark that of the Apostle 2 Cor. 1.10, 11. Who delivered us from so great a death; and doth deliver, in whom we trust he will yet deliver us; you also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons, thanks may be given by many on our behalf. The prayers of the Saints are greatly available one for another. We have many a mercy that we never prayed particularly for, but possibly it hath been the fruit of others prayers; and therefore the Apostle calls it a gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons. Others sow the seed, and we enter into their harvest, and reap their labors. And this is one great part of that Communion of Saints which in our Creed we say that we believe.

3. They have a help greater than all this, and that is the help of Jesus Christ: and he is the mighty helper. That is an excellent Scripture, could we believe it, and live upon it, Zech. 10.12. I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in his name. What, or who can be too hard for such as walk in the ways and worship of Christ with the strength of Christ? Now the Lord Christ helps two ways.

(1.) By his powerful intercession, he is ever praying and pleading for you, Heb. 7.25.

(2.) By his Almighty Spirit, for how are your sins mortified but by the Spirit? Rom. 8.13. And how are your hearts quickened in duty, but by the Spirit? And how are you guided in the ways of God, but by the Spirit. Joh. 16.13. And how are you taught? but by the Spirit. 1 Joh. 2.27. And who upholds you in your course? but the Spirit. Psal. 51.12. Besides the grace the Spirit works in you at first, you have spiritual incomes and supplies of the Spirit daily. Phil. 1.19.

And is not the Believers help then greater than his work? now it was not so under the Law; there was great service but little assistance: but now the Christians help is greater than his work, for it is God that works in you to will and to do. The works of Gospel Obedience are more sublime, more spiritual, and therefore more difficult than any of the works of the Law; but so far as we have Communion with the power and strength of the Spirit to actuate and enable us, they are all easy and pleasant. Gospel duties may be difficult in respect of divine imposition, but they are easy in regard of divine cooperation. The Father sets the Child a Copy, and bids it write, the Child knows not how, but yet takes the Pen, and then the Father guides the hand, and the Child writes after the Copy. Lord, says Austin, give what thou commandest, and then command what thou wilt.

4. The wisdom of taking up Christ's yoke appears in this, that under this yoke, though the weakness of your obedience is great, yet the truth of your obedience is accepted. God looks at truth in the inward

parts, Psal. 51.6. O the many weaknesses that God passes by in his people, where he finds the heart and affection true to him; though there be much commanded, yet the least you do is accepted. Were it not for this there could be no serving him. If thou Lord shouldst mark iniquities who could stand? But there is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared. Psal. 130.3, 4. God will not take advantage of your fallings and infirmities. I will spare them as a man spares his son that serves him. O what a sweetness must this put into service! how easy must it needs make the yoke of Christ, when the least we do is accepted; as a handful of goats hair was for the Temple when it came from a willing heart. What reason therefore have we to bless the Lord that ever inclined our hearts to stoop to the yoke of Christ.

The wisdom of taking up Christ's yoke is evident in this, that herein true liberty consists. This may seem a Paradox; for sinners do therefore indulge themselves in their lusts because there is liberty; and they therefore refuse Christ's yoke because it abridges their liberty; they cannot live as they list. Now you must know there is a twofold liberty.

1. A carnal liberty; wherein a corrupt base heart takes a latitude to itself, to live and act according to its own vicious inclinations, without any restraint or control. Indeed the yoke of Christ is an enemy to this liberty; and it were not worth the taking up if it should not, for this liberty is only the licentiousness of lust, and no man such a slave as he that is thus at liberty. He is a servant to corruption, 2 Pet. 2.19. Under the devils rule, led captive by him at his will, 1 Tim. 2.26. He is held in the chains of Hell, and will you call this liberty? are not the Saints at liberty in Heaven? and yet there is none of this liberty there? will ye call this liberty, to be loaded with the guilt of sin? to be bound over to damnation? to be vexed daily with an accusing Conscience? to have all the threats of the word lie against thee? to have wrath hanging over thy head every moment? and God ready to throw thee into Hell? is this liberty when thou art in such a dreadful case, that thou darest not think of dying for fear of

hell and damnation? better be the veriest gally slave in the world then thus at liberty. But then

2. There is a Spiritual liberty, which is wrought out for us by Christ; the purchase of his blood: John 8.36. If the son make you free then are ye free indeed. And he that partakes of this liberty may well be said to be free indeed, for he is freed from the curse of the Law. Gal. 3.10. He is freed from the condemning power of sin. Rom. 8.1. He is freed from the Spirit of Bondage. Rom. 8.15. And he is freed from the dominion of sin. Rom. 6.14. And a man never enjoys this liberty till he comes under the yoke of Christ; and is there not reason to bless God for drawing the heart to Christ?

6. The wisdom of taking up Christ's yoke appears in this, that the longer you are under it, the easier you will find it. I will make it out in three things.

1. The longer you wear it, the lighter it will be: it is not so in other matters. A little burden in tract of time is heavy, and the longer it lies the heavier it is, because of a waste of strength by long bearing: but Christ's burden the longer it is born the lighter it is, because though the burden is not diminished, yet your strength is increased. They go from strength to strength. He that hath clean hands shall grow stronger and stronger. And as spiritual strength increases, so spiritual difficulties must needs abate.

2. The more progress you make in obedience, the greater testimony you shall have from conscience of the uprightness of your hearts with God, and you cannot imagine (unless you ever felt it) what peace this brings in, 2 Cor. 1.12. Nothing gives conscience that advantage to witness aloud to our case, as godly sincerity in our obedience to Christ.

3. Much obedience brings in much comfort. The more seed the more sheaves; that Christian is likeliest to enjoy most comfort, that walks most close with God in the way of obedience. He hath comfort in the

most difficult duties, even in his sufferings for Christ; and they are the most pinching part of his Yoke. And yet as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ, 2 Cor. 1.5. And therefore Christ bids us rejoice even in persecution, Matth. 5.11, 12.

He hath comfort in the worst of times, To the upright there ariseth light in darkness, Psal. 112.4. When the fig tree doth not blossom, yet then he can joy in the God of his salvation.

CHAPTER XVI.

Directs our obedience as to principles, matter, manner, and end.

2. You that are under the yoke of Christ, see that you bear this yoke aright. Many put it on that do not bear it becomingly. As it is one thing to make a covenant with God, and another thing to keep it; So it is one thing to take up the yoke of Christ, and another thing to walk aright under it. To him that orders his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God, Psal. 50.23. Then a man orders his conversation aright when he makes conscience of those duties which this yoke lays him under: And therefore, let this be your great work and business. I will express my meaning in four things.

1. See that the principles of your obedience be right.
2. See that your obedience be in right exercises.
3. See that all be done in a right manner.
4. That it be done to a right end.

1. Look to the Principles of your obedience. No man can do the duties enjoined by Christ without a principle of life from Christ. Without me ye can do nothing, Joh. 15.5. All performances which flow not from spiritual principles wrought by Christ in the heart, stand for nothing in the account of God. Though much may be done, yet it is no obedience. Therefore when the Lord designs himself honor from the service and obedience of any, he first makes them vessels to honor meet for the masters use, and prepared to every good work; and how? but by infusing spiritual principles into the soul where there were none before. As the Prophet, when he would heal the waters, threw salt into the spring. Regeneration doth not lie in a change of actions, but in a change of principles. This is that writing the Law in the heart, which God in the New Covenant promiseth, Heb. 8.10. The writing the law with ink makes it a rule of obedience; but when it is written in the heart, it then becomes a principle of obedience. Christ calls it a making the tree good; first make the tree good, and the fruit will be good, Matth. 12.33. And it is elsewhere called a new heart and a new spirit, Ezek. 36.26. We must not by this understand any substantial newness. A sinner in conversion is the same person that he was before, though he is a new creature, the soul under a work of grace is the same in substance as before, and the faculties are the same. The change is not of the faculties, but of the qualities. As when a garment is cut into a new fashion, the cloth is still the same. Naaman was the same man when he was a Leper, as when he was cured.

The work of grace begins where sin began; the depravation of our nature was first in the mind and heart, Ephes. 4.18. in a corruption of principles. And accordingly the work of renovation lies in furnishing the soul with contrary principles: and therefore God says, I will put my law in their mind, and write it in their heart. That which is intended by it is, a planting in the soul those principles of obedience whereby it is enabled to conform to the whole will of God. And this is the great thing that we should look to in the whole course of our obedience, what the principles are by which we are acted in duty; it being a matter of great concernment, for

1. Such as our principles are such will our actions be. If our principles are carnal, our performances will be carnal; unsound principles will produce unsound obedience. Actions can rise no higher than the principles from whence they flow; the fruit can be no better than the tree that bears it. Our best actions come under the denomination of evil, if the principle they proceed from be not good; and so that which we account to be duty, God may reckon to be sin. An action, in itself indifferent, yet becomes holy, if the principle from whence it flows be holy. Quod forma est in physicis idem est principium in moralibus. Therefore it concerns us to look to our principles.

2. The truth of any man's grace cannot be judged of by what he doth, but by the principles from which he doth what he doth. Gifts may for a time act as strongly, & carry a man out as zealously as grace: There was no discrimination in appearance between the corn of the stony ground and that which grew on the good ground, no difference in the likeness, as grew the one so grew the other; the same blade, and the same greenness; the difference lay in that which could not be seen, and that was in the root. The one had root the other had not.

3. We can never come to a knowledge of the soundness or unsoundness, the sincerity or hypocrisy of our own hearts but by our principles. Hypocrisy may make as great a change of external actions as grace, but it can never make a change of principles; it may clean the outside of the cup and platter, but not the inside. It may garnish a sepulcher of rotten bones, but cannot make the dead live within.

4. Such as a man's principles are such will the arguments that move him to duty be. You may know much both of the truth and growth of grace by the arguments that move you to duty. Two may perform the same act of obedience, but the argument that draws them may be very different. One may be moved by the goodness of God, They shall fear the Lord and his goodness; another by his justice and severity. One may obey him as an indulgent father; another as a righteous judge. Fears of wrath and terrors of conscience may compel one, while another is under the constraints of love, 2 Cor. 5.14. The love of

Christ constrains us. One may obey out of respect to the command, another out of respect to himself. An instance of this you have in Abraham and Shechem. Abraham is circumcised in obedience to the command, but Shechem submits to it for carnal advantage: The young man deferred not to do the thing because he had delight in Jacob's daughter, Gen. 34.19.

Our principles are then carnal, when the arguments of our obedience are so; The Devil himself, as bad as he is, yet he will sometimes press a man to duty: he loves to sail with the wind; he knows he hath the sinner thereby in a snare, and God abhors him so much the more. He that doth a good work upon a bad argument provokes God, because he doth that for the sake of a lust, that he would not do at the command of Christ. There is no such friend to hold a man up in right evangelical obedience as right principles.

5. This is the great thing God looks at in all our obedience: not only what our works are, but what our principles are. And in the day of judgment God will not call us to account only for the actions we do, but for the principles we do them by; and we shall stand or fall according as they are sound or corrupt. The Apostle hints this to us, Rom. 2.16. in telling us that at the day of judgment, God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ. Now principles are the great secrets of men, hid from all but God and a man's own heart. Nothing is more latent; they are as the spring to a Clock: you see the hand move, but that which causes the motion is not seen. Actions are manifest and may be seen by all, but principles are secret and discerned by none; but God takes strict notice of them and will judge us according to them. Nothing therefore concerns a man more than to see that the principles of his obedience be right.

Now the great principles that a man is acted by, and that carry him on in gospel obedience are these three,

Faith.

Love.

Self-denial.

1. Faith. This is the great principle of all acceptable obedience; without which no obedience can please God: the Apostle is peremptory in it, Heb. 11.6. Without faith it is impossible to please God. And therefore all gospel obedience is called the obedience of faith, Rom. 16.26. There is a twofold obedience to the gospel.

1. Obedience to the call of the gospel, whereby fallen sinners are invited, and by various methods of grace persuaded to return to God and live. Now there can be no obeying the gospel in this sense without faith. For how can a man turn from his sins, and take Christ upon the terms of the gospel, resigning himself to the guidance of his word and spirit, without faith?

2. There is obedience to the rule of the gospel; which directs and guides us how to live and walk so as to approve our ways to God. For the gospel is not only the power of God to salvation, but it is the will of God also for our guidance and direction; and all obedience to it, as such, is the fruit of faith: Therefore we are said to live by faith, Gal. 2.20. and to walk by faith, 2 Cor. 5.7. And living and walking take in the whole course of a Christians obedience in the language and sense of the Scripture.

As the gospel hath not only its credenda but its agenda, not only truths to be embraced, but duties to be practiced; so faith hath both a receptive, and a dispensing property: it receives the truths of the gospel, and embraces them; 1 Thes. 2.13. Ye received the word, not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God. And it hath a dispensing property too, whereby it pays homage to Christ in all capacities; it doth not only receive the Law at his mouth as a Prophet, and rest upon his merits as a Priest, but subjects to his yoke as a King; Faith is an active principle, it doth as freely submit to the government of Christ, as it readily accepts of pardon and salvation by

him. By faith Abraham obeyed, Heb 11.8. This is one principle of obedience.

2. Another principle is love. And this is of as great importance as the other; nay faith itself is deficient without this, for faith works by love, Gal. 5.6. This love as it is the Christians badge and character, (Let them that love thy name be joyful in thee, Psal. 5.11.) So it is the great principle of obedience: The Law being a ministration of death; the great principle of obedience there was fear. Fear God and keep his commandments: but the gospel is a ministration of life and glory, and the great principle there is Love; if a man love me he will keep my words, Joh. 14.23. Love is virtually all obedience, and therefore our Lord Christ reduces all the precepts to this, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and thy neighbor as thyself. So that the substance of Religion is contained in this: It is not Circumcision, as the Jew would, nor uncircumcision, as the converted Gentile would, but faith that works by love, Gal. 5.6.

There is no such principle of obedience as Love. This will be evident if you consider but eight properties of it.

1. It is an appreciative principle, that prefers and values Jesus Christ above all. It sees such a beauty and excellency in him that it counts all loss and dung in comparison of him. And he that thus loves Christ cannot but obey him.

2. Love is an opening principle. Open to me my sister, Cant. 5.2. and ver. 6. I opened to my beloved. Christ can have no entrance into the heart if love do not let him in This is the opening grace.

It is so in God the Father. What makes him open his eternal counsels and purposes of grace and mercy to poor creatures, but love?

It is so in God the Son. What made him open heaven and come into the world? open the virgins womb and be born? open his side and let out his blood, and so open a new and living way for us to the Father?

What makes him open his arms to receive returning sinners, and open the gates of glory for them? but love.

It is so in God the Holy Ghost. What makes him open blind eyes, and deaf ears, and hard hearts? but love.

And look how love works in God to us, so it works in us to God; it opens the ear to hearken to him; it opens the mouth to speak for him; it opens the hand to work for him; it opens the heart to entertain and embrace him.

3. Love is a liberal principle, it is all for giving: it is the most bountiful affection. Love is all for laying out upon its object. It is so with God. Divine love expresses itself in acts of bounty; God so loved the world that he gave his son: He gives Christ, He gives his Spirit, He gives grace and glory, He gives himself. I will be their God. So it is said of Christ, He loved us and gave himself for us. And look how love acts in God and Christ, so it acts in all that are born of God; he that loves God gives all to God; he gives not only his time and strength and talents, but he gives himself. I am my beloveds.

4. Love is a laborious principle: It is always doing; Amor nescit ferias; it hath no days of leisure; it sets all the wheels of the soul in motion. And therefore the holy Ghost joins love and labor together. God is not unrighteous to forget your work, and labor of love, Heb. 6.10. Your work of faith and labor of love, 1 Thes. 1.3. As the word of God is *objectum practicum*, a thing not only to be known, but obeyed; so love is *principium operativum*, not a mere notion swimming in the brain, but a devout affection quickening the heart to obedience. I have lifted up my hands to thy commandments which I have loved, Psal. 119.48.

If anything keep a man close to God in duty it is love; for this will spend and be spent; as it is right in regard of its object, so it is laborious in its motion; and doth so enlarge the dispositions and resolutions of the heart for God, that as it knows it cannot do

enough, so it is apt to overlook all it doth as nothing. And this is many times the reason of those complaints that are found among Christians; that it is not with them as in time past; they cannot pray, nor act, nor walk, nor work for God as once they could and did: the complaint arises merely out of an improved affection; not because duty is lessened, but because love is increased. He that loves but little, will think he doth enough when he doth least; but as love is increased, so duty will be diminished in our esteem, though it be enlarged in our endeavor.

5. Love is a regulated principle, it acts by rule, and direction. The motions of love are voluntary and free; but its offices and acts are bounded by the commandment. As the Promise is the rule of faith, so is the Precept the rule of love. Love to God is not a love of equals but of inferiors, and therefore comes under a law; it is our duty to act it, but it is God's prerogative to govern and guide it. The expressions of our love are to be wholly regulated by what God requires and commands of us; whatever is done otherwise though in the service of God, yet it hath not love for its principle.

Many supererogate in the service of God, and think this love to God, as the Papists; and among ourselves how zealous are many for ceremonies and superstitious observances, and think this is their love to God; whereas it is in the language of God himself, a hating of him: as you see in the second commandment, Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of them that hate me. Who they are that hate him, the former part of the command tells you; they are such as corrupt the worship of God by any manner of will worship, or human institutions. Though every sin hath a degree of hatred of God in it, yet false worship is in a peculiar manner said to be a hating of him, because it is a downright invading the rights of his Sovereignty, to whom alone it belongs to prescribe how he will be worshipped; and hence one says, it is a less sin in the worship of God, not to do what God commands, than to practice what he hath not commanded; because in the former we show our weakness to do the will of God; but in the latter we show

our impudence, in making ourselves wiser than God. Herein is love that we keep his commandments.

6. Love is a commanding principle, it sways the heart. Every man is acted by the power of love. That which gives sin its dominion in the soul is the love of it: So much as a man loves sin, so much power it hath over the heart; and so much as we love Christ, so much he rules in us; for Christ and lust rule by love. As love to sin abates, the power of sin decays; and as love to Christ increases, so his interest and government advances in the soul. Therefore it is that God bespeaks us to give him our hearts, Prov. 23.26. My son give me thy heart, and to love him with all our hearts, Matt. 22.37. Because he knows that if he hath our hearts he hath all.

7. Love is an enduring principle. It beareth all things, —endureth all things, 1 Cor. 13.7. Jacob served twice seven years for Rachel, and endured hard things, and yet the time was short, and his burden light, all was nothing because of the love he had to her. Nescit amor molimina, love knows no difficulties, how can it when it makes hard things easy.

Is it not a hard thing to keep the respects of the soul fixed upon God when he hides from it, or frowns upon it? Amare Deum cum se praebet inimicum. This Luther counted a very hard work; but love makes it easy.

Is it not a hard thing to endure reproaches and persecutions for Christ? yet love makes it easy. I take pleasure in reproaches and persecutions and distresses for Christ's sake, 2 Cor. 12.10. There is no man can take pleasure in these things for themselves; no, but for Christ's sake. It is love to Christ that sweetens all.

Is it not a hard thing to lay down our lives for Christ? and yet love makes it easy. I count not my life dear, says Paul, so that I may finish my course with joy, Acts 20.24. They loved not their lives to the death, Rev. 12.11. there is no part of Christ's Yoke grievous to love; no

duty burdensome. Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them, Psal. 119.165.

8. Love is a lasting principle. The holy Ghost says it never faileth, 1 Cor. 13.8. it is sure to hold out and persevere to the last. Nay it shall not only be a principle of obedience in Saints while they are in this world, but in heaven forever. A believer is acted by some principles in the present state, that shall cease in heaven; but love shall never cease; it shall be a principle of obedience in heaven to Eternity.

O what an excellent principle of obedience is love! and therefore see that your love to Christ be sincere; and that all your services to Christ flow from this principle; for without it all ye do is nothing; If I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profits me nothing, 1 Cor. 13.3.

3. The third principle of obedience to Christ is self-denial. There is a self-denial before closing with Christ, which is necessary in order to the taking up his Yoke. As Christ finds every sinner in himself, so he first calls him out of himself to close with him. If any man will come after me let him deny himself, and take up his Cross and follow me, Matt. 16.24. A man must come out of himself to Christ.

And there is a self-denial which is the effect of closing with Christ; that follows upon our believing, and is an essential part of sanctification; None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself, Rom. 14.7. Self-opinion, self-will, self-love, self-confidence, all must be denied; every imagination, and every high thing must be brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, 2 Cor. 10.4, 5. Nay righteous self too is as much to be denied in point of dependence, as carnal self, is in point of indulgence; for trusting to self-righteousness hath undone many. Not only our unrighteousness will undo us if we abide in it, but our very righteousness will undo us also if we trust to it; and why? because hereby we thrust Christ out of office, and make void his righteousness. Let your box of ointment be never so precious, yet this dead fly will spoil it all. If once judgment

be sent forth to victory over everything of self, then art thou prepared for a full subjection to the Yoke of Christ. Nothing a man doth can be called gospel obedience, unless it be done from a principle of self-denial: for till then all his duties are but a sacrificing to his own net, or as the Prophet Hosea calls it, a bringing forth fruit to himself, Hos. 10.1. Our Lord Christ himself acted from this principle, for as he did not his own will, so he sought not his own glory. I seek not mine own glory, but the glory of him that sent me. A man can never carry it becomingly under the Yoke of Christ, nor keep his commandments unless he be acted by a principle of self-denial. That is the first thing therefore that you are to look to, that the principles of your obedience be right.

2. If you would order your conversation aright under this Yoke of Christ, see that your obedience be in proper acts and exercises. All that is done in Religion is not obedience; all that is done with reference to God, is not obedience to God. There is a building wood, and hay, and stubble upon the foundation, this work must be all burnt. It is the vanity of Popery, and the wickedness of its teachers, to prefer the precepts of men before the commands of Jesus Christ, and so to take up the Yoke of Antichrist instead of the Yoke of Christ. This obedience, though done in the name of Christ, yet is downright rebellion against Christ.

Nothing can be obedience to Christ but what is done with respect to the authority of the commands of Christ. Not this or that single command, but all. Many obey Christ in one command, and neglect another; zealous in some things, but must be dispensed with in others. The Yoke of Christ doth not consist of any one single observance, but is made up of many duties; it is as extensive as the preceptive part of the gospel, which comprehends in it whatever is in any sense the matter of our duty. The whole government of heart and life, with respect to God, to ourselves, to others, is fully taught by the precepts delivered in the gospel. And therefore obedience lies not in some particular observances as to this or that command, but it is an entire and full resignation of ourselves to the laws of Christ, as they

are a rule of guidance and government to the whole man. We must have respect to all. That obedience that is not universal is not real. Quod propter Deum fit aequaliter fit. I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right, Psal. 119.128. Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things, Phil. 4.8.

But yet, there is a preference in the commands of Christ; some are greater than others; there are H&G, the weightier matters of the law; Some commands are more essential to piety, others are more circumstantial. Some wherein the glory of God, and the salvation of the soul are more immediately concerned; in others more remotely. Some precepts there are wherein the vitals and main parts of religion are contained, there are others that are but as fences about these. And therefore though every command is to be obeyed, yet some are to be preferred. Though it is a duty to respect all, yet not with the same degree of respect Though the commands are all equal in regard of the authority of the law-giver; yet in respect of the things commanded, there is a difference and disproportion. To love God is a greater duty than to love my neighbor. To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken then the fat of rams, 1 Sam. 15 22. I will have mercy and not sacrifice, Matt. 9.13.

Now then if you would have your obedience manifested in proper acts and exercises, then observe these six rules.

1. Neglect no duty in its season; several seasons have their several duties annexed to them by God, which makes them more a duty than any other duty. That which is the duty in season is greater than any other duty.

2. Where God lays most weight there we are to express most care. As for instance.

I. Where any commandment is called great, there God lays great weight; Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, this is the first and great commandment, Matt. 22.37, 38. Therefore this ought to have our first and greatest observance.

II. Where God gives forth commands with the greatest sanctions, and severest penalties, there he lays great weight; and there we should express great care. So in the second commandment; there you have a sanction consisting of a sore threat, and a sweet promise: Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and showing mercy to thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments. Therefore of all sins we should take heed of false worship, and idolatry, for this God abhors: and keep close to divine institution in all religious performances.

III. Where two duties come together, there the greater is to take place of the less. *Agendum est id quod est major obligatio.* In this case that which is the lesser duty ceases for that time to be a duty; and the greater duty becomes the only duty.

Thus positive precepts are to give place to moral precepts. Though I am commanded to keep the Sabbath and do no work; yet for preserving my neighbors life, or house when on fire, I may as lawfully work on that day as any other.

And in moral precepts; the less is to give place to the greater. Thus when the first and the fifth command meet; (obey God, and obey your rulers.) the first is to take place. The power of a delegate is not to be owned in competition with the authority of God. *In praesentia majoris cessat potestas minoris.* In this case superiors are not to be obeyed. For no command of superiors can bind against the command of God, who is higher than the highest.

Again; when my own temporal good, and the spiritual good of another meet in competition, I am to prefer his spiritual good before my own temporal good. Therefore Paul would rather never eat meat, then offend his Brothers conscience. This is the meaning of that in 1 Joh. 3.16. We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. That is, our corporal lives for their spiritual. As in time of persecution, when the death of the strong may confirm the saith of the weak, and so be a service to the salvation of others; then we ought not to count our lives dear.

IV. When external duties are commanded, internal obedience is therein required and chiefly intended. For every precept is given to the whole man; and therefore binds the inward man as well as the outward, or else we are obliged to be hypocrites, and seem what we are not. When we are commanded to repent; to hear, to pray, to do good works, they are not the outward acts only that Christ calls for; but the inward graces and affections. And therefore you never obey the precept, whatever duties you perform, unless they be done in spirit and truth.

V. Observe the station and condition God hath set thee in, and the circumstances thou art under, and attend to the duties thereof. For that which is the duty of one may not be the duty of another: and that which is a great duty at one time, may be no duty at another. One man may be a Magistrate, another a Minister, and so may be obliged to those duties which are no duties to another.

VI. Lastly, whatever duties conduce most to God's glory; whatever have the greatest tendency to our own salvation, and the salvation of others; whatever may put the greatest honor upon religion, and render it lovely among men, and put to silence the ignorance of the foolish: in these things lie the proper acts and exercises of obedience. And therefore these are the works chiefly to be attended to by all that are under the Yoke of Christ: but we must not so be concerned in the greatest, as to neglect the least. *Qui minima spernit paulatim decedit.* Spiritual decays begin in the neglect of lesser duties. Remember that

of Christ to the hypocritical Pharisees: These ye ought to have done, and not to leave the other undone, Matt. 23.23. And that in Matt. 5.19. Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.

3. If you would carry it becomingly under the Yoke of Christ, as you must look that the principles of your obedience be right; and that the matter of your obedience be in right exercises: so you must see to the manner of your obedience. It is not the bare doing what God commands that is obedience, unless it be done in a right manner. Most men miscarry herein; taking up in a bare performance of duty, and resting in opere operato, in the work done, Like the blind Papists, that bead out their devotions, and serve God by tale. How few watch over their hearts in duty, or look to the frame of their spirits in obedience: whereas this is the great thing God looks at. And therefore the precept doth not only direct in the matter to be done, but also in the manner of doing: not only what, but how. Take heed how ye hear, Luke 8.18. Take heed ye do not your alms before men, Matt. 6.1.

Now what doth our Lord Christ mean by these take heeds? but to show us how possible it is for a man to miscarry in the very doing of duty, if he do not make as much conscience, and show as much care in the manner of doing, as in the matter to be done. *Malum ex quolibet defectu*. Tho all requisites must concur to make an action morally good, yet any defect makes a good thing evil. And therefore in all instances of obedience the manner is carefully to be attended to. For

1. This is the great distinguishing character between a true believer and a hypocrite. It is not in the matter done, but in the manner of doing. both may be engaged in one and the same duty: and yet it may be an act of grace in one, and an act of sin in the other. The good man prays; so doth the hypocrite; but the one prays with faith and fervency; the other draws nigh to God with his lips, when the heart is far from him. The good man serves God; so doth the hypocrite: but

the one brings the male of the flock; the other brings the torn, and the lame, and the sick. The one serves him deceitfully; the other acceptably.

2. A duty that is materially good, may be formally evil by failing in a right manner. Good becomes evil, and duty is turned into sin by an undue manner of performance. It is iniquity even the solemn meeting, Isa. 1.13.

3. It makes God disown his own appointments, and reject the very performances which the precept makes a duty. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand to tread my courts? Isa. 1.12. It was God's requirement, as you may see, Deut. 12.5. To the place which the Lord your God shall choose to put his name there, to his habitation shall ye seek, and thither ye shall come. So that they had the command of God for treading his Courts; and yet here God rejects his own appointments. Who hath required this at your hand? Though God required it, yet not of such as they were; nor in such a manner as they appeared. So in v. 13. Bring no more vain oblations, incense is an abomination to me. But were not these oblations and incense of God's own institution? Yes, but because they were feignedly performed, therefore they were not accepted; and so became vain and abominable. But there is a farther hint in the words; for oblations were from the people; incense was from the priests: so that when he says, their oblations are vain, and incense an abomination, he doth therein reject the specious worship and services both of priests and people. He that offereth an oblation is as if he offered swine's blood, and he that burneth incense as if he blessed an Idol, Isai. 66.3. And if God rejects that worship which he himself appointed, and so was right for the matter; because not done in a right manner; what shall become of that worship which is neither right for matter nor manner? where the commandments of God are made of none effect by the traditions of men? this, wherever it is, renders the worship of God vain; for so the Lord Christ himself hath determined the case, Matth. 15.9. In vain do they worship me teaching for Doctrines the commandments of men. O that our

superstitious will-worshippers would consider this, who have (to use the Prophets phrase,) the broth of abominable things in their vessels, Isa. 65.4. and as ever they would avoid the devils meat, let them shun feeding upon his broth. For little innovations in the worship of God open a door for the gradual entrance of the most abominable idolatries. And so the house of prayer becomes by degrees a den of thieves, Matt. 21.13.

4 A man may lay himself under great vengeance and judgment from God in the doing the very thing which God commands, for want of a right manner. Cursed be the deceiver that hath a male in his flock, and voweth and sacrificeth to the Lord a corrupt thing, Mal. 1.14. Sacrificing was a duty commanded by God, but he that corrupted his sacrifices came under a curse; as they did that offered the blind and the lame, and the sick, to God, ver. 8. When men have not a rule from the word of God for a warrant of their worship, that is a blind sacrifice. When there is action without affection; the lips without the heart; that is a lame sacrifice. When duties are done coldly, without life and vigor; that is a sick sacrifice, and such a sacrificer is a deceiver, because he doth not observe the right manner, and cursed be the deceiver. So Jeremy 48.10. Cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully, 1 Corinth. 11.29. He that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh judgment to himself. And what the judgment is, he tells you in the next verse. For this cause many are sick and weak among you, and many sleep. Many were under soar diseases, and many swept away by death, for coming to the Lord's table in an unworthy manner.

It is of great concernment therefore to see that your obedience be right for the manner. Otherwise we may think we serve God when our very service becomes sin. It is excellent counsel of the Apostle, Heb. 12.28. Let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably. That which gives the acceptance is the manner of obedience. Now there must be four things to make obedience right for the manner.

I. It must be a willing obedience; duties are to flow from the heart freely, like the drops that come from the honey comb without pressing: it is a character peculiar to the subjects of Jesus Christ, they are a willing people. And herein the efficacy of grace is seen, in taking away natural reluctancy and opposition; and bringing the will into subjection to Christ. And therefore it is said to be an effect of the day of his power in the soul. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power. God is more honored by the obedience of the will, than by all the service of the outward man. Human force may compel this; but nothing but grace can rule the other. Many obey; but it is by constraint, not by choice. The influence of by ends or foreign motives, or the compulsion of a natural conscience, or fears of hell, and wrath, may compel them to do many things, as Herod did; but they are burthensome and grievous. Ever as the will is such is the service: and therefore God who in some cases accepts the will for the deed, never accepts the deed in any case without the will. In the duties of God's service, the will is all in all. Thou Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind, 1 Chron. 28.9.

II. It must be a universal obedience. And that both in respect to the subject, and to the object.

1. With respect to the subject, it must be the obedience of the whole man. Jesus Christ hath redeemed both body and soul; and regeneration is a work upon the whole man; All things are become new, 2 Cor. 15.17. and therefore the service of the whole man is required. Glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. Many give God an outward obedience, but their hearts are set upon their lusts, and many pretend their hearts are good, and right with God, but their lives are vicious, and among the unclean: but where the Yoke of Christ is truly taken up, the whole man is the Lord's.

2 With respect to the object. The whole will of God as revealed in his word. Walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may

be well with you, Jer. 7.23. There are affirmative precepts and negative: commands for suffering as well as doing; positive commands and relative: greater commands and less. None may be neglected. It is said of David, he fulfilled all Gods wills, Acts 13.22. i. e. his will in all his commands. He had respect to all his commands, Psal. 119.6. Zacharias and Elizabeth walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless, Luke 1.6. and it will be so wherever the heart is right with God. For in regeneration the whole law of God is impressed upon the heart; so that the soul is equally inclined to all the commands as to one; and makes conscience of one as well as another.

I know, in a legal sense, no believer on earth can obey universally, and fully: for in many things we offend all. But Evangelically, and in the sense of the new covenant, every believer keeps all the commands of God, that is

1. In love and esteem: I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right, Psal. 119.128. Now love is the fulfilling of the law, Rom. 13.10.
2. In unfeigned desire. That which his soul longs after is, to stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. O that my ways were directed to keep thy Statutes, Psal. 119.5.
3. In purpose and resolution. I will keep thy statutes, Psal. 119.8. All people will walk everyone in the name of his God, and we will walk, in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever, Micah 4.5. Thus they cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart.
4. In sincerity of endeavor and undertaking. He sets no bounds to his obedience, that is hypocrisy, but forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before. He presses toward the mark, Phil. 3.13, 14. and this according to the tenor of the new covenant, is full and perfect obedience.

III. It must be an upright and sincere obedience. Walk before me and be thou perfect, Gen. 17.1. in the margin it is, be thou sincere, or upright. So that sincerity and uprightness is new covenant perfection. The perfection of grace in heaven is glory; but the perfection of grace on earth is sincerity. One dram of this in the heart is worth a world. It is that which God delights in; Thou triest the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightness, 1 Chron. 29.17. Nay he doth not only delight in uprightness; but in the persons and performances of the upright. The upright in their way are his delight, Prov. 11.20. there you see his respect to their persons; and from the person, this delight of God passeth to their performances. The prayer of the upright is his delight, Prov. 15.8. God can take no pleasure in any duty without sincerity; because all duties that are not done in sincerity are a lie. It is said of those Israelites in Psal 78.34, 36, 37. When they sought God, and returned, and inquired early after him, that they did but lie to him with their tongues, and why? Because their hearts were not right with him.

It is sincerity that commends every duty to God. It supplies all other defects: denominates a man a Saint under all his failings: it is the only soil wherein grace takes root, and grows prosperously: It is that one thing wherein only the true Christian can outstrip the hypocrite; it is that which crowns all grace with perseverance. No wonder therefore that the Apostle is so earnest with God for this grace in behalf of that Church, Phil. 1.9, 10. Now this I pray—that ye may be sincere. And that David applies himself so earnestly to God upon this account, as he doth, Psal. 119.80. Make my heart sound in thy statutes, that I be not ashamed. Hypocrisy ends in shame; it is the glory of a Christians obedience when it is done in sincerity.

IV. It must be a constant obedience. Tho there may (through the strength of remaining lusts, & the imperfections of grace) possibly be many particular unevenness's, and sinful deviations in the course of the saints obedience, as it was in Noah, Lot, David, Peter, &c. yet in the main, he holds on his way. I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes always to the end, Psal. 119.112. Not by pangs and fits,

but always; not for a time, and then draw back, but to the end. Judas was a disciple, and put on Christ's Yoke for a while: but Satan enters, and the Yoke is cast off. Simon Magus takes up Christ's Yoke for a fit; but, his heart not being right with God, he soon casts it off again.

There is a great deal of this volatile devotion in the world. Many take up Christ's Yoke early, and cast it off again as suddenly: their goodness is (as was said of Ephraim's) Hos. 6.4. as a morning cloud, and as the early dew that goes away. Or like the new moon, that shines a while in the first part of the night; but is down, and disappears before half the night be gone. But blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doth righteousness at all times, Psal. 106.3. Now when obedience is thus circumstanced; when it is done willingly, fully, sincerely, and constantly; then it is done in a right manner.

4. See that your obedience to Christ hath right ends, it is a known maxim, *non actibus sed finibus pensantur officia*. Duties are not weighed and esteemed so much by acts as by ends. Though a good end cannot justify a bad action, yet the best action is corrupted by a bad end. Jehu is employed in a good work; a work well pleasing to God; a work to which he was called of God; viz. the destroying the house of idolatrous Ahab. And yet when he had done it, God threatens to avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, Hos. 1.4. God first anoints Jehu for that work, to shed the blood of the house of Ahab, and then bid him go and do it: and then declareth his acceptance of it when done: (2 King. 10.30. Thou hast done well in executing that which is right in mine eyes) yea promiseth to reward him for doing it; Because thou hast done to the house of Ahab all that was in mine heart, thy children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel, and yet after all this threatens to avenge this blood upon Jehu's house. What should be the reason of this? Because though the work was good, yet Jehu's end was bad. It was not done in zeal for the Lord as he pretended, but his end was to get the Kingdom. I observe hence two things.

1. A man may possibly do that very thing which is commanded by God, and yet not do the will of God. He may serve his own lusts in doing what God requires.

2. God may reward a work in this world, and yet punish it in the next. A work may be materially good, and so may have a reward here; and yet our end in it may be carnal and corrupt; and for that God may punish it hereafter. It is a very mischievous thing for a man to subject a good work to bad ends; Our Savior speaks of some that pray to be seen of men, Matt. 6.5. and that devour widows houses, and for a pretense make long prayers, (Matt. 23.14.) a bad end to a good action. And what follows, therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.

It is a base contempt that is put upon God when his worship is made a pretense to vile ends. Some preach Christ out of envy, Phil. 1.15. What work more spiritual? what end more carnal? this is prostituting Religion to serve our lusts; and so make God's stream to turn the devils mill. Or as if we did set up another God besides him, as every carnal man doth: for he that hath no higher end in all his actions than himself, is a God to himself. Hence it is that corrupt and false Teachers are said to make their belly their God, because their highest end in all they do in the matters of Religion is to feed their belly, and to gratify their carnal appetite in worldly pleasures and preferment, a Scripture never more verified then in this day. It is of great concernment therefore that in all we do, our intentions and ends be right, for

1. Our ultimate end doth greatly influence all our actions, they are greatly guided and governed by that. If a man's end be carnal and selfish, it will influence every duty, every act of Religion. He brings forth fruit to himself in all. If a man's end be the eternal enjoyment of God as his chief good and utmost felicity; why then all his duties and performances are directed to his Glory; that whatever he doth may please God. He lives to the Lord, and dies to the Lord. He labors that whether present or absent he may be accepted of him.

2. A man's state in grace is discovered by nothing more than by fixing a right end. Grace is not discovered by what a man doth, but by the end he doth it to. One says three things must concur to denominate a man truly godly.

That he be sure to make God his portion.

That he be nothing in point of self-righteousness.

That he have a change of his utmost end.

A man cannot call his most spiritual action, an action of grace, unless he doth it to a holy end.

True wisdom lies in three things.

1. In propounding and fixing a right end.

2. In the choosing proper and suitable means.

3. In a diligent use of these means to the attaining to this end: and you have all these pointed at in that of the Apostle, Phil. 1.11. Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the praise and glory of God. Fruits of righteousness must be our work: as the means which must be done by Jesus Christ, by whom we have strength for performance. And they must be done to the praise and glory of God as our end.

3. There is nothing in our best duties and performances that can any way lead us to communion with God, unless our end be good. One end in all duties is to obtain communion with God. There is Commerce and Communion: Commerce is when one man Trades with another for private advantage; and so a man will maintain commerce with a stranger, or an enemy. But communion supposes love and delight in the object. A carnal man may have commerce with God in duties for selfish ends; as they that followed Christ for the loaves: but a man can have no communion with God in duty

unless his ends be right. He puts himself seven times farther from God by an unholy end, than by a holy action he seemed to draw nigh to him.

Our ends therefore are to be narrowly looked unto. The best action is corrupted by a bad end: and our civil and natural actions have a holiness upon them, and are tinctured with religion, when they are done to a right end. Therefore the Apostle counseling servants in their duty to man, bids them make the glory of Christ their end, Ephes. 6.5. Servants be obedient to your masters — in singleness of heart as unto Christ. And ver. 6. Not with eye-service as men pleasers, but as the servants of Christ. And again, ver. 7. With good will doing service as to the Lord, and not to men. The great design of the Apostle's counsel is to sublimate and ennoble their ends: that the meanest act of their servile state may reach to Christ. Be obedient as unto Christ. And as the servants of Christ; and as to the Lord. What ever a man doth, whether in civil or spiritual performances, if his ends be not right, his heart cannot be right.

There is a twofold end in obedience, which commends it to God: the one is subordinate to the other as the ultimate. The subordinate end is the honor and credit of the gospel, the good of our neighbor, the edification of the Church; and our own salvation: That when we have done all, we be not castaways, losing all that we have wrought: but that we receive a full reward. Then there is the ultimate end of our obedience: and that is the honor and glory of God, which is the chief end of all. Whether ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God, 1 Cor. 10.31. If the stream of every action empty not itself into the sea of God's glory, it runs waste. This is the mark of a hypocrite, self-love is his highest principle, and self-seeking is his utmost end. But the Christians true character is in this; Love to God is the great principle he acts by; and the glory of God is the great end he aims at.

I might here answer a case of conscience, whether a man ought always actually to intend his ultimate end? that is, whether he ought

to have his eye continually upon the glorifying of God in every particular duty which he performs?

Answ. 1. Affirmative precepts though they always bind, yet they bind not to all times. now this being a duty by virtue of an affirmative precept, it is always a duty, yet not absolutely necessary in every particular act. Indeed as the affirmative doth include a negative, so it binds ad semper, to all times; so that we must at no time do anything against God's glory, that may reflect any dishonor upon him.

2. There is need of a distinction for the fuller resolution of this case. Aims and intentions with respect to their end are either habitual, or actual, or virtual.

1. Habitual. The work of grace in the heart is to change and sublimate our end; so that wherever grace is, there is an habitual scope and aim at God's glory as the end of all obedience. But this is not sufficient.

2. There is an actual aim at the glory of God in each particular performance. Now this cannot be the duty of a believer in his present imperfect state, for three reasons.

1. Because it would leave no place for other duties.

2. It is not absolutely necessary in every particular act: though it ought to be frequently done, yet it is not so necessary in every duty as that it ceases to be an act of obedience if it be not actually done. If a man make a voyage to the Indies, his aim and design is to be there in such a time, and accordingly he sets sail in pursuance of his end. Yet his end is not in his eye, in every action he doth in steering and guiding the vessel. So it is in this case: The design of a Christian is the glory of God in all his actions, though he may not actually aim at it in every particular performance.

3. It is impossible to perform it where there is a constant lusting of the flesh against the spirit, as is in every believer; and therefore a further work of grace must pass upon the regenerate soul then can be

attained in this state, to enable it hereto; and that is in glorification, whereby grace is completed and freed from all mixtures of flesh, and interruption in its acts by temptation. Saints in heaven do actually intend the glory of God in everything they do; and no wonder, for they see face to face. They are held close to God by an immediate and uninterrupted vision. Therefore the holy Ghost puts these two, sight and service together, Revel. 22.3, 4. His servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face. They shall serve him, so they do here; I but there they shall serve him perfectly, with purity of intention, and completeness of performance; and how so? they shall see him immediately and enjoy him fully. God is never perfectly served till he is fully enjoyed.

3. There is a virtual aim and intention, which is more then habitual. And though it is not actual, yet the action hath thereby such a tendency as naturally refers to the glory of God. He that in almsgiving actually intends the good and comfort of his poor neighbor, doth therein virtually aim at the glory of God. When a man by his repentance, and mourning for sin, actually aims at the obtaining of pardon and forgiveness, the tendency of his action is to an end subordinate to the glory of God. For it is the glory of God to forgive sin. So then I would resolve the case thus.

To intend the glory of God habitually, is not enough for a believer to do. To intend it in every particular duty actually, is more then a believer can do. But to intend it in each duty virtually, and as oft as we can actually, this is a believers present duty: and obedience thus performed shall certainly find acceptation with God. And so much for the second direction, to such as are under Christ's Yoke; that they would labor to bear it becomingly: which is done when obedience is from right principles; and consists in proper performances; and all is done in a due manner; to a right end.

CHAPTER XVII.

Exhorts to perseverance under the yoke of Christ, with arguments to press it, and directions to guide in it.

Having put on the Yoke of Christ, never cast it off again. Having begun in the spirit do not end in the flesh, He that puts his hand to the plough and looks back, is not fit for the Kingdom of God, Luk. 9.62. Art thou bound (as the Apostle says in another case) seek not to be loosed. The Yoke of Christ is to be put on early, but never to be put off again. The gospel, that puts this yoke upon us, is the everlasting gospel; not temporary, or cessant, but a fixed rule for the whole life; and therefore we are to serve God in righteousness and holiness all our days. Let me propound some arguments to press this duty; and then some directions to help in it, and I shall dismiss this branch of the use.

1. Consider the great advantage of a persevering obedience; whether you look at the honor that attends it, or the peace that comes by it, or the safety that is in it, or the reward that is entailed upon it, the advantage is great on all these accounts.

1. It is your honor to persevere in your obedience to Christ to the end. This is clearly intimated in that counsel of Christ to the Church of Philadelphia, Revel. 2.11. Hold that fast which thou hast that no man take thy crown. The Crown here some take for the crown of glory in heaven. Others take it for that honor God had put upon her ver. 9. I will make them of the Synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not—to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. But I take her crown here, to be her perseverance in faith and obedience to Christ; for perseverance is a Christians crown; it crowns all grace; therefore saith our Lord Christ, hold fast that which thou hast. That profession thou hast made, that grace thou hast received, that obedience which thou hast wrought, For I know thy works, thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and

hast not denied my name. Hold fast that which thou hast; there is the counsel of Christ: and the argument he urgeth it upon is, least she should lose her Crown. Perseverance in the ways of Christ is the crown and honor of a Christian.

2. If you respect the peace and comfort of your state, nothing secures and promotes it more than your constancy in obedience, As there is a peace which flows from justification, Rom. 5.1. so there is a peace resulting from persevering obedience. Great peace have they that love thy Law, Psal. 119.165. He donit say only, that do it, but that love it; for he that loves it will do it, and never depart from it, Gal. 6.16. As many as walk according to this rule, peace shall be upon them and mercy. Constant obedience brings in constant peace and comfort.

3. It is of great advantage in point of safety. Righteousness keepeth him that is upright in the way, but wickedness overthroweth the sinner, Prov. 13.6. Ah what fools are sinners, who run into sin to avoid suffering; it is as if a man should venture his head to save his hat: or sink the Ship to avoid the storm. It is He that keepeth the commandment that keepeth his own soul, Prov. 19.16. There is no safety but in the way of duty. We are sure of God's protection so long as we make conscience of God's precepts. So says the Prophet, Isa 33.15, 16. He that walketh uprightly—he shall dwell on high, his place of defense shall be the munitions of Rocks. And Prov. 1.33. Whoso hearkeneth to me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.

4. It is your advantage in point of reward. The promises are made to perseverance. To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory, and honor and immortality, eternal life, Rom 2.7. The date of your service is short, but eternity is the date of your recompense. So that great is the advantage of your keeping close to Christ in the way of obedience, and therefore he that is righteous, let him be righteous still, and he that is holy, let him be holy still, Rev. 22.11.

2. Consider on the other hand the danger and mischief of Apostasy from Christ. As perseverance in his service is attended with great advantages; so casting off his yoke hath in it very mischievous effects; and that both with respect to Jesus Christ and to ourselves.

1. With respect to Christ. It is the greatest reproach that can be laid upon Christ for any one that hath taken up his yoke to cast it off again. For it is a leaving and rejecting him after choice, profession, and experience.

1. Subjection to Christ's yoke is an act of choice; for Christ forceth none into his service. Now choice is of the best things. Of evils a man chooseth the least, but of good things a man chooseth that which is best. So that he that chooseth the service of Christ doth therein acknowledge the goodness and beauty of his ways. And therefore for a man to cast off his yoke is to repent of his choice. And this is a great reproach to Jesus Christ for a man to choose his precepts, and afterwards to reject them.

2. Casting off the yoke is a forsaking Christ after an open Profession, for there can be no Apostasy, but by such as have first owned Christ, and made a profession of him; the drunkard, the unclean wretch &c. that hath been vile all his days, living in a course of sin from his youth up, he cannot be said properly to be an Apostate; if he lives and dies in his sins and lusts, he may be said to live and die a Reprobate, but no Apostate. But he is an Apostate that hath known and owned the ways of Christ, and afterward turned the back upon them; that hath given his neck to the Yoke of Christ, and then cast it off again; that hath vomited up his filthiness, and then turned to his own vomit again, 2 Pet. 2.22. Such an Apostate was Judas, Demas, &c. Now for a man to take up a professed subjection to Christ, and then forsake him must needs be a great reproach, for he seems to say that he is not a good Master, it is no profit to serve him.

3. It is a leaving Christ after experience; for there is no man that hath taken up Christ's Yoke, but hath seen an equity and goodness in his

Precepts; he hath found some peace of Conscience in so doing; he hath tasted somewhat of the Heavenly gift, and been made partaker of some operations of the Spirit, and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the World to come. Heb. 6.4, 5. Now for a man to have experience of Christ, and then cast him off, is the greatest reproach that can be cast upon him. The Apostle calls it a Crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting him to open shame. Heb. 6.6. It is a less evil to refuse the first tenders of grace, then to reject Christ after he hath been professed and owned; the former may be from ignorance and prejudice, but to cast him off upon trial, argues his yoke to be uneasy, and his Commandments grievous, he says in the language of his action, there is not that good to be found in God as he expected, nor that comfort in his ways as was promised. And what greater contempt can be put upon Christ then this?

2. It hath mischievous effects with respect to ourselves.

(1.) It proves the unsoundness and hypocrisy of our hearts; and shows they were never right with God. They went out from us, but they were not of us, for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us, but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us. 1 Joh. 2.19. He that at any time shall cast off the yoke of Christ, shows that his heart was never right in taking of it up. In a Marriage relation love increases and firms the bond, but adulterous love is only hot while new.

(2.) Another mischievous effect is in those unspeakable losses we sustain by casting off Christ's yoke.

1. A loss of all we have done or suffered for Christ, when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, — all his Righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned. Ezekiel 18.24. thy Faith, thy Prayers, thy Alms-deeds, thy Fasting's, thy striving against sin, thy zeal and fervor for Christ, will all come to nothing; it shall never be mentioned, all thy labor, and obedience, and duties are lost, though they have been never so many

and great. When a Nazarite under the Law had separated himself to the Lord, if any defilement came upon him, all was lost, and counted for nothing. Numb. 6.12. He shall consecrate to the Lord the days of his separation, (that is, he shall begin all again) but the days that were before shall be lost, because his separation was defiled. So it is with professors of Religion, if they draw back all is lost; In Christianis non initia quaeruntur, sed finis. It is not only how we begin, but how we finish. And therefore it is excellent counsel the Apostle gives, 2 Epist. Joh. Look to yourselves that ye lose not those things which ye have wrought.

2. A loss of that honor and reputation which doth ever attend sincerity and perseverance: as an Apostate loses the profit and comfort of all his duties, so he loses the honor of his profession. Ye did run well, who hindered you? Gal. 5.7. Demas hath forsaken us, and embraced this present world: it is recorded as an act of perpetual infamy and dishonor. So Christ saith of him that begins to build, and is not able to finish, that all that behold it shall mock at him, saying, This man began to build and was not able to finish. Luk. 14.29, 30. The Crown of profession is only secured by perseverance, Hold fast that which thou hast that no man take thy Crown. Revel. 3.11.

3. A loss of gifts and parts, and of that expediteness for service which we once had. When men withdraw from, and forsake Christ, he causes his Spirit in his wonted operations and influences to withdraw from, and forsake them; So that they are not the men they once were. How hath the experience of the present Age verified this. Do we not see many that once had great gifts of the Spirit for praying, teaching, and edifying of others, who by turning their backs upon Christ to a dead way of formal Worship, have sinned away the gifts of the Spirit, and are now become utterly dead and lifeless? and thus is that of our Lord made good, Mark 4.25. He that hath not, (not improved) from him shall be taken away that which he hath. Thus Christ took away the Talent from the unprofitable servant. Mat. 25.28.

4. A loss of that tenderness of Conscience which is necessary to a true repentance; for when a man doth reject, and cast-off Christ's yoke, usually Conscience is laid waste, it is sinned out of office, and so lets a man sin on without check or control. And how shall that man repent who hath sinned away all tenderness of Conscience? therefore the Apostle says, It is impossible if such fall away, to renew them again to Repentance. Heb. 6.4, 6.

5. A loss of Heaven and the salvation of their souls. There are two sorts of persons that are forever shut out of Heaven. Such as never believed, and such as make Shipwreck of Faith. Such as never would take up the yoke of Christ, and such as having taken it up, do finally cast it off again. If you forsake God, he will forsake you; This is willful sinning, and how dreadfully hath God expressed himself against this. Heb. 10.26. If we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the Truth, there remaineth no more Sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries: you therefore that have taken up the yoke of Christ, let that severe threatening of Christ fasten it forever upon you. Mark 8.38. Whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him shall the son of man be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of the Father, with his Holy Angels.

These are the Arguments, the Directions follow.

Direct. 1. Would you not cast-off Christ's Yoke? Then do not be weary of his service. Do not count it burdensome. No man loves to bear what is burdensome; it makes him weary; and weariness causeth fainting. Hence that of the Apostle, Heb. 12.3. Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be weary and faint in your minds. There is a weariness from contrariety of Spirit to the work. Ye have said, what a weariness is it? And there is a weariness from despondency of Spirit under discouragements in the ways of God, by reason of contradictions and sufferings: but nothing should make us weary of Christ's work. Be not weary of well-

doing. 2 Thes. 3.13. Christ speaks it to the commendation of that Church of Ephesus, Rev. 2:3. For my name sake thou hast labored, and hast not fainted. Scaliger says, lassitudo est deficientia virtutis moventis; Weariness is from a failure in the moving Principle, and that is the love of God in the heart: So that weariness in the work of God shows that the heart is not right with God.

Direct. 2. Look to your first undertaking in giving yourselves up to Christ, that it be in sincerity and uprightness of heart. How can that man hold out in the service of Christ to the end that was not right in the beginning? Job says of the Hypocrite, will he always call upon God? Job 27.10. No, he will not where the heart is not made right with God by renewing grace, it can never hold out long in the ways of Obedience: Sappy Timber in the building will quickly fail. Counterfeit Grace cannot last. There is something in the beginning of the way, and something in the end, that distinguishes every true Believer from a Hypocrite. He begins in sincerity, and that never any hypocrite did: He perseveres to the end, and that never any Hypocrite could.

Direct. 3. Practice daily the duty of Mortification of sin, not this, or that, or another sin; but every sin, for if there be any one Lust indulged in the heart, that one Lust will at one time or other make the yoke of Christ an offense to you. Therefore they that are Christ's have Crucified the Flesh with the affections and lusts. Gal. 5.24.

Direct. 4. Labor for weanedness of heart to all carnal and worldly interests, that you may be able to say with David, Psal. 131.2. My Soul is even as a weaned child. While our respects to worldly advantages are kept up in their strength, we are sure to miscarry when a temptation comes. This was Balaam's bane, he loved the wages of unrighteousness. And this caused Demas his downfall; Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world. 2 Tim. 4.10. This Scripture hath occasioned a great question, and that is, whether Demas was a good man or a Hypocrite? whether his Apostasy was final, or whether he did repent of his fall?

Some are of opinion that he was a good man; and that though the love of the world prevailed upon him, to leave the Apostle Paul in his troubles, and to mind his present advantages, yet he afterward repented of his sin, and returned to the Apostle again. And the ground of this opinion is from two Scriptures. One is, Col. 4.14. Luke the beloved Physician, and Demas greet you, the other is Philemon 24. There salute thee Epaphras my Fellow-Prisoner in Christ Jesus, Marcus, Aristarcus, Demas. Therefore say they, Demas his fall was but partial; and though he fell, yet he arose again.

But how weakly this opinion is founded appears in this; that both those Epistles to the Colossians and Philemon were written before this second Epistle to Timothy; which was written when Paul was in Bonds at Rome the second time, as the conclusion of the Epistle (which was but a few Months before his death) doth make manifest. And he tells you (ver. 6.) The time of my departure is at hand. And if so, then those salutations of Demas to the Colossians, and to Philemon, were written while Demas was a Professor, and before his fall; and therefore can be no proof of his rising again by Repentance. In all probability therefore Demas was but a Hypocrite, who made a profession for carnal ends; and such a one can never persevere in the ways of Christ. He may follow him so long as Christ's way and his lie together; but where the way parts there the Soul departs from Christ. From that time many of the Disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Joh. 6.66.

Direct. 5. Preserve tenderness of Conscience. This is an excellent remedy against backsliding. It binds wherever God binds; and gives every Precept its full force upon the Soul. It consults neither safety nor danger; but God's honor, and its own peace. Nothing stands in competition in such a heart with the authority of God, and the securing his favor. Keep Conscience tender, and that will keep thy path pure, no man makes shipwreck of Faith, but he first violenceth Conscience. So says the Apostle, Holding Faith, and a good Conscience, which some having put away, concerning Faith have made shipwreck. 1 Tim. 1.29.

Direct. 6. Live much in the lively exercise of Faith. The Apostle saith in one place, we walk by Faith, 2 Cor. 5.7. that speaks its influence into our Obedience. And he says in another place, we stand by faith. 2 Cor. 1.24. which imports its influence into our perseverance. In nature standing is before walking; but in grace walking is before standing. Obedience must be before perseverance, but both obedience and perseverance are by Faith. We walk by faith, and we stand by faith. All Apostasy from Christ is the fruit of unbelief? Heb. 3.12. Take heed Brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. Nothing can keep the heart close to duty in all conditions, but Faith firmly fixed upon the Authority of the Precepts, and the good of the promises. By faith Abraham when he was called to go out — obeyed, and he went out, not knowing whither he went. Heb. 11.8. Faith is an excellent Grace, not only for the undertaking of duty, but also for persevering in it; There are but 2 things that make perseverance in the service of Christ difficult.

Some good which we cannot not part with.

Some evil which we know not how to undergo.

Now there is no good but Faith can part with at God's command. By faith Abraham when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises, offered up his only begotten Son. Heb. 11.17. And there is no evil but Faith will undergo at God's call; Through faith they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the Sword, &c. Hebrews 11.37. Faith fetches constant supplies from Christ as head of the body; and he is not only a head of guidance for the way we are to walk in; but a head of influence for strength to walk in it; Therefore it is said, Isa. 40.31. They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as Eagles, they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint.

Direct. 7. Take heed of first declensions, and watch daily against them. Apostasy begins in little decays at first: nemo repent fit turpissimus. A breach of waters which is but little at first, may end in a great deluge. Many a fair house goes to utter ruin, which timely repairs might have prevented at a small charge. A little breach made in the Conscience grows wider and wider. It is easier to crush the egg, then to kill the serpent. And therefore it concerns us to watch against first declining's. Is your Spiritual fervor abated? doth love decay? is duty omitted? doth Conscience grow less tender? This, if let alone, and not timely remedied, will end in a casting off the Yoke of Christ. Hence that counsel of Christ to the Church of Sardis, Rev. 3.2. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die.

Direct. 8. Remember the terms of the Covenant you are in with God, and renew them often by a fixed and settled resolution. There is no man takes up Christ's Yoke but he doth therein enter into a Covenant with God: and this Covenant stands in mutual agreements and promises. God promises that he will be our God; and we promise to be his people. He Covenants to teach, and guide, and rule us by his Laws; and we Covenant to take him for our Lord; to hearken to him, and obey his voice in all he commands us. He engageth that he will never turn away from us to do us good. Jer. 32.40. And we engage that we will never depart from him; but will walk in the name of the Lord our God forever and ever. Mic. 4.5.

So that there is an Everlasting obligation lies upon you to duty and obedience. You have sworn and cannot go back. As David says, I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments. Psal. 119.106. Now one part of the Covenant is to answer another; you look that God should always bless you, and provide for your good: and God looks that you should always serve him, and promote his Glory. You expect that God should perform all his promises of Mercy and Blessings; and God expects you should be true to all your promises of Obedience and subjection. For he said surely they are my people, children that will not lie, so he was their Savior. Isa. 63.8.

Now therefore renew your resolutions of service and subjection. Cleave to the Lord with full purpose of heart. Resolve (in the strength of Christ) never to cast off his Yoke, nor count his Commandments grievous. You cannot rationally expect the Blessings of the Covenant, unless you perform the conditions of the Covenant. The stipulation on our part must answer that of God's. And therefore as ever you would have God to be your God and Guide unto death, resolve living and dying to be the Lord's.

Direct. 9. Maintain a holy filial fear, of God in the world, this is an excellent preservative against Apostasy, By the fear of the Lord men depart from evil, Solomon says, Prov. 16.6. and he tells you Chap. 14.27. The fear of the Lord is the fountain of life, whereby men depart from the snares of death. And backsliding from Christ is one of the great snares of death.

Direct. 10. Think much of the day of recompenses, and of the glorious reward of perseverance in that day. Be thou faithful to the death, and I will give thee a Crown of life. Rev. 2.10. non incipientibus sed perseverantibus corona tribuitur. It is not mercenary service to quicken ourselves to obedience by the hope of a recompense. Omnis amor mercedis non est mercenarius. It is said of Moses, he had respect to the recompense of reward. Heb. 11.26. And David says, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy Commandments. Psal. 119.166. He encouraged himself to duty by the hope of Glory. And it is said of Christ himself, that for the joy that was set before him he endured the Cross. Heb. 12.2. Hope of that glorious recompense is of great force to quicken us to perseverance. And to the same end doth the Apostle urge it, 1 Cor. 15.58. Wherefore my beloved Brethren, be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Contains matter of Counsel to Christless sinners, with motives and directions to further it.

To such as have never yet taken up Christ's yoke; and I am afraid I now speak to many. Though many are called to Christ, yet few close with Christ, and submit to him. There are threescore Queens, fourscore Concubines, — Virgins without number. Cant. 6.8. How many are sons of Belial without yoke; They are H&G, under no law but that of the Flesh, and under no yoke but that of lust.

I am now to deal with you: whether you will hear me or no I know not; you have hitherto turned a deaf ear to all the calls of God and Christ. I am now from the authority of this Text to give you one call more; and I do, in the name of the great God, call and invite every sinner of you this day to come to Christ, and take up his Yoke. And this is no other then the very call that Christ makes in the Gospel. Mat. 11.28, 29, 30. Come to me all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek, and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest to your souls, for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. Come to me] that implies believing.

Take my yoke upon you.] that implies obeying. Faith and Obedience cannot be separated, everyone that believes in Christ must obey the commands of Christ; If you come to him, you must take up his yoke. Pray consider, it is the counsel of the Lord Christ, who knows what is for our good. He knows there is no life, no salvation, no happiness, no Heaven without it: this is implied in that rest he promises; they shall find rest in so doing, which supposes that without taking up his yoke, this rest can never be had.

Again, it is his counsel, who can, and will, reward all that practice it; and therefore makes this promise, ye shall find rest to your Souls. Mat. 11.29. And pray mind, here is a twofold rest promised, one in

ver. 28. Come to me, and I will give you rest: that is a rest by believing, another is ver. 29. Take my yoke upon you, and I will give you rest; that is a rest in obeying. So that the former is a peace which flows from justification, and pardon of sin, and therefore promised to the weary and heavy laden. And this is the fruit of Faith in Christ; and therefore promised to all upon coming to him. The latter is a peace which flows from Sanctification; and this is a fruit of Obedience to Christ; and therefore promised to them that take up his yoke. And mark what kind of rest it is that Christ promises, ye shall find rest to your souls.] So that it is not an outward rest, but an inward spiritual rest, the outward man may have less rest and peace under Christ's yoke then ever; your obedience to Christ may make the world hate you, reproach you, persecute you: therefore Christ says, In the world ye shall have trouble, but in me ye shall have peace.

This finding rest to your souls under the yoke of Christ implies 4 things; which greatly commend Christ's service.

1. Liberty. It holds but Christ's yoke to be a yoke of Spiritual Liberty. His service is perfect freedom, and therefore the Gospel by which this yoke is put upon us, is called a law of liberty, Jam. 1.25. There is nothing more consistent than obedience to Christ, and freedom of Spirit: Deo servire summa libertas, Pray which are most free, the good Angels in Heaven, or the evil Angels in Prison and chains of darkness? are not the good Angels? and yet they are in a state of service and subjection; therefore called Ministering Spirits, Heb. 1.14. and said to do his Commandments; Psal 103.20. The Angel says to John, Rev. 22.9. I am thy fellow-servant, and of them which keep the sayings of this book. So that the highest liberty is consistent with the service of God, therefore David puts them together; I will walk at liberty, for I seek thy Precepts. Many decline the ways of God, and cleave fast to their Lusts for the sake of liberty. Whereas it is the greatest slavery in the world to serve sin: the little finger of lust is heavier then the whole loins of Christ. Nothing makes a man such a slave as sin. He that lives in the love, and service, and enjoyment of

God hath the truest freedom. But every sinner is a vassal to lust: at the command of every unclean motion. Is not he a slave that is at the will and command of Satan? That is moved and acted by Satan in his whole course? You pity men made slaves by the Turks; laid in chains; condemned to the Gallies; grinding in Mills, broken with burdens; drubbed and beat after all. I tell you it is an eligible condition to this. Nay sin doth not only make a man a slave but a brute, for it bereaves him of all reason and judgment, there is no judgment in their goings. Isa. 59.8.

2. This finding rest under the yoke of Christ, implies an easiness in his service. And so it follows, Matt. 11.29, 30. Ye shall find rest, for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light. A Believer in the ways of obedience hath those aids of God, those divine quickening's, those daily supplies of the Spirit, that Communion with God in all, that no duty is difficult or burdensome.

3. This finding rest to your souls, implies an after good by your present obedience: There remains a rest for the people of God. The service of sin is best at first, and worst at last. Sin in the temptation is taking; but sin in the conclusion is vexing. It is sweet in the mouth, but bitter in the belly. Satan shows the pleasure and profit of sin to ensnare you, and then comes the guilt of sin to torment you. But now the service of Christ is worst at first, and best at last. All the difficulty is in the beginning, but the end is peace.

4. This finding rest implies an end of your service and duty, as it is labor. So says the Holy Ghost, Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, for they rest from their labor, your yoke shall be put off then. But when shall the vassalage of sin end? This is such a yoke as shall never be put off; an everlasting servitude. The sinner goes from a present slavery to a worse. His present condition is servile, but hereafter it will be dreadful. First chains of Lust, then chains of death; and at last chains of darkness, Jude 6. The sinner lies in yokes and chains forever; for what is guilt of Conscience? This is a chain that binds wrath upon the soul forever, He shall be holden with the

ords of his own sins. Prov. 5.22. What is utter despair? This is another Chain the sinner is held in. What is God's power? that is another chain. And what is the everlasting sentence, go ye cursed into everlasting fire? He is an Eternal Prisoner there, God shuts him up, and there can be no opening. Job 12.14. He hath the Keys of Hell and Death, and who can get them out of his hand? O what an everlasting slavery doth sin bring upon the soul! Will you therefore hearken to the counsel of Christ, and take his Yoke upon you.

1. Consider, How reasonable a thing this is. For

1. God commands nothing that is unsuitable to our reason.

Look upon this Yoke in such duties as refer more immediately to God. Either in External Worship, or Internal.

1. In External Worship.

As Prayer, how reasonable is it that an indigent creature should go to God for what he wants; seeing he cannot support himself let him go to him that can.

Hearing how reasonable it is that if God be to be obeyed, and this obedience is not to be by the creatures arbitrement, but by God's precept; that then I should labor to know what Revelation he hath made of this.

2. Look on Internal Worship.

Faith. How reasonable is it that he who is the Eternal Truth should have credence in all the discoveries of his will: and that I should trust him upon the credit of his promise.

Love. It is the most reasonable thing in the world I should love God; because he is the chief good; and because he is always doing me good. God's love to us comes under no reason but what is in himself,

but our love to God is founded in the greatest reason: we love him because he first loved us.

The fear of God, how rational a duty is it; he being the highest Lord, and his supremacy absolute. He is great, and therefore greatly to be feared.

Look upon the most difficult duties; Repentance, Self-denial, Mortification of lusts, &c. These may be troublesome to the flesh, but not unreasonable. What more equal than that I should do whatever God would have me do, how contrary soever to flesh and blood, and the dictates of a carnal mind?

2. He commands nothing that is prejudicial to our interest. The end of every Precept is our felicity: both our spiritual and eternal good are promoted by it. And is there anything more reasonable then that a man should pursue his own good?

3. He commands nothing but what answers the end of our being. The end though last in execution is first in intention. Now what is the great end of your being? young ones? what do you do in the world? let me say, as God said to Elijah, what make you here? What do you think God gave you being for? was it to please the flesh? to suck the sweet of the creatures? to pass away your years in mirth and jollity? to live to yourselves? Hath an immortal soul no other end of being but this? Surely yes, as God is the Fountain of being, so his glory should be the end of being. You are come into this world to make provision for another; to avoid the snares of death, and lay hold on Eternal Life. To walk so before God here, as that you may secure his favor forever. This is the great end of being; and how reasonable is it that every man should attend to that which he was born for. and came into the world for. Or else the being of man is in vain, as David expostulates the case, Psal. 89.47. Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain

2. Consider the great advantage that comes by this, and that whatever your condition be.

Suppose your extract be mean; that you are a branch of a poor Family. What an advantage will your subjection to Christ be in this case. For nothing can ennoble and enrich you like this; Have you no friends? this makes God your friend. Are you of a low extract: this shows you to be born of God. Is your education mean? why hereby you are taught of God. Have you none to leave you an inheritance? why God is your inheritance. Though you have neither house nor harbor, yet this secures you, a house not made with hands, Eternal in the Heavens. 2 Cor. 5.1. O what a comfortable thing it is to see the see of the poor to fear the Lord; it makes them rich in their poverty. I know thy poverty, but thou art rich, Rev. 2.9. It gives you a preference in the esteem of God to the greatest sinners on earth. The Righteous is more excellent than his Neighbor.

Suppose you come out of the loins of a rich Parentage. What an advantage may this be, for you have nothing to mind but your soul, and your Salvation: others are forced to spend much of their youth in learning a calling whereby to get bread; but your Parents have laid up a plentiful estate for you, so that your work should be to mind God. You have that time and leisure that others have not, it may be said of you as God said to Israel, I have given you a land for which ye did not labor, houses that ye built not, and Vineyards that ye planted not. And what follows? Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and truth. Josh. 24.13, 14. This sanctifies all your enjoyments, and makes them Blessings indeed, without this they are but fuel to your lusts, and so become a curse and a snare. This then is one great advantage of Christ's yoke.

2. It is your subjection that proves your relation to Christ. Mal. 1.6. If I be a master where is my fear? The question implies that whatever men pretend, the authority of God is no farther owned then as his will is obeyed. Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things I say? Luk. 6.46. and Matt. 12.50. He that doth the will of my father

the same is my Brother, and Sister, and Mother. Relations are not empty Titles, though they are minima entitatis, yet they are maximae efficaciae. They have a mutual H&G and affection to each other. Obedience is the filling up of your relation to Christ. Now whom do ye obey? who hath your subjection? whose will do ye do? If ye call God father, and live in sin, ye blaspheme his holy name: you lay the devils brats at his door. If you say our Father, you must say, Thy will be done, and labor to do it.

3. Your subjection to Christ is your proper qualification for glory. Heb. 5.9. Submit to him here, and reign with him forever. And your obedience to Christ don't give you a right to blessedness, that comes in by faith; but it disposes and qualifies for blessedness, a great advantage therefore.

3. Consider the disadvantage of not taking up Christ's yoke.

(1.) This spoils all your duties. If the heart be not subjected to Christ, no duty can please God. No obedience, no audience. If we will not hear God, he will not hear us, Quantum a praeceptis, tantum ab auribus dei longe sumus. He that turns away his ear from hearing the law, his Prayer shall be abomination. prov. 28.9. If his arguments cannot prevail with us, nor shall ours with him. What is the great argument you are wont to use in pleading with God? it is the blood of Jesus, Heb. 10.19. We have boldness by the blood of Jesus. and Ephes. 3.12. We have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. Now this is the argument God uses with you. Phil. 2.1. If there be therefore any Consolation in Christ, — if any bowels and mercies. If God's beseeching you by the bowels and blood of Christ cannot prevail with you to duty; why should your pleading then with God prevail with him for mercy? for his blood was shed to redeem us to obedience, as well as to be the price of mercies.

(2.) It renders all your hopes vain. The hope of a goodman shall never be frustrate, it shall be finished, but never be disappointed. His hope ends in the fruition of the good hoped for. It is a living hope.

But the hope of the sinner is a dying, soul-undoing hope, that will certainly fail at last, and needs it must; For,

1. It is a hope that hath no foundation.

(1.) None in the soul, what is the foundation of hope there? I will give you it in two Scriptures. One is, 1 Pet. 1.3. Begotten us again to a lively hope. Their regeneration is made the ground of hope. The other is, Col. 1.27. Christ in you the hope of glory, There Union to Christ is made the ground of hope: So that wherever there is a union to Christ by faith, and a change of state by Regenerating grace, that man hath a foundation of hope in himself. No other man hath or can have.

2. His hope hath no foundation in the word, for that gives no countenance nor encouragement to hope in a state of disobedience; that tells you that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. 1 Cor. 6.9. it tells you that without holiness no man shall ever see the Lord. Heb. 12.14. and therefore for a man to hope for Heaven in a state of sin, is to hope that the word of God is not true, or that God will not do as he saith; and how vain is that hope.

2. It is a hope that sets God's attributes at variance. It sets mercy against justice; his goodness against his truth and righteousness. God is as righteous as good; as just as he is merciful: and for an unsanctified man to hope in the mercy of God, is to set his attributes at variance; for if he show mercy to such as live and die in their opposition to Christ, he cannot be a just and righteous God.

3. It is a hope that gives the lie to Christ. For he hath with the most solemn asseveration averred that no man shall, or can see the Kingdom of God unless he be regenerate. Joh. 3.3. he hath said the gate is strait, and the way narrow that leads to life, and but few find it. Now for a man to hope for Heaven without being born again, to hope to be saved in the broad way, is to hope that Christ will prove a false Prophet.

4. It is a hope that lays no stress upon any lust, to subdue and weaken it. That hope that is right and genuine, purifies the heart. 1 Joh. 3.3. But cursed is that hope that cherishes men in their Lusts; and cursed be those lusts that frustrate a man's hope.

3. It renders all that Christ hath done about the purchasing Salvation, as to you, vain and to no purpose. What a blessed work hath Christ undertaken! what great things hath he done! what great things hath he suffered! but if a man be not changed and made holy, it is all in vain as to him; because Christ died for sinners, this many look upon as a good ground for hope: but the question if put home, must be this; did Christ ever die to save impenitent and unregenerate sinners? did he die to save such as flight him; refuse his yoke, and live and die enemies to him? if he did, then hope on; but if not, then there is no hope. Nay let me tell you it is out of the reach of Christ's power to save any one of you in your lusts. He can save you from your sins, but he cannot save you in your sins. For,

1. He cannot falsify his trust. God the father hath put the great work of Salvation and damnation into Christ's hands. And how is salvation carried on, but in pursuance of the election of God? look how God chooses to Salvation, and so Christ carries it on. Now we are chosen that we should be holy. Eph. 1.4. He hath chosen us through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience. 1 Pet. 1.2. And therefore Christ will save none that are not sanctified, for he came to do the will of God, and he will not betray his trust.

2. He cannot alter the standing law of Heaven; and what is that? it is the standing law of Heaven, which the righteous God hath fixed more firm than the Sun in the Firmament, and will never vary from it, that a man must repent, and turn to Christ, or perish. He must be converted, or he shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Matt. 18.3. He must take the yoke of Christ upon him, or he shall never find rest to his Soul. None but the pure in heart shall see God. This is the standing law of Heaven; and how then can the unbelieving and disobedient be saved? either the law of Heaven must be

reversed, or sinners are eternally undone, and will Christ, who revealed this law to the world, reverse it again to gratify thy lusts?

3. He cannot make void his own offices. Why hath God made him a King? but to subdue sinners to himself, to conquer the nolency of the will, to set up his government, and rule in the heart; and to subdue and destroy the rebels; He reigns that he may put all his enemies under his feet. And if so, what shall become of disobedient sinners? can you think that this Melchizedek, this King of Righteousness will ever countenance the impenitent and unbelieving? will he take those to reign with him in his Kingdom of glory, that would not that he should rule over them in the Kingdom of grace? This were to violate the rights of his Crown, which you cannot think he will do, if you do but consider two Scriptures, one is, Luk. 19.27. Those mine enemies that would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me. The other is in 2 Thes. 1.7, 8, 9. The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with his mighty Angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. And how do you that slight Christ think to escape this sentence? will not the judgment of the great day of the Lord be very terrible to all that live and die in their lusts? can you bear it? Can thy heart endure, or thy hand be made strong in the day that I shall deal with thee? If not, then be wise, and flee from wrath to come; and there is but one way, and that is by closing with Jesus Christ, and giving yourselves up to an entire subjection to his yoke. There is no way to escape wrath, and secure eternal life but this. You read of a strait gate, and a narrow way that leads to life. The yoke of the spirit in conviction to conversion, that is the strait gate; and the yoke of Christ in holiness and obedience, that is the narrow way, and there is no other: and as our Lord Christ says, few there be that find it. Is there any sinner here now that stands convinced of the necessity of undertaking this duty, that you must take up Christ's yoke, or you must perish in your sins? I hope you are, and therefore I

shall lay you down some directions to help and guide you in this work.

Take heed of mistaking the yoke of Christ. Some will tell you it lies in this way of worship, some in that, as Christ says, many will say, lo here is Christ, and lo there is Christ, believe them not.

Some will persuade you it lies in ceremonious services, and human traditions, but this is the yoke of men, and not the yoke of Christ, and therefore take heed of it. If you would know which is the yoke of Christ, you must be guided by the word of Christ, for nothing is duty but what the word commands.

Some will tell you it lies in Popery, but this is the yoke of Antichrist; And therefore you that are young ones take heed of this yoke; for it is none of Christ's. It is a grievous yoke.

It binds you from the use of the Scriptures, which are able to make you wise to Salvation. It ties you up to worship God in an unknown tongue, in a language you don't understand. It ties you to make use of many Mediators, whereas there is but one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. It ties you to believe against your senses. To believe that a blind sottish Priest can with a few words convert a wafer into the very body and blood of Christ; and then you must believe it to be the very substance of Christ; against Scripture, against Reason, and against Sense. For though the Scripture calls it still bread, and though you break bread, and see bread, and taste and eat bread, yet you must believe it not to be bread. It ties you to believe many abominable errors and false Doctrines, as that of merit by works, though Christ says, when we have done all, we must say we are unprofitable servants. Luk. 17.10. And that of the infallibility of the Pope, and his Supremacy over all Churches and Princes; and that if he doth but excommunicate any Prince, and pronounce him a Heretic, it is lawful to murder him. It is full of such abominable Doctrines. Oh therefore never come under this yoke; it is an idolatrous yoke, a cruel bloody yoke, a heavy intolerable yoke; a yoke

which neither we nor our forefathers were able to bear, therefore they wisely cast it off: and let us rather choose to die then put it on again, for it is none of the Yoke of Christ.

If you would resolve to take up Christ's yoke, then you must remove all hindrances to this duty, whatever may be a stumbling block, or obstruct you in your attempt. I have named many in the former part of this discourse, let me name 6 more now.

1. One is, a thinking this yoke of Christ too strict and burdensome; this hinders many. But never any that took it up found it so: and they that never tried cannot judge of it. This is a mere subtlety of Satan to mis-represent the ways of Christ, that we may perish in our prejudices. He deters young ones with this conceit, that Christ is a hard Master, farewell all pleasure and comfort if once you take up this yoke, whereas the design of Christ is the pleasure and comfort of the soul. His ways are ways of Pleasantness, and all his paths peace. Prov. 3.17. Are not the fruits of the Spirit more sweet and comfortable then the works of the Flesh? It is Satan that is the hard Master, that commands such unreasonable things: and then after all instead of a reward of your service, deprives you of your peace, your comfort, your innocence, the favor of God, the benefit of Christ's blood, and the hope of Heaven. O did we but seriously believe a life to come, a glory to be revealed, we would think nothing much that might render us capable of that blessedness. What will not men do and suffer for a Crown, though but fading and transitory? It is storied of Alexander, that he provided a Crown, and promised it to him that should at such a Feast drink most; and four (the Story says) drunk themselves dead to get the Crown. Shall men hazard Soul and Body for a poor fading Crown, and shall we think anything hard for a Crown that fades not? They for a corruptible crown, we for an incorruptible. Don't think this yoke of Christ too strict therefore.

2. Another hindrance is a worldly Spirit. I tell you, of all persons the covetous are hardly persuaded to come to Christ. Many such do love to take up a Profession to cover and color their sin, but not to take up Christ's yoke, for then they must lay aside their sin. And if you look into Scripture you shall find that this one sin kept more from Christ than any other. What made the Gadarenes weary of Christ among them, but the worldly interest? What made the Pharisees deride him and his Doctrine, but their covetousness? And what made those guests that were bidden to the wedding feast, to make light of it, but the farm, and the Merchandise, and the new married wife? And what made that hopeful young man to forsake Christ, and part, after such fair hopes given? it was this one thing. One thing thou lackest, sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and come and follow me. O you that are young; I pray think of this young man, and don't do as he did.

3. The scandalous miscarriages of professors, and their unsuitable walking; this hinders many, and hardens them against the ways of Christ. But this is unreasonable to judge of the Laws of Christ by the lives of men. To condemn the rule because some swerve from it; The question is, doth the law of Christ countenance this? doth it give the least indulgence to any one sin? no, it is holy, just and good. The way of Christ is holy, though all that profess it are not so. Gold is excellent, though all is not Gold that glisters. You will not refuse to take Gold because it is sometimes counterfeited. Because some Professors are proud and vain, others covetous and base, &c. therefore you will never go for Professors. Because you observe one Church-Member drunk, another deceitful in his dealing, &c. therefore you will never join to the Church. O take heed of this, for you are to look to the rule, and to walk by that, Gal. 6.16.

4. Another hindrance is a presumption of finding mercy at any time. Indeed this hath undone many. And therefore let me tell you, mercy is in bringing you under Christ's yoke; it is not to

keep you from taking it up. If hope of mercy hereafter make you neglect the taking up Christ's yoke for the present, you are undone by the hope of mercy.

5. Another hindrance is wicked companions. Oh how many have been undone by bad company! many that have in youth had great convictions, made fair and hopeful beginnings, used to pray in secret, and read the Scriptures, and make conscience of the Lord's day, by falling into wicked company have lost all. Their convictions are stifled, duties laid aside, God forgotten, his day profaned, and so their hopeful beginning like to come to a sad end. Whoever got good by bad company? Oh remember Peter, he would venture into the high Priests Hall, and company with them, and what came of it? it ended in a denial of Christ. Evil communication corrupts good manners. 1 Cor. 15.33. And yet many young ones dare frolic it in all companies, drink, dance, revel, run to play houses, and worse houses too, and yet dread no danger.

O young ones! of all things take heed of bad company. Never such a generation of young sinners as in this day; that dare not only be drunk, and unclean, and swear; but dare scoff at Religion, make a mock at Godliness, laugh at Heaven and Hell, and in contempt of God dare him to damn them at every word. And dare you be found a companion to such as these? O let me say to you as Moses did concerning Corah, and his wicked company, depart I pray you from the Tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in their sins. Numb. 16.26. For Solomon says, the companion of fools shall be destroyed. Prov. 13.20. Let me tell you, I never look to see you own Christ, nor the ways of Christ, till you resolvedly shake off your wicked companions, and say as David did, Psal. 119.115. Depart from me ye evil doers, for I will keep the Commandments of my God. What says Solomon to his son, Prov. 1.10. My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. One will entice thee from a Sermon, to go to an Alehouse; another to

a Brothel house; &c. consent not, touch no unclean thing, 2 Cor. 6.17. a man that had a running issue under the Law was unclean, and he that touched him was unclean. Lev. 15.7. Can a man touch pitch and not be defiled? wicked men are as infectious as the plague; and therefore shun them as you would do one that hath a running soar. Resolve to forsake all that have forsaken God. Prov. 9.6. Forsake the foolish, and live.

6. Another hindrance, and the greatest of all, is the yoke of sin and lust. While your neck is under this yoke, you can never put on Christ's; Christ and Lust are two such Masters that no man can ever serve both. If any one sin be indulged and spared, you can never be true to Christ. You must be divorced from all sin, or you cannot be Married to Christ, therefore remove all hindrances to the duty.

Labor to be convinced of the absolute necessity of conversion. A true sight of the dreadful condition you are in by nature will discover this. And what is that? you are by nature children of wrath, under the curse from the very womb; the guilt of all the sins that ever you committed lies upon you: you are the devils bondslaves; dead in sin, under the power of lust, alienated from the life of God. Hasting to destruction, there is but one step between you and Hell; you stand upon the brink of the bottomless pit: for whoever dies in an unconverted state shall assuredly perish: the holy God hath said it, and will make it good. And is this a state to be rested in? where is the sinner that dares die, and appear before the Righteous God in this condition? therefore let this show you the necessity of conversion.

Heartily accept of Jesus Christ as the Gospel tenders him. Here is the turning point of thy Salvation. Christ in bowels of pity to thy undone case tenders himself, to thee as a universal remedy, to pardon, to purge, to renew, to sanctify, to save Young ones! have any of you a

heart thus to accept of Christ? if so, you are happy forever; and all your sins and lusts, nay all the devils in hell cannot hinder it.

Let an entire resignation follow this acceptation. Having thus received Christ, give thyself wholly up to Christ, resolving that Body, Soul and Spirit shall be the Lord's, so it is said of them, 2 Cor. 8.5. They gave themselves up to the Lord.

A hearty subjection must follow this resignation. No man can be fully resigned that is not entirely subject. Be sure therefore let Christ bear rule; let the government be upon his shoulders; let him give law to thy heart and life; thy affections and actions: do not part with some sins, and retain others; this is to hold fast deceit, and to refuse to return. Do not obey Christ in this or that command, but in all; you must take all or none. An imperfect obedience may be right and sincere, but a partial obedience cannot. I pray remember this, the yoke of Christ is made up of every Commandment; not this or that, but every Commandment goes to the making up his yoke; and when you become willingly subject to all the commands of Christ, then have you taken up the yoke of Christ.

Lastly, this must be done without delay. The Text prompts to this. It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth. What says David? I made hast, and delayed not to keep thy Commandments. Psal. 119.60. As Christ said to Judas in another case. What thou doest do quickly.

Consider

1. It is a business of life and death; and what a foolish thing it is for a man to deliberate whether he shall be saved or damned, go to Heaven or Hell.
2. By continuance in the ways of disobedience the heart is made more obstinate, as a path becomes the harder by frequent treading. Sin is of a hardening nature, Heb. 3.13. So that if conversion to Christ be hard today, it will be harder tomorrow,

and so every day adds to its difficulty, because the heart grows harder and harder.

3. You suffer great loss by delays. What grace might you have gotten e're this had you begun early! what victories over sin, what experiences, what communion with God, what evidences for heaven.

4. There are special seasons of grace which are but for a limited time, and in complying with, or slighting these, the happiness or misery of man is fixed. Because to every purpose there is time and judgment, therefore the misery of man is great upon him. If your seasons of grace are lost, they are never to be redeemed. Now I pray consider, in what part of life is it most probable that (in the wisdom of God) these are placed? in youth, or in old age? Can you think that God would choose the infirmities and dotages of life for his service, rather than the strength and vigor of your days and affections.

5. The slighting of your special seasons is the way to lose them. Luk. 19.42. Gen. 6.3. These three years I come looking for fruit and find none. And what follows? cut it down, why cumbers it the ground. Luk. 13.7. Three years they had enjoyed Christ's ministry, and yet brought forth no fruit, and therefore Christ casts them off. O sirs! how many years hath Christ been calling of you, and waiting for fruit, why stand ye all the day idle? Remember the foolish Virgins, and tremble, and get Oil while the Market is open.

6. Thou dost not know how near thy day of account may be. It is many times nearest, when we think it is farthest off. We are many times most secure, when we are least safe. When they shall say peace and safety, then sudden destruction, &c. My Lord delays his coming, said the wicked servant, Mat. 24.48. And what follows? The Lord of that servant shall come in a day that he looks not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of.

Little did the old world think of a flood so nigh when they gave themselves to sensuality. Or Sodom of fire from Heaven when they burned in their lusts. So shall it be when the son of man comes. Luk. 17.30.

Lastly, Consider this; If any of you that have heard these Sermons of taking up Christ's yoke early, shall dare yet to live in the neglect of this duty; This word that I have spoken to you in the name of the Lord, and this call that God hath made to you by me, will be a dreadful witness against such refusers in the last day, and that which I have intended for your conversion will turn to your destruction and damnation.

But God forbid: what shall I run in vain, and labor in vain? nay shall the Lord Christ call in vain, and his Blessed Spirit strive with you in vain. Therefore I beseech you lay things to heart, and let me know what you intend; Will you at last be prevailed with to submit to Christ, and take up his yoke forthwith, without any more delay? if not, let me tell you God will look upon you from this day as willful refusers of his grace and love; and it shall be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, then for you. But if you have a heart now to accept of Christ, to be resigned to him, and to take up his yoke without any more delay, you have done your work, you have saved your souls. Now God is yours, Christ is yours, Peace, Life, Salvation, all the good of the Covenant, all the glory of Heaven is yours, and therefore you are blessed and happy forever. For as your present choice is, such shall your Eternal Condition be. The Lord persuade sinners to know the things of their peace, before they are hid from their eyes.

FINIS.

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ePub, .mobi & .pdf Editions July 2023. Requests for information should be addressed to: Monergism Books, PO Box 491, West Linn Or 97068

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