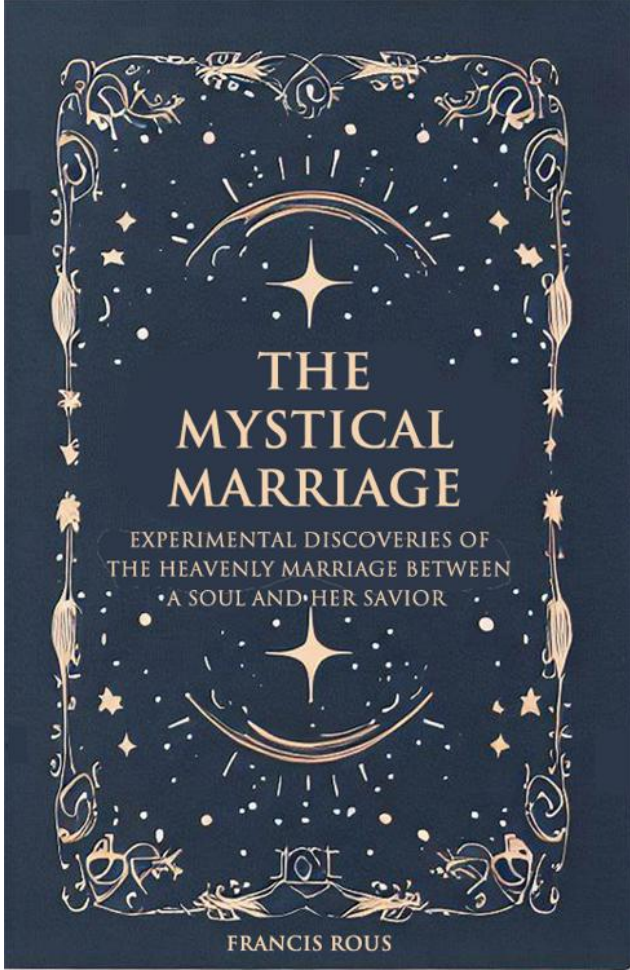


THE  
MYSTICAL  
MARRIAGE

EXPERIMENTAL DISCOVERIES OF  
THE HEAVENLY MARRIAGE BETWEEN  
A SOUL AND HER SAVIOR

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# The Mystical Marriage

Experimental Discoveries of the heavenly Marriage between a Soul  
and her Savior.

By FRANCIS ROUS

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1631.

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## **TO THE BRIDE THE LAMBS WIFE.**

A reason of this work.

If any man fearful of waste do ask, To what end serveth this labor? I answer, To the main end, God's glory by man's edification. And to this I think it conduceth many ways.

First, by the fitness of it to all times and seasons, either of prosperity or adversity.

For if the times be joyful, this subject brings the best joy with it, and enables us to rejoice with them: Yea it rectifies, amends, and exalts our joys; for upon an earthly it sets a crown of heavenly joy. And

indeed without this joy, we may say to joy, Thou art mad, and to laughter, What is it that thou doest?

But if the times prove sad and dangerous, by pestilence, famine, sword, or other calamities, this Doctrine brings strong consolation, even stronger than all sorrows and discomforts. For our Communion with Christ is a fastening of the soul to a mighty and impregnable Rock that makes her steadfast, even against the gates of hell. By this Communion we are made Temples of the holy Ghost, the very Comforter himself; and by him there is a Sanctuary made within us, into which the soul may fly for rest, safety and comfort amid all fears and dangers: For into this Sanctuary the Avenger may not enter. There is a chamber within us, and a bed of love in that chamber, wherein Christ meets and rests with the soul, and the force of friends, or men, either dares not or cannot break in, to disturb the rest of Christ with the soul, nor of the soul with Christ. It is an undeniable Axiom, We are more than conquerors through him that loveth us. An omnipotent lover gives an excessively conquering, and unconquerable safety. And for this safety of us and our joy, we have also the immediate word of the lover himself; I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy shall none take from you. No wonder then if the Disciple beloved of this Lover do tell us, that writing of this communion, he writes, that our joy may be full: for in this communion stands the fullness of joy, both for soundness, measure, and safety.

And surely with these last times of the world it hath too great a fitness; For it hath been foretold that in these times the love of many should wax cold: and what fitter remedy is there for love when it hath taken cold, then to kindle a fire to it; even that spiritual fire, which issueth from the spirit that baptizeth with fire?

A second advancement to edification is this, that that it presents to the view of the world some bunches of grapes brought from the land of promise, to show that this land is not a mere imagination, but some have seen it, and have brought away parcels, pledges and

earnests of it. In these appears a world, above the world, a love that passeth human love, a peace that passeth natural understanding, a joy unspeakable and glorious, a taste of the chief and sovereign good.

Neither doth the benefit of it rest only in the conviction of the understanding, but, thirdly, it goes on to the will and affections. It warms and draws them, and by them the whole man to partake of the same pledges, and by the encouragement of these pledges to go on laboriously and constantly to the possession of the whole. And that as by a borrowed sight men are provoked to come to tasting so by their own tasting, they may come to a sight of their own, which only tasting can teach them: But withal that by these foretastes they may be led on to that fullness, wherewith the soul shall eternally be satisfied.

Fourthly, it may provoke others of this Nation to bring forth more boxes of this precious ointment, even of that mystical love which droppeth down from the Head Christ Jesus, into the souls of the Saints, living here below. For so the house of God shall be filled with the savor of his ointments, and we know, that because of the savor of his ointments, the Virgins love him. And loving him, they cry, Draw me, and I will run after thee: So the more savor of this ointment, the more love of Christ, & the more love, the more running after Christ. But if the number of those who have written on this subject, of mystical and experimental Divinity, be told, I think this work will not be found supernumerary.

# THE MYSTICAL MARRIAGE.

## CHAPTER I.

The soul seeketh a Husband, and finds him.

I was first breathed from heaven, and I came from God in my Creation; I am divine and heavenly, in my original, in my essence, in my character, and therefore my happiness must be divine and heavenly: For to a divine and heavenly essence, can agree no other but a divine and heavenly happiness. I am a spirit, though a low one, and God is a Spirit, even the highest one; and God who is a Spirit, is the fountain of this spirit. Where should a low spirit find happiness but in the highest Spirit? and where should a created Spirit seek happiness but in the Spirit that created it? Wherefore being a Spirit I will fasten myself on a spiritual happiness, and this spiritual happiness I will look for in no other, but in the first, and best Spirit, beyond whom there is neither good, nor being.

Then what hast thou to do O soul, any longer among these gross, thick, and bodily things here below, to cast thy love on them, or to seek happiness in them? what are they to thee? or what agreeableness is there between thy purity, and their grossness? The body that lives by breathing the thin element of air, may as well live in the bottom of the thick water, as thou canst live, continue, much less better thy Being, by sucking these gross and bodily Creatures. Thy being is of a higher and purer nature, and therefore thy well-being must be fetched from something that is higher and purer than they. The main use of them is to serve the body, which is some kin to their grossness, but remember that the body itself is to serve the soul, and what base felicity must that be, which she shall find in her

servants servant? Much more reasonable were it for the soul to fetch her well-being from some being higher, and better than herself, (for such only can better her,) and withal to lift up the body to the participation of the souls high and spiritual happiness, (for there is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body) then that the body should draw down the soul to the gross and transitory things that are given to serve the body, in the bodies service of the soul. And thus may man be perfectly happy, the soul a spirit by union with the highest Spirit, and the body by union with the soul, united also to that Spirit.

And now the soul is resolved of her choice, for she hath fixed her love on that Spirit, which is the true object of the love of spirits. But even that excellency, which draweth her love, awaketh her fear, and beholding admirable purity and majesty, together with her own impurity and lowness, she is moved at once both to run to happiness, and to fly from it. She stands distracted, and in this distraction asketh; Will God indeed dwell with men? and will the highest Spirit who inhabiteth eternity, and cannot abide iniquity, dwell with low spirits that are defiled, and be full of impurity? Who shall dwell with the devouring fire, and who shall dwell with everlasting burnings?

But the Lord himself speaketh to her, and saith, Fear not, for thy maker is thine husband, (the Lord of Hosts is his Name) and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel, the God of the whole earth. It is the glory of the greatest spirit to bless the lesser spirits, as it is the happiness of the lesser to be blessed by the greatest. Fullness is glorified most by filling the greatest emptiness, and majesty by succoring greatest infirmity. As for thy impurity, true it is that thou art indeed too unclean to touch God in an immediate unity; but there is a pure counterpart of thy nature, and that pure humanity is immediately knit to the purest Deity. And by that immediate union, thou mayest come to a mediate union. For the Deity, and that humanity being united, make one Savior, Head and Husband of souls; and thou being married to him who is God, in him art also one with God. He one by a personal union, thou one by a mystical. And being thus united and married to him, his spirit flows into thy spirit,



and the sap of the Deity sheds itself into the soul. For as man and wife in a corporal marriage, are one flesh, so in this spiritual and mystical marriage, Christ and his spouse are one spirit. The spirit of Christ entering into our spirits, lays in them an immortal seed, and from thenceforth those whom he found impure, he makes pure; even pure in heart, so that they may see God. The Son of God so loved the souls of men, that he would make them a wife, and marry them. And that he might make this wife fit to be brought into his Fathers house, he left his Father to come to his wife, that he might cleanse her from spots & blemishes, and present her pure & glorious to his Father. By his precious blood he purgeth her from her guilt, & by his spirit he purifieth her from her uncleanness; and both of these he bestoweth on her in his marriage with her. And then the soul thus washed, hath boldness to approach unto God, through her husband, the Son of God, who hath loved her, and given himself for her, and given himself unto her. For God beholds her, and she beholds God, as one with his Son, even as his Sons wife.

Then draw near O soul to this husband of souls, the Lord is the spirit that marrieth spirits, and makes them one spirit with him in a knot of eternal blessedness. Clear up thine eye, and fixe it on him as upon the fairest of men, the perfection of spiritual beauty, the treasure of heavenly joy, the true object of most fervent love, and inflamed affections: and accordingly fasten on him, not thine eye only, but thy mightiest love, and hottest affections. Look on him so, that thou mayest lust after him, for here it is a sin, not to look that thou mayest lust, and not to lust having looked. For the spirit hath his lust also; it lusteth against things contrary to it, and it lusteth for things connatural to it. Accordingly it lusteth against the flesh; but it lusteth after spiritual objects; whereof Christ Jesus is the chiefest. Let thy spirit then look and long, and lust for this Lord who is the spirit, the chiefest spirit; let it cleave to him, let it hang about him, and never leave him till he be brought into the chambers of the soul. Yea tell him resolutely thou wilt not leave him until thou here a voice in thy soul, saying; My well beloved is mine, and I am my well beloveds. To this end be still gazing on him, and still calling on him; Kiss me with

the kisses of thy mouth; Yea kiss my soul with such a kiss of thy spirit, that they may be no longer two, but one spirit: say to him whom have I in heaven but thee, and whom have I desired on earth besides thee? My soul thirsteth, and panteth for thee the living God. Tell him that thou art sick of love. Vex him with Importunity, and put him out of hope of ease, (as the widow did the Judge) but only by satisfying thy desires. It is the right-voice of the spirit, I found him whom my soul loveth, I held him and would not let him go. If then thou hast found him with thine eye, hold him with thine heart, and wind thy affections round about him. And if he see thee all on flame with love, and obstinate in Importunity by love, he who is love, cannot deny the importunity of love. The bowels of love in him, melt at the sound of love in thee, as one string danceth at the sound of another agreeing with it. He was great with love before thou lovedst him, and he looked but for a love to draw his love from him. He was great with spirit, and did but look for spirits, that by love would draw some spirit from him. And now when his love meeteth with thine, his love joineth with thine; when his spirit meeteth with thine, his spirit poureth itself out into thine; he is joined to thee, and thou art one spirit with him, his spirit and thine being united and mingled in a blessed communion.

## **CHAPTER II.**

The soul hath but one husband at once.

There is a law in heaven, that the heavenly Bride may at one time have but one Husband. The first marriage on earth was a pattern of this Law, for then God gave one woman to one man: God that made this first marriage, gave not two women to one man, nor two men to one woman, but he gave one to one, that two (not three or four) may be one flesh. Accordingly the heavenly marriage-makers espouse the Church to one husband, and that they may do so, they do teach, that

the former husband must be dead, before the soul can marry with another. No soul can marry with Christ Jesus, but a widow; for she must be freed from the law of her old husband by his death, before she can come to be subject to the law of the new. Her old husband was concupiscence, to who she was married in carnal generation, and this husband must be slain, and put off by death, if Christ Jesus the new and true husband of the soul shall be put on in regeneration. And indeed if the soul will give her consent, this new and true husband will kill the old, not so much an husband, as a thief and adulterer: A thief he is, for he hath stolen the fowl, from her first Lord and husband, even the Lord that made her; and an adulterer he is, for he lives with her that belongs to another, and while he lives with her, he keeps her not for love, but lust: wherefore let the soul give her consent to his death, that thereby her true husband may recover his right in her, and that she may receive her true husband, and in him, life, liberty, and felicity.

And indeed she may well be weary of the old, for her living with him is most unreasonable, most slavish, and most miserable. It is most unreasonable, for there is no sense in the marriage of a soul with lust. What good can lust do to a soul? there being no likeness, but a mere contrariety between them: and we know that things are cherished and augmented by their like, but they are destroyed by their contraries. The soul is light, and lust is darkness, and can darkness give any increase of being or wellbeing to light? Yea doth not darkness go about to lessen, to quench and kill light? Again, lust hath in it a venom contrary to goodness, and can evil give any access or addition of goodness to the soul? Yea this venom hath in it a force and power to draw the will and affections from that sovereign good, which is the true and only beatifical object of the soul, and to glue and fasten her to objects of vanity, yea of death and misery. Again, the soul in her substance is a spirit, and what kindly or natural pleasure or profit can a spiritual essence receive from gross and fleshly lust? The soul hath no savor in the rank and gross pleasures of the flesh, but they are to her as the onions and garlic of Egypt to a dainty & delicate taste. Surely so well may the earth lighten the Sun,

and a tempest give rest to the sea, as lust can give light, or life, or rest or happiness to the soul: but darkness and death, and misery it can and doth give, and so under the shape of a husband it is a cruel enemy and a very murderer of the soul. And surely he could be no other but a mortal enemy of the soul, that made such a marriage between the soul and her mortal enemy: And he had need to be as cunning as malicious, to put a show of reason upon a match so absurd and unreasonable.

And if in a second place we behold the slavery of the soul in this marriage with lust, the tears that bewailed the virginity of Jephthahs daughter, are not sufficient to bewail this slavish marriage. The body commands the soul, earth heaven, and dust that noble and divine essence which was breathed into man, even from God's own mouth, and had his own image imprinted on it. Neither is it the body of dust only that commands the heavenly soul, but the body itself being commanded by lust, doth command the soul; so is lust the chief lord both of body and soul; even a certain venom, itch and fury dwelling in this earth of man. There may be some proportion between the dust which God turned into a body, and that soul which God made with his breath, though in a large and remote distance and difference. But between the soul which God made according to his own image, and this blind and wild lust which God made not in man, there is no portion or part of proportion, whereupon any right or power of command may be grounded. Yet in this base and wretched marriage, vile and odious lust spurs up the soul with his commands, and makes her to trudge up and down in businesses of darkness, filthiness and wretchedness: The soul is set on work in things that are no kin to her, no good to her, yea that are contrary to her being and well-being: For contrary they are to that image of God which is in her, and consequently contrary to that God whose image this is, and to whom this image points and leads her as to her sovereign good. And thus have we a third mischief of this marriage; even misery annexed to slavery. For as the image of God in the soul turns the eye and heart of the soul to look unto God her chief happiness, so lust turns about the eye and heart of the soul from her happiness; and what can her

prospect and object be then but misery? And if the eye of the soul happen to cast up some glances to heaven and happiness, yet the heart, even the will and affections are hurried away by this lust to objects and works of vanity and misery; so that the soul can only say, I see the better things, and follow the worse; I see happiness, and run after misery. Thus by slavery she buyeth misery, and slavery itself being misery, by misery she earneth misery. And indeed is it not the true misery of an Egyptian bondage, that the soul should be still set on work by lust in a fiery furnace, yea be beaten and tormented when she doth not work, though her work concern her self nothing, but only to strengthen her own bondage, and to increase her own misery? And indeed therefore is she kept so hard at this work, that she may have no leisure to think beyond bondage and misery. Accordingly if the soul at any time do but lift up her eyes above her present bondage, to that Lord of life, liberty, and happiness, which would once have married her, and still makes new offers unto her, this tyrannous husband like a Task-master, strikes in deep lashes into her side, and tells her she is idle, though she thinks on her nearest business, and dearest happiness. If it be in the morning, there is a bargain of profit imposed on her, and this lot of brick must be made that day, and about it must the soul go, being pierced through with the thorns of covetousness, by the violent hand of her false husband, that she may have no leisure, respiration or rest. And if at night the soul be weary of this days work, and would fain go to bed with the body, the night is lusts day, as it is the Owls, (for both are blind) and then there is a wife whose husband is from home, and the poor soul being a spirit must traffic in this errand for the flesh, to make a wary but a wicked meeting between her own lewd husband, and another man's wife: and while she plots it, she doth a work of slavery, and when she hath done it, she shall have no other but the wages of misery. But endless were it to set forth the whole story of this Egyptian bondage: Let the carnal man read over the story of his own life, and he may see the one in the other. And all being summed together amounts to this; that the marriage between the soul and lust is monstrous, as between a woman and a beast; slavish, as between a

woman and a tyrant; mischievous and mortal, as between a woman and a serpent.

And I wish all this were sufficient to persuade the soul to give consent to the divorce and death of this usurping and bloody husband, without whose death there can be no marriage between her & happiness: for though all reason and right do join for his removal, yet power and possession, and union work mightily for him. The friends of the Bridegroom cry aloud, Put off the old man corrupt through deceivable lusts, & put on the new created in righteousness and holiness. And, If ye live after the flesh ye shall die, but if ye mortify the deeds of the flesh by the spirit, ye shall live. And, Abstain from fleshly lusts which fight against the soul. The authority, love, and reasons of these voices, deserve to be heard, persuading the soul to no other, but a separation from a deadly enemy, who can give her no dower but death eternal. And I wish that thus yet the soul may be persuaded.

And when the soul is come even to the point of persuasion, even then will lust come weeping after the soul, like the false husband of Michal: he will raise up in her remembrance the images of gross and filthy pleasures, to awake the old unhappy love, and to cause a cruel and unmerciful pity. For a cruel pity it is, when the soul pities her own murderer, and not her own murder. But rather put on a merciful cruelty, being merciful to thyself, by killing him that would kill thee. It is better he should endure one death, who is not worthy to live, than that a soul should be ever dying, which should live forever. If thou kill not lust now, he must shortly die with the death of the body, and this short life of his will cost thee everlasting death: but if thou kill him presently, who must die shortly, by this small odds of death, thou preservest to thyself everlasting life. Wherefore that which shall shortly be necessary, make it presently voluntary, and so shalt thou turn necessity, into a sacrifice, (even a freewill offering,) and by his death thou shalt change thy own death into life eternal. And know that they are but false tears which lust doth shed, and his cries are lies: for there is no such happiness in his union, as his tears would

tell thee, but thy happiness is then most, when thou art gotten free from lust; even when lust is dead, and the soul new married to her Savior. For the first soul was happy before she was married to lust, and miserable only after that accursed marriage. To be without lust is a true Paradise; for man had not this lust when he was first placed in Paradise, neither could Paradise endure man, when this lust was placed in him. Therefore the true way to return to Paradise, (or the state of happiness, whereof it was a type) is to put off this lust, wherewith began our misery. And lust being put off from the soul by death, and she new married to the Lord of life, then will she say that she was never happy till then, and that her former imaginary happiness, was but painted and glittering misery. She will look on dead lust as on a loathsome carcass; and she will loath the remembrance of her former not loves but adulteries: she will be like one awaked from a foolish dream, or an enchanted love, and she will wonder that she hath so long been bewitched with vanity, folly, sin and misery. But withal in her new marriage, having tasted how sweet her Lord is, she will wonder and lament, that she hath so long lacked this sweetness. Excess of joy will be to her a cause of sorrow, for her joy is now so great, that she is sorry she was no sooner partaker of this joy. And in this joyful sorrow she will kiss the feet of her Lord, and weep on them while she kisseth them. The feet of her Lord are now more precious to her than the head and top of lust; for therefore she kisseth them, because she loveth thē, and therefore she weepeth, because she hath loved lust so long a time, and her Lord so little. For lust that once falsely appeared to her as her greatest joy, now truly appears to her as her greatest sorrow; and her now Lord in whom before she took no delight, now appears to be her chiefest and truest joy: And both these her tears do tell us.

### **CHAPTER III.**

The happiness of the soul in her second Marriage.

Nabal being dead, David marries his wife: lusts name is Nabal; and folly is with him; and folly being dead, the Son of David, yea the Son of God, who is the highest wisdom, marriage. A right kindly and blessed marriage, wherein a spirit marries with a spirit, a derived spirit with the original and root of spirits; yea with a spirit that hath abundance of spirit, and so can continually refresh and nourish her with a new supply of spirit. For being thus fed and supplied with a sap of her own kind, she growing in being and well-being; she is more spiritual by receiving more juice and fatness of the spirit, and consequently more full of divine light, beauty, love, virtue, power, life, joy, and glory. Behold the highest knot of blessedness on earth, and a preparation, yea a pledge of the highest happiness in heaven. And though this inchoate marriage here on earth compared to the consummate marriage in heaven, seem but like to a betrothing, yet even this betrothing compared to earthly marriages, casts a shadow of darkness on them: for all the beauty, all the glory, all the joy in the world are but beams, & rays, & flashes of this King of glory, beauty, and joy. By him were all things made that were made, and therefore the goodness of the things that are made by him, must be borrowed of him that made them; and then must the borrowed goodness needs be ashamed, to be compared with his goodness that gave or lent it. Christ Jesus is all lights in one light, all glories in one glory, all beauties in one beauty, all joys in one joy. When he gave light, and glory, and beauty, and joy to the creature, he left the root of light, and glory, and beauty, and joy in himself. So did he leave infinitely more in himself, than he gave out of himself; for an internal, and infinite fountain, hath infinitely more in it, than all the streams that ever issued from it: and he is a fountain, for largeness unlimited, and for spring without beginning and ending. The dew of his birth is of the womb of the morning, even of that morning which hath an everlasting rising, and shall be free from setting, for all eternities. Thus the soul being united to him, is united to an eternal root and fountain of blessedness: she is lightened with the primitive light, she enjoyeth the primitive beauty, she is adorned with the primitive glory, she tasteth the radical, utmost, and uppermost sweetness. Being made one with him who is God, she hath the taste of God, and



God being tasted, overfloweth, and steepeth, and drencheth the soul with overcoming and inebriating sweetness. For a high, and large, and mighty joy, poured into a low, and measured, and weak spirit, overcome her with quantity, and quality, and so carries her away into ecstasy and ravishment: she is too narrow and feeble to contain and bear a joy that is too large and strong for her; and therefore having filled her to the utmost capacity, it goes beyond, and runs over. So is she blessed in that fullness which her measure containeth, yea she is more than blessed, even blessed in a kind of excess, by being overcome and overflowed with blessedness. And if we will consider the quality of this joy as well as the quantity, there is no joy to the spiritual joy, the joys of the body being base in comparison of it; the spiritual joy is pure, piercing, and full of activity, the joy of bodies is gross, heavy, dull, and earthy. In the bodily wine it is the spirit of the wine, that rejoiceth the spirits of the body. But a wine that is all spirit, and spirit in the height and top of spiritualness, and newly drawn and sucked from the prime and chiefest spirit, how doth that rejoice, how doth that ravish the spirits that drink it? when man's highest part doth taste the highest good. Man hath no higher part whereby to taste and receive happiness, neither is there any higher happiness to be tasted and received. Therefore the soul that tasteth this wine at her spiritual marriage, saith as the Master of the Feast at the earthly marriage; Lord, Thou hast kept the best wine until the last. And this being best, the soul gives it the best place in her judgment and affection; she forgets that which is behind, and endeavors to that which is before, she will not rest in the low and backward joys of the body, but strives toward the high and forward joys of the spirit: and having attained them, she rests in them, as in the best joys, yet so rests in them, in this life of growth, that she desires to grow by them presently to a greater capacity of them, and finally to a full, large, and everlasting fruition of them, in a nearer access unto the very spring and fountain of joys.

But when all is said of this marriage-happiness, one taste of it will tell thee more, than all that is or can be said. The true knowledge of the sweetness of God is gotten by tasting, and therefore taste first,

and then see how sweet and gracious the Lord is. The taste of it will truly tell him that tasteth it, how sweet it is; but he that knoweth this sweetness by tasting, cannot deliver over the full and perfect image of this sweetness to him that hath not tasted it. For this sweetness surmounts all known sweetness of the creatures, and by that which is known must that which is unknown be made known. But if that which is known be less and lower than that which is unknown, that which is known may teach and tell us what the unknown is not, but not what it is. So the joy of love and union in an earthly marriage, cannot express a heavenly joy that is spiritually pure, and purely active. Only these and the like comparisons may serve for stairs, whereby to ascend, even above these comparisons, and to set our foot on something beyond them. For if the soul rests on these, she rests short of the knowledge of the sweetness which is beyond these; she is still in the sweetness of the creature, and hath not attained the sweetness of the Creator. Therefore when she hath gone as far as she may in the sweetness of the creature, let her advance one step more into that spiritual union, wherein is to be tasted, and seen by tasting, the sweetness of the Creator; and there shall she see more by tasting, than all the creatures could show her by resembling: she hath met with that joy, which only can truly teach itself, and therefore it is called unspeakable. And whereas before it was tasted the being of it was doubted, and much more the manner and shape of it was unknown, now it is both known to be, and the shape and manner of it is also known. And being known, all other sweetness's which before were alone known and esteemed, are now despised, & as it were unknown. For this is that blessed estate of spiritual love and union, whereof the spouse of Christ truly saith: If a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned. And indeed the spouse having Christ's love, she hath that which is better than all things; and having Christ with his love, how can she with him but have all things also? Christ is the heir of all things, and the soul having married this heir, is a joint-heir annexed with Christ. She hath him by whom the worlds were made, and therefore she hath also the worlds made by him: yet he that made the worlds, being Infinitely better than the worlds made by him, she despiseth the

worlds in respect of him that made them: she quencheth her thirst in the fountain only, and she accounts it a folly, and a loss to leave the fountain, and to run after the streams. Therefore setting her mouth to this fountain, she is filled with the waters of life, with the oil of gladness, with the new wine of the kingdom of God, with the joy of the holy Ghost, even a joy unspeakable and glorious. In Christ Jesus she hath all-sufficiency, all safety, all supply: she receives from Christ that spiritual ointment, which gives her spiritual light power, goodness, love, and life; yea it adorneth the soul with the most excellent beauty, even the likeness and image of God himself. And being thus lovely, the bridegroom kisseth and embraceth her with spiritual visitations, he tells her his counsels, and his eyes are ever toward her, even when he seems to be turned from her: For she is set as a signet upon his heart, and much water cannot quench his love: & she also looketh on him, and is changed from glory to glory, as the Moon when with more open face she beholdeth the Sun. But of the particular benefits and advantages of this blessed Marriage more hereafter.

Thus happy, and thus growing in happiness, she walks on in this life of marriage inchoate, until she come to the eternal life of marriage consummate. She is happy now in her union with happiness, and she shall be happy hereafter in a full fruition of happiness. She is happy now in the earnest and pieces of that happiness which shall be full hereafter; yea daily more and more happy here, by a daily enlarging of those earnest and pieces: and she shall be the more happy hereafter, by how much more these earnest and pieces of happiness have been here enlarged. And thus shall she walk by happiness unto happiness, and by the increase of happiness to the increase of happiness, since the more happy she is in time, the greater shall her happiness be in eternity.

## **CHAPTER IV.**

The heavenly marriage is happy not only in the pleasures, but in the labors of love.

A wise husband though most loving, is not always embracing: he doth love ever, but doth not ever embrace: For there is a time to embrace, and a time to be far from embracing. There is the service and labor of love, as well as the pleasure of love: and accordingly as we read once that Isaac sported with Rebekah, so we read also that she made savory meat such as her husband loved. No doubt she had pleased him before by the like service, that she pleased him so certainly now; at least she was no better than Sarah, who did her husband the service of making cakes for the entertainment of his guests. So doth the mystical wife also, she thinks sometimes how she may please her husband by service, and not only how she may take pleasure in him, and of him. For the souls husband will not only please, but be pleased; he will not only give love, but take it, and the love which he takes, shall be sometimes in the labors of love. He is her Lord, and therefore he expects service from her, that she may not call him Lord in words only, but in deeds, even in doing his will. Neither is this service, a mere service, or a thing only of toil and trouble; but it is an easy yoke, and a light burden: yea it is full of profit and advantage, for it bringeth and increaseth rest and happiness to the soul. For indeed love ever seeks the good of the beloved, and accordingly Christ Jesus who is love, sets the soul on work for her own good.

For the soul hath many gains annexed to her work, she gains before she works, she gains in her work, and she gains after her work: She gains before the work; for this is one main cause, why those weighty joys, sweet embracement's, and ravishing consolations are given her, that she may cheerfully run the race, and perform the service set before her. When Angels bring meat to Elijah, it is because he hath a great journey to go; so that he is beholding to his great journey for his Angels food. The outward Israel is fed with the bread of heaven, to maintain him in his walk unto Canaan, and the inward Israel is fed with the true bread that cometh down from heaven, to enable him in

his works, and walks through this pilgrimage to heaven. Neither doth this course hold only in the service of doing, but in the service of suffering; in the passive, as in the active obedience. Christ Jesus shows his Disciples on the Mount a pattern of his heavenly glory, and then to Christ thus gloriously transfigured, Moses and Elias do speak of the suffering which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. So to the Head himself, the glory set before him is an encouragement to the enduring of the Cross, and despising the shame: And if it be so to the head, it should be such also to the body. And such it is indeed to the true members of that body, for they receive not the grace of God in vain, but can do, and will do all things through Christ that strengtheneth thē. For as they find that they are strengthened with all might, according to God's glorious power, so they know the end for which they are thus strengthened, even unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness. Wherefore let us think that the parcels of glory, joy and strength which we now receive in the visitations of Christ Jesus, are a kind of wages paid aforehand to encourage us more cheerfully & confidently to the work of doing and suffering. And accordingly having received them, let us not dream of rest, but of labor; not of setting up Tabernacles, but of service and sufferings. And let us not doubt, but if the Angels food be a preparation and call to a long, or laborious journey, of doing or suffering; the same food will also strengthen and enable us to perform the journey unto which it calls; so that in the strength thereof we shall be able to walk even to the Mount of God.

Yet neither is all the comfort, encouragement, and gain given to the soul before her work, but even in her work she gaineth. In the service of her husband is continual gain, and that not of strength only, but of pleasure and delight. For the soul having tasted Christ in a heavenly communion, so loves him, that to please him is a pleasure and delight to herself: Yea there is such a law of love shed into her by that communion, that his commandments are so far from being grievous to her, that there is no pleasure in her taste comparable to them. No sweet things, no precious things in her judgment may be compared to the sweetness and preciousness of commandments. Therefore it is

the true voice of the Spouse, and therein not so much her mouth as heart speaketh, They are more to be desired than gold, yea than much fine gold, sweeter also than honey, and the honey comb. Behold how the soul married unto Christ delights in the law of her husband; and no wonder if she love his law, when she loves him; neither if her heart be to his law, when his law is written in her heart. Besides, the law of his lips is a law of grace, and a law of grace is a lovely law. So she loves his law, because his law is lovely; she loves it because it is his law whom she loves; she loves it because the love of his law is written in her heart. And as she loves his law, so she loves to fulfill it; for her love will not be quiet, until it see her words turned into her deeds. And this she doth not negligently, nor heavily, but like a lover, pleasantly and cheerfully. Look but to a carnal lover, and see how he affects the title of a servant, and is more than glad, (even proud) to receive and fulfill the commands of his beloved. Give then spiritual love to a soul, and she will rejoice also to perform the spiritual commands of her beloved. If a man know not this, it is because he loves not, but let him love, and then he will both know and do it. For the nature, and law of love in the lover, naturally moveth to the fulfilling of the law of the beloved. And as the Sun in whom a law or covenant of motion is written, rejoiceth like a giant to run the race and motion of that covenant, so the soul in whom this law of love is written, rejoiceth to run the race and motion of this law. Obedience is the kindly fruit of a loving soul, and a loving soul bringeth forth this fruit as kindly, as a good tree bringeth forth good fruit.

And as this law of love is active, and laborious, so is it strong and mighty. Even death itself cannot overcome love, for love is stronger than death. Yea love enjoyeth dangers, and death itself; and takes them for advantages; as by which the excellence and vehemence of love may be really expressed. Accordingly, the nearest and dearest friends of the Bridegroom rejoice that they are counted worthy to suffer for his sake. The fire of divine love so inflameth them, that much water of persecution cannot quench it; yea such is the nature of this fire, that it feedeth on those waters, and groweth more fervent

by that which would quench it. For the fire of love upon opposition kindleth another fire of a holy rage; which is full of anger and scorn, that life or death, or any other creature should offer to separate the soul from her loved Christ Jesus. And as the Bridegroom himself rejected a great Apostle with the title of Satan, when he dissuaded him from expressing his love to his spouse by dying for her, so the spouse herself is angry, when she is dissuaded from expressing her love to her best-beloved in the sufferings of love. One while being threatened with a fiery furnace, she saith, O King we are not careful to answer thee in this matter, but be it known to thee, we will not serve thy gods, nor worship thy golden image. And another while, at other threats, We cannot but speak the things that we have seen and heard. And again, when danger was denounced, and friends dissuaded: I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die for the name of the Lord Jesus. Thus may be seen, not only what pleasures, but what power and might do accompany and bless the labors and sufferings of love: love delights in doing and suffering; yea it is angry when it may not be suffered to suffer: And as opposition riseth against it, so it riseth against opposition, yea it riseth by it, until it rise above it.

But besides the usual pleasure which love takes in suffering for the beloved, there are unusual and extraordinary comforts allotted to the sufferings of love. When the Bride suffereth most for her love to the Bridegroom, the Bridegroom's love must needs be most increased to the Bride; and consequently the fruits & benefits of his love. Therefore there being an hundred-fold gain promised in this life to the sufferings of love, the more those sufferings are, the more hundred-fold is that gain which is promised to them. Besides, the Bridegroom seeth that the Bride hath then most need of comfort, help and supply, when for his sake she is in most distress: and therefore he that is a present help in trouble, cannot but be a greater help, in a time of greater trouble; for he fitteth the measure of his help to the measure of her trouble. Hence it ariseth, that there is a peculiar height and abundance of consolations, which none can attain unto, but those that have a special height and abundance of

tribulations. For this proportion the Apostle acknowledgeth when he saith, As the tribulations do abound, so do the consolations. Thus is there continual gain in the sufferings of love, and great gain in great sufferings; thus is the soul made a conqueror and gainer in all labors, and losses, and crosses, through him that loveth her. What she loseth in the creature, she hath repaid with great advantage in the Creator: what she loseth in brass, she hath repaid in gold, not barely value for value, but weight for weight: yea the weight of the worse is far exceeded by the weight of the better; for it is but a light affliction, and it is an exceeding weight of glory, and parts of this weighty glory the soul now receiveth aforehand as earnest of the whole; and having received them, she doth now rejoice, (even through manifold temptations of crosses and losses) with a joy unspeakable and glorious. Her finite, measured, and utterable tribulations are outweighed with joys unspeakable; and that they are so, we see it in the effect of them; because the soul despiseth the sufferings for the joys: yea the sufferings are so overcome by the joys, that the sufferings do not turn her joys into sadness, but the joys turn the sadness of the sufferings into joy; for she rejoiceth in her sufferings.

Lastly, the soul is a great gainer after the work; for the greatest gain of the soul is at the end of all her labors: there is a time coming when she shall rest from her labors; but when she rests from them, they shall not rest from following her, for follow her they shall into heaven, and bless her with eternal joys. Yea the more she hath labored and suffered, the more shall she be blessed and glorified. The more afflictions, the more weight of glory, for the harvest will answer the sowing; the present sowing in tears shall be followed with a proportionable harvest of joy; so that he which loveth sparingly shall reap sparingly, and he that soweth plentifully, shall reap plentifully.

Upon the consideration of these threefold gains annexed to the labors and sufferings of love, here ariseth a just reproof of those contemplative men, who by neglecting or rather excluding these labors and sufferings, do neglect, & shut out these gains. They would presently be at rest, and presently would have nothing but rest and



enjoying; but it is utterly a fault and a loss to separate mystical Divinity from practical, for howsoever they may be distinguished, they may not be separated; each having his turns, and each giving hand to other, and strengthening one another. The joy of the Lord is our strength, and it strengthens us for something to be done or suffered, and again these labors and sufferings do increase the joy, for as the tribulations do increase, so do the consolations. True it is that the mind of man would presently be at his works end, and having received joys, spend the whole time in gazing on them, tasting of them, or in recalling the tastes and images of them: But too much enjoying is a loss of enjoying; for it loseth all those gains (formerly mentioned) annexed to doing and sufferings. For if a man will only busy himself in tasting present joy, how can he expect those joys that are sent to prepare unto labors? or those that accompany labors? or finally, (which is of most weight) those infinite, and unmeasurable, and exceeding joys, which in the life to come are to follow afflictions and labors? Will God give joy to enable us unto services, when he seeth he cannot have the services for which he gave the joys? Can we look for an abundance of consolations, when we exclude the abundance of tribulations to which these consolations are annexed? Or can we look for that exceeding weight of glory, which shall follow light and momentary afflictions, and yet utterly refuse that light affliction which worketh this glory? Surely whosoever thou art that thus doest, thy loss hereby is manifold, but especially greatest in turning thy seed-time into harvest, and in eating up thy seed: thou makest the time of sowing to be the time of reaping; yea thou eatest up thy seed, which being sown, would have given thee an ensuing harvest. True it is that joys are given thee here, and they are given thee to be enjoyed; but even this enjoying is but a sowing; for thereby are sown in thee new supplies of faith, hope, and love, and of all spiritual strength, even the seeds of future active and passive services.

Thou art by these joys mightily encouraged, fortified, and enabled to an unwearied industry in the labors of the Lord, since by this which is paid thee in hand, thou seest, and feelest, and tastest, that thy

labor is not in vain in the Lord. Thou doest not receive thy earnest-penny to be still gazing on it, much less to bound thy thoughts with it, or to think thyself rich enough in it, but thereby to be drawn on to a cheerful running in the race, that leadeth to the infinite treasure which is in heaven, whereof this penny is an earnest. Wherefore if any man will set up his rest in present joys, and speak of building Tabernacles in them, let him know what was said of him that said so, and see whether the same agrees not also to another that saith the same agrees not also to another that saith the same, He wist not what he said. Surely this is not our rest, neither have we here a continuing City, but we seek one to come: our Sabbath here is but one day in seven, but the eternal Sabbath cometh not, until we be past the works of the six days. There remaineth a rest to the children of God, and that which remaineth is not presently. Therefore seeing that rest remaineth, let us labor to enter into that rest: let us enter into this rest, by labor, not by rest: or if by rest, by that rest, which encourageth and enableth us to labor. Having eaten with Elias, let us walk with Elias, having taken the earnest, let us do the work, having eaten Manna, let us walk on to Canaan. Let us not grow restive by that which was given to make us active; neither let us look to tie these joys together in this life of action; which are therefore intermitted, that there may be times for action, as well as for enjoying. Therefore if Jesus do sometimes vanish out of sight, and withdraw himself into heaven, imagine you heard the Angel saying unto you, Why stand ye gazing into heaven? The same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come as ye have seen him go into heaven. He hath times of going, and times of returning. He hath visited thee, and is gone out of sight, expecting the fruit of his former visitation. As thou hast seen him going, so thou shalt see him coming; when thy work is well done, he will come and comfort, and encourage thee to the work that is to be done. But still remember that his best coming is his last coming: then will he come to thee, and cause thee to come to him, and this coming together shall be without anymore going asunder. Then shalt thou rest, and only rest, for even thy actions which now are labors shall then be rest. And then shall it be no grief of heart to thee, that thou hast had here interpositions of

labors between thy rests, since these labors here shall there be turned into the joys of a rest eternal. Neither shall it be a grief of heart to thee then, that thou hast had some abatements here of a temporal rest, when those abatements have been occasions of increased degrees in a rest and glory everlasting. Thou shalt have thy joys increased according to the increase of thy labors, for thy works shall follow thee; and if they follow thee in abundance, they shall be followed with abundance of joys. If thy labors have made thy five talents to be ten, thy Lord shall make thee Ruler over ten Cities: and then shalt thou find it best to enjoy most in the place of most enjoying. And surely that must needs be the place of most, and best enjoying, where both soul and body are enlarged and clarified to the greatest capacity of enjoying; and where this greatest capacity doth meet with the greatest perfection, and fullness of joy. And this fullness of joy is at that right hand, where the Bridegroom sitteth preparing a place for his Bride: And into that place of fullness of joy shall this husband receive his wife, having passed through the labors and sufferings of love, and there they shall be changed to her into large, full and everlasting joys.

## **CHAPTER V.**

The Spouses estate in desertions though seemingly miserable, is indeed profitable.

The Spouse of Christ is now willing to labor, and to suffer for her husband, yea contented that sometimes joys be intermitted for labors and sufferings, which hereafter shall be exchanged into full and eternal joys: But this she is both willing and able to do through her Christ that strengthens her, and she is contented to do it, so that he be ever with her, though not still smiling and embracing, yet still supporting and strengthening her: But she hears, and she says she feels, that sometimes he withdraws himself, and then her heart is full

of woe, even of Woe to her that is alone. She hath left all things for him, for that she knew to be the price of him, and she thought him well worth it; but now he for whom she hath left all things, hath left her, and so she is left of him and all things. Yea he seems not only to leave her, but to send terrors to her, even terrors without and terrors within. Within, the remnants of the old husband stir up the loathed images of the old, not love, but lust; and though the head of this serpent be broken, yet the end of it will still be moving. And while she sees nothing but these ugly shapes in the dark night of desertions, she is affrighted at them, and at her own estate, for now she thinks this to be her true and only estate, because she sees no other but this. And without the old enemy of souls, and the first cursed marriage-maker between the soul and sin, renews his old business, and would yet again make a bad match between the dying old man, and a living soul. And when he cannot bring the soul to consent, he will persuade her that she hath consented, and strive to make her believe that she hath done it, even because he cannot prevail to make her to do it. He would have had her to perish by giving her consent to sin, and seeing he cannot do that, he will strive to destroy her, by this desperate thought, that she is nothing but sin, and nothing else shall be, seeing she is forsaken of him, who only takes away both the guilt and reign of sin. And thus being filled with bitterness, if she look out to men for comfort, there she finds many miserable comforters that wound and smite her, and if she meet with that one of a thousand, that speaks right words, and tells her true comforts, yet while the inward Comforter is wanting that should turn the words into deeds, they remain bare words, and are like the white of an egg, that hath no taste in it.? For the soul says still, Call me not Naomi, but Marah: for my Lord hath dealt bitterly with me. Yet still she looks out for her husband, but sees him not: she calls to remembrance his former loves, that so she may enjoy him in the representations of her former enjoying's. But then a world of fleshly and fearful thoughts rush in upon her, and with a cloud cover that sight of him which memory would give her: and if she yield not to them, she is vexed with importunity; and if she yield to them, she is vexed with guilt & self-accusation: the Tempter buffets her with

sharp and thorny temptations, to drive her to yield; and when she yields, he buffets her with fearful accusations. Now what can be added to her misery? Her best friend is gone from her, and her worst enemies are round about her; yea her best friends seems to have surrendered her into the hands of her worst enemies; for she feels a mighty force of her enemies, but no strength of her beloved. Therefore her heart fails her, and she thinks that she hath wholly lost both herself and him. I opened (saith she) to my beloved, but my beloved had withdrawn himself and was gone; I sought but I could not find him, I called him, but he gave no answer. The watchmen that went about the City, found me, they smote me, they wounded me.

But yet be of good comfort, thou weary, wounded, and distressed soul: thy husband is a God that comforteth the abject, that makes light to shine out of darkness, that gives refreshing to the weary and heavy-laden, that brings life out of death. Thy Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken, and grieved in spirit, and as a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God. For a small moment hath he forsaken thee, but with great mercies will he gather thee. The mercies of God, even when they seem to fail thee, then do they gather thee; yea they gather thee by their seeming to fail thee. Thy husband is God, and God is love, and love doth ever good to the beloved. Yea thou lovest him, and he hath told thee that all things shall turn to good to them that love him: therefore even these desertions, though never so dreadful and discomfortable, the almightiness of God's love shall make useful and advantageable.

This is so true, that many of these uses and advantages may particularly be named; and I doubt not but thy husband himself will teach them to thee experimentally; yet because while the cloud of desertion is upon thy soul, she can hardly see by her own light, another that hath light for the time, (though perchance clouded himself as much or more another time) may tell her what he sees by his light. And indeed when the soul is in the dark, and her own light shines not, she may do well to get a guide, and to take heed to

borrowed light, until the day dawn, and the day-star arise in her own heart.

A first advantage then, that may come to the soul by the desertions of her husband, is by desertions to prevent desertions: for by losing him she may learn not to lose him, and by the miseries of her former ill keeping him, learn hereafter to keep him better. Perchance thou wast too careless in holding him when thou hadst him, or in admitting him when he came to visit thee, and to bring these thy faults to remembrance, that by remembering them thou mayest amend them, he is now gone from thee. Remember whether thou didst not hear such a voice as this; Open to me my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled; for my head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night. Remember also whether this was not thy answer: I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them? Thou hadst taken up some rest in the flesh, and hadst put thyself into a method of ease, and then it was a marring of thy method, and a fowling of thy feet, to step into any action or passion for thy beloved. He that was thy true happiness, was grown very cheap to thee, and thou wast content to part from him rather than to give the price of a little pains for him: And art thou not well worthy to lose him, whom thou thoughtest so little worth the keeping? But now thou art put to learn the value of him by absence, whom thou didst so much undervalue being present. And when by absence thou hast learned this lesson, thou hast gained more by absence, than thou wouldest have done by presence; for thou hast gained the true valuation of thy Lord by absence, which through thy fault and frailty thou forgotest in his presence: & so by this first gain thou shalt come to a second; for by absence thou shalt gain his presence. For absence having taught thee truly to value him, and accordingly to desire and thirst after him, and to give him due entertainment, when he comes hereafter and offers his love unto thee; then shalt thou by this benefit of absence, come to enjoy his presence. Thy fullness brought thee to hunger, and thy hunger now brings thee to fullness; for he filleth the hungry with good things, and the full he sends empty away. He will fill thee not only with good

things, but with goodness itself; for he will fill thee with himself, and he is goodness: yea thou shalt yet have a farther gain by this absence, for when he comes again, thou wilt hold him faster, and keep him surer, and so enjoy him nearer & longer. Now thou wilt embrace him, and cleave to him, and wind thyself about him, and when thine eye sleepeth, thy heart shall wake, that thou mayest still keep his presence, whose absence was so bitter unto thee. Thou wilt bring him into the chamber of the soul, and bind him with the cords of love, thou wilt clasp thy affections about him, and hold him fast that he may no more escape from thee: And being thus bound by the cords of love, and love loving to be bound by love, he willingly abides in the bands which he loveth: for both love and faith are mighty with the Almighty, and make the spouse an Israel, even a prevailer with God. She that loveth Christ much, may embrace him much, and kiss him much, and hold him much; and if any man do trouble her, he himself will say, Why trouble ye the woman? And thus thrives the Spouse by her losses, while by losing her husband for a time, she loves him better, and being returned, enjoys him the more, and holds him stronger and longer.

But secondly, there is yet a farther use and benefit of desertions. For it may be thou hast gone beyond neglect of thy beloved, and hast proceeded unto some offensive, cross and contrary carriage toward him; thou hast entertained some thought, purpose or act, which he cannot endure, and then it is best both for him and thee, that he hide himself from thee. If thou come once to entertain his enemies, and to lodge them in one room with him, how canst thou expect but that he should leave that room, since there is no agreement between light and darkness, between Christ and Belial? And surely he should neither regard himself, nor thee, if he should give thee his loves, when thou entertainest his enemies. For since thy husband is thy happiness, the enemies of thy husband are the enemies of thy happiness, and so both his and thine enemies. Therefore is it good that thy friend should a while go aside, when that thou grievest him, and hurtest thyself by the entertainment of his and thine enemies. And while thus he is hid from thee, and thou art left to those enemies

whom thou hast entertained instead of him, thou mayest learn what odds there is between a friend and an enemy; and what a folly it was to grieve him that loved thee, by loving them that hate thee. Thou hast perchance had a touch with thy old husband the flesh, and jealousy, (which is the rage of a man, much more of a man that is a jealous God) is angry with thy whorishness, and puts a day of wrath upon thee, wherein he seems not to spare thee. Therefore thy conscience is let loose upon thee, and it tears thee to pieces, it breaks thy bones, and grinds thee to powder. Satan also who tempted thee hath leave to set upon thee, and to tear thee with vexations, whom he had seduced by temptations. And now art thou left as it were wholly in hell, who wouldest entertain a piece of hell into thy heaven. And indeed it is both a just and merciful dispensation to tire thee with thine own ways, to make the flesh to come out at thy nostrils, to make thee weary of thine enemies, and to make thee long, and look, groan, and cry for thy friend whom thou hast grieved, and driven out of thy sight. Therefore is heaven shut up, and become as brass unto thee, and hell hath enlarged her mouth to swallow thee: yea thou art like Jonah in the belly of hell; thou art like Nebuchadnezzar cut down by the commandment of the holy one, and driven away from men to the beasts of the field; thou art like Sampson, when his locks were cut off, the good Spirit leaves thee, and the evil Spirits like Philistines are upon thee.

But hath God forgotten to be merciful? and hath he shut up his tender mercies in an everlasting displeasure? Will he break the bruised reed, and deliver up the soul of his Turtle into the hands of her enemies? Nay, we shall not die O Lord; Thou hast ordained them for judgment, and O mighty God thou hast established them for correction. The enemies of the soul are suffered to scourge her for loving her enemies; so to beat that love out of her, and to beat her into that old love from which in some great degree she was fallen. Thus is she beaten by her enemies from her enemies, and the stripes sent her from her friend, bring her back to him that sent them. She had grieved the spirit of her beloved, and by the grief of her own spirit she now learns what the grief of a grieved spirit is, and thereby



learns to grieve him no more. Hereupon she resolves to cast out whatsoever hath offended him, and to put on that singleness and purity of soul, which makes her one for one, and one fitted by holiness for that one who is holy. She will be his alone, whose alone she is, and from henceforth she will scorn and hate any sin that will offer to be a rival with her well beloved, and especially that sin, whose rivalry hath lately cost her so dear, as the loss of his familiarity. And the soul being thus washed and trimmed by repentance, holy resolutions, and renewing her covenant, the bridegroom of the soul appeareth to her again, and giveth her his loves. And now is she like a garden watered after a scorching heat; the heat being overcome by moisture, makes her more flourishing, and more fruitful: the belly of hell having vomited up the soul of a Saint, (because it could not digest her) she then runs much more readily in the ways of God's commandments. The stump of the tree (for it was not pulled up by the roots) springeth and flourisheth again being watered with the dew of heaven, and is more glorious than before by a greater acknowledgement and glorifying of the Lord of glory. The hair (for it was only polled) groweth again, & so doth the strength of the spirit, and greater exploits are done against the enemies of the soul, than ever before. For the soul having been long kept fasting, feeds more heartily on the bread of life; and this being the true bread that strengthens the heart of man, the more feeding on it, the more strength of heart: A long dryness of spirit hath made her very thirsty, and the more thirsty she is, the more doth she drink of the waters of life; and the more she drinks of life, the more lively and active she is. The late breach of love increaseth her love, and by love her union with her Lord and husband: and the increase of that union is the increase of holiness, and happiness.

There is yet a third profit by spiritual desertions, and it is the preventing of pride, which usually ariseth upon spiritual revelations, or any other excellencies of the spirit. It is a precious and a glorious thing to know the counsels of heaven, and the secrecies of that kingdom, and these mysteries doth the husband of the soul often reveal unto her in the bed of love. There is a secret murmur of things

inutterable, and then the soul wonders at the deep wisdom, and unspeakable truths which are discovered to her: yea anon she wonders at herself, and her own happiness, because they are discovered to her. But then the flesh, which is apt to swell upon the apprehension of any honor or eminence, steps in too often, and puts his swelling into the soul; and then the thoughts of the soul are changed: For whereas before she was a spirit that did magnify the Lord, and rejoiced in God her Savior, because to her lowliness he shown high and great things; now she rejoiceth in herself, because of that which she hath received, even as if she had not received it. She grows proud against the giver, even by his own gifts, and boasts of a self-sufficiency, even against him from whom her sufficiency came, and without whom she hath no sufficiency. Accordingly as she changeth her thoughts, so she changeth her voice; for now she speaks in the language of Babel, I sit as a Queen; and of Laodicea, I am rich, and have need of nothing. But indeed this riches is the true way to poverty and nothing. For the soul being once rich in her own opinion, turns her eyes from her husband, that only gives her true riches, and so looks from riches unto poverty. And again, her husband seeing her rich in her own opinion, strips her, and sends her naked and empty away. But what a folly and madness is it in the soul, (though indeed very agreeable to the blind flesh that maddeth her) to think highly of the secrets and mysteries revealed to her, and withal to stop the current of such revelations? For thus she doth by turning away the face, and turning the back unto the revealer. But on the other side, it is a great mercy and favor in the revealer, to stop his current of revelations, yea to send some spiritual affliction and desertion instead of them, to prevent or amend this turning away of the soul from her husband the giver, because of his gifts: For thus by a short absence of both, she may recover both the sooner, and keep them the longer; but if she should have that which she will abuse, the having of it would cast her into the danger of a greater and a longer loss. If the Moon being full, should grow proud in her fullness, and out of that pride neglect the Sun, not caring though the earth did ever keep him out of sight, were not this a way by the pride of her light to bring her to an everlasting darkness? And were it not far

better for her, that the Sun by some short eclipse and interposition of the earth, did show her, her own darkness being without his light, that so she may the more steadily and continually be lightened by a steadfast and continual looking on him, from whom her light cometh? And thus indeed doth the husband and Sun of the soul. Having sent light, he sends also some turn of darkness, that by a short darkness he may prevent a longer, and that by darkness he may send a greater light. Having visited the soul with his graces, he gives a medicine and preservative against pride, the poison of grace, and a restorative to humility the forerunner of grace. Humility is the bed, wherein the Bridegroom lies down and rests with the soul: With whom shall I rest, saith he, but with the humble & contrite soul? Wherefore let the soul account it a benefit, when this bed is made by some spiritual affliction; for the King of grace and glory is shortly coming to lodge with her in some gracious visitation; he that giveth grace to the humble, will visit her with abundance of consolations; he will give her his loves, and his loves shall again tell her his counsels: And then shalt thou account thyself a gainer, if affliction and desertion have been so great as to bring forth a great humiliation, for a great humiliation shall be followed with a greatly gracious and glorious visitation.

Fourthly, these desertions are profitable to try the truth of our love; and the trial of our love shows us the faults of it, and by showing them calls upon us to amend them. The husband of the soul will see whether his spouse love him with the love of a wife, or of a harlot. The love of a harlot loveth a man only for his gifts, and so in truth loveth not the man, but the gifts. And though this be secretly true, when by outward fashion she seems to love him, yet it is manifestly true, when the gifts cease, for then her love to the man also ceaseth. But the true wife loveth her husband, even for himself, and by himself, she loves him without gifts, yea she loveth his gifts for his sake, for she would not take the same gifts from another man. Yea the true love of a wife goes some degrees farther; for she doth not only love her husband when he gives no gifts, neither doth she only love his gifts for his sake, but she loves him when he is absent from

her, even when she is without both his presence and his gifts: for even then the memory of him is precious to her, she calls to remembrance his perfections, his virtues, and his loves. And yet the true love of a wife goes farther; for she loves her husband, even when he chides her, and is angry with her, though in that case a husband seems to be more absent being at home, than a husband pleased being from home. All these doth the true spiritual love of the spouse perform unto Christ, and Christ delights to see them performed. Christ Jesus loves his wife with a true love, for he hath laid down his true his true blood and life for her. And greater love hath no man, than he that laid down his life for his beloved. Now Christ thus truly loving his wife, he expects a return of true and unfeigned love from his wife: And that it may be tried to be true, or amended and made true if it be not so, these trials are sent to her in these desertions.

And indeed in most of these degrees of love are we often faulty, the flesh having often too great a part and influence in our love. For the flesh as mainly for things present and palpable, and like Thomas is wholly for seeing and feeling. And hence it is that our love dotes so much on the gifts of Christ Jesus, that it cools even to Christ Jesus himself, without his gifts. We are all for Christ's light, and knowledge, for his kisses and embracement's, for his honey and his wine, for his sweetness's and ravishing's: and without these Christ is a dry and loathed husband, as Manna to the fleshly Israelites was a dry and loathed food. But when it is so with us, how far are we short of those higher degrees of love, even of that love that loveth Christ being absent and hid out of sight, or that loveth him being present in that utmost absence of anger, chastisement, and seeming enmity. How far short are we of that Canaanitish woman, that kissed his rods, and made love out of those reproaches, whereby Christ seemed to drive her away? But since it is so, is it not high time for Christ to remove his gifts, to whom our hearts are removed from Christ, that so our hearts may again be removed to Christ from them? It is a right proper cure of this adulterous love, to remove those things with which love did adulterate, that so the right object of our best love may be sought and found, and constantly proposed.

And surely this cure is profitable to our souls, as it is pleasing also to the husband of souls, for by it Christ hath more interest in the soul, and the soul in Christ. And if this be the fruit of desertions, then art thou a gainer by desertions.

But that thou mayest be sure to gain by them, be sure to learn that which they teach thee: they teach thee that Christ is better than his gifts, and that Christ's love is better than the gifts of his love. Therefore learn especially to fasten thy love on Christ, and next on his love; and think thyself happy enough in having thē, though thou hast nothing but them: yea know also that thou hast them, even when thou hast them not; they are thine when thou seest or feelest not that they are thine. He and his love see thee, when thou seest them not, yea they love thee, when thou feelest them not; and he and his love are better than the seeing and feeling of him and his love; and it is better for thee that they are thine, than that they do appear to be thine. Yea, it is good for thee sometimes, that they do not appear to be thine, that thou mayest love them better than their appearing to be thine; and this love do thou learn even from their not appearing.

Yea farther, Christ and his love are thine, even when he chideth and chastiseth thee, for it is his very love that chideth and chastiseth thee. And he doth it to purge thy blemishes, to try and exercise thy virtues, and among others, this excellent love which loveth him chastening. Therefore though he kill thee, do thou trust in him and love him, for He that loveth thee so, that he gave his own life for thee, may well be trusted with thy life. For his own life was infinitely better than thy life; & he that gave so precious a life for thy good, will not take so mean a life from thee but for thy good. Hence it is that even by losing thy life thou shalt find it, and thou shalt find it with him, for whom thou lovest it, for thou shalt find it hid with Christ in God. And when Christ which is thy life shall appear, then shall this hid life appear with him; but not such a frail, and base life as that which thou gavest for him; but a glorious, immortal, and incorruptible life, shall that be which he will give unto thee. Therefore at all times and in all estates,

even in darkest desertions, and greatest sufferings, trust him whose love turns all things to good, unto his beloved, even death unto life. For be thou assured that this Almighty husband, out of this eater will bring meat, and out of this strong one will bring forth sweetness. He himself broke the gates and bars of death, and carried thē away, and so made away open for us to eternal life. He quickened himself when he died a universal death, even when all our deaths were included in his death. And as we all died in his death, so in his quickening & rising, do we all rise again; as the universal death of the head is given particularly to all the members, so shall the universal Resurrection of the Head, be also particularly communicated to the members. Much more easily in the desertions of this life, which are a kind of sownings and seeming deaths, will he give thee life again, when thou hast learned by them that which thou wouldst not learn without them. When thou lovest Christ alone, when thou lovest him hiding himself, & chastising thee, then he that said to the woman; O woman great is thy faith, be it unto thee even as thou wilt: He will say to the Spouse, O woman great is thy love, be it unto thee as thou wilt. Thou willest him most, be it unto thee even as thou wilt. For when thou willest him most, thou shalt have him whom thou willest most; he will come unto thee, yea he will come much unto thee, and thy latter end shall be more then thy beginning. By wanting him, shalt thou have him more, then thou hadst before thou wantedst him, because by wanting him, thou dost love him more, then thou didst when thou haddest him.

Fifthly, these Desertions are profitable to the Soul, by teaching her patience; and by making patience to bring forth her kindly fruits waiting and attendance. The husband of the soul is a King of glory, and he will sometimes expect the honor, and service of patient attendance. He is a free agent, and his Spirit bloweth when, as well as where he listeth. And to a free agent there is due a waiting patience: He that gives freely, gives when himself will give, and not still when the receiver will have. In this case, he will answer his Spouse, as he did his Mother, Woman, my hour is not yet come. There are times and tides, wherein the spirit moveth; as it is said of Sampson, The

spirit of the Lord moved him at times in the camp of Dan: The Angel of the Lord, not always, but at a certain season went down and moved the waters. Now these times and seasons are in his own hands, and it is not in the souls power, to know and appoint them. Therefore as the eyes of the handmaids are to the hands of her Mistress, so must the eyes of the spouse be to her Lord, until he regard her. Her part is patience and attendance, and the patient abiding of the righteous shall not perish forever. When the soul hath submitted her will unto his will, the Lord's hour will shortly come wherein the water shall be turned into wine, the water of cold desertions, into the warming and comfortable wine of joyful visitations. When thy Lord hath the honor and service due to a most free and wise giver; then shalt thou have the crown of thy patience and attendance. For God hath given his word, that those which honor him he will honor: and again, Waite on the Lord, and commit thy way to him, and he shall bring it to pass. A blessed waiting which honoreth the Lord, and blesseth his handmaid: and a blessed absence, that procures this waiting which draweth his presence, accompanied with blessedness.

But take heed that thy patience be not the effect of dullness or neglect, nor a cause of idleness: be not patient in the absence of thine husband, because thou carest not for his presence: desire his presence above all earthly joys, and the shining of his countenance above all corn and wine. But let thy patience be merely grounded in a submission to his will; and let his will be the cause that thy will is content to want that which above all the world it desireth. And this desire thou mayest express in prayers, praying to drink the cup of salvation, as Christ prayed not to drink the cup of his passion; but with Christ's reservation, even with a will submitted to the will of God: Not when I will, but when thou wilt. Thou mayest say unto him, My soul thirsteth for God, even for the living God. And thou mayest sigh out this longing unto thy Savior, When wilt thou come unto me? And thou mayest look for him more than they that watch for the morning, even more than they that watch for the morning. For blessed shalt thou be if when he comes he find thee watching; that so

when he knocks thou mayest readily open, and he may readily enter; and that by thy slackness he do not turn away to the flocks of thy companions.

And in the second place take heed that thou give not thyself over to a desperate idleness, to doing nothing, because thou canst not do as thou wouldest. This were a double offense, both because it is impatience, and because it is idleness. This is to cut off the hands because they are feeble, and because the feet halt, to turn them out of the way. But it were far better to strengthen thy weak hands, and that thou mayest do by exercise, though it be but weak exercise; and it were better for thee to halt in the right way, than to run or rest in a false way. Wherefore if thou canst not do the higher works, do the lower; for doing is thy way, though thou go but softly in it, but idleness is a false way. And when thy Master, Lord and Husband cometh, and findeth thee doing according to that which thou hast, thou shalt be blessed in thy deed, by him, who accepteth our work, if it come from a willing mind, according to that which we have, and not according to that which we have not. If thou art faithful in little, he will make thee ruler over much; thy Masters joy shall shortly enter into thee, and thou shalt shortly enter into thy Masters joy. But contrarily look for no gain from idleness, but the gain of loss and punishment. Thou mayest lose him the longer, the less thou doest to please him; yea he may come unto thee with a rod, when thou expectest him to come with the spirit of meekness and consolation. To the workers he comes with a penny, even with a reward, favor, and a good eye; but to the idlers he comes with a frown and a check; Why stand ye all the day idle? Rather do that which may win him to come, & may please him being come, than by doing nothing keep him from coming, or make him angry when he cometh. And if thou ask what thou shalt do; Thy most ordinary work is the work of thy ordinary calling, yet mayest thou give times and turns to those works that more immediately concern thy heavenly calling, even such as immediately call for thy heavenly Lord to come into thy soul: sigh and pray, and read and hear, and by heavenly meditations let thy soul be trimmed as a bride that looks for her husband: yea with thy



earthly labors mayest thou mix these heavenly thoughts; thou mayest work and sigh, work and wish, work and pray in short ejaculations: and thus working, and thus waiting, working in profitable duties, and waiting with submissive patience, he that loveth both thy works and thy patience will come unto thee, and say, I know thy patience and thy works: yea he will come with such an increase of grace, that he will also say, Thy last shall be more than thy first.

Finally, these desertions are advantageable to the soul, while they draw her eye and affection from this place of interrupted joys, to the place of incessant and everlasting joys. The Bridegroom here doth but look in upon the soul at a cranny, and the soul seeth him but by glimpses, but there shall she behold him face to face; and this beholding as it is full, so it shall also be perpetual. The soul is here walled up in a house of clay, and the traffic between her and her husband is but by some chink which the spirit hath bored. But this clay which is now in itself nothing but darkness, and keeps out light, shall hereafter be made all glorious and lightsome; yea whereas the soul is now much carnal, then the body shall be made spiritual: and if the body be spiritual and lightsome, how pure and spiritual shall the soul be which is now a spirit? Surely then shall we be as it were all eye, even all clarity and purity, and so most capable of light and glory: and according to the capacity of our receiving, shall the light, and glory, and joy of our husband enter into us, and fill us: And of this fullness of joy and glory there is no end, no interruption. Wherefore our husband wisely and profitably, draws us by these desertions, from earnest unto full fruition; from broken pieces to whole and entire joys. If the soul might still have these glimpses, she would perchance be contented with them: and this were no other than to be contented with perpetual star-light, even a light fitted for this life of vanity, which is but a night, being compared to the bright day of eternity. Yet lying in the bed of love, she would be content to look on her beloved by this lesser light, and would not desire the perfect day, wherein the Sun of glory might arise unto her; and by a large and glorious light, make her largely and gloriously to see him, who is the fountain of that large and light, by which she seeth him.

Wherefore this lesser light is profitably taken from her, to stir her up to the seeking of the greater; and her beloved doth chastise her by desertions, to beat her away from resting in lesser, and interrupted joys, and to beat her unto the seeking of fuller loves, mightier joys, and everlasting fruitions. And indeed the earnestes should have taught her this lesson, but because they did not, these interruptions are sometimes sent to teach it her. The earnestes should have taught her, to look out for the full exhibition of that whereof they are earnestes; but because the soul instead of looking by them, beyond them, fastens and stays her eye on them, they are taken from that eye which was unduly stayed on them, that so by wanting them it may look beyond them, which it should have done, but did not by them. And now the soul seeing that these earnestes are not only, but drops and parcels of an infinite fullness, but with all drops and parcels, that are to be enjoyed with distances, and interruptions, she is spurred up to the seeking of it in an uninterrupted, and perpetual fruition. And whereas before she was heard to say, Master it is good to be here, and here let us build up tabernacles, not knowing what she saith; now she speaks in the true voice of the Spouse, Make haste my beloved, and be thou like to a Roe, and a young Hart upon the mountains of spices: And in the language of the Bride, Come, come Lord Jesus quickly.

## CHAPTER VI

The uses and advantages which the soul may make of the visitations  
of her husband

Sampson comes not empty handed, when he goes down to Timnath to visit his Wife. Christ Jesus who is blessedness, doth not come down to his Wife without abundance of blessings. His name is an ointment poured forth; and his actions are answerable to his name. As he was anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows, so doth

he give of his ointments to the Bride which is joined in communion and fellowship with him. For of his fullness doth she receive, even grace for grace. The precious Ointment drops from this head, unto his body, the Church, and thereby she is made all glorious within; glorious she is now within by grace; and she shall hereafter be glorious, both within and without with perfect glory.

Among the benefits of this glorious Grace, wherewith the Church is inwardly beautified, when the Bridegroom visits her with his spiritual ointments, this is a great one, that the heavenly oil giveth light to the soul: the soul is a lamp, & with this oil is the Lamp of the wise Virgins trimmed, and becomes a burning & a shining light. They have that light from the bridegroom, by which they look out for the Bridegroom. The eye salve is gotten from Christ, by which the eyes of the Church being anointed do see him, and all things that concern him. Spiritual things are spiritually to be discerned; and Christ and his spouse are one spirit, and by that spirit whereby she is one with Christ, doth she discern spiritual things. The husband of the Church, is the wisdom of his Father, and when wisdom goes into a soul he giveth wisdom to the soul. The Spirit by which he enters into us, taketh of his, and giveth it to us. Therefore as he is wisdom in himself, so is he also made wisdom to us, Christ is light, and when light and the soul are knit together by that union with light, there is a Communion of light. The wine of the Spirit is herein quite contrary to the bodily wine. The bodily wine when it inebriates, darkens the understanding, and being grosser than the soul, casts a mist upon the soul. But the spiritual wine, being purer than the soul, enlightens and clarifies her, and even then when it brings her to an ecstasy, it doth it, not by the diminution, but by the excess of light.

Wherefore let the soul make special use of this precious light which shineth within her, in the accesses of her husband, let her mark, and learn, and record the discoveries of that light; for a spirit so enlightened will discover more than seven men upon a watchtower. There are some mysteries and secrets which thy husband will whisper unto thee by his spirit in the bed of love, and then let him

that hath an ear, hear what his spirit saith. But if he do not speak to thee, do thou speak to him; know of him those things that are needful for thee to know, and bring to his light those things that thou wouldest have truly seen and discerned. Go into this Sanctuary, and there receive Oracles and Answers; for there shalt thou find resolutions of those things that were before too high and too hard for thee: and when thou hast truly seen them, believe them to be that which by this light thou seest them to be, and resolve never to believe the flesh hereafter, when it shall put any other shapes upon them. For darkness puts false and imaginary shapes upon things, but it is light that makes all things truly manifest.

For example, when this light shines in upon the soul, look out for thy happiness; and that thou mayest find it, set all things before this light, which are briefly these, The Creator and the creature, God and the world: and having done this, thou mayest plainly see, where is true, solid, and permanent felicity; and where is vanity, transitoriness and misery: And when thou hast seen it, know it to be the very truth which thou hast seen; and that which is once truth is truth forever. If thou wantest the skill of truly measuring time and eternity, so that a short life seems to thee like eternity, and eternity less than a short life; when this light shines in thy soul, bring the life of man and eternity together in one view before it, and thou shalt quickly learn the art of numbering the few days of thy life, and withal thou shalt learn that the days of eternity cannot be numbered. There is not so much proportion or likeness between them, as there is between the very lowest and least point of the earth, and the circle of the uppermost sphere. And what thou hast now seen to be true, believe to be true ever, even when this light is so obscured, that thou seest not the truth of it. If thou doubt which is better, the prosperity of the wicked, or the adversity of the godly, bring them before this light, even into the Sanctuary and Temple of thy soul, wherein the holy Ghost dwelleth and shineth; and there shalt thou see that prosperity ending in a never-ending misery, and that adversity ending in a never-ending felicity. Besides, thou shalt see the prosperity to be but a light vanity, yet followed with a weighty

misery; and thou shalt see adversity to be but a light affliction, yet followed with a weighty glory. And having seen this, thou mayest easily judge which is the better, and as they appear now to thy judgment, such let thy memory present them to thee forever. If thou art doubtful of thy way, and thy path seems to be covered with darkness, search thy way by this light, for it shall be to thee instead of a voice, saying, This is the way, walk in it. When after some dark nights the soul is visited (through the loving kindness of her beloved) with these day-springs and mornings of grace, then let her say, Cause me to see and know the way wherein I shall walk: and then, The good Spirit will lead thee into the land of uprightness. If the word written be dark to thee, bring it to this light, and if it be fit for thy measure, and the glory of thy Lord, this light shall reveal it: For the Spirit doth reveal the hid things of God. If the infidelity of men without thee, or of thine own flesh within thee, cast a mist of doubts on the Gospel of Christ Jesus, with this light behold this Gospel, and thou shalt see in it a plot of divine wisdom, and a mystery of high and supernatural truth. Yea thou shalt see the face of him who is the sum of the Gospel, as the face of the only begotten Son of God, full of grace and glory. For God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. It is an ancient promise, They shall be all taught of God. And when will God sooner teach than when he visiteth a soul with his spirit, which communicates both his light, and his love unto her? For both light and love are discoverers of secrets: light makes manifest things hid in darkness, and love tells counsels unto the beloved. It is our Savior's own inference, I have called you friends, therefore I tell you my counsels. But remember that the knowledge which thou learnest from this teacher of hearts, be laid up by thee safe, as a precious stock or treasure, and account it thy best learning, which thou hast learned of the best Teacher. Having bought this truth sell it not; keep it, and it shall keep thee: When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened, and when thou runnest thou shalt not stumble: Therefore take fast hold on this instruction, let her not go, keep her, for she is thy life.

Secondly, these seasons of love, are seasons of prayer. If thou want anything now ask it, for in these heats of love, thy husband will deny thee nothing. These be the times when the spirit moveth the waters; therefore now cast in thy petition, and whatsoever grief it hath in it, thou shalt be cured of it. Now the King holds out his golden Scepter, therefore let the Queen come in boldly with her request, though it be for a kingdom. Yea this King likes it best, If thou do first seek a kingdom: wherefore whatsoever thou askest, be sure to ask this kingdom, yea to ask it first, and the righteousness inseparably annexed to it. It were a madness in thee to offend him by asking a less gift, when thou mayst please him by asking a greater, especially, since if thou ask and obtain the greater, the lesser by promise is annexed to the greater. And accordingly thou mayest come down in thy petitions from the greater, to the lesser, and having desired the main petitions, that the King of glory may be glorified, by the coming of his kingdom of grace, with the righteousness thereof, then after mayst thou petition for daily bread to be given thee. Yea, know that thou art now in a high degree, the Temple of the holy Ghost; and whatsoever prayer or supplication shall be made in this Temple by a man that shall know the plague and grief of his own heart, He that dwelleth in Heaven will hear the prayer made on earth, he will forgive and do according to that prayer. The spirit of prayer & supplication is in this Temple, and he is most powerful in these seasons of love, & he who gives this spirit of prayer, will hear the prayer of the spirit which himself giveth. For he gave this spirit of purpose, to make those prayers in us, which himself might approve & grant. We know not how to pray as we ought, for we are carnal, and flesh will not ask so, as it may be pleasing to a spirit. A spirit loves a spiritual prayer; and therefore he gives the spirit, that he may have that spiritual prayer which he loves. So when he heareth his spouse, he heareth himself, and how can anyone deny his own prayers? Christ and his Spouse are now, (and that in a height of eminence) one spirit. And if a man who is flesh, do not hate his own flesh, but cherisheth it, surely much more assuredly the Lord who is a spirit, cannot hate his own spirit, but loveth and cherisheth, and consequently heareth it.

Thirdly, when the soul is visited by the spirit of the Bridegroom, then set upon some good, yea upon some great work. The spirit which we receive is a spirit of power, and when the spirit floweth much into us in these tides of grace, we receive much power. Now great power can do a great work, and it were both a loss and a shame to thee, with a great power to do a little work, when thou mayest do a great one. Therefore if there be a work which was before too great and too hard for thee, yet now set upon it; for when thy strength is greater, thou mayest do that work, which thou couldest not do when thy strength was less. Our Savior saith to Peter, Thou canst not follow me yet, but thou shalt follow me hereafter: thou canst not follow me yet, until thy strength be greater, by a greater portion of the spirit: But when thou art more strengthened by the spirit, then thou shalt follow me. And accordingly he that before Christ's resurrection denied Christ at the voice of a maid, after his resurrection confessed him in the face of a Council: And no wonder, for it is then said of Peter, that he was filled with the holy Ghost. Neither is it true of Peter alone, that a great measure of the spirit enables to a great work, but in others also. When the spirit of the Lord comes mightily upon Sampson, he doth mighty works; for he breaketh cords as flax, and slays a thousand with the bone of an asse. And Paul being filled with the holy Ghost, worketh a miracle, by which at once he confounded Elymas, and converteth the Deputy. Though two talents gain but two, yet five can gain five: Therefore mark when the spirit comes mightily upon thee, and then attempt some mighty work. As the Seaman watcheth the natural wind and tide, so do thou watch the wind and tide of the spirit: The spirit bloweth when he lifteth, and when he listeth to blow, then set forth on some noble action: when the tide of the spirit floweth, then put thy hand to the oar, for then if thou row strongly, thou mayest advance mightily. The soul lying in flesh and blood, is like a boat on ground, all the rowing in the world will not move it, but let the tide come and set him afloat, the same tide that enables him to move, will also mightily advance the motion, which it first enabled. Wherefore if there be any virtue, or any work of excellence, not yet well done, think upon it in these times and tides of grace: now set upon them, that so thou mayest go from virtue to virtue, until

thou be skillful, & active in all virtues; and having attained the full number of them, then strive to the fullness and perfection of degrees. On the contrary, if thou have some mighty enemy, that hath been too hard for thee, even some raging and wasting concupiscence, fear, distrust, or other temptation, now set upon him mightily, for now canst thou best see the way to conquer him, and now hast thou most might to effect this conquest, and to do what thou seest. Having tasted this honey, thine eyes shall be opened, and thy strength revived; wherefor make thou now a more mighty slaughter of the enemies of God, and thy soul. And let thy fighting be against all these enemies, though chiefly against the chiefest. There are some little foxes that have strong holds, and these will ask some strength, to be digged out and taken. Remember that thy warfare is against the whole Nation of the Canaanites, thou mayest not suffer a little one to live. Thou must strive against all sin, and strive for all righteousness; for the fruit of the spirit, is all goodness, righteousness and truth. It is the saying of a Saint, I can do all things through Christ that strengthens me. If therefore Christ strengthen thee, strive thou to do all things also.

Neither hast thou in these times, only a greater strength to encourage thee to great works, but also a great joy. And indeed the joy of the Lord is our strength: The joy that is in us is a piece and pattern of the joy set before us, and by this piece of joy within us, beholding the joy set before us, we may despise the shame, and endure the Cross, and run with patience the race set before us: As sure as we have this pawn, so sure shall we have the performance: and therefore we may labor comfortably in the works of doing and suffering, because our labor is not in vain in the Lord. The joy which we have excites us to labor, because as this joy is followed with labor, so shall the labor be followed with an over-weighing joy: and the greater the labors are to which this joy of the spirit encourageth us, the greater shall those joys be which follow these labors; for he that soweth plentifully to the spirit in labors, shall reap plentifully of the spirit in the joys life everlasting. Though no life everlasting can be longer than another, yet one life everlasting may be more joyful than another, and this



greater joy shall follow those that dying in the Lord do rest from greater labors. And as the joy precedent, and the joy subsequent do encourage us to the labors of holiness, so doth also the joy concomitant. The spirit thriveth, grows fat, prospereth and rejoiceth in the doing of good works, even like the mighty man in the running of his race. As the natural man pleaseth himself in eating and drinking, so doth the spiritual man delight himself in well-doing; and it is meat and drink to a heavenly Son, to do the will of his heavenly Father. When a thing worketh naturally, it worketh pleasantly, and it is natural to the godly nature to work godliness. Therefore by all these ways, Blessed is the people that knows the joyful sound, they shall walk in the light of thy countenance, O Lord. They that know the joyful sound, are blessed, and they are walkers: The joyful sound is a precedent blessedness, and a present blessedness it is, to walk in the light of God's countenance, and the future is to walk by that light unto the countenance itself, which is perfect blessedness. The joyful sound, and the light of God's countenance, do not allow any to take up their rest here, but they call on them to walk, even to walk cheerfully in good duties, by these streams of blessedness, unto the ocean and fullness of blessedness. Wherefore let us make this use of the precedent, present, and following joys, even to walk and run that race of piety which is here prevented with that sound, accompanied with gladness and the light of God's countenance, and shall be followed with the never-ending sight of that countenance which is the fountain of that light, and which to behold is true felicity.

Fourthly, in these times of plenty lay up a stock of confidence and comfort for times of scarcity. It hath been told thee before, and thou shalt find it true, that the Bridegroom sometimes hideth his face, and holds back his ointments, and the spirit which bloweth when he listeth, bloweth not when he listeth not. Therefore go unto the Pismire, and learn of him in the summer of consolation, to provide for the winter of desertion. If with Thomas thou hast seen and felt Jesus to be Jesus in his near and palpable approaches and visitations; and hast then truly called him, My Lord, and my God: lay up this truth for the times of desertion, and believe that truth to be

then true, when thou feelest not the truth of it; and that though thou art changed, yet Jesus Christ is yesterday, today, and the same forever. And for the better help of thy memory, and assurance of thy soul, set down upon record these testimonies and tokens of love, and seals of union which Jesus gave to thy soul when he visited her in the bed of love. In an ill matter Tamar kept a seal and a staff, for the safeguard of her life: in a good matter do thou much rather keep these seals for the safety of thy soul. And if thine enemy, who is both a Tempter, and an Accuser, and in these times of desertion doth commonly tempt by accusing, do call thy soul into question for her life, accusing her to be an adulteress of the flesh, and not a spouse of Christ Jesus, bring forth thy seals & tokens which lie by thee, and tell him, that whose these are, his thou art; thy well-beloved is thine, and thou art thy well-beloveds: Tell him, That thou hast not followed cunningly devised fables, but hast been an eye-witness of Christ Jesus and his love: And what thou hast seen and heard, and felt, that declare and show to the face of thy accuser: tell him, The spirit of Jesus hath left a testimony with thy spirit, that thou hast been one spirit with Jesus in an heavenly marriage; and then say also, Wherefore we are no more two but one spirit ; let no tempter, nor temptation put asunder, what God hath put together. Thus in laying up the seals of union, thou layest up a stock of confidence; and thou mayest see Saint Paul making the same provision, and the same use of it; God hath given us the earnest of the spirit, therefore are we always confident.

Neither do thou only from these Memorials gather confidence but comfort. True it is that confidence itself will bring comfort, for hope is the juice of confidence, and this juice is an especial comfort and cordial to the soul. But besides this comfort which ariseth from the apprehension of the things to come, thou mayst take comfort in that which is past, and therewith refresh thy soul in times of drought and weariness. By these memorials & pledges, call to remembrance his loves his sweetness, his kisses, his ointments. Renew the Images, and keep them fresh in thy soul, and these shall comfort thee, when the things themselves are absent. It will be a pleasure to thee, to taste

over his loves, again & again by renewed remembrances of them. It will be a pleasure to thee to repeat the pleasure thy soul hath enjoyed, and to say, His love was pleasanter than wine, and I eat under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. Thou hast tasted & by tasting seen that thy Lord was gracious, and now see and by seeing taste how gracious thy Lord was. For as tasting brought forth seeing at the first, so now a revived seeing will also bring forth a revived tasting; each mutually begetting other. Yea, many times when thou doest this only by remembrance and representation of that which is past, thou shalt bring into thee, the substance of that whose shadow thou recallest: And so while Jesus and his sweetness are represented to thee, as they have been heretofore seen and tasted, they will even now present themselves afresh to be tasted and seen by thee. While the Disciples going to Emmaus talked of Jesus as of one that was absent, Jesus became present unto thē, and then their hearts burned with an heavenly fire. And so while thou talkest with thy soul of Jesus, of his beauty, of his graces, of his sweetness, he will present himself to thee, and thou who wouldest have accounted it a great comfort, to sit under the shadows of his remembrance, shalt now enjoy his real presence, and eat of his most pleasant fruits; for when he comes, he comes with abundance of consolations. Thy remembrance of him, brings him into thee whom thou doest remember; and then thou needest not to borrow comforts out of the stock of thy former remembrances; for thou hast the Comforter himself to give thee new comforts, and so mayest add them to the stock of thy memorials and remembrances, for future encouragements and consolations.

Lastly, let the pieces and earnestings of heavenly joys stir up thy desires and affections, to the fruition of the fullness of joys; let these drops of God's sweetness enflame thy soul with a thirst and longing to enjoy God the fountain of this sweetness. Let these kisses of Christ Jesus kindle in thee such a fervent love of Christ, that thy soul may pant to be united to him in a perfect and consummate marriage. And out of the heat of these longings and enflamed desires, send up the aspirations and breathings of thy burning soul in vehement wishes,

and groaning complaints: My soul thirsteth for God, when shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while the flesh saith to the spirit, Where is thy God? I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, which is best of all. Surely Christ is best of all, and therefore is it best of all to be with Christ. Thou hast tried in the drops of his sweetness which thou hast tasted, that he is best of all, for the taste of Christ in them hath distasted all the taste of the creatures. Thou hast tasted and seen that the goodness creating is better than the goodness created; and therefore Christ is best of all. These drops of the Creator are better than all the visible creature, and he that is the fountain is better than the drops that distill from the fountain, and so is he better than that which is better than the creature, and therefore is best of all: and if he be best, surely it is best for thee to be with him; the enjoying of the best is the best enjoying. Therefore call unto him, O send out thy light and thy truth, let them lead me, let them bring me unto thy holy hill: let thy good spirit lead me and bring me to thy blessed presence, that as I have seen thee in these models, and mirrors, and earnest, so I may behold thee face to face. And though thy pilgrimage be prolonged, and being present in the body, thou art absent from the Lord, yet desire rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord. Accordingly let thy affections be ever rowing in these streams of the Deity to the Deity itself: by these patterns of rich oar, having discovered a far richer mine, do not stand gazing on the patterns, nor think thyself rich enough in them, but by them be stirred up to get and possess the full riches of the Mine. Indeed the pattern shows thee the richness of the Mine, it being a part of that riches which the Mine will give thee. But remember it is but a piece, and a piece cannot be equaled to the whole; for the whole hath an infinite fullness of such pieces in it. And hereby there is such odds between a piece and the whole, that a piece is more valuable for being an earnest of the whole, than for his own value. It is more to be prized for that which it promiseth, than for that which it exhibiteth. Therefore value it highly for the worth which it hath in itself, but value it infinitely more highly, for that excessively exceeding weight of glory which it promiseth. Look upon it for the goodness that is in

it, but much more on the goodness without it, which the goodness within it promiseth. So by looking on it, look from it, even beyond and above it; for though these earnestes first do call thy affections to them, yet being considered as earnestes, then do they remove thy affections, to that whereof they are earnestes: our rest is not in them, but in him, that gave these earnestes, who gave them for this end, that they might direct our faith and hope to him who is our rest. Wherefore as God spake to Israel by Moses, so speaketh he to the true Israel by these earnestes, Go forward. Why stand ye still gazing and resting on these earnestes, when even the earnestes themselves call on you to go forward? The earnestes call on you to go forward from earnestes to full performances, from grace to glory, from faith to vision, from the drops of the Deity to the Deity itself, the only true rest and Sabbath of the soul. And when God saith, Go forward, If any man draw back, his soul shall have no pleasure in him. But of all drawing back, let us most of all beware of drawing back from God to the world. This were yet a farther degree of going back from God; for whereas the drawing back from God to the earnestes is one degree, this going back from the earnestes to the world is a second and a most fearful degree. This is a true returning from Canaan to Egypt: but let us remember what the Apostle saith of the right possessors of these earnestes: We are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul. If we believe, we do look forward, and go forward, for faith looks not on things seen, but on things not seen, and such are the things before us; yet because the strong taste of the onions of Egypt, (even of fleshly lust) doth stick still in our teeth, and often would make Manna to seem but a dry meat, it is not amiss, that this word Go forward, be often sounded in the ears of the heavenly pilgrims. These earnestes are Manna, and this Manna is not such a dry meat, as the flesh would make it, for it serves to carry us unto the land of eternal felicity: it both calls upon us to go to our husband who is our happiness, and it enables us to go that journey, whereunto it calleth us. Therefore let us hearken to the voice of it when it calleth, because the same that calleth us, doth also enable us. We have received the earnest of the Spirit, therefore are we always bold, and willing to be with the Lord, whose earnest we

have received. We would put off these bodies of dust and lust, that our souls may put on Christ in a full and fruitive union. Yet neither would we wholly be unclothed of our bodies, but put them off, to put off their baseness and sinfulness, and to put them on again glorious and holy. And then shall it be a fit garment for the soul in the day of her gladness, and capable with her of the consummate marriage with the King of glory. And for this marriage doth the spirit and the bride say, Come: the bride saith it by the spirit, and the spirit saith it in the bride: This is the voice of the bride, and not of her tongue only, but of her spirit; and not of her spirit only, but of the spirit in her spirit. If then thou have the same spirit of love, because thou lovest, do thou also speak and say, Come Lord Jesus, come quickly.

## **CHAPTER VII.**

The signs, and marks of the true and right visitations of the heavenly Bridegroom.

It is necessary to show what these visitations are, to convince that they are, and so to undeceive those that think they are not. It is also necessary to free those from error, who believing that they are, yet do mistake those that are not, for those that are. Such visitations there are, for they are seen and felt by men seeing and waking; and seeing and waking not only with the bodily eyes, but with two better eyes, the one of human reason, and the other far excelling that, divine and heavenly light. Spiritual light beholds these spiritual sights, and shows them to the understanding, which being convinced by that which it sees, believes them itself, and would also deliver over the sight, and the belief of them to others. But the thoughts of man are narrower than these joys, and words are narrower than thoughts. But, which is worst of all, the heart of an earthly man is narrower than the narrow words of a spiritual man; for the carnal man perceiveth not spiritual things, though they be held up before his

fleshly eyes; yet in the mouth of two or three eye-witnesses a word should stand; and stand it doth, though blind men see it not standing before them, and therefore stumble at it. But who knows whether an Ephatah may come down from heaven, that while a spiritual object is proposed, a spiritual sight may be infused? Howsoever the words of heavenly wisdom are not spoken in vain to the children of wisdom; and especially those who are yet but children, and not perfect in the art of discerning good and evil, must not be left to the dangers of error and mistaking. The black Angel sometimes changeth himself into an Angel of light, and then may he also make some shows of lightsome visitations. There is also a sanguine and natural lightsomeness, and a bright beam of adustion, that sometimes shine in the mind, and these also may be mistaken to be divine. But the spirit is not flesh, much less is he that evil spirit, which is contrary to him. And because the spirit is that which these are not, the visitations are such, as those imaginations are not which come from these. And that this difference may the better be discerned, let us behold the true characters of a spiritual visitation, which the soul seeth when the husband of souls doth visit her.

A first mark and sign of his presence is light; a light not fitted for the eye but the soul, even a light spiritual, and shining spirit and truth into the soul and spirit. For the Lord is a spirit, and when he comes into the soul, he comes with abundance of that spirit which leadeth into all truth. He is the light of the world, even of the great world of mankind, and therefore when he comes into the little world of one man, how great is his light? And when this light shineth brightly, then the soul by it doth see spiritual things as truly and assuredly, as the corporal eye doth corporal things. For there is an agreement between a spiritual eye, and spiritual objects, as there is between the bodily eye, and bodily object. By this light, things formerly not known are seen and discovered, and spiritual things known before only by a carnal, which is a false knowledge, are spiritually, and so truly discerned; for the light is that which maketh manifest, and this light being spiritual maketh spiritual things so manifest, that it gives a full assurance of understanding, and makes us know that we know

thē. Even those things which before seemed fables and foolishness to the carnal eye, to this spiritual sight and light, appear plainly to be deep mysteries, and most wise truths. Especially the great Bridegroom of souls, who to the Jews is a stumbling block, and to the Grecians foolishness, to this light appears clearly to be the wisdom of God, and the power of God. For the light begotten acknowledgeth the light begetting, and Christ is seen in the soul by his own beams. He is seen there as a Head and Husband to the Church, as a root of life; as an All-sufficient Savior, fit and able to restore a decayed and lost creation, to disperse and tread down a combined association of adversary and mighty spirits, and to unite and recapitulate the scattered members of a mystical body both in heaven and earth, each to other, and all to the Deity. He is beheld as the fairest of men, the souls well-beloved, an infuser of that blessed sap of spiritual life, by which the soul is purified here, and made capable of the beatifical vision in an eternal life hereafter. And as this derived light showeth us the primitive light which begat it, and being spiritual, shows us that Lord who is the spirit from whom it proceeded, so doth it also discover to us divers other spiritual truths, and is a kind of Oracle that gives divine answers and resolutions.

Now that we may certainly know this light to be a truth, and not an imagination, and withal to be truly spiritual and heavenly, and not carnal, earthly, much less infused by a counterfeit Angel of light; let us first observe that this light of the spirit doth agree with the light of the word: The same spirit of God which shineth now in our souls in these heavenly visitations, did first shine in the word; so that the light of the word, and the light in our souls are twins, and resemble each other, and agree like brethren. If therefore there be this agreement, then there is this brotherhood, and if no agreement, then there is no brotherhood. Therefore to the law, to the testimony, if thy thoughts speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them: for indeed if our thoughts be truly enlightened, we shall find some words in the word of God confirming them; yea many times this light within will call up some place of the word without for a witness to it, to confirm a truth which in that place was not



formerly perceived. Such is the harmony and power of harmony between the spirit and the word, that when you hit a spiritual truth in your soul, there will often come a sound, answer and echo from some place in the word agreeable to it. And as the word doth approve this light, so doth this light approve the word. It loves to look on it, it seeth a heavenly wisdom in it, yea it seeth secrets in it; yea many times it will in some short sentence, yea in some single word, find out a Mine of heavenly doctrine, and as at a little cranny discover a world of divine truths. And so the light of the spirit doth approve it self, not only by being approved of the word, but by approving, and improving it.

This is a sufficient trial and touchstone of this heavenly light, though if need were I might add, the willing resignation of reason, even of the natural light of the soul to the sovereignty of this divine and heavenly light. The understanding is not fettered and bound by a violent hand, but it yields itself up freely to be subdued and captivated by a light that surpasseth the light which itself hath. The reasonable light of man continueth in man, even when this supernatural light shineth; it knows what other men know, and knows what it self knew and thought before this light came to it; but this light being come, it yields willingly to it, and surrenders both itself and the man whom it formerly guided. This homage of reason shows a sovereignty in that spiritual light to which reason doth this homage. The going out of the light of a candle, (not by quenching, but not-shining) acknowledgeth a greater and more excellent light to be present. And indeed reason even with reason gives way, that a greater light should rather guide than a lesser; yea with reason it gives way, that it self being a lesser light, should be increased and enlarged by a higher and greater, that so it may discern higher and greater things. And this increase it experimentally finds: for by this new and greater light, the soul sees the supreme light which begat it, she sees him to be her sovereign good; she sees the way to him, and is directed to union with him, and to the full fruition of him. And because she sees these excellent things now, which she saw not before, she justly and wisely resigns herself to that light by which she

sees those excellent things which she saw not before, and to that sight by which she seeth in a more excellent manner of seeing.

A second Character and mark of a divine visitation, is joy, even a joy of a different kind and character from other joys; For this joy ariseth not originally from natural principles neither fasteneth itself on natural objects, but is supernatural in the root of it, and fixeth itself on supernatural objects. It is no sanguine joy, neither made of humor and complexion, for it ariseth often in the midst of sadness within, and crosses without. The spiritual man therefore thus truly describeth the manner of them, In the midst of the sorrows of my heart, thy comforts have refreshed me. Even when the outward man decayeth, & dieth away, the inward man reneweth and rejoiceth: When the disciples are talking doubtfully and are sorrowful; then Jesus appears to them, and warms their hearts, with a heavenly fire. When the wine of natural joy is spent, and there is nothing left but the waters of affliction, thē doth Christ turn this water into wine. Thou hast turned (saith David) my mourning into dancing, thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness. There is a river that maketh glad the City of God, there is the new wine of the kingdom, that makes the heart merry; there is a heavenly oil that maketh that face pleasant and joyful, which is the image of God; these flow forth from the throne in heaven, from the true vine, from the right olive, and that it may appear that they do so, they are commonly sent into thirsty, weary, mourning & almost despairing souls; that the excellency of them may appear to be of God and not of man: when the soul is parched with dryness, the sap of joy cannot naturally come out of dryness; even Moses himself saith, Shall I fetch you water out of this rock? when there is no wine, and there appears nothing but water, even tears and sorrows, it must be a divine hand that turns this water into wine. When the soul is oppressed with spiritual wants, and sees nothing but grief within, and terrors without, it must be the work of God to make this oil to run, until the vessels be full. Therefore Saint Paul rightly infers, that it is the right hand of the most High, even in an high degree, which maketh this change. Yea there is in it more than a change, even a harmony and

agreement between contraries; Much affliction and joy in the Holy Ghost. And so Saint Peter, Ye greatly rejoice, though ye are in heaviness: Wherefore since to the Saints there ariseth a light in the midst of darkness, could not make this light, but he only who is the light of the world and by whom first the light came to shine out of darkness.

And as this joy is divine and heavenly, flowing from a divine and heavenly fountain, so is it also divine and heavenly, because it fasteneth on divine and heavenly objects. Things that love are like: the natural joy delights in natural objects, and a spiritual joy in spiritual objects. Accordingly while the natural joy looks out for corn and wine, the spiritual joy looks out for the countenance of God. God is a spirit, and he delights in spirit, because it is like him: and the joy of the spirit delights in God, yea delights in him most, because he is the supremest spirit, and consequently highest in this likeness. And because the union of our spirits with this spirit is only in Christ, with whom the soul becoming one spirit hath union with the highest spirit, therefore the soul having found Christ, rejoiceth in him above all things, with a joy unspeakable and glorious. She rejoiceth so in him, that she will sell all natural things, to buy the spiritual happiness that is to be found in him. And thus both by the absence, and by the contempt of natural things, this joy may be known to be supernatural. For as it doth not faint nor fail when natural things are absent, if Jesus be present, so doth it not fixe or feed on them being present, if Jesus also be present with them. Yea if the soul may feel Jesus to be more present, because they are more absent, she enjoyeth that absence, by which the presence of her beloved is more enjoyed. She delights in the tribulations, whose abundance hath caused an abundance of consolations: she so much loves Christ, that for his sake she loves things that are to nature most hateful, and rejoiceth in them. And thus while the soul rejoiceth in things contrary to nature, for the love of things supernatural, this joy cannot be natural, and of the same kind that those things are which it despiseth, but must needs be supernatural, and of the same kind that those things are in which it especially delighteth.

Another property of these joys, by which they prove themselves to be spiritual, is this, that they are nutrimental to the very soul & spirit of man. They feed, they satisfy, and in their measure fill the soul, and give her an inward thriving, and increase. Bodily joys are thick and gross, and by their grossness stick behind in the body, and pierce not to the soul; and if anything come to the soul from them, it is commonly but filth, dregs, guilt, vexation or shame. She may be more clouded by them, made more dull, earthy, and foul, by materiality, or filth, cast upon her; but they enter not into the inward parts of the soul, to water the root of her, and to give her true, kindly, and real increase. As mud is to the thirsty bodies, so are these to thirsty souls, they cannot drink them in, nor quench their thirst with them: But the spiritual joys enter in, and enlarge the very soul of man; they make her who is a spirit more spiritual, for she opens her mouth wide to them, and then she is filled with that spiritual and divine sap, which accompanieth them, and wherein they are founded. And then as she hath heard, so she hath seen and tasted, that a heavenly joy is to the soul a restorative medicine: and that when she enjoyeth her Savior in the contemplations and tastes of his love, then is she filled with marrow and fatness.

But I hasten to a third Mark of spiritual visitations, and that is holiness. For when Christ visiteth the soul, as he doth clarify her with light, and ravish her with joy, so he doth beautify her with holiness. External joys, and joys of the body, have not this virtue, neither can they give it to the soul: but when Christ cometh into the soul by his spirit, the same spirit that doth enlighten and glad her, doth also hallow her; yea as by the light she is directed to holiness, so by the gladness she is lifted up, encouraged, and actuated unto holiness. In these accesses of Christ there are heights of union, and the increases of union bring with them increases of uniformity. The spirit of union is fire, and fire turns that into itself to which it is united: and the fuller and closer this union is, the more is this turning. So Christ Jesus, the more he comes into a soul by his spirit, the more spiritual doth he make her; yea the more doth he melt a soul into himself; the more doth he turn her will into his will, and the more doth he

increase his own image in her; and we know that his image is righteousness and true holiness. He brings with him those ointments for which the Virgins love him, and those ointments also make them more lovely. Hence are they inwardly more glorious, and hence outwardly they smell more sweetly in their conversations. The Kings daughter is all glorious within, and her garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia. In these touches of Christ if in any other, there comes forth virtue from him: The spirit of the lover passeth into his beloved, and makes her of one heart and will with him, and this conformity of the will with Christ is true holiness.

The spirit by which Christ visiteth his spouse is a holy spirit and a spirit of power; and accordingly when this spirit is shed into the soul, there is power & holiness infused with him, and by him. And hence it is that they who receive the true ointments of the spirit in true visitations, they pass beyond a speculative & discoursing holiness even beyond a form of godliness, and advance to the power of it, & to a fruitful expression of this power.

Yea I may say, that hereunto the very love of Christ constraineth us. For in these visitations, and by them, the love of Christ is shed into our hearts. The spirit of power & holiness, is the spirit of love; and this love given by the spirit may be called holiness, for it is the fulfilling of the law. They that love Christ are certainly willing to please him, and to keep his commandments; and they that have the spirit of love cannot but love him.

Yea they cannot but love him for the union they have with him, and the joys of this union: And loving him they will desire to bring forth fruit unto him, and by him, even fruit that may be like him. The pleasure of love and union in outward marriage, is a kind of hire of fruitfulness: and in the spiritual marriage, the joy of love and union is the hire of a fruitful holiness. Wherefore those that truly enjoy Christ in these spiritual accesses, both desire and obtain this spiritual fruitfulness; for the spouse of Christ is most truly that vine,

which is fruitful by the sides of the house, and whose children stand like olive plants: yea in old age is she full of fruit.

Wherefore if with light and joy, the soul do feel, that the spirit of Christ, by spiritual heat, power, and love, have wrought a powerful, and fruitful holiness in her, let her know that Christ Jesus himself hath been with her. Carnal and corporal things cannot do this, evil Angels neither can nor will do it; good Angels though they rejoice to see it done, yet they do it not, but that spirit alone both can do it, & doth it, which is the power and right hand of God; & which only writeth the laws of God in the hearts and souls of men. He it is alone that giveth the soul the new wine of the kingdom, wherewith the soul being once refreshed, she rejoiceth as a giant to run the race of holiness: It is the spirit of Christ alone that so anointeth the soul, that she runneth after Christ in the ways of righteousness. And as it was said to this Head and Husband of the Church, Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity, therefore God even thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows: So it may be also said to the Spouse, Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity, therefore God even thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above all those that were thy fellows by carnal generation. For there is no oil of gladness, that hath with it the love of righteousness, but that wherewith Christ Jesus the Head was principally anointed, and which dropping from Christ the Head to the Members and Spouse of Christ, makes her to excel the rest in virtue and holiness. And as there was not any such spice, as the Queen of Sheba brought unto Solomon, so there are no such ointments of grace and gladness, as a greater than Solomon doth give to his Queen, when he and she are met in the heats of a spiritual conjunction, and the excesses of a fruitive union.

## **CHAPTER VIII.**

A Corollary of counsels and directions, to those that are entered into  
the estate of this blessed Marriage.

Let it be the main endeavor of a soul married to Christ, to keep herself still in that point wherein she may keep him; and so keep him, that she may still say, and feel what she says, My well-beloved is mine, and I am my well-beloveds: To this end, let her still cast, and consider with herself, what those things are which he most loves, and make her most lovely in his eyes: for the spirit of this lover, loves to be there where his love is. Therefore if there be any praise, any virtue, think on those things, and set them as pearls, and jewels about thy soul, to make her glorious and amiable in his sight. Let the face of the soul, even the image of the most excellent Deity, shine brightly in his eyes, being anointed with fresh oil; and let her be lovely to him by those ointments which make him lovely to her.

Let her often go out of the body, yea out of the world by heavenly contemplations; and treading on the top of the earth with the bottom of her feet, stretch herself up, to look over the world, into that upper world, where her treasure, her joy, her beloved dwelleth. Let her stand in this watch-tower, and look out for her lover, as the watchman looks out for the morning; and then the day-spring from on high shall visit her. Turn thy face away from the enchantments of this world, from dreams of earthly profit and preferment, and turn thy face to the wilderness, even turn this world into a wilderness, and a nothing before thy face; and the spirit of God shall come upon thee, and thou shalt see the vision of the Almighty. And when this Sun of the soul shineth upon her, let the eye of the soul, made clear and piercing by faith, (like the eye of an Eagle) look on the Sun; for this Sun looks on the eye that looks on him, yea he loves the eye of a faith working unto love, and cries out that he is wounded by this one of her eyes. It is his own speech to the soul, Seek my face continually: and it is an answer which he loves to receive from the soul, Thy face, O Lord, will I seek. And thus beholding Christ Jesus with open face, thou shalt see, and feel things inutterable; thou shalt also be changed from beauty to beauty, from glory to glory by the spirit of this Lord.

The more the soul seeth, and is seen of him, the more lovely shall she grow, and the more lovely she is, the more will he delight to see and be seen of her.

Again, if with that hearty lover, whose heart was according to the heart of his well-beloved, thou canst truly say, Mine eyes are always to the Lord; having procured his coming, thou shalt also stay him from going: Thy heart shall watch him, and keep him, and hold him; for where he is so watched and held from going, he is willing to abide. The story is well known, that though he seemed as though he would have gone further, yet when they constrained him, he went in to tarry with them. And though he should after some tarrying vanish out of sight, yet if our hearts be thinking and talking of him, he will eftsoons stand in the midst of them, and bring his peace with him.

And that thou mayest keep his love fresh, and fervent to thee, keep thy own love fresh and fervent to him. For love draweth love, and fervent love makes love fervent like itself. Love is like burning coals, and burning coals will kindle coals that are not burning. Therefore kindle thy love, and make it to flame, by thinking on his beauty, on his sweetness, on his goodness. Kindle it by renewing the old tastes of him, which thou hast formerly tasted. Kindle thy love, by reviving the images of loves past: put thyself into the same thoughts wherein thou wast, when thou didst enjoy him. And so if thy mind be fitted, and put into a state of enjoying, it is likely that he will come into a mind so fitted, and thou shalt enjoy him. And if he come not yet into thee, stir up thy spiritual concupiscence, and therewith let the soul lust mightily for him, and let her lusts and desires ascend up to him in strong cries and invocations, & then by his spirit he will descend unto thee.

Be careful that there be a perpetual consent of thy will unto his will, and a perpetual issuing of thoughts and actions from this consent and conformity. In the house of this husband there must be but one will, and that is the husbands. The wife's will must be melted into the will of the husband, and her will must not live, but her husbands will



must live in her. And then this husband will delight to be much at home, where he may be Master; and he will delight often to give the unity of fruition, where there is a unity of will and affection: but where the wife's will doth cross the will of the husband, there is he wearied away, and that house is to him as a place of continual dropping, offensive, and indeed unfit to entertain that Lord who is the King of glory. A King loves to be in his Kingdom where he commandeth and is obeyed; and therefore if thou wilt have this King to visit and dwell with thee, let him command and reign in thee: for he hath told thee himself, If any man love me, and keep my commandments, I will love him, and will appear plainly to him.

Wherefore if the soul desire to please herself by the fruition of his presence, let her especially and mainly strive to please him: for by pleasing him, she shall be pleased by him, whose pleasure is infinitely greater than that which ariseth out of her pleasing of herself. Let her give away her own will for his will, and in so doing she shall be a double gainer: for she changeth a worse will for a better, and withal gains him whose the better will is, and who is infinitely better than herself. Wherefore strive to please him, and to give him his will, yea strive to give it much and mainly; for the more thou givest it, the more thou receivest into thee a most excellent will, and a most excellent husband. Thus shalt thou please thyself most, by pleasing him, and not thyself. What husband is there, who seeing his wife to neglect herself for him, but he will love and cherish that wife the more, the more she neglects herself for him? And then by how much his love and cherishing is more advantageable and pleasing than her own, so much is her gain advanced, by loving and pleasing him more than herself.

And because there is some beauty and good in the creature, (though indeed subject to vanity, and blasted with a curse) and there is a law of the members reigning in the worst, and not wholly rooted out of the best, which loves to look on the creature, and by looking lusts after it; let the soul married to Christ be very wary how she turns her eye, and fixeth it on the creature. For if her eye go much after it, and

fettle long upon it, her love is likely to come after her eye. She may look on it, and behold the goodness of it, but in beholding the goodness of it, she must again look from it, to that transcendent, original, and infinite goodness of her husband, of whom this goodness was borrowed. For by him all things were made, that were made. Again, she may look on it to see the vanity of it, that by seeing the vanity of it, she may look from it to her Lord and Husband, in whom is stability, and perpetual felicity. And yet again she may look on it, to see the curse that is cast upon it, and in the terribleness of that curse, she may see the horror of sin, that looking from it again to her Lord and Savior, she may see the excellency of his love, and inestimable value of his person, who hath taken away the curse, and the sin from his beloved Spouse, and gives her a blessed use of the creature, and full blessedness in the eternal fruition of the Creator. Thus looking to the creature, by looking to it, she looks from it, she rests not in it, but passeth by it to her only true rest. And indeed by these and the like removals the soul should ever be kept loose from the world. For as when we would not have things to glue and fasten, we do often touch, and turn, and move them; so the soul being apt to glue and fasten to the world, we must by these and the like meditations often touch and remove her, that so she may be kept continually loose from it.

But because the cement which joins the soul to the world is the flesh, and she must adulterate first with this old husband, before she can prostitute herself to the world; let the soul take especial care to watch and resist the approaches of this fly, but deadly enemy, that cometh in the shape of a lover. This is he whom the true husband, whose name is jealous doth perfectly hate, for there is a perfect contrariety between them. Therefore so much as thou admittest the flesh, so much thou expellest thy Lord and Savior. But so much as thou banishest the flesh, so much room doest thou make for Christ to come into thee by his spirit. Therefore be thou so far from losing thy husband, for this old adulterer, that thou gain him the more, by expelling and killing the other. The flesh is good for nothing but to be slain, and therein there is this gain, that the more he dieth, the more

thy love and life loveth thee, and liveth in thee. Therefore whereas the flesh would make it thy pleasure to live after the flesh, do thou make it thy pleasure to kill the flesh: let the hunting, pursuing, and killing of the lusts of the flesh be thy pastime and pleasure, even the hunting and destroying of these foxes, that would destroy thy vineyard. And then will the Lord of the vineyard get up early to his vineyard, the vine shall flourish, and the tender grape appear, and there shall he give thee his loves.

But if through thy own remissness, or the flesh's importunity, the soul by concupiscence hath conceived sin, make haste to the fountains set open for Judah and Jerusalem to wash, and to be clean. Wash thyself in tears and blood; the spirit of penitence, contrition, and conversion washeth white, & the blood of the Lamb washeth whiter than snow. And by the cleansing spirit is given to thee the cleansing blood. That false husband whom thou hast pleased, he hath defiled thee, and thy true husband whom thou hast offended, he it is that must wash thee; therefore he came by water and blood, to wash thy guilt with his blood, and thy filth by his spirit; that thus being washed thou mayest be without spot and blemish, and again lovely in his eyes, and acceptable in the eyes of his Father. And being thus made fair by his washing, he will yet again embrace thee, and put thy evil out of his remembrance, by his own overcoming goodness. But then let his goodness overcoming thy evil, teach thee to overcome thy own evil with goodness. Hate and resist all sin, and especially that sin by which thou hast most offended so loving a husband; and hate and resist that false husband who tempted thee to this sin. Love thy true husband the more, the more thou hast offended him, and the more he hath forgiven thee. And the more thou lovest him, the more strive not to offend him. And if thus after thy sin, thou art the farther from sin, more fair in holiness, and fuller of love to thy heavenly husband, thou shalt hear from his mouth the voice of joy and gladness, and shalt feel from his mouth a kiss of peace in thy soul. And this spiritual kiss shall drop a spiritual ointment, the very pledge and seal of pardon and peace; even a

testimony of his spirit speaking to thy spirit, Thy sins are forgiven thee.

And having regained him, make thyself more one with him, and increase thy communion with him. Touch him hard with thy faith, suck him strongly with thy love, that more virtue may come out of him, to cure that issue of sin yet abiding in the remnant of the flesh, and to make thee more one and uniform with him. For as a bough, the more he sucks from the tree, the larger is his union with the tree, and the more is his likeness to the tree, so the more a soul draws from Christ, the more is she one with him, and the more is she like him. And again, the more she is like him, the more will he delight to be one with her; and thus shall she go on in an endless circle of happiness. The highest and happiest, and sweetest harmony is, when the soul is in an unison with her Savior and husband: every touch and sound of the soul thus tuned to Christ Jesus, resoundeth in him, toucheth and moveth him. And as with the sound of outward music the spirit of God came upon the Prophet; so with the sound of this inward music (be it in holy contemplations, ardensies, desires, invocations, resolutions) the spirit of Christ Jesus cometh more powerfully and plentifully into the soul. And when he comes, do thou draw from him that spiritual sap and nourishment, by which thou mayest grow up to the stature appointed thee. By the supply of this head grow up to this head in a due proportion, even to the fullness of that part which thou holdest in his body. And let not the head be the head of a man, yea of the fairest and goodliest of men, and thou a starved, dwarfish, crooked or misshapen hand or foot, but both in measure and shape strive to be a member proportionable to so comely a Head.

And that thou mayest thus grow, let not swelling, but growth be the end of thy sucking. Desire the sincere milk, and honey and wine of the Deity, that thou mayst grow thereby, in solid substance, not in frothy and puffy imaginations. Grow thou in the real excellence of a divine Nature, and not in the empty swellings of a fleshly pride. For the flesh hath sometimes a desire of spiritual excellencies, but it is

for a fleshly end, even to puff itself up by them. But seek not these pearls, to cast it to these Swine, nor this Bread of heaven to give it to such dogs. Rather buffet this flesh and beat it down, lest a messenger of Satan be sent to buffet thee for not buffeting it, and so when thou lookest for a good spirit to exalt thee, an evil spirit be sent to beat & humble thee. Christ comes into thee, not to feed, but to kill the flesh; wherefore thy end and his are contrary, if thou desire his coming to feed that, which he comes to kill. If then thou wouldest have him come indeed into thee, join with him in the proposal of one & the same end; even the exaltation of the Spirit, and the death of the flesh: allow not fleshly swelling to be an end: no not a subsequent, of thy meeting with Christ; but kill it, if after this meeting it arise in thee. The flesh hath no part nor portion in this service; but to be slain by it: therefore let not this left hand of the flesh, know, what the right hand of the spirit doth in thee: but be thou wholly spiritual, in a spiritual, in a spiritual business, and by it grow more spiritual, and, not more, but, less carnal.

Again, desire not these sweetness's of spiritual union, only because they are sweet; for in this the flesh also may have his part, both in desire and fruition. Be not like the children of Israel, in the wilderness, who desired meat for their lusts: for of such a desire there is an il beginning, & an il end may be expected, since lust is both the beginning and end of it. But blessed is the land, when her Princes eat for strength, and not for riot; & blessed is the Church when her Nobles eat this spiritual food for spiritual strength, and not for lust and luxury. It is a kind of luxury to make taste, and not strength the main end of eating: but let the sweetness of the taste be used as an encouragement unto eating for strength. Out of the strong one comes this sweetness, that by this sweetness thou mayest be made partaker of his strength. Wherefore having found this honey, eat with Jonathan, that thou mayest be strengthened in services to be done, and against enemies to be resisted. Eat that thou mayest strengthen thy faith, and that the eyes of the inner man being enlightened, thou mayest the more clearly discern the riches of glory given to thee in Christ Jesus. Strengthen thy faith also, that thou

mayest more fully, and closely cleave unto him with thy will, whom thou hast seen with thy understanding to be the treasure of perfect felicity. Yea let not thy faith leave growing from strength to strength, until it bring thee beyond faith unto vision. Eat that thou mayest strengthen thy hope, and that thou mayest hope the more perfectly to receive the full fruition of that sweetness, and blessedness, whereof here by this eating thou hast received the foretastes and pledges. Eat that thou mayest strengthen thy love, and that thou mayest love him with a love above all loves, whom thou hast seen and tasted to be fairer and sweeter than all that can be loved. And by strengthening thy love to him, strengthen also thy love to his will, and to his law the copy of his will. The sweetness which thou tastest, must needs love the law, for they are twins; this sweetness being shed into our souls, and the law written in our hearts by one and the same spirit. And as the sweetness brings with it a love of the law, making it sweet to us, (even sweeter than honey, and the honey comb,) so doth the law lead us to the fullness and fountain of this sweetness. Be thou also strengthened by this sweetness, more strongly to resist the enemies of thy soul, and of thy Lord and Savior. Let the sweetness of the spirit turn the sweetness of the flesh into bitterness, and the sweetness of the world into contempt: and let it make thee to spit out against the taste of all temptations, which the evil spirit shall offer thee: for how sweet soever the same temptations may now seem in thy mouth, they shall at last be turned into an everlasting bitterness and gnashing of teeth. But the sweetness of thy husband groweth like a river, until it come and bring thee to a boundless Ocean of perpetual sweetness. Briefly, let this sweetness now tasted by thee, fill thy heart and soul, and life with sweetness. Let thy garments smell of myrrh, cassia, and frankincense; let thy conversation yield forth the sweet fruits of righteousness, sweet figs, and sweet grapes, that cheer God and man. Having received sweetness from Christ, sweeten others also; and being strengthened by this sweetness strengthen thy brethren.

Be not discouraged, if he come not so often to thee, nor stay so long with thee as thou desirest. The baits of a traveler are short, and his

journey long. The meals of Elijah were but two, but his journey was forty days. This kind of food hath in it an eternal nourishment, and therefore it may strengthen long, though but shortly taken. Besides, if thou hadst this meat so long and so fully as thou desirest, it may be thou wouldest not so long and so fully desire and love it, as now thou doest. There is a loathing upon fullness, and a restiveness upon spiritual fatness, as upon the bodily. Therefore Jeshurun being fat, kicketh against him that made her fat, and Israel being fully and daily fed with Manna, falls to loathing it. But thy husband, who is wisdom in perfection, and knows thee better than thou knowest thyself, prevents this dangerous fullness and fatness, and carries his kindness in so temperate a moderation, between glutting and starving, that the soul be neither too fat nor too lean. And indeed as she is then most comely in the eye of her husband, so is she then most healthy, active, and fit for the services of her husband. Wherefore let her be content with these turns of coming and going, with short meals, and long journeys. If the meals be sufficient to bring us to our journeys end, even to God's holy Mountain, we may well be contented. For these journeys and labors that here seem to be long in regard of the rests that come between them, shall bring us at last to an eternal rest which hath no interposition of labors. And then it shall be no sorrow of heart to us, that through short rests, and long labors we have arrived to that state of happiness, which hath in it no labor, but is all, rest.

Again be not discouraged, if he come not still when thou thinkest that thou hast prepared thy soul, and made the bed of love for him. Thou mayest perchance be short of that fitness which thou thinkest, for he is a God of pure eyes, and thou even when thou knowest nothing by thyself art not free from Impurity. He will have thee yet more fitted for his coming, by a narrower search of thy own blemishes and unfitness; yea he will have thee fitter for his coming, by being composed and decent without his coming. He will have thee fitted and trimmed by faith, as well as by love, and teach thee to believe his love, when thou feelest it not, as well as when thou feelest it. And indeed that is most like faith, which believes what it feels not,

but how canst thou show this virtue, if still thou hast feeling? He expects perchance that the old stock of assurances in visitations and sensible approaches should have lasted longer with thee, and thou shouldst not so soon have need of new tokens of love on his part, and new feelings on thine own. The former tastes and tokens of his love, should have longer told thee, that he still loves thee, though thou do not still receive tokens from him and tastes of his love. True it is that he seldom fails to meet a soul, duly trimmed and prepared for him. Nevertheless he is still free, and perchance will have it sometimes to appear so. And if he do thus at sometimes when we are prepared, then at other times, he comes being unexpected; and so by a compensation gives us that which we asked, though only with a difference of time. And indeed his dispensations are wiser than our desires, and it is fittest that times and seasons should be in his hands and not ours, especially for his own gifts. For we indeed do not all ways open our mouths in due season, but he always openeth his hand, and filleth us with his blessings in due season: and accordingly though the spouse sometimes seek him & find him not, yet another time he is found of her that seeks him not; for when she is sleeping, he comes knocking; and saith, Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled. Wherefore let us look mainly to our own part; to have our lamps trimmed with faith, and love; and let us trust him with his own part; the choice of the times and seasons of his coming.

Yea again and again, be not discouraged, though hitherto thou hast not felt the spiritual kisses of Christ Jesus, the ecstasies of his wine, nor the ravishments of his union. It may be the hour of thy Lord & Savior is not yet come, nor the day wherein he shall say, This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise. This day was the last day to him, to whom it was first said, and it may be one of thy latter days wherein it shall be said to thee, this day will I be with thee, and make a Paradise within thee. Yet let not these days be late days, much less last days by thy delays, howsoever late they may be his dispensations. Remember him in thy youth, and first days, and be thou as a servant ever ready and hearkening when his Lord will come and knock, that when he knocks, thou mayest open, and he may



come in and dwell with thee forever. It is just that the giver should choose his own time for his own gifts; and it is just that if thou refuse his time, he should refuse thine; and then will he be like one that turns aside to the flocks of thy companions.

And yet less let those be discouraged, who have small, and but small tastes of these spiritual joys. He that made us knows our frame, and what is the fittest proportion both for our age, and measure. There are babes in Christ, and we seldom give wine to children, because it is too high for them. Christ gave his doctrine so as they were able to hear it, and so gives he the joy of his spirit, as we are able to bear it. As by the strength of the same spirit the joy may be converted into spiritual advantage, and not perverted by the flesh into carnal voluptuousness, security, or swelling: the soul must be faithful in little, before she be an owner of much; and therefore there is commonly some time of trial and acquaintance between Christ and the soul, before he will trust her with great familiarity, and give her the great and high degrees of his hidden joys.

Besides, it must be known and considered, that Christ Jesus hath some parts, whose measure even at their full growth is so small, as the infancy of other parts. A finger in his full growth is not so big as the leg of an infant. And such little parts may have less feeling of these joys, because of their littleness: and yet they may be as lively as the greater, for a finger liveth as well as an arm. And indeed let such especially look that their life be sound in them, & that shall they know by the actions of life. If faith and love be active in them, then are they lively and living. For it is no other but the life of Christ in them which makes faith and love to be lively and operative in them; and then let them not fear, for they are passed from death to life. On these fruits therefore let them especially look, for though they have not here many sweetness's and joys, yet if they have many fruits of faith and love, they shall hereafter have a greater measure of joys in heaven, than those who have had here greater joys than they, and have not improved them (as they should have done) to a fruitfulness greater than theirs whose joys were lesser.

Yet farther if this matter be duly weighed, we shall see in God's dispensations a great wisdom and equity for commonly those that have the greatest consolations, have also the greatest tribulations. And the one are so balanced with the other, that the soul is kept in an evenness, the tribulations not making her to sink, by reason of the counterpoising consolations, nor the consolations over much weighing her down into pride, (for pride though seeming to look upward is an infernal thing) because of the counterbalancing tribulations. Wherefore if thou envy another man's consolations, why doest thou not also envy his tribulations? If thou wish to be wrapped with Paul into the third heaven, wish also to be in labors often, in watching's often, in perils by sea, in perils by land, and under that load of sufferings which he fulfilled for Christ. But withal take heed what thou wishest, lest thy own wishes being granted do sink thee. If thou know not thine own strength, God knows it, and what thy vessel is able to bear both of the one and other. And be thou contented, if with less tribulations he give thee less consolations, this lesser measure of both being fitted for a lesser vessel, and yet the same proportion between both, in the lesser that is in the greater.

## **CHAPTER IX.**

### **A Song of Loves.**

Thou hast touched my soul with thy spirit, O most beloved, and virtue is gone out of thee into me, and draweth me to thee. Thy spirit is a loadstone of love, and where it toucheth spirits, it leaveth love, and this love makes a soul to move to her beloved, that touched her. So by thee doth she run after thee, O thou fountain and rest of loves: thy ointments draw her to the anointer, her loves begin and end in thee. O let my soul ever run this circle of love; let her ever be tasting of thy loves, and ever love thee by tasting them. Let the savor of thy ointments, whose very breath is love, be ever in her nostrils, that she

may ever love thee for that savor, and by it. Give me the flagons of the new wine of the kingdom, which may lift up my soul above herself in her loves, and give her better loves than her own, where with to love him that is far better than herself. Yea let her drink plentifully, that she may be mounted up in a divine ecstasy above her carnal and earthy station; that she may forget the low and base griefs, and cares, and distractions, of carnal and worldly love, and by a heavenly excess be transported into an heavenly love, to embrace her beloved, who is the Lord from heaven, with a love that is like him.

O my beloved, thou art most lovely; even when I love thee not, yet then art thou most lovely: and when my soul covered with flesh sees not thy beauty, yet then art thou most beautiful, and most worthy to be beloved. But then thy loveliness is lost to me, because love loves not, what it sees not. Therefore ever anoint mine eyes with thine eye-salve, that my soul may ever see thy loveliness, and seeing it to be most lovely, love it with her best loves, and despise a world of beauties in comparison of thine, and a world of loves in comparison of those loves wherewith she loveth thee.

Let my love rest in nothing short of thee, neither let it be content merely to rest in thee, but kindle it, enflame it, enlarge it, that it may rest largely in thee. Enlarge the cranny which thy spirit hath bored through the flesh into my spirit, that I may largely see thee, and so largely love thee. Enlarge the arteries and conduit pipes by which thou the head and fountain of loves, flowest into thy members, that being abundantly quickened and watered with the spirit of love, I may abundantly love thee. And do not only come much, but often into me, and let my spirit often be one spirit with thee in communicative and fruitive unions. For such often unions with thy spirit will make my spirit more spiritual; and the more spiritual she is, the more will she love him who is a spirit.

Again, the more spiritual she is, the more will he who is a spirit love her; and the more he loves her, the more will he visit her with his

spirit; and the more he visits her, the more lovely, and beloved shall she be. Wherefore by often visitations, put thy own image and beauty more and more on my soul, and then love thy own beauty in my soul, and my soul for thy own beauty, which thou hast put on her, and let my soul love thee infinitely for being infinitely more beautiful, than that beauty which thou hast put on my soul, and therefore infinitely more lovely than that which thou lovest in my soul. Wilt thou, my Lord, love the image, and shall not the image much more love the pattern? O thou most lovely, my love to thee should be far greater, than thy love to me, because my object of love in thee, is infinitely greater than thine in me. But I being a poor and narrow creature, have not love enough to love thee sufficiently, an infinite Creator; and indeed there is no love but thy own sufficient to love thee, whose love only is equal to thy loveliness. Thy being is loveliness itself, and thy being is love itself, for God is love. Come therefore into me, O thou that art love, and love thyself in me. Come into me, and by thy own most excellent love, fitly love thy own most excellent loveliness. And while thou lovest thyself in my soul, let my soul according to her measure, taste and see, and love that love. Let her with all her might (though that might be far too weak for this work) consent and approve that love of thine, and on the torrent of thy love, let her most active, strongest, and largest affections swim to thee, O thou Ocean and unbounded fullness both of loveliness and love. And thus though she cannot make her own love sufficient to love thee, yet let her make thy all-sufficient love her own by receiving some of it into her, according to her capacity; by assenting to it, by approving & magnifying it, and by a desire to resemble it, as much as a poor, measured creature, may resemble that which is unmeasurable. It is thy own word, O thou lover of souls, that where there is a willing mind, thou acceptest that which a soul hath, and not that which she hath not.

But Lord, though that love which I have, attain not to that measure which is unmeasurable, yet Lord let it be a full measure which thou pourest into me, and let there be nothing void in my heart, and unfilled with thy love. Yea let thy spirit of love come so fully into my

soul, that it stretch and enlarge her measure, and make her to grow from the measure in which she is, unto the measure in which she should be; even to that stature which is appointed her in thy body. And thus by fullness in a less measure, let her grow to a fullness in a greater measure, growing still in measure, and growing still in that which filleth her measure. Yea let the measure sometimes be not only full, but running over; even running over to a spiritual drunkenness, but not unto drowning, for these ecstasies and excesses of love, shall somewhat advance my ability of loving thee. For when my understanding, will and affections are all overflown, overcome, and amazed, then shall my wonder gaze on thee, and my very fainting's shall be enflamed toward thee, and melt me into thee.

Neither doth my soul desire the pleasure of this love, and joys of thy union merely for pleasure: But I desire that the joy and sap of thy spirit poured into mine, when they two are one spirit may be generative and fruitful. Far be it from my soul to love thee like a harlot, and not like a wife; let me desire union with thee because I love thee; and because I love thee let me desire to bring forth fruit unto thee. Yea I will not cease to cry unto thee, Give me children or else I die. For thou canst not reply unto me; Am I in God's stead to give the fruit of the womb. For verily thou art that God who giveth the fruit of the womb, both spiritual and corporal. Give me therefore children by this union with thee even fruits of thy spirit which may resemble thee, and be pledges to me of thy union with me. And when I have brought them forth let me give the praise unto thee; For thou only makest the barren to bear; and to be a fruitful mother of children.

And when thou hast made me fruitful by coming to me, come more often to me because thou hast made me fruitful. It was the voice of a natural wife long ago: Now will my husband dwell with me because I have borne him six sons. Let it be said now also by a spiritual wife, Now will my husband dwell with me, because his dwelling with me hath made me fruitful. Make my soul a fruitful paradise bearing

every good fruit of love, divine and human, and then come often into thy garden, to behold, & gather the fruits of it.

And that I may bring forth fruits wholly thine, and not another's beside thee, burn and consume whatsoever would grow one with my soul besides thee. Thou art a burning and consuming fire, and the spirit by which thou art one with my spirit, baptizeth with fire; O let the fire of thy spirit, so wholly turn my soul into spiritual fire, that the dross of the flesh & the world being wholly consumed, she may be only spiritual, and so bring forth fruits only to thy spirit.

Thus, and thus saith my soul to her beloved, but when she saith thus, her beloved is not far from her, for by him she speaks to him: when he is near, his ointments yield their savor, and the savor of his ointments draweth souls to run after him. There hath been of late a fruitive union, and such fruitive unions do individuate, and enflame the love of the soul to him, whom she hath enjoyed in that union.

But alas the husband of the soul is sometimes like that husband which is not at home, but is gone a long journey. He is gone so far from me, as if he were not mine, yea so far sometimes, as if he were not at all. The summer is gone from my soul, and the winter is come; and the true olive so draweth in his fatness, that my soul though a branch, yet doubteth whether there be a root that beareth her. The ointments of light and love, are not seen or felt, and how can she love the loveliness that she sees not, and if she saw it, how can she love it without love? In such a darkness, the greatest loveliness affects not the eye, and in such a deadness there is no love wherewith to love the greatest loveliness. The soul doth not now taste how sweet her Lord is, and therefore his sweetness is to her as a thing forgotten, or a thing mistaken, or at best, as a thing which was, and is not, and will be no more. The often unions that are passed, are wholly past, and the very images and representations of them, are near wholly vanished. And now my soul that will ever be a lover of something, and a seeker of good in one object or other, being left to the flesh by the enchantment of the flesh, runneth to the creature to seek good in

it. For as the spirit runneth to Christ, so doth the flesh to the creature. But alas the dove of Christ thus flown from the Ark in her thoughts and affections, findeth no rest; for she is gone from her rest, and how can she find rest, by going from rest? Put forth thy hand, O thou lover of souls, and take her in unto thee, yea first make her to return to thee, by finding her when she seeks thee. Seek her, O Savior, when she goes astray from thee like a lost sheep; for even when she thus goes astray, she hath not utterly forgotten thee, thy loves, nor thy laws. One look of thine will awake her love, and make her weep bitterly, that she loved thee so little, whom to love sufficiently, her best and mightiest loves are most insufficient. Prevent her seeking with thy seeking, and be thou present with her in thy providence, and preserving power, even when thou seemest to be far off, in the tastes of thy sweetness, and fruition of thy loves. Love her, even when thou doest not give her thy loves; yea love her by not-giving them. Do her good even by the subtraction of thy goodness; show her that her safety is not in her own hands, show her that her goodness is not her own, show her that she is nothing in herself but that which is worse than nothing; and that thou, and thy grace make her wholly to be that which she is. Then shall she be more humble by seeing her own vileness in thy absence, and thou shalt be more lovely and precious to her, whose presence gives her all her worth and excellence. When she hath regained thee, she will hold thee more hardly, and keep thee more fastly, and love thee more vehemently. She will value thy loves above treasures; yet she will love thee more than thy loves, and she will provide a stock of loves in the summer, against the winters, if they perchance shall return again.

For in these loves she will behold the pledges of a love eternal; in these joys of thy presence, she will behold the earnest of eternal joys in an eternal presence; and for the sure hope of these eternal joys, she will patiently endure the sorrows of these temporal absences. Yet let these temporal absences be as thorns in the sides of my soul to stir her up to the desire of that eternal presence. And be not lacking overlong, O thou life, and love, and guide of my soul, but ever and anon visit her with thy presence, stay her with thy flagons, comfort

her with apples, for she is sick of love, when she wanteth her beloved. When thou wast here on earth, thou hadst compassion on the multitude, that had nothing to eat, and wouldest not send them away fasting, lest they should faint by the way. O sweet Savior, thou art no less merciful in heaven than thou wert on earth, and a hungry soul is a fitter object of mercy, than a hungry body; and my hungry soul hath a farther way to go than their bodies, for she must go from earth unto heaven. O refresh her, and that right soon with thy mercies, with the joys of thy presence, with the bread of heaven, and water of life which thy spirit plentifully giveth to my spirit, when thou comest unto her. Be thou her guide even to the life which is beyond death, and grant that through these changes of temporal presences, and absences, she may run in one even, and unchanged path of love and holiness, until she come unto that eternal presence, where is the fullness of joy without ebbs, and perpetuity of joy without interruptions. There shall she see her beloved clearly and plainly, even face to face; and there shall she enjoy her beloved so fully, as she seeth him clearly; yea she shall enjoy him, with all her might of enjoying. Her being shall be the measure of her enjoying; for as much as she is, so much shall she enjoy: she shall be in a perpetual union with her beloved, and in a perpetual fruition by union; and so in a perpetual rack, extent and uttermost of joy. The fountain of joy shall flow continually into the mouth of the soul; the new wine of the kingdom shall still overcome her, and set her up in a continual trance, and ecstasy of joy. Her life shall be rejoicing, and her life shall be eternal, and so shall be her rejoicing. Her life shall be love, and this love shall give an overcoming sweetness to the enjoying of him whom she loveth, and the sweetness of her enjoying shall enflame her love to him, by whom she enjoys this sweetness; and thus shall she run an everlasting course between the pleasure of love, & the sweetness of enjoying.

Therefore thus saith my soul to her beloved; Come away my beloved; and be as a Roe on the tops of the mountains. My life is hid with thee my love; Appear quickly thou which art my life, that I may quickly appear with thee in the glory, and happiness of a consummate



marriage. Make me fair with thy spirit, and put the golden vesture and the needlework of thy manifold graces upon me, and bring me speedily into the presence of the great King. Let the day of gladness quickly come wherein both soul and body even my whole self may eternally enjoy thee. For thy spirit being now in both, makes both to thirst for thee; and my flesh fainteth as well as my soul, and each panteth after thee. Neither will they still be put off, with these tastes and earnest, but their love and longing is rather enflamed by them to the fruition of thee. The very voice of these earnest is, come; yea they scarce know any other language, but, Come; therefore again & again they say, come; Yea after they have said, come; as if that were not enough, they say, Come quickly. Now thou who knowest the meaning of the spirit, give an answer to the speaking sighs and groans of the spirit. Thou who hast enflamed the heart of thy spouse, to speak unto thee in this silent, yet loud language of ardent desires, speak again to the heart of thy spouse, and answer the desires, which thou hast made to speak unto thee

But hearken; for he speaketh: Those lips speak which are full of grace; and such lips cannot but speak grace, & peace to his spouse, to his beloved. Hearken therefore and hear what he saith; Behold, I come quickly. O honey, and sweetness itself to the soul that loveth her beloved comes quickly; her consummate marriage comes quickly, her full joy, and perfect happiness comes quickly. And now what can the soul say more to her Lord? Only as before she still said, Come, so now will she still say, Amen; and Even so come Lord Jesus, Amen, and Amen.

FINIS.

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