

Monergism

The Cure of Distractions in Attending Upon God



NATHANAEAL VINGENT

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THE CURE OF DISTRACTIONS IN ATTENDING UPON GOD

By Nathanael Vincent, M.A. Minister of the Gospel.

In Several Sermons Preached from 1 Cor. 7.35.

That you may attend upon the Lord without Distraction.

Psal. 27.8. - When thou saidst, seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, thy face, Lord, will I seek.

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Editor's Note - During the TCP Transcription Process, all the text was hand transcribed according to visual representation; and as such, sometimes the letters s, l, f & t are misconstrued with each other, these letters regularly being almost illegibly similar in the original facsimile script. Though it is rare for these errors to remain post-edit, unfortunately they may remain if uncaught. My apologies in advance where such errors occur. Also, the symbol <H&G> signifies omitted Hebrew & Greek. Because a majority of readers are not fluent in the original languages; it was thought best to omit, instead of possibly misconstrue; since most original languages are written antiquated script in the original facsimiles. Lastly, some archaic words may be updated to more contemporary terminology; but changes have been kept to a bare minimum.

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To the Truly Honorable.

Sir William Ashurst, Kt. and Alderman of the City of London.

Much Honored Sir,

I did not Address to you when you were like the Rising Sun, and made the Chief Seat in this City, where you were deservedly placed, to shine with more than ordinary Luster; when you discovered and were severe against the Works of Darkness; and your Influence was so benign and kind, for the Sustentation and Benefit of London; but now you have run your Course so well, and have set without the least Cloud; nay, with so much Clearness and Glory, I make this Dedication to you, desiring your serious Perusal of a Treatise, the Subject of which is of such great importance. And indeed now you have quitted the Chair, and have less of public Business to manage, and may have more leisure to retire into your Self, and from Company, and from Civil Affairs; this Cure of Distractions in Religious Duties, knocks at your Door, the Author desiring it may be helpful to your Meditations and Devotion.

'It is a great Respect and Honor that is due to the God's on Earth, so Magistrates are called, and Inferiors should apply to Them accordingly, with a great sense of their distance. With what Reverence then are we to approach the Supreme Majesty! The Lord of Hosts, the King of Glory! Our highest Apprehensions are infinitely below him. And the best of Saints do rather wish to Worship him, than perform anything that is worthy of the Name of Worship.

Among the many Faults in Holy Duties, there is one that will never be quite mended in this World, and that is Distraction; but yet more and more help may be still attained against it: And these Sermons which I now present you with, I hope with a Blessing from Heaven may contribute somewhat, and be successful this way.

If Religious Duties were but well done, everything else would be done the better; for it is from God alone that we have ability to do as we ought in any matter whatsoever. The Lord gives Wisdom and Grace most liberally to them who most sincerely seek him. And such as have most help from God, will best perform their Duty towards Man; and both Church and State will find them the most useful Members. Religion is certainly the truest Policy. The Wisdom of this World, says the Apostle, and of the Princes of this World comes to naught, but Godliness in the power of it, makes Men better in every Capacity and Relation. How does it alter and amend Persons, Families, Nations, where 'tis encouraged and prevails! Righteousness and Peace, Joy, and Love, are found to be the blessed effects of true Religion! It tames the fierceness, and subdues the malignity of corrupt Nature! And makes Man to look something like what he was in the state of Innocency!

All that wish well to this City and Nation, must needs desire that God may be better served, and that Men by his Service may be bettered. How happy should we be if People were all Righteous! Violence then would be no more heard in our Land, nor wasting and destruction within our Borders; our Walls would be called Salvation, and our Gates Praise, and the Lord himself would be to us an everlasting Light, and our God our Glory!

I wish that all Lord Mayors for the future may follow your Example, and endeavor to suppress Wickedness, and may never be ashamed of

Holiness, which is the Glory of God, and is most unreasonably looked upon as matter of Disgrace to any Man. Sir! You are descended from Religious Ancestors, and Religion is that which does truly ennoble your Blood and Family. An increase of this Nobility and of all other Blessings, is wisht to yourself and Yours. By,

Honored Sir,

Your Most Humble Servant,

Nathanael Vincent.

To the Reader.

Reader!

It is a Subject of the highest consequence, and in which all are concerned, that I Discourse of in this Treatise; and I design some relief against that which is the general Complaint of serious Christians, who would fain offer to God more Spiritual and well pleasing Sacrifices, but are hindered by the remaining Sin and Vanity of their own Minds. They are called indeed the Habitations of God through the Spirit; but these Habitations are haunted with distracting Thoughts, and vain Imaginations, to their great grief and disturbance. The Work and Service of the God of Heaven, is the principal business everyone has to do in this World; and though no Duties are to be slightly done to Man, which are done for the Lord's sake; yet in attendance upon himself, and in those Duties which more immediately we perform to him, an holy Awe becomes us; our

Hearts should be immovably fixed, and we should exert the utmost Vigor of our Spirits. To trifle with a Jealous God, whose All-seeing Eye strictly observes the whole we do, and wherein soever we fail, is to despise him to his Face, and to act to the great peril of our own Souls.

Our God, says the Apostle, is a consuming fire; and Nadab and Abihu, the Sons of Aaron, sound him so, to their cost and sorrow, when they offered strange fire, such as he commanded, them not. We must do what God commands, and as he commands, else what we call our Religious Duties, will be looked upon by him as acts of Disobedience.

The Mind of Man ever since the first Man parted from God, is notoriously fickle and wavering, being unsettled by Sin, it roves up and down the Earth from one Vanity to another; but how hardly is it brought back to God! And though it is engaged to approach near to him, yet if it be not narrowly watched, in the twinkling of an Eye, it starts back and is gone away from him. To keep our Hearts with all diligence, is our Duty, but they will not be held in from wandering by our most careful Custody. It is the Hand of that God alone, by which the whole Universe consists, and is kept from dissolution, that can fix the Mind of Man, and hinder its being distracted in his Service.

There is a great deal of Pains taken in the World to little purpose: All things, says Solomon, are full of labor, Man cannot utter it; and yet he affirms that there is no profit under the Sun. But 'tis lamentable to think that in the Church, there should be so much labor in vain. Distraction of Mind keeps the Heart away from God and from the Duty that seems to be performed to him; it hinders the stirring of holy Affections, the acting of saving Grace; and turns Religion into a mere Bodily Exercise: and how can that be profitable to the Soul,

which is a great way off, and so little regards what is done? How can it be acceptable to God, who is a Spirit, and will be worshipped in Spirit and in Truth?

The Church of Rome is for implicit Faith, for blind Obedience, and for Worship in an unknown Tongue. How distracted must that Worship needs be? How can the Peoples Thoughts be intent upon what they do not understand? Too many Protestants in their Devotions mind what themselves say, as little, as if they did not understand the words they spake; and truly the latter sin with greater aggravation, because having means of better instruction, their Duties are no better performed.

The Cure of Distraction in Religious Services, is very difficult; some think light of the Disease, and imagine the Cure needless; others are discouraged from striving against Distraction, as if it were impossible to overcome them, but nothing is too hard for the great Physician, he can heal the Mind's Vanity, bring the Heart into God's Presence; he is able to cast down Imaginations, and to hinder them from rising again, and to bring Thoughts into Captivity and Obedience.

A Sense of my own Wanderings in those Ordinances I administer, and engage in, has put me upon a more serious study how to prevent them. And I would be the first and best Follower myself, of that Counsel, which I give to others. And if the Lord is served with greater Attention and Spirituality; and if the Hearts of those who shall read this Treatise, are more than ever in the Work of God, and more benefited by doing it, the great End is obtained, which is designed by

Nathanael Vincent.

The Cure of Distractions in Attending Upon God.

That you may Attend upon the Lord without Distraction.

- 1 Cor. 7.35. lat. part.

The Apostle Paul had a great and fervent zeal for the honor of God, that he might have such attendance as he Commands; and which most rightfully appertains to a Lord so great, and good; unto whom, both Heaven and Earth do owe all Service and Obedience. The Apostle also manifests an extraordinary care of the Souls of Men; that they might not fail to give that Attendance which is enjoined them as their Duty: and is also their advantage, honor, and security. The thoughts, the hearts, the endeavors of all, should run this way; as to a matter of the mightiest importance and concernment. Here if we are undistractedly serious and sincere, all is safe; and that both throughout time, and to Eternity. But if Attendance upon God be either neglected, or negligently given, though we are never so intent and industrious about other things, our Souls and all our labor will be lost together.

In this Chapter a little before the Text, the Apostle admonishes the Corinthian Saints of the shortness of time, of the transitoriness of this present World; and then informs them, what kind of Attendance upon himself, God required, and expected from them.

1. His Admonition concerning Time is startling, Time is contracted to a little space. An allusion here is to Sails, which are no longer spread, but bound up when the Ship is just come to the Harbor. The word <H&G>, also signifies to wind up a Body in Grave clothes, that it may

be fit for the Sepulcher. Time is thus ready to be wound up continually, and to be buried as it were in Eternity: compared with this, 'tis but as a drop to the whole Ocean: and this very drop is ever wasting. Time is a short thing; in a continual Flux; and every moment growing shorter. Other things are of the less value, because they can be enjoyed but a little while: the Epithet Temporal, or lasting only for a season, being added to the greatest Wealth, the highest Pleasures, nay, to Diadems and Kingdoms, makes them fall in the esteem of a discerning Judgment. But the worth of Time is enhanced by the brevity of it. The day of Salvation, the accepted time in which we, and our attendance upon God, may be accepted of, cannot extend beyond the limits of the time of life. Now we must make Peace with God, work out our own Salvation, and provide for Eternity; this must be done now or never: There is not a moment of time but is too good to be lost; there is Service and work enough to do in it: and to lose all our time, is everlastingly to lose ourselves.

2. The Apostle speaks of the Worlds transitoriness, the fashion of the World passes away. Mammon is but a sorry Master; and really is unworthy of that numerous attendance, and mighty respect which is given to him. Sin has made man foolish, and the world vain. And 'tis an undeniable argument of Man's Folly that a vain World is so much minded; which is so apt to fade and change. As Scenes in a Comedy or Tragedy alter, and quickly the last Act comes; and the Play is at an end: so this World is continually varying. Now there appears one, and a little after, quite and clean another Face of things. The Face of the Sky is not more mutable, than the state of human Affairs. And thus 'tis likely to be to the World's End, when the Earth, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up.

That God whom Christians attend upon is unchangeable, and so is his love to them; and the inheritance they expect hereafter is

incorruptible, and fadeth not away. But they themselves are Strangers and Pilgrims in this World; and should behave themselves as Passengers that are travelling towards a better World. And as for their Enjoyments by the way, they should love them, as being about to leave them. Joy should be moderate in the fruition of them; and when they are taken away, Sorrow should not be excessive, nor transgress the Bounds of Grace and Reason.

3. The Apostle, as a Man well acquainted with the Court of Heaven, directs Believers Attendance upon the Lord, who dwells and reigns there. He is very careful not to cast a Snare upon the Corinthians; nor to impose upon Conscience what God does not. Papal Authority is Audacious and Antichristian, and makes bold to Command, and that upon the highest Penalty, what the Lord never required. But the Apostle abhors spiritual Usurpation: He would have all observe what God called them to; and in every condition to abide with God, and to attend upon the Lord without Distraction.

In the words take notice,

1. Of the Lord with whom we have to do. The Eyes of Servants are to their Masters; and the Eyes of Worshippers should be to the Lord whom they adore; and if they had a greater respect to this holy One, what an influence would it have upon their Lives and Services! The word Lord, in the New Testament, is put for Jehovah in the Old. The God whom Christians acknowledge, is the Lord Jehovah, who has his Being of himself, and has Dominion over all.

2. Observe what this Lord requires and calls for, and that is attendance upon him. The Greek word which the Holy Ghost uses is very significant and emphatical, <H&G>, implies, access unto God, and abiding with him; and being sit for, and well-pleased with, both the one and the other.

3. Who are to attend upon the Lord? All Men do owe Homage and Service to him; which is their Honor and Interest to pay: But those who are his own Children and People, are by special obligations and favor called to this duty and privilege of attending upon their God; and they have a new Principle and Nature which inclines them to it.

4. Here is a direction as to the manner of attending on the Lord, it must be without distraction. Plutarch calls that *Studium sapientiae*, the study of Wisdom without Distraction, when nothing is able to call away the Mind, and make it cease that study. In attending upon God, there must be intention in the mind, a full bent of the heart; with strength of affection and desire; not to be diverted, much less to be extinguished. All other business, comparatively, must be looked upon as trivial; attendance upon the Lord must be with the greatest seriousness.

I raise three Doctrines from the words.

First, The Children of Men ought to attend upon God; this the Text plainly supposes.

Secondly, In attending upon God we should look upon him as the Lord; and serve him accordingly.

Thirdly, Attendance upon the Lord should be without Distraction.

Doctrine. I.

The Children of Men ought to attend upon God

I begin with the first of these Doctrines: The Children of Men ought to attend upon God. The Heaven of Heavens is his Throne; and he is attended on by thousands and ten thousands of glorious and holy Ones, who minister unto him, and stand before him. And yet upon Earth, which is his Footstool, he calls for Attendance too; for he rejoices in the habitable parts of the Earth, and his delights are with the Sons of Men; who understand him and themselves so well, as to seek after him. He requires continually to be waited on, Hos. 12.6. Therefore turn thou to thy God, keep Mercy and Judgment, and wait on thy God continually. Injunctions to wait are reiterated, with the encouraging promise of Divine Aid and strengthening Grace, Psal. 27.14. Wait on the Lord, be of good Courage, he shall strengthen thy Heart; wait I say on the Lord. Psal. 37.34. Wait on the Lord, and keep his way; this way is true; walking in it, is holy and safe; and the end is Peace.

In the handling of this Doctrine I shall;

First, Show you what is supposed in Man's Attendance upon God.

Secondly, I shall tell you what is implied in this Attendance.

Thirdly, I shall speak of several sorts of Attending upon the Lord.

Fourthly, I shall assign the Reasons why the Children of Men ought to give their Attendance upon God.

Fifthly, Make Application.

In the first place, I am to show you what is supposed in Man's Attendance upon God. There are several pre-requisites unto this; for Man is not easily persuaded to this Duty; though the performance of it prove never so beneficial to him. Now that there may be this Attendance:

1. Man must firmly believe that there is a God, Heb. 11.6. But without Faith 'tis impossible to please him; for he that cometh unto God must believe that He is. As God is to everlasting, so he is from everlasting. If he had not ever been, and that of himself, he would never have been; neither could anything else ever have had a Being. Creatures Existence supposes there is a Creator; and Attendance upon God supposes there is a God to be attended on. The stronger the Assent to this, is, the greater will be the care to understand how the Attendance may be acceptable. The Being of a God, there are few that deny in words; but there are abundance who deny him in their works; even among them who profess to know him, Tit. 1.16. And being so foolish as to say in their Hearts there is no God: No wonder that with their hearts they refuse to seek him.

Man should look upward, and see how the Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament showeth his handy-work, Psal. 19.1. The Visible Creation is not more obvious to the Eye, than the Eternal Power and Godhead of him who made all things, is clearly to be seen by the Mind of Man, Rom. 1.20. And if Man will but look into his own Heart, he may find this Truth deeply engraven there, that God is; therefore the Apostle speaks thus of the Gentiles, who had only the Light of Nature, Rom. 1.19. for that which may be known of God, is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. Let not any go about to obliterate this Truth concerning the Being of a God, but undoubtingly credit it; for 'tis the first Stone in the Foundation of all truly Religious Service and Obedience.

2. Man must have a sense that he had his Being from God, and was made for him; and truly he is made such a Creature, that he will never be quite unmade, so as to become nothing. He is capable of knowing and serving his Maker; and enjoying him forever; God has made all Men for himself; and some way or other he will secure his own Honor, and have Glory from the very worst. But as for his own People, he has formed, bought, and new made them for himself, that they might show forth his Praise, Isa. 43.21. Man should Eye the Hand that made him, and the End for which he was made. Our Bodies will be found a curious piece of Divine Workmanship, if the contexture, variety, and use of their parts are considered: But though our Flesh is of God's Forming, yet in a more immediate manner, he is called the Father of our Spirits. And wherefore have our Souls a thinking Faculty, but that God may be thought of? Wherefore have we Memories, but that our Creator from our Youth may be remembered? And if we live to Gray-hairs, he in no wise is to be forgotten. Wherefore are we capable of loving, desiring, and taking delight; but that God may be the chief Object of these Affections? In him we live, and move, and have our Being, Acts 17.28. that we might live to him, move according to his Will, and be indeed his Servants.

3. Man must be persuaded that God is rightfully his Ruler, and has given him a Law and Commandments, by which he is to be governed. Mammon and Satan are mere Usurpers, and where they reign they ruin. The evil One is to be resisted, not obeyed; and Man was made to have Dominion over the Creatures, not to be enslaved by them. But God is Man's Sovereign by Right, and may lay upon Man what Commands he pleases, but has given them none but what are holy, just and good, Rom. 7.12. And the better these are obeyed, Man becomes more holy, just, and good himself, and partakes more of the Divine Nature. Would we attend upon God? We must have respect unto his Commands. David plainly intimates the gain of Obedience;

when he says, more are they to be esteemed than Gold, yea, than much fine Gold. He signifies the pleasure of Obedience, when he adds, sweeter also than the honey, and the honey comb, Psal. 19.10.

4. Man must be convinced, that by sin he has departed from God, and has justly incurred his displeasure. The natural distance between God and Man as a Creature, must ever remain: God is, and will be forever, infinitely above, and superior even to those that are in Heaven: he humbles himself to behold the things that are there, Psal. 113.6. But the moral distance that is between God and Man, or the enmity that Sin is the cause of, may be made to cease. When Man attends upon God, he should come with deep sense how he has provoked him: that he is by Nature a Child of Wrath, Eph. 2.3, and in his practice a Rebel; and as he has acted like one, so he deserves to be dealt with as an Enemy. When the Syrians came to the King of Israel, they had Sackcloth on their Loins, and Ropes on their Heads, 1 Kings 20.32. They had newly been in Arms against him; and now they declare how ill they deserved to be treated by him. For offenders to approach unto God without any trouble for their offenses, 'tis not to Attend upon him, but to Affront him. Those are his own words, Woe to them for they have fled from me; destruction unto them, because they have transgressed against me, Hos. 7.13. And hear the Language of the penitent Church, Lam. 5.16. The Crown is fallen from our Head; woe to us that we have sinned. When we come for Mercy, we must be sensible that Mercy is undeserved, and that confusion of Face belongs to us, Dan. 9.8. A penitential Acknowledgment there should be, that we have been foolish, disobedient, deceived; that we have served divers Lusts and Pleasures; and in ourselves are so hateful to God, that we are unworthy to be admitted into the number of his Attendants.

5. Man must hear the Call of God; to return to him; and to Obedience and Duty. The Angels that sinned were not spared, nor called to attend upon God in order to their recovery after their Apostasy. Indeed we find Satan an Intruder among the Sons of God, who came to present themselves before the Lord, Job 1.6. but it was not to beg Grace for himself; his Chains of Darkness hindered his Hope of finding any; he comes as an Accuser of Job, and with a desire of a Permission to do him a Mischief. But Man, though departed from God, is called to come back again, Hos. 14.1. O Israel, return to the Lord thy God, for thou hast fallen by thy Iniquity. Man is sought after as well as saved, or sought that he may be saved: And if the Lord did not seek him, but leave him to his own Imagination and Inclination, his Imaginations are so vain, his Inclinations so perverse and wicked, he would never cease going astray, till he died without Wisdom. The Call of God is loud and earnest, that Man would turn from his Disobedience, and do his Duty, Prov. 8.4. Unto you, O Men, I call, and my voice is to the Sons of Man. Prov. 1.23. Turn you at my reproof, behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. Prov. 8.34. Blessed is the Man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.

6. Man must look upon God as accessible in Christ. When Adam fell into the first Transgression, showing a Contempt of God, and of his Covenant, and the Life that was there promised; he was turned out of Paradise, and a flaming Sword was placed to hinder his re-entering, and access to the Tree of Life. Life was impossible to be had by the first Covenant; therefore he and his Faith were directed to the promised Seed, who should bruise the Serpents head; and in time would be manifested to destroy the Works of the Devil, 1 John 3.8. This Work of the Devil was Sin, whereby Man had departed from his Maker: Now Christ the second Adam, suffered once for Sins, the Just

for the Unjust, that he might bring Man to God, and make up the Breach that Sin had made between them, 1 Pet. 3.18. As God is but One, so there is but One Mediator between God and Men, the Man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a Ransom for all, 1 Tim. 2.5, 6. no access to God by any other: But says the Apostle, In Christ Jesus our Lord we have boldness, and access with confidence by the Faith of him, Eph. 3.12. Under the Old Testament there was but one Temple, one Altar for Burnt offering and Sin offering to make an Atonement: A Heathen thought it a dishonor to the Lord Jehovah; that Hezekiah had taken away his high Places and his Altars, and had commanded Judah and Jerusalem to Worship before one Altar, 2 Chron. 32.12. But the mystery and meaning of this was, that Jesus Christ alone is the Way, the Truth, and the Life; and that no Man cometh to the Father but by him.

7. Man must plainly discern his Ignorance and Impotence to give a right Attendance upon God, without the Direction and Aid of his Word and Spirit. Nay, as Man does want both Skill and Strength to serve the Lord, so he has no Will to it; there is an Indisposition and an Ill disposition in him; which plainly shows that the Light and Grace of the Word and Spirit is of absolute necessity, unto an Attendance upon God that is acceptable to him. When Man is off from God, and betakes himself to himself in Matters of Religion, he rangeth infinitely, like a Sea-faring Man who has lost his Compass in a Mist, moving swiftly but to no purpose. Now there shall be more words than that which is written, more Articles than what God has put into our Creed, more Commands than the Law-giver ever gave; nay, more God's and more Mediators than One: Mans Invention will be fruitlessly Fruitful, and himself restless and endless in his own ways. We should see our need of Instruction and Help from the Spirit of the Lord: Both Light and Liberty, Strength and Liveliness in all Holy Duties, is from Him.

'It is through the Son as Mediator, and 'tis by the Spirit as our Helper, that we have access to the Father, Eph. 2.18. The Apostle acknowledges, We know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit helps our infirmities; the holy and gracious desires of the Saints, are the breathings of this spirit in them; acceptable Petitions that will find Audience, are of his drawing up, and enditing. He maketh intercession for the Saints according to the Will of God, Rom. 8.26, 27. He is the instructor of all those who are taught to profit. Ordinances, Gifts, Administrations which are so useful, are from the Spirit, and the benefit and success of them is owing to him; his Aid is earnestly to be implored, and thankfully to be accepted. Preparation to Attendance upon God is necessary, Psal. 10.17. Thou wilt prepare their Heart, thou wilt cause thine Ear to hear; and this preparation is the work of the Spirit.

8. Man must not doubt, but be thoroughly persuaded that God is ready to be found of such as attend upon him, and is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him, Heb. 11.6. Satan affects to be the Representer of God to Man; and he represents him contrary ways; and both are false, and indeed misrepresentations; from secure Souls, he does endeavor to hide the Wrath of God, his Holiness, Justice and Jealousy, that he may heighten presumption; from awakened and humble Hearts, he does endeavor to conceal his Mercy and Grace in Christ, that he may kill their Hope, and discourage them from engaging in the work of God. But 'tis Wisdom in Man to hear what the Lord speaks of himself; for he best knows himself, and the Revelations he makes of himself are most certainly true. Now as he has told us, that he will wound the Head of his Enemies; and he accounts those Enemies who go on still in their trespasses, Psal. 68.21, so he has assured us that he is good and ready to forgive those who are troubled because they have offended,

and see their need of pardon; and he is plenteous in Mercy unto all that in Truth do call upon him, Psal. 68.5.

'It is a mighty encouragement to attend upon God, when we see the door of Hope standing open, and that the Lord takes pleasure in those who fear his displeasure, and hope in his mercy together. Psal. 147.11. The Tables of the Law were put into the Ark, and the mercy-seat was above it; a plain intimation, that the Lord who sits upon this mercy-seat, will not enter into Judgment with his Servants, nor mark the iniquities; but be merciful to the unrighteousness of them that turn to him; this should raise Hope in dejected Spirits, and cause it to abound. Psal. 130.7, 8. Let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is Mercy, and with him is plenteous Redemption, and he shall redeem Israel from all his Iniquities.

9. Man must not think to divide his Service between God and Mammon. Our Lord himself tells us, that no Man can serve two Masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other; ye cannot serve God and Mammon. To mind the World as if it were the most desirable thing, and to serve the Lord, only for the World's sake; this is hateful earthly-mindedness, and Hypocrisy. When the Children of Israel assembled themselves before God, only for Corn and Wine; their Cries were but howling's in his Ears. Hos. 7.14. If we would attend upon God, we must come out from the World. Conformity to the World, and walking after the course of it, must cease. The most desirable good things of it must be contemned in comparison with God, and the better and enduring substance. We shall never look and aim at, so as to obtain the things that are unseen and eternal; unless the Eye be shut against the things that are seen and temporal, 2 Cor. 4.18.

Not but that Attenders upon God may and ought to mind their secular business which their particular Callings lead them to. Christians are cautioned against idleness as great disorderliness; and are commanded and exhorted by our Lord Jesus Christ with quietness to work, and to Eat their own Bread, 2 Thes. 3.11, 12. This notwithstanding must ever be remembered; that the things of this World are to be regarded so far as God has commanded, that they must be begged of him, they must be kept, used, and improved for him; they must not be liked for themselves, but so far as God is enjoyed with them, and in them. And in the greatest abundance of them, this should be the Heart's Language, which came from the Heart and Mouth of Luther; *Noli his satiari*; Lord I will not be put off with such things as these! The Lord is my Portion saith my Soul; and I have looked and longed, and wait for thy Salvation!

10. Man must consent to cast away whatever may separate between the Lord and him. And what that is, the Prophet plainly tells us, Isa. 59.1, 2. Behold the Lord's Hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his Ear heavy that it cannot hear; but your Iniquities have separated between you and your God; and your Sins have hid his Face from you, that he will not hear. Separation from God is the Hell of Hell; and this Hell upon Earth, Sin is the cause of. Sin is that which provokes the Lord to be angry with Man, and with his Soul to hate him; to behold him afar off: so that he is not admitted unto his Favor, or unto Fellowship and Communion with him. To talk of Fellowship with God, and to walk in this darkness of Sin, is to lie to others, and to deceive ourselves. This middle Wall of Partition must be thrown down, else there can be no drawing nigh to God. Jam. 4.8. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you: Cleanse your hands ye sinners, purify your hearts ye double-minded. The Hand must not practice and work wickedness; the Heart must not regard and like it. The more the Heart is desirous of Purity, the fitter it is to attend

upon the Lord, to serve him and to see him. Therefore you read Mat. 5.8. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God; and 2 Cor. 6.17, 18. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you; and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my Sons and Daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.

In the second place, I am to tell you what is implied in Man's Attendance upon God. This Attendance is of large extent, and takes in all the Service he Commands: In Scripture 'tis expressed sometimes by following of God, sometimes by waiting upon the Lord; and in the Text by Attending. I shall explain what this is in several particulars.

1. Attending upon God implies enquiring of God. He is only Wise, the Father of Lights, from whom all true Wisdom, and every good and perfect gift comes down, Jam. 1.17. The Wisdom of this World, and of the Princes of this World, however 'tis magnified as the most profound Policy, cannot secure them that are most excellent this way, but they and their Wisdom come to naught, and perish together; but spiritual Wisdom which is hidden from the prudent of the World, and is the especial gift of God, is ordained to the Glory of them that have it, 1 Cor. 2.6, 7. Wisdom to Salvation and everlasting Glory; deserves the name of Wisdom, sound Wisdom it may well be called. Prov. 2.6, 7. For the Lord giveth Wisdom, out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding, he layeth up sound Wisdom for the Righteous, he is a Buckler to them that walk uprightly.

Our inquiry must be of God for Wisdom of this Nature. He gives it to all that desire and ask it, and that liberally without upbraiding, Jam. 1.5. He upbraids not any with their former hatred of knowledge, or contempt of Wisdom; neither does he upbraid them with their

natural dullness and unaptness to learn, but both instruction, and also the very heart and ability to receive it, are from him, Prov. 20.12. The hearing Ear and the seeing Eye, the Lord hath made even both of them. The Psalmist thus; desired to attend upon God, all the days of his life, that he might inquire in his Temple, Psal. 27.4. They are well counseled, and are led safe to Glory; who have God to be their guide even unto death, and still follow on to know the Lord.

2. Attending upon God implies hearkening, and heeding what God speaks. Psal. 85.8. I will hear what God the Lord will speak; and what Attention does such a speaker deserve, who speaks from Heaven; and whose Word shows the way to Heaven! who speaks peace, and publishes glad-tidings of great Salvation! When Lydia her heart was opened, that she attended unto those things which were spoken of Paul, Acts 16.14. She heard Paul 's Voice, but believed the Lord spake by him to her; and she regarded the message accordingly. We attend upon God in the Ministry of the Word, when our Eye looks beyond the Ministry unto the Lord himself; and our Ear is attentive that we may understand his Truths which are to be believed, his Precepts that are to be obeyed. Now the Word comes with a Divine Power and Efficacy, when God is heard speaking in the Word, 1 Thes. 2.13. For this cause also thank we God without ceasing; because when ye received the Word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of Men, but, as it is in truth the Word of God; which effectually worketh also in you that believe. It concerns us to take heed what we hear, and how. We should be forward to be made acquainted with God's Truth and Will; and neither should be held in unrighteousness; for to hear what God speaks, and not to mind it, but to act quite contrary, is disobedience with an high aggravation.

3. Attending upon God implies returning and yielding ourselves unto God. Man is naturally Contentious, and struggles hard about this

point; and will not yield that God should direct and rule; and that 'tis reasonable, that he in all things should submit and obey. Man till he is instructed and enlightened from above, will be still murmuring and disputing against his Duty, and will not come to God, though God is Light, and can shine into his Mind; though Divine Goodness can satiate Man's Soul, though the Lord has supreme and sufficient Authority to Command the Conscience, and to lay the whole Man under obligation to Obedience. But when we attend upon God indeed, we hearken to his Call to return, and we return at his Call.

There cannot be a right Attendance without sincere Conversion; and this Conversion is Man's yielding of himself to his Lord. Rom. 6.12, 13. Let not sin reign in your mortal Bodies, that ye should obey it in the Lusts thereof, neither yield ye your Members as instruments of unrighteousness unto Sin; but yield ye yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the Dead, and your Members as instruments of Righteousness unto God. The Body must be yielded, that the Holy Ghost may Consecrate it to the Lord's Service; that Eyes and Mouth, and Hands and Feet, and all may be at God's Beck, and ready to fulfill his Pleasure. And especially the Heart must be yielded, nay, the whole heart, else returning is but feigned. Jer. 3.10. Her treacherous Sister Judah, hath not returned to me with her whole heart, but feignedly saith the Lord. The Soul must consent to have all its powers renewed and sanctified, that with them all it may give Attendance upon God; the Heart without any reservation must yield, that God should work out of it whatever is offensive, that he should work in it that which is pleasing in his sight.

4. Attending upon God implies seeking and desiring after God. Isa. 26.9. With my Soul have I desired thee in the Night, yea with my Spirit will I seek thee early. The bent of the very Soul was towards God, and the desires are kept up in vehemency both Night and Day.

The Lord humbles himself to behold things done in Heaven; yet he looks down upon the Children of Men upon Earth, to see if there be any that understand and seek him. And if he seeks after these seekers, how ready is he to be found of them! The Command is, that we should seek the Lord and his strength, and his Face evermore, Psal. 105.4. God is to be sought unto for himself, when the all-sufficient Jehovah gives himself to any; he gives infinitely more than if he gave them many thousand such Worlds as this is. His strength is of absolute necessity, to secure us from evil, and to assist us in the doing of good; and the shining of his Face makes our work easy and pleasant, it makes our Life, and even Death itself comfortable. No wonder therefore, when God said, Seek ye my Face; one of his Attendants heard presently, as the Echo answers the Voice, said, Thy Face Lord will I seek, Psal. 27.8. To seek to any else is vain; 'tis seeking for Water in a broken Cistern that can hold none. Men of low degree, though never so great a multitude, are vanity; and Men of highest degree are a lie, Psal. 62.9. But God's Power, Mercy and Truth are an evident proof that he is forward and sufficient to satiate the Souls of all, that charge their Souls to wait only upon him, and to have their expectations from him.

5. Attending upon God implies waiting upon him in his own House and Sanctuary. Every Christian's House should be a House of Prayer; but the place of public assembling to Worship should be highly prized, and frequented for the work sake that is performed there. The living, the true, the eternal God is here publicly owned and acknowledged, and so is the only Mediator Jesus, as also the Holy Ghost; whose Aid and Grace is all in all, as to the efficacy and success of those Ordinances which are administered. Saints that have seen God's Power and Glory in his Sanctuary; it is no marvel that their Souls thirst for God, for the living God; and that's the Language of their Hearts, When shall we come and appear before God, Psal. 42.2.

As the Sanctuary was next to the holiest of all, so the House of God on Earth, is as it were, the Suburbs of the City of God in Heaven. The Sanctuary is the place where the Light of holy and heavenly Doctrine shines. Here the Psalmist understood the end of the ungodly, and that all their prosperity was but a Dream and Image, being abused by themselves, to further and hasten their destruction; for they are quickly cast down from their greatest height, and brought into Desolation as in a moment, and utterly consumed with Terrors, Psal. 73.17, 18, 19. Here also he understood how good God is to Israelites indeed; when he does afflict them; his Rod guides them, purges their Hearts; he upholds them with one hand, when he corrects them with another; he makes earthly things more contemptible in their Eyes, and sets their Affections more upon himself, who is their Portion forever. In the Sanctuary Believers are quickened, strengthened, comforted and settled: And this one thing they desire of the Lord, and that they seek after, that they may dwell in the House of the Lord all the days of their life, that they may behold the Beauty of the Lord, his Holiness and Grace in Christ, with the admirable Harmony of all his Attributes; and that they may perpetually be enquiring in his Temple; until being guided unto Death, and brought safe to Glory, they are past all danger, Psal. 27.4.

6. Attending upon God implies not only keeping the way of his Ordinances and Institutions, but minding his Dispensations, and the manner of his dealing with us. The Ordinances of the Gospel are from Heaven, and not of Men. Men have no right to institute, who have no power to bless. Men's Inventions in Religion, though often followed with great eagerness, are found unprofitable and vain to them that have been Zealous for them. But the Ordinances which the Lord himself has appointed, he is ready to own and make effectual to them that attend upon him in the use of them: so that they shall have reason to say, they have sought the Lord and have found him; and

have tasted and seen that he is gracious: Ordinances are Feasts with which Saints are entertained, called by the Prophet, Feasts of fat things full of Marrow, and of Wine on the Lees-well refined, Isa. 25.6. And the People of God are so strengthened, revived and delighted, and have such sensible Communion with him, as that they speak out their Joy and Satisfaction, v. 9. Lo this is our God, and we have waited for him, he will save us; this is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his Salvation. Those are dangerously puffed up with Pride and Self-conceit, that think themselves above Ordinances; and 'tis not a commendable Humility for them that desire the spiritual Benefit of Ordinances, to imagine that Ordinances are above them. They are in no wise to be neglected; for they are the golden Pipes, Zach. 4.12. which convey the Grace of the Spirit, compared to Oil, into the Hearts of Men.

And as Attenders upon God are found in the way of his Ordinances, so they observed diligently God's dealing with them. They take notice how he looks upon them, whether there are Smiles, or Frowns in his Face; they regard what God speaks, whether it be by way of Counsel, Caution, Rebuke, or Comfort; they heed what the Spirit says to them, and what Communications of Grace are vouchsafed. They are attentive to regard the works of the Lord, and to consider the operation of his hands. Does he afflict? They turn to him that smites them, and desire to be more fully instructed, and more thoroughly purged, Isa. 27.9. Does he load them with Benefits? They are affected with his lovingkindness, and sensible how obligations grow stronger to praise and please him.

7. Attending upon God implies expecting all from him. From this one Fountain flow the Streams of all sorts of Blessings. In our Father's House there is Bread enough, and to spare; and how many soever are received and attend there, there is room for more; and not only

room, but Entertainment. The Apostle though he was as having nothing, yet had such a confident expectation from God, as if he had all things in possession. 2 Cor. 6.10. as having nothing and yet possessing all things. He assures the believing Philippians, that God would supply all their needs according to his Riches in Glory by Christ Jesus, Phil. 4.19. The Psalmist in danger and calamity, betakes himself to the mercy of God, and the shadow of his Wings for refuge, and cries unto him as the most High, who performed all things for him, Psal. 57.1, 2. Who questions whether the Sun be full of Light? Whether the Ocean abound with Water? Much less reason is there to question God's Power and Will to answer the expectations of his People that attend upon him. It is his pleasure that they should wait upon him for everything; and knock at his door, whatever they have to ask. Abounding in hope is acceptable to God, and will not issue in disappointment. Therefore says David, Psal. 71.14. But I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more.

8. Attending upon God implies readiness to do whatever he Commands; and to engage at his bidding in any Service. Nominal Attendants will cry Lord, Lord; but real ones will do the things which he says. There are an innumerable company of Angels who excel in strength, who wait on God, and those do his Commandments, hearkening to the Voice of his Word, Psal. 103.20. That they may fulfill their Maker's Pleasure, they minister to them that shall be Heirs of Salvation, Heb. 1.14. Attendance includes a disposition to yield Obedience. 'It is thus expressed Psal. 119.48. My Hands will I lift up to thy Commandments which I have loved. The lifting up the Hands, shows a forwardness to receive whatever Command God shall give; and a readiness to set about the doing whatever he requires. That's becoming Language, Speak Lord, for thy Servant heareth; and he that is truly a Servant, will act according to what he hears his Lord speaking; and he will not give back, though he is put

upon the hardest and hottest Service. Abraham rose early in the Morning to obey God's Command, to offer up his Son Isaac. And the Lord swore to him by himself, because he had not withheld his Son, his only Son from him; that in blessing he would bless him, Gen. 22.16, 17. 'It is a temper of Mind in which God delights, when his Attendants resolve to Obey without any exception, 1 Sam. 15.22. Hath the Lord as great delight in Burnt-offering and Sacrifices; as in obeying the Voice of the Lord? Behold to Obey is better than Sacrifice; and to hearken, than the Fat of Rams.

9. Attending upon God implies giving Glory to his Name, and acknowledging that his is the Kingdom and the Power. Though the Offerings and Sacrifices enjoined by the Law are to be offered no more; Christ who was typified by those Sacrifices, having offered up himself once for all, and put away Sin by the Sacrifice of himself; yet under the New Testament Dispensation, Attendants upon God have their Sacrifices to offer: they must present themselves a living Sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is their reasonable Service, Rom. 12.1. and says the Apostle, Heb. 13.15. By Him therefore, by Christ Jesus, let us offer the Sacrifice of Praise to God continually; that is the fruit of our Lips, giving thanks to his Name. Those glorious Spirits which attend above, and surround the Throne in the Heavenly Kingdom, Praise is their perpetual employment: and to their Eternal Joy and Delight, they find perpetual reason for it. Worthy is the Lord to receive Glory and Honor, and Power; for he has created all things, and for his Pleasure they are and were created. Worthy also is the Lamb that was slain, to receive the same; and therefore Blessing, and Honor, and Glory, and Power, be unto him that sits upon the Throne, and to the Lamb forever, Rev. 4.11. & 5.13.

This Service of Thanksgiving, the Lord much insists on, is well-pleased with, and accounts himself glorified by. Psal. 113.1, 2, 3.

Praise ye the Lord; Praise, O ye Servants of the Lord: Praise the Name of the Lord: Blessed be the Name of the Lord from this time forth, and for evermore; from the rising of the Sun to the going down of the same, the Lord's Name is to be praised. Behold also, how acceptable thankful Attendants are. Psal. 69.30, 31. I will praise the Name of God with a Song, and will magnify him with Thanksgiving; this also shall please the Lord better than an Ox or Bullock that hath Horns and Hoofs. And this is our way of Glorifying God, who is so infinitely Glorious, that to his Glory no addition can be made, but only a Declaration and Acknowledgment made of it: and when these Acknowledgments are largest, it must be confessed, that he is exalted above all Blessings and Praise.

10. Attendance upon God implies a continuing to follow him. Holy David says, his Ears were opened, or bored, to hearken to God's Voice, Psal. 40.6. Here is an Allusion unto the Israelitish Servant, who was so well in his Master's House, that he refused to go out free at the year of release; and had his Ear bored with an Awl to the Post of the Door, to signify his resolution to serve his Master continually. To profess Service to the Lord, and then to depart from him, is highly to reproach and dishonor him, and in effect to say, that fleshly and worldly Lusts are better Lord's than He; 'tis more notoriously to despise him, and to harden others in their contempt of him, and of his Word and Commandments. Attenders upon God give not over following him in all those ways he has commanded them to walk in. They follow on to know him, they follow him fully, and being upheld with the right hand of his Righteousness, their Souls follow hard after him, Psal. 63.8. And whom should they follow? To whom else should they go? The Lord has the words of Eternal Life, He alone has Grace, and Honor, and Glory, and all good things else to give; and to go away from him is to lose all this, and to tread the path which leads to Eternal Death. Attenders upon God cannot change their Lord, but

they must change for the worse; nay, the very best for the very worst of all: therefore they are unchangeably his, steadfast and unmovable, always abiding, and abounding in his Work and Service.

In the third place, I am to speak of several sorts of Attending upon God. It will be needful to insist particularly on these, that you may have a more distinct understanding of your Duty in the Extent and Latitude of it. The Scripture makes a great difference between Attendance, and Attendance upon God; so that there are diverse kinds of it, as shall be manifested in these following Distinctions.

I. There is an Attendance upon God which is with the lips and body only; and that which is with the Heart also. I begin with this distinction to prevent Hypocrisy and Formality in Religious Duties, whereby the Jealous God is so much provoked, and Professors deceive others, but principally cheat and ruin their own Souls.

1. An Attendance which is with the lips and body only. God by the Prophet spake against this, and by his own Son shows the vanity of it, and how displeasing 'tis to him, Mat. 15.7, 8. Ye Hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This People draweth near unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. The body indeed is to give Attendance, as being the Temple of the Spirit. The Tongue is then most Angelical, and Man's Glory, when most enlargedly it does confess to God, call upon, and praise and magnify his Name. But if when the eyes are lift up towards Heaven, the hands are stretched forth with great eagerness, the knees bow with seeming Humility and Devotion, and the words of the mouth are serious and holy, and with appearing fervency; all this while the heart keeps aloof, and at a distance from God; values not his love, his grace, or Communion with him; but goes after its pleasures, lusts and covetousness: Alas! Here is only a dead and

rotten carcass of a Duty without a Soul; and 'tis very loathsome and abominable. In all Religious Performances, if the heart does not at all care to draw near; 'tis certain the Lord will not draw near neither as to his gracious presence: And if God be not found in the Duty, nor the Heart of the performer found there, how unprofitable must the performance needs be!

2. There is an Attendance upon God not with the Body only, but with the Heart also. He speaketh unto us as unto Children, and saith, My Son give me thy heart, Prov. 23.26. Give him never so much without this, you give him nothing that he cares for. The Heart does the chief part in the pure and acceptable Worship of God. The Heart must keep his Commandments, else they are not kept. Prov. 3.1. My Son forget not my Law, but let thy Heart keep my Commandments. The Psalmist lifted up his very Soul to God, Psal. 25.1. this the Lord looked at, and liked. Those Graces which are to be acted in Attendance upon God, as Faith and holy Reverence, Love, Desire, and Hope, and such like, the Heart is the Seat of them; and 'tis by the Heart that they are exercised. And when the Heart being cleansed from its Defilements, and weaned from the Allurements of this World, draws very near to God; and God also draws very near; these his nearer approaches, how reviving, how healing and confirming are they! When the Spirit of a Saint does before the time, in a sense return to God who gave it, and converse with him in the heavenly places, that converse how high, and joyful, and beneficial is it found! When Moses came down from the Mount where he had been with God, his Face did shine; and when the Heart has been above in Heaven, a clearer light does shine into it, and 'tis more gloriously transformed into the Divine Image and Nature.

II. There is an Attendance upon God which is voluntary, and which is through constraint and forced.

1. An Attendance which is voluntary; When God by his powerful Grace inclines and determines the Will to himself; so that He is chosen, and his special Favor and Blessings are valued above all things. A mighty strength is put forth, and yet without coercion, in bending the Will of Man towards God, and to his Will, which naturally is so perverse and obstinate in Evil, that 'tis fitly compared to an Iron Sinew. What a Power is it which makes it pliable! Psal. 110.3. Thy People shall be willing in the day of thy Power. And when to will is thus wrought, the Heart is then enlarged, and at liberty to come to God, and to do its Duty. There is a renewed Nature, which is principium motus, a principle of spiritual Motion. This is notably expressed. Zach. 8.21. And the Inhabitants of one City shall go to another, saying, let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of Hosts. I will go also. The like temper we find, Jer. 50.5. They shall ask the way to Zion with their Faces thitherward, saying, come and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual Covenant that shall not be forgotten.

2. There is an Attendance which is through constraint, and forced. The Heart is not right with God, nor taken with himself at all. But pressing necessity drives the Soul to him, for some benefit which none but he can bestow. Or there are some indications of God's Anger and Displeasure. The effects of which, they which attend upon him, feel or fear; whereupon they are forced to cry for mercy. Such kind of Attenders were those, Psal. 78.34, 35, 36, 37. When he slew them then they sought him, they returned and inquired early after God; they remembered that God was their Rock, and the high God their Redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their Mouth, and lied unto him with their Tongues; for their Heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his Covenant. Had they not felt God's Hand, he had not heard their Voice; had not peril been extreme, they would not have run to this Rock for refuge: had not

enemies pressed hard upon them, they would not have cried to this high Redeemer for deliverance. But their cries were lies and flatteries. As soon as the danger was in their apprehension over, their naughty Hearts started aside like deceitful bows, and they soon returned to their corrupt way. In Attending upon God let not Affliction, Conviction, and fear of punishment, be the only cords that hale you to your Duty. The more there is of God's Servants wills in his work, the more acceptable and well-pleasing is the Service.

III. There is an Attendance upon God which is ordinary, and extraordinary.

1. An Attendance upon God which is ordinary. As we are ordinarily to be employed in the works of our particular Callings, so the works of our general Calling as we are Christians, must in no wise be neglected. As we have Bodies to feed and to clothe, and some business about the World to mind and manage. So we have Souls to look after, and a God to serve; and this is the main business of all. To work out our Salvation with fear and trembling, is that which should always be upon our Hearts. That Man may truly say, *Diem perdidit*, I have lost a day, if a day is gone, and nothing at all of this work done. Mary is commended who heard and heeded Christ's word, and according to the direction of it, minded the one thing needful, and chose the good part which could not be taken away from her. Whereas Martha is taxed and reprov'd, for being careful, and troubled about many things, Luke 10.41, 42. All the Lord's Servants are to be Attendants in ordinary. Religion is to be the constant business of their lives, as being of greatest concern, and most worthy of their time and labor.

2. There is an Attendance upon God which is extraordinary. When he goes out of the common way and course of his Providence; his

Servants ought to follow him; and as He acts extraordinarily in a way of Judgment, or of Mercy. They are to do something extraordinary in the Duties they have such a signal and loud Call to.

Acts of severity are styled, God's strange Acts, Isa. 28.21. The Lord will rise up as in Mount Perazim, that he may do his work, his strange work; and bring to pass his act, his strange act. Affliction is said to be strange, either because his ordinary course is otherwise: Kindness and Mercy is that which he delights in showing; or it may denote Judgments that are unusual, and that have something more than ordinary of terror and instruction. When the Lord is thus raised up out of his holy Habitation, and comes forth to visit and punish Iniquity, there should be great preparation to meet him, Amos 4.12. Because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God O Israel. There should be deep Humiliation before him. 1 Pet. 5.6. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time. There must be strong cries unto him for pity, favor, and a spirit suited to his dealings. Psal. 18.6. In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God, he heard my Voice out of his holy Temple; and my cry came before him, even into his Ears. Sin must be forsaken with more than ordinary sorrow and hatred; as that which has provoked the Lord to be so very angry; and Righteousness must be followed after with greater zeal and diligence. Isa. 26.9. When thy Judgments are in the Earth, the Inhabitants of the World will learn Righteousness.

On the other side, when God does act extraordinarily in deliverance and salvation, Songs suitable to Deliverance should be loud; the Heart should be exceedingly well tuned to praise his Name. His Attendants should call upon their Souls, and all that is within them, to bless him, Psal. 103.1. Love should be extraordinarily ardent unto God the deliverer, when extraordinary deliverance has been wrought.

And he that is so mighty to save, should be both feared and believed in together. Exod. 14.31. And Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians, and the People feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and his Servant Moses.

I might also add, that when Falls have been foul, and scandalous sins have been committed, then there should be extraordinary contrition and supplication unto God for Pardon, Healing, for Establishment by his Spirit, and for the Joy of his Salvation. When David an eminent Saint and Prophet, was of a sudden turned black as Hell, and become a Monster of Ingratitude, Impurity and Cruelty, he comes unto God being awakened by Nathan 's Ministry, with great shame and brokenness of Heart, Psal. 51.16, 17. he implores mercy, begs Ease, and the healing of his wounded Conscience: He cries for a clean Heart, and a right Spirit: and being sensible of his own weakness, nay, treacherousness and unfaithfulness to himself, he entreats that the Lord would undertake for him, and by his own free Spirit continually uphold him.

IV. There is an Attendance upon God which is Secret in the Closet, Private in the Family, and Public in the Congregation.

1. An Attendance upon God that is Secret in the Closet. Our Lord was much in Prayer alone by himself; sometime a great while before Day; and sometime he continued in it all Night. He commands and urges secret Prayer, upon every one of his Disciples, Mat. 6.6. But thou when thou prayest enter into thy Closet; and when thou hast shut thy Door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. God sees in secret, and hears even whispered Confessions and Petitions. And when 'tis said that He is in secret, it seems to intimate a special gracious presence, that is vouchsafed to them that are often alone with him. In this

secret Attendance upon God, we may use a greater freedom of Speech, and tell him all that we fear and feel, and ail and desire. Secret Duties which Man can take no notice of, have not those motives which are very prevalent with Hypocrites; who loved to Pray standing in the Synagogues, and in the Corners of the Streets; where two Streets met, that those in the one Street and in the other, might behold their Devotions, and applaud them. God is pleased to listen and hearken after Prayer, and there is not the closest homeliest Corner, where there is a sincere Supplicant, but God is really there to fulfil and grant the desire; and to support the burdened, if not to remove the burdens that are groaned under, Psal. 38.9. All my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hid from thee. As according to Solomon, A gift in secret pacifieth Anger; and a reward in the bosom strong wrath, Prov. 21.14. so secret confession of sin, bitter mourning for it, and begging forgiveness in the Name of Jesus will prevail for the pacifying of God's fiercest displeasure; and the obtaining of his Love and Grace.

2. There is an Attendance upon God that is Private in the Family. This has been woefully, sinfully, shamefully neglected not only by the profane, but by them that call themselves Professors, though hardly worthy of that Name. Family Worship has been much pressed from the Pulpit; Oh when shall it once be, that every ones practice will be answerable! I read not only of a Dedication of the Tabernacle and Temple; but also of the Houses of the Israelites, Deut. 20.5. Psal. 30. was composed at the Dedication of the House of David. The Israelites justly called their Houses God's Houses. And those tumultuous combined, and insulting Enemies of theirs in Pride, Scorn and Derision said, Let us take to ourselves the Houses of God in possession, Psal. 83.12. Houses were dedicated to the Lord's Service. Joshua says, I and my House we will serve the Lord; and all Israel promise the same, Josh. 24.15, 21. David says, he will walk within his

House with a perfect Heart, Psal. 101.2. there be Songs of Mercy and of Judgment. Indeed the voice of rejoicing and Salvation is in the Tabernacle of the Righteous, Psal. 118.15. The Lord is adored and praised in the Tabernacles of them to whom he has showed himself a God of Salvation.

Cornelius one of the first-fruits of the Gentiles, was a devout Man, and he feared God with all his House, and prayed to God always, Act. 10.2. And fearing of God implies calling upon his Name, as casting off fear, and restraining of Prayer are joined together, Job 15.4. so that he prayed unto God with all his House; and there is not the least reason to think that they did not pray altogether, unless such kind of praying had been anywhere forbidden. We read of a Curse and a Blessing not only upon Persons, but upon Families. Prov. 3.33. The Curse of the Lord is in the House of the wicked, but he blesseth the Habitation of the Just. Surely Families have reason to Pray against the one; and that the other may rest on them. And truly our Lord Jesus in that Prayer of his own making, which is the great Directory for Prayer; when he does instruct us to say, Give us this day our daily Bread, very plainly signifies, that those in Families that daily Eat together, ought also daily to pray together. And are they only to pray together for daily Bread? No; they are also to Pray for the hallowing of God's Name, the coming of his Kingdom; and that his Will might be done on Earth as 'tis done in Heaven. They are to pray for the forgiveness of past trespasses; and that Grace may prevent their being led into Temptation, and may deliver them from Evil.

You see here is ground enough for Families to give their Attendance upon God. Families are the Seminaries from which both Church and State are furnished; and if there were more of Devotion and Instruction, and Discipline there, the Church in all probability would be more pure; and the State more righteously and better ordered.

Whereas, if Families live without God in the World; the Governors, the Children and Servants are all usually wicked, and likely to become worse and worse: and the Churches Face is fouled with odious spots and stains; and the State grows more corrupt, till at length 'tis ripe for ruin.

3. There is an Attendance upon God that is public in the Congregation. In public Assemblies the true God is owned and honored in the Face of the Sun; and the Lord Christ is glorified; Christians Assembling in his Name, depending upon his Promise to be in the midst of them, and to bless them. He walks in the midst of the Golden Candlesticks, Rev. 1.13. He blesses the Ordinances himself has instituted, to the enlightening, purifying, and Consolation of sincere Attendants on him. In these Public Assemblies, Saints unite their spiritual strength in wrestling with God; the Faith and holy Desires of a great many Believers together being conjunct, are likely to be the more prevailing. These Assemblies ought to be valued and frequented; to forsake them, is ill to the forsaker: Hence that caution, Heb. 10.25. Not forsaking the Assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching. The breaking of solemn public Assemblies, should be a Heartbreaking thing to us; and the Lord has promised to gather those that are sorrowful upon this score. Zeph. 3.18 I will gather them that are sorrowful for the solemn Assembly, who are of thee, to whom the reproach of it was a burden.

V. There is an Attendance upon God on his own day, and upon other days.

1. An Attendance upon God on his own day. A seventh part of our time is hallowed by the fourth Commandment. Six days are for

Labor, a seventh for Rest from that Labor; and that we may have leisure, with greater seriousness to attend upon God. The great Creator having made the World in six days, rested on the seventh, and appointed it for a Sabbath, and blessed it. And the Apostle tells us that our Lord Jesus Christ the great Redeemer, is entered into his Rest, having ceased his own works, as God did from his; and therefore there remains a rest, a keeping of a Sabbath to the People of God, Heb. 4.9, 10. As the Jewish Sabbath was kept in Commemoration of the Lord's resting from Creation, so the Christian Sabbath is to be observed in Commemoration of Christ, who is over all God blessed forever, his resting from the work of Redemption; it is in him that we have rest by Faith at present, and hope for a blessed, glorious, and everlasting Rest in Heaven. The day that Christ rose, was the day on which he rested; for his lying in the Grave was not his rest, but part of his Humiliation; and that was the first day of the Week. On this Christian Churches assembled for Worship, Acts 20.6, 7. The Apostle was at Troas seven days. We read not a word, being among Christians, that he solemnly Worshipped on the seventh day, but upon the first day of the Week the Disciples came together to break Bread. Upon this day Christians being assembled together, Collections were made for good Uses at Corinth, and in the Churches of Galatia, 1 Cor. 16.1, 2. Nay, this is called the Lord's Day, Rev. 1.10. Now as the Lord's Supper is a Supper of the Lord's Institution; so the Lord's Day, is a day of the Lord's appointing and ordaining. The profanation of this Christian Sabbath has been punished with remarkable Judgments; The Ordinances administered thereon have been owned and blessed to the Conversion and Confirmation of Thousands and Millions of Souls.

On this Christian Sabbath, what kind of Attendance on God should ours be! Before the day comes it should be longed for; and when 'tis come, it should be most welcome. As soon as our Senses are

unlocked in the Morning, our Souls should be as it were, caught up to the third Heaven, and there continue until Night. Our Lord is risen indeed, and we should rise with him, and seek those things which are above, where he sits at the right hand of God, Col. 3.1. Things on Earth will be intruding into our Hearts and Thoughts; but no Entertainment must be given them. A Desire or Wish must not be allowed them, unless it be, that we may not be distracted with them. When Abraham was just come to Mount Moriah, he says to his Servants, Abide you here, and I and the Lad will go yonder and Worship, Gen. 22.5. So when the Lord's Day comes, we should say to all our Worldly Businesses and Concerns, Abide as you are; cease from our Care and Thoughts, whilst we and our Hearts ascend unto the Hill of the Lord and Worship. This day is appointed for our more solemn approaches unto God, and that we may have more intimate Fellowship with him; and if Communion with him be enjoyed, we shall find so much Grace and Strength, and Peace therein, that we shall be perfectly of the Psalmist's mind, That a day in God's Courts is better than a Thousand, Psal. 84.10. The very Palaces of the wicked are contemptible. No place under Heaven is so desirable as the Sanctuary.

2. There is an Attendance upon God on other days. He is the Lord of our time, and therefore every day, he should have some part of it. We should be careful to know how he would have us to employ that time which himself gives, and will call us to account for. We should live the rest of our time in the Flesh, to the Will of God, not to the Lusts of other Men, or our own, 1 Pet. 4.2. and we should grieve, that so much has been wasted to his Displeasure and Dishonor. David was glad to go up to the House of God on the Sabbath; but he was also a daily Attender on him. Psal. 86.3. Be merciful unto me, O Lord, for I cry unto thee daily. So Heman, Psal. 88.9. Lord, I have called daily upon thee, I have stretched out my Hands unto thee. And Daniel

rather than omit praying daily unto God, ventured to be cast into the Lion's Den; and God miraculously appears for him, his Mouth having been open so often in fervent Supplication; God shuts the Lions Mouths, that though in the Den among them, they did not make a Prey of him. Every day we should be in the Fear of God, and have Faith in him; and if in the midst of our Worldly Business, our Hearts frequently step aside to attend on God in mental Applications to him; that attendance will be both acceptable and profitable. But sometimes every day we should sequester ourselves from other business; that this greatest and best business may be minded; which is to draw near to God.

6. There is an attendance upon God in a time of Liberty and a Calm, and an attending upon him in a time of Persecution and a Storm. In a time of Liberty the Lord has many Followers, who leave him when a Storm of Persecution beats in their Faces. When the King of Navarre was about to Apostatize to Popery, and Beza came to confirm him in the Truth, he made this Answer, That he would never go so far to Sea as not to be able to put to Shore when he pleased; He showed plainly, that he could turn Papist to get the Kingdom of France; but he was resolved not to go through much Tribulation to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. The Hearers compared to stony ground heard the Gospel with forwardness and joy, while the Gospel and Prosperity were conjoined; but when Persecution and Tribulation arose because of the Word, they were offended, they kept not their standing, but in that time of Temptation fell away, Mat. 13.20, 21. We should be other kind of attendants than so. Let us count the cost of being Disciples, and conclude that Grace and Glory will quit the cost. Our Lord was offended at nothing that was to be done or suffered for our Redemption; surely neither his Commands nor his Cross should be matter of offense to us, but still we should remain his followers.

I might also add another distinction: There is an attendance upon God in Earth and in Heaven; the one is Duty, the other is Reward; the one is short, the other is endless; and yet in that Service there shall not be the least weariness; nay, so far from that, that there will be fullness of Joy and everlasting Pleasure. Thus I have spoken of the several sorts of attending upon God.

In the fourth place I am to assign the reasons why the Children of Men ought to give their attendance upon God.

1. The Command to attend upon God is written on the Heart of Man by Nature. There is both the Creed, and the Law of Nature. There are several Truths that are apparent without a supernatural Revelation; as that there is a God; that he rules the World; that he sees all the works of the Children of Men; and that he will call them to an account for all that they have done. There are also Commands which are written in the Hearts of Men. Rom. 2.14. For when the Gentiles which have not the Law do by Nature the things contained in the Law, these having not the Law, are a Law unto themselves; which show the work of the Law written in their Hearts; and among these Commands, this is as plain as any, That God is to be worshipped. The Gentiles therefore are blamed because this Command was not observed, Rom. 1.21. Because that when they knew God they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful: but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Now as sins have their peculiar aggravations that are committed against the Light of Nature, so neglect of Duty is highly aggravated, when 'tis evident by the Light of Nature, that such Duty ought to be performed.

2. Attendance upon God is frequently called for and urged in the Scripture. The Lord spake this with his own Voice from Heaven, and afterwards wrote it with his own Hand upon the Tables of Stone, that

we should have no other God's before him, that we should not Worship Idols, that we should not take his Name in vain, Exod. 20. Our Lord repeats what was enjoined long before, Mat. 4.10. It is written, thou shalt Worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve; and he says Joh. 4.24. God is a Spirit, and they that Worship him, must Worship him in Spirit and in Truth. So Psal. 22.23. Ye that fear the Lord praise him; all ye the Seed of Jacob glorify him; and fear him all ye the Seed of Israel. See also Psal. 105.3, 4. Glory ye in his holy Name, let the Heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord: Seek the Lord and his Strength, seek his Face evermore. And as the word of God calls for this, so the Providence of God seconds his Precepts. The dispensing of mercies calls upon us to attend the Father of them with our Praises. And afflictions should quicken us in our seeking God; he requires this, Psal. 50.15. Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me. And he reckons upon it that he should hear from his People, when his chastening was upon them, Hos. 5.15. I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offense, and seek my Face; in their affliction they will seek me early.

3. God sees whether there be an attendance upon himself, and after what manner, and that with a jealous eye. And this is another strong reason for our attending on him. The Lord looks down from Heaven upon the Children of Men, to this very end, that he may see if there be any that understand and seek God, Psal. 53.2. so that he very strictly observes, how Men's Hearts are affected towards him and his Service; and he cannot but be very much displeased with the whole Race of fallen Man, because Rom. 3.10, 11. There is none Righteous, no not one; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God The Lord takes notice how Days and Weeks, and Months and Years go over Men's Heads, and yet that God from whom they have their all, they seek not to for anything; neither

return they any thanks to him, how much soever they receive from him. And those who attend upon God, he observes the manner how they do it; and heartless Duties, doing the work of the Lord deceitfully, provokes and kindles the Fire of his Jealousy. Mal. 1.14. Cursed be the deceiver, who having a Male in his Flock, voweth and sacrificeth to the Lord a corrupt thing. The second Commandment which directs us as to Divine Worship, makes mention that the Lord is a jealous God. He cannot endure to have his Service neglected, as if there were no profit or reward in seeking him: He cannot endure a negligent Service. As if he were an Idol, as if he had Eyes, but did not see or take notice who they are that mock him. God's Omniscience and all-seeing Eye, struck a great awe upon the Apostle, it made him draw near to God; and it made him very serious when he had to do with him. Heb. 4.13. Neither is there any Creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the Eyes of him with whom we have to do.

4. Man's necessities should constrain him to attend upon God. Sin has made the Children of Men in the worst sense poor and needy; they fancy themselves rich, and dream of fullness; but behold 'tis only a dream; for they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. Now for the supply of their needs, 'tis in vain to have recourse to any but God. The broken Cisterns can hold no Water: and cannot furnish them with any that run to them; but there is enough in the Fountain of living Waters for all that repair to it. An experienced attender upon God, knew how to be furnished with everything, Psal. 57.2. I will cry unto God most high; unto God, who performeth all things for me. And the Apostle speaks with a most reasonable confidence, Psal. 4.19. My God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. The one thing needful is alone from God; and from him are all things else: His Kingdom and Righteousness he bestows on them that seek him; and

all things else shall be added, Matt. 6.33. Man has beggared himself; as to the true Riches he is a mere Bankrupt: In him, that is, in his Flesh dwelleth no good thing, Rom. 7.18. and that which is born of the flesh is flesh, wholly carnal, till there be a regeneration by the Spirit. How shall Man, who is so very evil, be made truly good? All true Grace and Goodness is from God, who is therefore called the God of all Grace, 1 Pet. 5.10. and 'tis through Christ that 'tis all communicated: Therefore every good thing in Believers, is said to be in them in Christ Jesus, Philem. ver. 6. Man has need to come to God, for he has ruined himself, and 'tis the Lord alone to whom Salvation belongs. Man has destroyed himself, in God is his help found, Hos. 13.9. Those whom the Lord saves not, must needs perish.

5. Man's Obligations to attend upon God, are still increasing. The Lord causes his Sun to arise upon the evil as well as the good, upon the unrighteous as well as the righteous, Matt. 5.45. He is kind to the unthankful and the evil, Luke 6.35. God's Bounty calls for a return of Duty, and should quicken Man to seek the Lord who is so abundant in Goodness. In God's hand Man's breath is, and every time he breaths God saves his Life; from God's hand he receives whatever he has. How strictly is Man engaged to acknowledge God in all! To serve him, and to glorify his Name! Even those that are bad, have experience of the riches of Divine Goodness, and Forbearance, and Long-suffering; and though this goodness is but common, yet offers are made to them of special Grace. All the day long the Lord stretches forth his hand to the disobedient and gain-saying; and in that hand are no less than the good things of Time and of Eternity. The wickedest and worst of Men, if they consent to leave their wicked ways, and to have their wicked hearts changed, and come to God, they shall graciously be accepted, be abundantly pardoned, and have the best things bestowed on them. God is ready to give Grace to them

that have none; and to give more Grace where he has already wrought it.

6. Promises are precious that are made to attenders upon God, and threatening's are terrible against Contemners of God, who refuse to attend upon him. Thus the Lord works upon those two great commanding things in the Soul of Man, his Hope and his Fear, that he may have Service from him. If we draw near to God, he promises to draw nigh to us, James 4.8. and his approaches to his People are the manifestations of his Pity and Power for their help and supply; the communications of that Grace which may be suitable and sufficient in the time of need: He says not to the Seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain. Moses supposes Israel apostatizing from their God by Idolatry, and his anger waxed hot against them, and themselves scattered among the Nations: Yet says he, If from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul, Deut. 4.29. Gracious words to the same purpose are sent in a Letter to the Captives in Babylon, Jer. 29.11, 12, 13. For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, saith the Lord; thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end; then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you; and ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

On the other hand, the God of truth and justice breathes out threatening's and wrath against them that despise him; that instead of seeking him, turn their backs upon him and forsake him. Isa. 1.24, 28. Thus saith the Lord, the Lord of Hosts, the mighty one of Israel. Ah! I will ease me of my adversaries. They were a burden to him, which at last he grew weary to bear; and revenge me of my Enemies; and the destruction of the transgressors, and of the sinners, shall be together; and they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed.

Sometimes God promises and threatens in the same breath, that he may prevail with Man to come to him, and make him afraid to refuse. 1 Chron. 28.9. The Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts, if thou seek him he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him he will cast thee off forever. So Ezr. 8.22. The hand of our God is upon all them for good that seek him, but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him. And the promised good, and the threatened evil, being thus presented together to our view, our Hearts are the more likely to be affected with the dreadfulfulness of the one, and with the desirableness of the other.

7. The time will not last much longer, in which God will be attended upon. Life is short, and Death, which puts an end to Man's Life in this World, will bring the Season of Mercy and Grace to a full period: There is no passing through that great gulf which is fixed in the other World, Luke 16.26. Prayers in Hell have no Audience, but a Denial, though but a drop of Water is asked: Nay, as the rich Man could not prevail for any ease for himself, so neither for a Messenger to be sent to his surviving, secure, and sinful Brethren, to prevent their coming into the place of Torment. Our Lord by his Spirit in the Patriarchs, went and preached to the Spirits in Prison; but it was before they came to that Prison; even when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, 1 Pet. 3.19, 20. When we read that admonition, Seek the Lord while he may be found, and call ye upon him while he is near, Isa. 55.6, there is a plain Intimation, that quickly it may be impossible to find him; and that to call upon him, may be too late and to no purpose. Despair hereafter will stop Sinners Mouths, and utterly discourage their crying unto God: Then they will rather call to the Rocks and Mountains to fall upon them, and hide them from the Face of him that sits upon the Throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.

8. If Man attend not upon God, how much evil will he do, and whither will he go! If God has no Service from him, Sin and Satan will have a great deal. Those who are not well employed in holy Duties, are likely to be very ill employed in the unfruitful works of Darkness. The Nature of Man is so depraved, that it has a mighty propension to wickedness. And were it not for the Grace of God, which does either change corrupted Nature, or chain it, what a universal running out would there be into all Excess of Riot, and with what greediness would Iniquity be committed? But if God be not attended on and sought unto, and proud scornful Sinners had rather he would keep his Grace to himself, than bestow any of it upon them; he may justly leave them to the perverse bent of their own Nature: and how will Sin abound then? How will a wicked Heart be perpetually sending forth polluted Streams? Jer. 6.7. As a Fountain casteth out her Waters, so she casteth out her wickedness. The Lord punishes neglect of himself and of his Service, this way. He leaves Men to themselves: and 'tis a very righteous and proper punishment, Psal. 81.11, 12. But my People would not hearken to my Voice, and Israel would none of me; so I gave them up to their own hearts lusts, and they walked in their own Counsels. And Man being thus left to follow the counsels of a Carnal Mind, and to fulfil the Lufts of a wicked Heart; what a Child of Hell may he quickly become; and what haste may he make thither? He may ripen apace for ruin, and be suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy.

9. Attendance upon God is not profitable to God in the least, but Man has the benefit and advantage by it. He was a Man of eminent goodness, whose Soul said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord, my goodness extendeth not to thee, Psal. 16.2. But though David 's goodness extended not to God, to draw near to God was good for David. Saints and Angels by their highest Services can add nothing to the Lord whom they serve. Their sublimest praises are an

acknowledgment that they have their all from him, and in him. The better we are, the better Obedience we yield; but the Lord is not bettered by our best Obedience. It is highly reasonable we should attend upon God; for though he can receive nothing from us; yet he is ready to give himself and all things to us, if we seek him diligently. He consults our interest in his Commands to come, to fear, to love, and cleave to him, Deut. 10.12, 13. And now Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, and to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul; to keep the Commandments of the Lord, and his Statutes which I command thee this day for thy good? Man's good you see, is aimed at; and that in fearing of God and keeping his Commandments, it may be well with Man forever. Deut. 5.29.

I come in the last place, to the Application of the Doctrine; the Uses of it may be several.

USE I. Shall be of Reproof. Many sorts of persons deserve reprehension, and need it.

1. They are to be reprov'd who are haters of God, and hate to attend upon him. 'It is prodigiously unreasonable, that the gracious God, who fills the Earth with his goodness, Psal. 33.5. and is most worthy of the Love of all, should be hated by any: yet though strange, 'tis too true, that God is hated by many, nay, by most of the Children of Men. Most are of their Father the Devil, and the lusts of their Father they will do: He is a hater of God, and so are they. All wicked Men are alienated from God, and Enemies in their Minds by wicked works: they dislike him and his Service; they get out of his ways, and turn aside out of his paths, and say, Cause the holy One of Israel to cease from before us, Isa. 30.11. they care not to hear, to think of this holy

One; they cannot abide to walk in his holy ways. Now if love to God be the first and great Command, how great a sin must the hatred of God be called! And how unfit are they to be admitted hereafter into his glorious Presence and Kingdom; who now say unto God depart from us! Most worthy they are to be sent away from him with his Curse, and to be sentenced to that everlasting Fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels, whom they resemble in hating of God, and with whom they have joined in rebelling against him.

2. They are to be reprov'd who account Attendance upon God needless. The Mind of Man appears to be void of Judgment, in determining what things are mainly to be minded. Things that are vanity and vexation of Spirit; what pains are taken to get them; what care is taken to keep them! The one thing needful is neglected, as if it were the only thing unnecessary. The Heathen Poet cried out,

O curas hominum! O quantum est in rebus inane!

The Care of Man about empty things, how injudicious is it? Time can be found for everything, but the making provision for Eternity; and yet the providing for Eternity is the main thing to be done in time; and time was given chiefly for the doing of this. Are these to be our great enquiries, What shall we eat and drink, and wherewith shall we be clothed and adorned? How shall we heap up wealth, and gratify ourselves with sensual pleasures? How shall we live plentifully ourselves, and leave abundant substance to Posterity? Certainly there are matters of far greater importance and necessity to be regarded. The truly grand Enquiries are of another Nature. How shall sin be pardoned, and the Wrath of God appeas'd? How shall the Heart be changed, and made a new one, and the Soul that is so precious saved? How shall God be attended on, and served, and glorified, so as to be enjoyed, and eternal blessedness attained in the

Enjoyment of him? Attendance upon God is no more to be accounted needless, than eternal happiness is needless, than the loss of a Soul more valuable than the whole World, is to be esteemed a small matter.

3. They are to be reprov'd who look upon attendance on God as a weariness, and grievous. In following and trudging after Mammon, they are unwearied. How swift and many are the steps in the way to Earthly Delights and Treasure! They rise up early, sit up late, rack their Wits, grow Lean with Care for the things of the World; and they are not grudging at all this Toil and Labor. But when they come to wait upon God, time moves very slowly; a quarter seems longer than an hour. Duties are tedious to them; they are loath to begin; and as soon as they have begun, they do not wish for Communion with God, or that they themselves might be bettered; but that their Duties were at an end. The Prophet is very sharp against them who despised the Table of the Lord, and looked upon the fruit and meat of it contemptible; and they said, behold what a weariness it is! Mal. 1.12, 13. God is weary of such unwilling Services as yours are. Isa. 1.13, 14. Bring no more vain Oblations, they are a trouble to me, I am weary to bear them. And as he is weary of your services, so he quickly may be weary to bear you; and he may count it a comfort to be rid of you. Ezek. 5.13. Thus my anger shall be accomplished, and I will cause my Fury to rest upon them, and I will be comforted, and they shall know that I the Lord have spoken it in my Zeal, when I have accomplished my Fury in them. We read of some that were weary of Sabbaths, the Ordinances then administered were to them no privileges; and when will the Sabbath be gone? Was their Language, Amos 8.5. but ver. 7. the Lord swears he would not forget their works, and he threatens ver. 11. to send a Famine in the Land; not a Famine of Bread, nor athirst for Water, but a Famine of hearing the words of the Lord: And

how unlikely were they ever to be saved; from whom even the means of Salvation were taken away!

4. They are to be reprov'd who are sinfully ashamed, or afraid to attend upon God. Some Ages are so degenerate, that Religion grows exceedingly out of fashion, and contempt of God and profaneness, is the thing that is all-a-mode. When great Men think it below them to be good, and Policy contemns Piety; when the vilest Men are exalted, and wickedness grows into credit; when Judgment is turned away backward, and Justice standeth afar off; when Truth is fallen in the Streets, and Equity cannot enter; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a Prey, Isa. 59 14, 15. then this fear and shame that I am speaking against is apt to prevail. But why should any be ashamed to own themselves Servants to the greatest and best of Lord's? Is not he glorious in Holiness? Are not his Precepts concerning all things to be esteemed right? Are not all those ways false that lead from him? Has he not said, Those that honor me I will honor, and those that despise me shall be lightly esteemed? 1 Sam. 2.30. Christ will be ashamed of them at the great day, who are ashamed of him and of his Word, before a perverse and wicked Generation. And why should any be afraid to attend upon that mighty Lord, who does according to his Will in the Armies of Heaven, and among the Inhabitants of the Earth; and all the Inhabitants of the World are reputed as nothing before him? Dan. 4.35. Attenders upon God should banish the fear of Man, for God has evil Men and evil Angels in a Chain, and his sincere Servants under his own keeping. Those who are afraid of Man that shall die, forget the living God, and their Duty towards him, and how able he is to protect them in the faithful discharge of it.

5. They are to be reprov'd who attend upon God, that they may cover and cloak their wicked and worldly, and selfish designs. They put on

a form of Godliness, but 'tis the better to hide their wickedness. They are for external Worship; but when they seem to seek after God most of all, they are nothing at all but self-seekers; and Religion is most unworthily made subservient to secular Interest. Thus the Birds of Prey when they soar highest towards Heaven, have their Eyes still downwards towards the Earth, to see what they may seize on there. But what abominable Hypocrisy is this, when love to the Father is pretended, but the thing intended is the gratifying the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the Eyes, or the pride of life; which are not of the Father, but are of the World! 1 Joh. 2.16. A Cloak of Religion is a specious, and goodly thing to look upon. Praying, Hearing, Professing, Singing of Praises, Presence at other Ordinances, looking upwards towards Heaven, and speaking like Saints, make the outside of this Cloak; and, Come see my Zeal for the Lord of Hosts; and, The Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord are these; make the Cloak look still the better outwardly. But the inside is most foul and filthy; there is Ambition, reprobate Concupiscence, insatiable Covetousness; the Purse must be filled; the Palate must be pleased; the Senses must be delighted; and Pride gratified with Applause and Preferment: But certainly the Lord will not hold such dissemblers guiltless, who with such carnal designs do take his Name in vain.

6. They are to be reprov'd, who are temporary Attenders upon God; but in time of trial and temptation, apostatize and depart from him. Some kind of faint wishes they have, that they might be saved; and with some kind of Joy they entertain the glad tidings of Salvation; but whatever becomes of their Souls, their resolution is to sleep in a whole Skin; and they will not hazard what they possess on Earth, for the sake of a Treasure in Heaven. The heat of Persecution scorches such Attenders as these, and causes all that is good in them to wither away, Mat. 13.6. They can by no means be reconciled to the Cross of Christ, though the Spirit of Glory and of God does rest upon those

that take up this Cross, and gives them a Mouth and Wisdom to confound and silence the enemies of the Truth; and strength to bear whatever wicked and unreasonable Men can inflict: Nay, abundant Consolation, when Sufferings most abound, 2 Cor. 1.5. For as the Sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our Consolation also aboundeth by Christ. When these temporary Followers of the Lord hear him say, If any Man come to me and hate not, i.e. less love, his Father and Mother, and Wife and Children, and Brethren and Sisters, and his own life also, he cannot be my Disciple: Their answer is, This is an hard saying, who can hear it? And not enduring the Trial and Furnace, 'tis a sign they are but reprobate Silver which the Lord rejects; and their utter Apostasy in the time of Temptation, shows they never had root in themselves, Matt. 13.21. If they had been of us, says the Apostle, they would no doubt have continued with us, but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us, 1 John 2.19.

7. They are to be reprov'd, who rest in the bare formality of attending upon God; but 'tis not their desire or aim to reap any Spiritual Benefit thereby. Education, Custom, and a regard to their Reputation, makes them to go in a road and round of Duties; and hereby an ignorant natural Conscience has some kind of Peace: But in all they do they have no eye on God, nor any sincere desires after him. So ignorant they are of themselves, that they are unsensible of any Spiritual Necessities to be supplied; they are unsensible of any Lusts and Passions to be mortified; of any Plagues in their Hearts to be healed. In attending upon God, His Approbation is principally to be minded; He is a Jew that is one inwardly, whose praise is not of Man but of God, Rom. 2.29. And God himself is chiefly to be longed after, Psal. 42.1. As the heart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my Soul after thee O God. But these formal Attendants mind not God's approving of them, neither do they desire Communion

with him. So the Work be but done, they care not how, nor how little themselves are Spiritually advantaged. The Door turns upon the Hinges to and fro; but still is where it was many years ago. So these Professors come to Ordinances, and from them, no better than they were: They were many years ago, proud, worldly, selfish, passionate, sensual, slothful; and oh their Sin and Shame! That so they are still, or more so than ever; notwithstanding all their Religious Services!

8. The very best are to be reprov'd, That there are so many sins in their holiest things, and when they give their best attendance upon God. Though they are new Creatures, yet there is much of the old man remaining; though they are born of the Spirit, yet in part they are still carnal. And this flesh lusteth against the Spirit, so that they cannot do the things that they would, Gal. 5.17. and what they do, they cannot do so well as they desire to do it. They are to be pitied indeed under their groaning, because of indwelling Sin. And the Apostle calls himself wretched because of this, who was joyful under the heaviest Cross he ever bore. And yet Saints are to be reprov'd too; because were it not their own fault, they might still do and be better. They might have more Grace from Christ, Life more abundantly from him; they might have more Aid from the Spirit; they might be more enlarged in Ordinances, and with greater Swiftmess run the ways of God's Commandments. Tho' when they have done all, all is so defective, they have need of the perfect Righteousness of Christ, to cover their Failings and Imperfections.

USE II. Of Exhortation to you all to attend upon God. Let not the World, and the God of this World, have you at command; the things that their attendants take up withal, are a mere show, and are gone presently. The Psalmist speaking of those who only mind such things as these, with great Asseveration tells us, Psal 39.6. Surely every Man walketh in a vain show; surely they are disquieted in vain; and then

adds, v. 7. And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in thee. Expectation from the Creature, he knew would be frustrated; but hope in God, he was well assured, would never make him ashamed.

The Arguments to persuade to attend upon God, are these.

1. 'It is wonderful Condescension and Compassion in God, that he will admit of attendance by such as you are. Whose Eye, but God's, sees the whole of Sins evil? The Lord alone does fully understand his own goodness, and glorious Perfections and Excellencies, therefore he alone fully understands Sins sinfulness, which is so contrary to him. The Psalmist tells us, He is not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with him, Psal. 5.4. When he prohibits Sin, he speaks with great concernedness, Jer. 44.4. Oh do not this abominable thing which I hate. You may perceive by his words, that his very Soul does abhor Iniquity; 'tis therefore matter of Astonishment, that God should have anything to do in a way of Mercy with Man who is so abominably guilty and defiled. What is there in Man by Nature to commend him to God? The Apostle charges the whole World as guilty before God, and proves Heart and Tongue, and Hands and Feet of Man to be corrupt; and that the way of Peace he knows not, Rom. 3.17. Why should such a Wretch be looked upon, and graciously called upon to return? Here is indeed Eternal Misery that Man is in danger of, for Divine Mercy to prevent? Here is a great deal of Sin for the justifying Righteousness of a Mediator to cover: Here are Heart-Plagues for Christ the Physician of Souls to heal: Here is Stubbornness and Obstinacy in evil, for the Spirit of Grace to overcome: Here are innumerable wants, for the All-sufficient God to supply: But not the least jot of meritorious Worthiness. Will the Lord admit such as we are, indigent, worthless, vile? Let us wonder that he will do it, and keep no longer at a distance from him.

2. Remember God refuses to be attended upon by multitudes of fallen Creatures, which at first were better than Man. We read that Man was made a little lower than the Angels, Psal. 8.5. so that the Angels were in degree higher than Man in their first Creation: Now a great Host of these Angels sinned, and when they sinned they were not spared, 2 Pet. 2.4. as soon as they fell into Sin, they were thrown down and fell into Hell. The Lord calls not to the Apostate Angels to repent of sin and return to himself: There is no Throne of Grace for them to come to, no Mercy offered, the door of hope is locked up and fast barred against them forever. Our Lord took not on him the Nature of Angels, Heb. 2.16. The good Angels were indeed confirmed in their good State, in their original Integrity, by the Son of God, who is the Head of all Principality and Power, Col. 2.10. But the Son of God redeemed and recovered not so much as one of the bad Angels, but they are all in Chains of darkness reserved unto Judgment. These reprobate Angels are of very great Capacity, they excel in strength, yet the Lord will accept of no service at their hands: He forces them against their wills to be subservient to his purposes and pleasure, but Worship and Obedience from them he admits not of. But he calls after Man to return, though fallen by his iniquity, Hos. 14.1. He puts words into Man's Mouth, and tells him what he should say, and what he himself is ready to hearken to and grant, Hos. 14.2. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord, say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: So will we render the calves of our lips. This great difference which Grace does make between fallen Man, and fallen Angels, should be a mighty Inducement and Encouragement to Man, to give most ready attendance upon God.

3. 'It is the great endeavor of your Spiritual Enemies to hinder your attendance upon God, or to disturb you in it: Which shows they are well aware how beneficial this attendance, if serious, would be; and they envy you the benefit of it. 'It is Wisdom [ab horte doceri] well to

mark, and to receive some instruction from an Enemy. What Satan urges you to pursue, you may conclude is of little worth; his Malignity is such, that he will not truly consult your interest. And since he uses so many Methods, and so much Subtlety, to stave you off from God, you may reasonably argue, that in coming to God, lies your Duty and your Blessedness. The Enemy of our Salvation has false glasses, through which he misrepresents the Lord and his Service to us. Sometimes he represents him as so High, that he minds not what we do, whether it be good or evil: Sometimes he sets him forth as so indulgent, that any careless Duties will please him; and neglect of his Service will not much, if at all, provoke him. Sometimes he sets before Man's Eyes God's Wrath and Jealousy, and says, that delays to serve him, have rendered him unentreatable; and that to seek him, is now too late and in vain. Thus he would obstruct Man's attendance on his Maker, for he knows that the Lord is good to them that wait for him, to the Soul that seeketh him, Lam. 3.25. and those that are far from God shall perish, Psal. 73.27.

But if by all these ways he cannot hinder attendance upon God, he will endeavor to disturb them that do attend, Zach. 3.1. And he showed me Joshua the high Priest standing before the Angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. How busy is Satan about us, when we come to appear before God! He endeavors to fill the Mind with vain Imaginations; to thrust violently the World into the Heart; to make indwelling sin active; to hinder the acting's of Grace; He endeavors to batter Faith, to beat down Hope, and to damp holy and spiritual Affections: He cannot endure the Soul should meet with God in Duties, he is troubled at its Communion with God, and being blessed with Spiritual Blessings. But all this should but quicken your desires and diligence in seeking; for what you seek after, you may conclude is highly worth finding.

4. How empty are all things that are apt to draw you away from attending upon God! The Egyptians of old were derided by the Poet, because they made God's of everything.

O Sanctas Gentes, quibus hoc nascuntur in hortis. Numina.

The very Herbs and Plants that grew in their Gardens were deified. And truly among many that are called Christians, a multitude of things that are very mean and low are idolized: Some make Idols of their Garbs, by affecting and being proud of them: Some idolize their earthly Treasures, and sensual Pleasures, by loving those more than God, 2 Tim. 3.4. Some make their Belly their God, and how many Meat-offerings, and Drink-offerings are sacrificed to this base Deity by the Wine-bibbers and riotous eaters of flesh! How low is Man fallen! How has he lost his Dominion over the Creature! They make him not only their Slave, but their Worshipper. But pray bethink yourselves, and take notice what things they are that thus captivate, and draw you away from God. Such is the immensity of God, that the whole World compared with him, is not so much as the smallest Dust to the Globe of Earth, not so much as a drop of Water to the whole Ocean. And as the Being of God transcends all other Beings, so his goodness excels all created goodness. So that our Lord speaking in the highest sense, affirms, That there is none good but one, that is God, Matt. 19.17. What then are the good things of this World, which Sin has brought a Vanity, nay a Curse upon? And which are used by Satan as his great Baits to catch inconsiderate Souls, that they may be lost and ruined?

5. Be prevailed with to attend upon God, who is the strongest Rock, the surest Refuge. Safety is desirable, considering what precious Souls all are entrusted with; and how full of Enemies and Snares this World is, in which we live: But the Lord alone is he, of whom Safety

is, Psal. 18.31. Who is God save the Lord? and who is a Rock save our God? Sincere attenders upon God are very dear to him, they are called his peculiar Treasure, Exod. 19.5. Now therefore if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my Covenant, then shall ye be unto me a peculiar Treasure above all People. They are called his Jewels, Mal. 3.17. They shall be mine saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my Jewels, and I will spare them, as a Man spareth his own Son that serveth him. Nay, he that toucheth them, toucheth the apple of his Eye, Zech. 2.8. Therefore he will keep them as the apple of the Eye, he will hide them under the shadow of his wings, Psal. 17.8. When you attend upon God, you repair to a Rock of Salvation, to a high Tower of defense: With his favor he will compass you as with a Shield, Psal. 5.12. He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you may securely trust; for his truth shall be your buckler, Psal. 91.4. In the hollow of his hand you shall be hid; and the same hand shall beat down all your Enemies that design your Destruction: You shall dwell on high, your place shall be the munitions of Rocks, Isa. 33.16. No Rock so high, so firm as God; no Muniton so safe, the Refuge is eternal. When David says, Unto thee will I cry, O Lord my rock, be not silent to me, Psal. 28.1. 'It is signified that this Rock can hear, and answer, and help abundantly, and afford abundant matter for thanksgiving, Psal. 18.46. The Lord liveth, and blessed be my Rock, and let the God of my Salvation be exalted.

6. That God whom you attend upon, can abundantly satisfy the very Soul of Man. When the Soul has wearied itself with seeking satisfaction from the Creature, and is sorrowful because its labor has been in vain. God can say and do what Creatures cannot. Jer. 31. I have satiated the weary Soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful Soul. The Negative Happiness is considerable, in being secured from Evil and Misery; but positive Blessedness is more, in being satisfied and delighted with Divine Goodness, Psal. 65.4. Blessed is the Man

whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy Courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy House, even of thy holy Temple. That rich Man in the Gospel, speaks as if he had, like Nebuchadnezzar, the Heart of a Beast, rather than the Soul of a Man: When he says, Soul thou hast Goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat and drink and be merry, Luke 12.19. This was but sorry provision for an immortal Soul, that was just ready to be required at his hand; to leave all these things behind it, and to go into Eternity. Attenders upon God find that in him, with which their Souls are satisfied indeed: They are satisfied with his Mercy and Love in Christ: They are satisfied in Christ's Sacrifice, and the Satisfaction he has made for Iniquity: They are satisfied when they perceive themselves changed more and more into the Image of God; and what a Satisfaction is it to converse above, and to sit in heavenly places! Eph. 2.6. And hath raised us up together, and hath made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. And what a Satisfaction is it at present, to be assured of a far fuller Satisfaction hereafter! Psal. 17.15. As for me I shall behold thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness.

7. Attend upon God, for he has long waited that he might be gracious to you. How has that Scripture been fulfilled, Isa. 13.18. And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you; and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you. He has stood at the door, and has knocked for entrance, and though that has been denied him, he has not gone away as he might, in just Anger, but behold he stands at the door still, Rev. 3.20. If you hear his voice, and open the door, he will enter and dwell with you, and he and his Benefits shall be yours. It is well for sinful Man, that God is Patient and Long-suffering, he does not cease calling at Man's first Deafness to his call; he does not cease offering Grace, Mercy and Life, upon Man's first refusing to accept what is offered. He told the

old World, that his Spirit should not always strive with Man, Gen. 6.3. yet 'tis added, his days shall be a hundred and twenty years. All that time the Long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the Ark was a preparing, 1 Pet. 3.20. to see if the Disobedient would return to him. The Lord comes year after year to the barren Fig-tree seeking Fruit, but he found none; whereupon he says, Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground? Yet upon Intercession made, he is prevailed with to spare it longer, to see if means that were used, might be effectual to make it fruitful, Luke 13.6, 9. The Apostle tells, that the Lord is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, 2 Pet. 3.9. Oh repent of your forgetting God, and your duty towards him days without number, attend and seek unto him in Sincerity, who has had many a long look for you, and has waited so great a while for your return.

8. Consider seriously how God is attended upon in Heaven, and what an Honor it is to you to wait upon him. He has thousand thousands that minister unto him, ten thousand times ten thousand that stand before him, Dan. 7.10. He has Angels that excel in strength, who surround his Throne, that are ready to do his Commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word, Psal. 103.20. The Seraphim's worship him with covered faces, to show their great reverence of God, and how they are ravishingly overcome with the brightness of his Majesty; and they cry out one to another, Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts, the whole Earth, as well as Heaven, is full of his Glory, Isa. 6.2, 3. These Angels are Spirits, these Ministers likened to a flame of fire, Psal. 104.4. How Sublime and Spiritual are their Praises! How ardent their Love to the Lord whom they praise and serve! And yet the Lord is said to humble himself, when he takes notice of such Attendants as these. 'It is certainly an high Honor that is done you, when you are admitted into the presence of such a glorious Majesty; he that sits upon a Throne of Grace, and is so ready

to pity, pardon, heal, help and save, is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings and Lord of Lord's, who only hath Immortality, dwelling in that light which no Man can approach unto, whom no Man hath seen, nor can see; to whom be Honor and Power everlasting, Amen, 1 Tim. 6.15, 16. If this glorious God will accept of Service from such as you, how readily should you give it! How highly are you favored when you come into his Presence, and have Communion with him!

9. Lay this to Heart, that Not to attend upon God, is wickedly to contemn him, and to rebel against him. 'It is in effect to say, He is not worthy of your Service; and that the Service of your Lusts, and of the World, is more beneficial. Thus God was despised by those wicked Men that were infatuated by Prosperity in an evil way. They said Job 21.15. What is the Almighty that we should serve him? And what Profit should we have if we pray to him? When Saul refused to obey the Command of God, Samuel rejects his Sacrifices, and charges him with Rebellion, which is as Witchcraft, 1 Sam. 15.22, 23. Behold, to obey is better than Sacrifice; and to hearken, than the fat of Rams; for Rebellion is as the Sin of Witchcraft, and Stubbornness is as Iniquity and Idolatry. When thou castest off the Service of God, thou castest off his Fear, and disownest God himself: This is Rebellion, and this Rebellion is thy Witchcraft, thy Confederacy with the Devil; thou makest a Covenant with Death, and with Hell thou art at an Agreement.

USE III. Shall be of Direction, How God should be attended upon. There must not be only a seeking of God, but a due Order in seeking him; if this be wanting, instead of receiving Benefits from his hand that hand may make a breach upon us, 1 Chron. 15.13. The Lord our God made a breach upon us, because we sought him not after the due order. If we have no care, as to the manner of our Services, the Lord

will care as little for the matter of them. Now the right manner of attending upon God, is to be declared in these particulars.

1. Our attendance upon God must be present; our living without God so long, and contemptuous neglect of our required Duty towards him, should be matter of deep Humiliation; and 'tis but reasonable to judge ourselves worthy of Frowns and Rejection, because we sought his face no sooner. But now immediately we must gird up the loins of our Minds to his Work. The Holy Ghost bids us hear his voice today; he tells us, that the accepted time is now. The Psalmist is a Pattern worthy of Imitation, for his present harkening to the Voice of God, and his speediness in yielding Obedience, Psal. 119.60. I made haste and delayed not to keep thy Commandments. Delays are displeasing to God, for they argue the Heart not so well reconciled to Him and to his Precepts, and that some other business is liked and preferred before his work. And these delays are dangerous, considering the uncertainty of our life's continuance, and how soon and suddenly the Spirit of the Lord being grieved by our deferring to obey his motions, and accept of his gracious Aid, may totally and finally withdraw from us.

2. Our Attendance upon God must be instant, Rom. 12.12. continuing instant in prayer. So Act. 26.7. Unto which promise our twelve Tribes instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. When we are thus instant in our attending, it implies a sense of the great importance of those things we come to God about; and that we are very urgent with him, that we may not miscarry in our everlasting concernments. Matters of Life and Death temporal, are managed with great seriousness. But when we attend upon God, Eternal Life is before us, to be laid hold on; and Eternal Death is before us to escape. Our intenseness and urgency here, should if it were possible, as far exceed our seriousness in other matters; as Time in length is

exceeded by Eternity. As the loudest Thunder drowns a whisper, so should the grand concerns of the unseen Eternal World, when we come before God, be carefully regarded before the petty matters of this present Life, which are but for a moment.

3. Our Attendance upon God must be constant. Paroxysms and Fits in Religion argue an unhealthy Soul; to be sometimes hot, and sometimes cold, is a bad temper. They that grow weary of God and of his Service, God is weary of them and their Duties. The Lord speaks to Ephraim and Judah, as one wearied, because all the means and methods he had used, had been ineffectual unto any lasting Reformation; if at any time they seemed inclinable to what was good, the inclination was very short-lived, and they soon returned to their natural bent and inclination to Evil, Hos. 6.4. O Ephraim what shall I do unto thee? O Judah what shall I do unto thee? For your goodness is as a morning Cloud, and as the early Dew it goeth away. 'It is not enough to begin well. The same argument that persuaded you to begin, will become stronger for your holding on. It were better not to have known the way of Righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy Commandment delivered to you, 2 Pet. 2.21. All that come to God should cleave unto him; all that embrace his Testimonies, should stick unto those Testimonies: I have stuck unto thy Testimonies, says the Psalmist, Psal. 119.31. and ver. 112. I have inclined my Heart to perform thy Statutes always, even unto the end.

4. Our Attendance upon God must be cordial and hearty, 1 Chron. 22.19. Now set your Heart and your Soul to seek the Lord your God. The full bent of the Mind must be this way. The Lord will not be found, unless the Heart and Soul be set to seek him. Naturally the Heart of Man is set another way, being of a corrupt Original, from the Womb 'tis estranged from God, and still 'tis farther alienating and estranging itself: 'tis not easy to have such a Heart reconciled to

God, and to the Will of God: But when the Heart is renewed, the enmity is in a great measure cured; the Heart is now willing to come into the Lord's Presence; for when the Heart serves him, 'tis in the way to be satiated by him. The Heart searcher cannot bear the Heart's absence; for if He has not the Heart, something else has it, which provokes him unto Jealousy. But the more there is of the Heart in Duties, God is the better pleased with them, and the performers find them in a spiritual sense more advantageous. When Hearts knock at Heaven gate, the Gate shall certainly be open. When Souls Thirst for God they shall not fail of satisfaction, Psal. 63.5. My Soul shall be satisfied as with Marrow and Fulness, my Mouth shall praise thee with joyful Lips.

5. Our Attendance upon God must be with clean Hands and a pure Heart. Jam. 4.8. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you; Cleanse your Hands ye sinners, purify your Hearts ye double-minded. So Psal. 24.3, 4. Who shall ascend into the Hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean Hands, and a pure Heart. The Gospel strictly commands good works, without these Faith is dead and vain, and Love is only a seeming Fire. The Apostle speaks with great vehemency, Tit. 3.8. This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly; that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. Our Lord owns them for his near and dear kindred, who are doers of his Father's Work and Will, Mat. 12.50. He stretched forth his Hand towards his Disciples, and said, behold my Mother and my Brethren. For whosoever shall do the Will of my Father which is in Heaven, the same is my Brother, and Sister, and Mother. Attenders upon God must not allow themselves in the doing of Evil: Fellowship with the unfruitful works of Darkness, and Fellowship with God, are inconsistent, 1 Joh. 1.6. If we say we have Fellowship with him, and walk in Darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. Unless there be a

living to God, serving of him in Ordinances is of no account with him.

And as Hands must be cleansed, so the Hearts of Attenders on God must be pure. The Heart must not defile itself by regarding any iniquity, so as to be unwilling to have it subdued. Psal. 66.18. If I regard iniquity in my Heart, the Lord will not hear me. Regarded iniquity will cry so loud for a denial, that Prayer will find no Audience. The Heart must not pollute itself by love to the World; for if this love prevail, there can neither be any true love to the Father, nor any Interest in the Father's love, 1 Joh. 2.15, Love not the World, neither the things that are in the World; if any Man love the World, the love of the Father is not in him. The Heart must consent to the crucifixion of all the affections and lusts of the Flesh. It must not be double-minded, on and off with God; but steady and right with him. Its resolution must be to be holy still, and its desire to be still holy more and more, to have holiness perfected in the sear of God.

6. Our Attendance upon God must be with Humility, Fear, and Faith, without wrath and doubting. Humility becomes the very Angels, for all their excellency is derived; and they are charged with possible folly, Job 4.18. 'tis owing to the Election and confirming Grace of God, that some Angels stood, when others being left to the freedom of their own Will, apostatized. How humble should the Children of Men be, who are fallen by their Iniquity! The best of Saints have reason to be low in their own Eyes, considering how many Talents they owed before they were satisfied for, and paid by their Surety; and how apt they are still to trespass. It may be said of the strongest Christian, stand he could not, stand he would not, were he not upheld by the Lord's free and mighty Spirit.

But a humble Sense of our Worthlessness and ill-deserving, should not hinder the acting of our Faith in Jesus when we come before the Lord. Our great Redeemer has bought us with a Price, and he has bought all things for us: We ourselves are his Purchase, and so is all that Grace we need, and all that Glory we hope for. God has made a Covenant with Christ, and has promised to give us to him for his Inheritance and Possession. Psal. 2.8. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the Heathen for thine Inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the Earth for thy Possession. And to be Christ's Inheritance and Possession, implies our being separated from the World, our being secured, our being made fruitful, and our eternal continuing to be enjoyed by him, and to enjoy him. Promises of all, and especially of the best Blessings, are made to us for Christ's sake, and he will see to the making of them good; because the accomplishment of them, is so much for the Father's Glory, as well as our truest Welfare. All this may exceedingly strengthen and raise our Confidence and Hope when we attend on God.

Doubts concerning our speeding should be looked upon as unreasonable, when we come in such a prevailing Name as Christ's, unto his Father and our Father, his God and our God, and we ask only for things agreeable to his Will, 1 John 5.14, 15. And this is the confidence we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his Will, he heareth us; and if we know that he heareth us, we know that we have the Petition we desired of him.

And as Faith is opposed to doubting, so to wavering, James 1.6, 7. But let him ask in Faith nothing wavering, for he that wavereth is like a Wave of the Sea driven with the Wind and tossed: For let not that Man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. He is the wavering Man, whose Mind hangs doubtful and unresolved, between God and the World, Christ and Satan, Sin and Holiness: Such an

Attender upon God, who is more inclined to serve other Lord's, shall certainly be rejected.

Finally, The Apostle forbids not only Doubting but Wrath also, 1 Tim 2.8. I will therefore that Men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands without Wrath or Doubting. The Wrath of Man worketh not the Righteousness of God; nay, it causes an abounding in Transgression. The Leaven of Anger and Malice is diligently to be searched for, and purged out, as that, which if it remains, will prove us carnal, 1 Cor. 3.3. For whereas there is among you Envyng and Strife, and Divisions, Are ye not carnal and walk as Men? Civil Discords, Church-Divisions, unruly Passions, should be avoided with Care and Fear; we should be full of Holy Love to all our Brethren; ready to forgive the greatest Injuries and Enemies; forward to pursue and promote Unity and Peace, whenever we attend upon Him who has called himself the God of Love and Peace.

7. Our Attendance upon God should be with Gladness and Delight, and a sense how good 'tis for us to approach his presence. Where the Will of God is best done, and that is in Heaven, there is the greatest Joy in the doing of it. The cheerful joyful Servant is a Credit to his Work, honors his Lord, and is a great Eye-sore to the evil one; for Satan is very much afraid, lest the Attenders upon God being full of Gladness, others should be induced to try that Work and Service, which these find so exceeding comfortable. Hypocrites, that go no further than the outside of Religion, count it wearisome because they do not understand it. But as God takes pleasure in the Upright, so the Upright find the truest Pleasure in God, and in his Ways. The Psalmist speaks upon very good ground, Psal. 32.11. Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice ye Righteous, and shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart. The Man after God's own Heart said, that the Meditations of God are sweet, Psal. 104.34. He was glad when they

said to him, let us go into the House of the Lord, Psal. 122.1. He tells us who is the Man that may have what he will, all his desire granted; 'tis he whose delight is in God, Psal. 37.4. Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desire of thy Heart. He is the blessed Man who takes no pleasure in the counsel, way, or seemingly easiest Seat of the Wicked; but his delight is in the Law of the Lord, Psal. 1.1, 2. And why should he not with delight be served at present? Since in his Kingdom, by all he will be praised with the highest Rapture of Joy forever!

8. Our Attendance upon God, should be in all Ordinances. It is produced as an Argument, that that excellent couple mentioned Luke 1.6. were both righteous before God, because they walked in all the Commandments and Ordinances of the Lord blameless. Under the Old Testament there was an Ordinance of God that was to be administered betimes, even to the Infants, and that was Circumcision; and though Abraham, at the first Institution of this Ordinance, believed and was circumcised at Age, as also were the Men of his Household; and though Circumcision is called a Seal of the Righteousness of Faith, Rom. 4.11. Yet Infants also were circumcised, these little ones are said to enter into Covenant with the Lord their God, Deut. 29.11, 12. Under the New Testament our Lord Jesus does not cast these Infants out of his Church and Covenant, but says, Suffer little Children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the Kingdom of God, Mark 10.14. The Apostle Peter, after he had exhorted to Baptism, says, The Promise is unto you and to your Children, Acts 2.39. And the Apostle Paul affirms, That the Children of Believing Parents are Holy, 1 Cor. 7.14. they are therefore Members of the Body of Christ. Now 'tis plainly signified, that Baptism is the Privilege of all in that Body, 1 Cor. 12.13. We are all baptized into one Body.

Indeed some that mind the Sound of Scripture more than the Sense of it, when they read, Repent and be baptized, Believe and be baptized, conclude that none but those that are at Age, and capable of professing their Faith and Repentance, ought to partake of this Ordinance. But they would do well to consider, who these were that in Scripture repented, believed, and were baptized, they were either Jews or Heathens that were converted to the Christian Faith at Age; and if thousands of such should be converted now, now also at Age Baptism ought to be administered to them, upon their repenting and believing. But in the whole New Testament we do not find any baptized at Age, whose Parents were Christians at their Birth: Yet several without Scripture warrant are thus baptized at this day.

Oh that there were less disputing about Infant-Baptism, and more care to improve it! All Infants that go to Heaven, are baptized with the Blood and Spirit of Christ, they are justified and sanctified thereby. This Justification and Sanctification, all that have been baptized, should desire to partake of.

Other Ordinances also should be engaged in, for the Lord who has instituted them, is ready to own and bless them, and himself to be found in them. Who that is wise, would neglect any one of them, since none of them are appointed in vain; nay, every one of them to serious engagers has been experienced abundantly Beneficial? The Lord is to be attended upon, how and in what way soever he pleases; in the Closet, in the Family, in the Sanctuary, at the Table, or any other way that he has ordained; Blessed are all they that wait for him.

9. Every Attendance upon God should make every Attender better. 'It is thought by some, that Creatures in the Waters, as long as they live, they grow still greater; Saints, as long as they live, should still be

growing in Grace, and be more full of all Goodness; They should grow as the Lily, cast forth their roots as Lebanon, their branches should spread, and their beauty be as the Olive-tree, Hos. 14.5, 6. God is ready to be as the dew to them, that from Him their Fruit may be found. It is really a fault in Believers, if every time they wait upon the Lord, they come not away from him with more Wisdom, Strength, and Grace, and Peace, than they had, since he is ready to impart such Blessings as these, and gives them Liberally without upbraiding.

USE IV. Shall be of Consolation to them, that thus, as I have directed, do attend upon God, Isa. 40.1. Comfort ye, Comfort ye my People, saith your God; with Joy you may come and draw most pure and refreshing Waters out of the Wells of Salvation: You are the Children of Peace, and the Peace of God is to rest upon you. For your Comfort take notice of these things following.

1. God puts a high value upon his sincere Attendants. He had a special respect to Abel, and that excellent Sacrifice that he offered. Though the Heaven be his Throne, and the Earth his Foot-stool; yet to that Man will he look, as being well pleased with him, that is, Poor, and of a contrite Spirit, and that trembles at his Word, Isa. 56.1, 2. He remembers the kindness of their Youth, the love of their Espousals, Jer. 2.2. and their willing Consecration of themselves to be Holiness to the Lord. He has taken notice of all their Desires and Groans, and their Cries to himself, and their frequent speaking one to another, that they might confirm and encourage one another in the worst of Times and Trials, to continue his Attendants still. Mal. 3.16. Then they that feared the Lord, spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard, and did so well approve them, that a Book of Remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his Name.

2. God delights over his sincere Attendants to do them good. He takes pleasure in the Prosperity of his Servants, they are in Heaviness by Affliction, only when there is need of it; he delights especially to see their Souls prosper: As he opens his Armory, and brings forth the Weapons of his Indignation against the Wicked; so he opens his Treasures of Bounty and Goodness to his Servants, that they may be supplied abundantly. He does them good with a good Will, his whole Heart and Soul is with them, Jer. 32.41. when his hand is open to them. He is ready to fulfil their Desires, to grant their Requests: Nay, when their Thoughts are most Comprehensive, and they crave never so much; he is able and ready to do for them exceedingly abundantly more, Eph. 3.20. Who can conceive how beneficial waiting upon God is! That passage is both encouraging and amazing, Isa 64.4. For since the beginning of the World, Men have not heard, nor perceived by the Ear, neither hath the Eye seen, O God, besides thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him.

3. God is ready to cover a multitude of Infirmities in them that sincerely attend upon him. He mercifully observes how willing their Spirits are, when their Flesh is weak, and cannot keep pace with their renewed Minds. When our Lord was in an Agony, his Disciples could not watch with him one hour, but were fallen asleep; yet he himself graciously excuses it, Matt. 26.41. The Spirit indeed is willing, but the Flesh is weak, and passes it by. He takes notice of the Lusting's of the Spirit against the Flesh, the Strivings of Grace against Sin and Corruption; and passes by the Lusting of the Flesh against the Spirit, the Strivings of Sin against Grace. The Lord does not enter into Judgment with his Servants, nor deal in Rigor with them; but he expresses Fatherly Tenderness and Compassion towards them, Psal. 103.13. Like as a Father pitieth his Children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. We are directed to beg for the Forgiveness of

Trespases daily, which shows, that as the Disciples of Christ daily offend, so their Heavenly Father is ready to grant forgiveness daily to them: Nay, Iniquity cleaves unto our holiest things; our best Duties should and might be done a great deal better. These Infirmities then are much to be lamented, more and more striven against; and seeing ourselves compassed about with them, we should banish all Self-confidence, and look into Jesus, that in him we may find acceptance; and certainly the Righteousness of Christ the Son of God, and the Father's love in him, will cover the greatest multitude of bewailed Infirmities and Offences.

4. It may be also Comfort to Attenders upon God, to think whom they have attending upon them. Saints on Earth have the Angels in Heaven to be their Guardians. Christ is signified by Jacob 's Ladder; the Angels of God are said to ascend and descend upon the Son of Man, John 1.51. 'It is owing to our Lord Jesus, that Believers have the Benefit of the Angels Ministry; and the Apostle signifies, that all of them are thus employed for the Saints Protection and Security, Heb. 1.14. Are they not all ministering Spirits, sent forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of Salvation? The reprobate and evil Angels resist Attenders upon God; but the elect and good Angels are their Friends: These Angels that excel in strength, How do they rejoice when any repent and are converted! And they have a Charge over Converts to keep them in all their ways, Psal. 91.11. and when 'tis added v. 13. Thou shalt tread upon the Lion and the Adder; the young Lion and the Dragon thou shalt trample under feet. It may be intimated, that Satan's Force, and Fury, and Subtlety, shall be ineffectual, and that by his Temptations he shall not prevail. But though Angels attend the Servants of God, they are not wholly trusted to the Angelical Care. The Lord himself is their Keeper: The Father and the Son come to them and make their abode in them, and

will secure their own Mansions, till they are out of the reach of Enemies, and past all danger.

5. Sincere Attendance upon God, shall attend upon him after another and better manner, in another World. They shall be fitted for, and admitted into the presence Chamber of the King of Glory. In Heaven there will be no need of the Sun or of the Moon to shine in it, for the Glory of the Lord does lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof, Rev. 21.23. and Rev. 22.3. And there shall be no more Curse, but the Throne of God, and of the Lamb, shall be in it, and his Servants shall serve him. They shall serve him, so as never in the least to disserve him; they shall do his Will, and nothing at all contrary to it; there will be a Perfection of Delight, and Rest, and Peace; in the Obedience they shall yield, when they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come, Rev. 4.8. and Rev. 5.13. Blessing, and Honor, and Glory, and Power, be unto him that sitteth upon the Throne, and to the Lamb forever and ever! All God's sincere Attendants, are now advanced to Priestly, nay to Kingly Dignity; therefore they are called a Royal Priesthood, 1 Pet. 2.9. Christ has loved them and washed them from their sins in his own Blood, and has made them Kings and Priests unto God and his Father, Rev. 1.5, 6. But hereafter they shall inherit and possess the Kingdom prepared for them, they shall all of them be actually crowned with a Crown of Life and Righteousness. And Oh what a joyful sight will it be to behold the Lord, and all his Saints glorified together with him, Col. 3.4. When Christ who is our Life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in Glory. Thus of the first Doctrine.

Doctrine. II.

In Attending upon God, we should look upon him as the Lord and serve him accordingly

The second Doctrine is this. In attending upon God, we should look upon him as the Lord, and serve him accordingly. When God pronounced his own Laws with his own Mouth upon Mount Sinai, He thus begins, I am the Lord, Exod. 20.2. and this was to awe Israel into Obedience. We read Deut 6.4. Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. No other Lord is his equal; no Commands to be regarded like his Commands. None so worthy of service as He; He must have attendance, who, or whatever is neglected, Psal. 89.6, 7. Who in Heaven can be compared to the Lord? who among the Sons of the Mighty can be likened unto the Lord? The mightiest Monarchs upon Earth, the highest Angels in Heaven, are infinitely below him; therefore it follows, God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of his Saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him. Holy David cries out, Psal. 8.1. O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy Name in all the Earth! Who hast set thy Glory above the Heavens! He worshipped and praised him, as the highest Sovereign, who excelled all things on Earth; and whose Glory the Heaven, though full of it, was not able to contain; and when he says our Lord, 'tis intimated that he was truly his Servant and Subject, and that he gloried in subjection to him.

In the handling of this Doctrine I shall;

First, Show you how God is the Lord.

Secondly, Manifest what influence and effect the apprehension of his being Lord, should have upon us when we attend upon

him.

Thirdly and Lastly, make Application.

In the first place, I am to show you how God is the Lord. His Majesty may amaze us; when we think or speak of his Dominion, we should be struck with godly Fear: Thus was the Psalmist, Psal. 104.1. O Lord my God, thou art very great, thou art clothed with Honor and Majesty, who coverest thyself with light as with a Garment, Psal. 96.4, 6, 9. For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all God's. Honor and Majesty are before him, Strength and Beauty are in his Sanctuary. O worship the Lord in the Beauty of Holiness, fear before him all the Earth. Now that you may the better understand with whom you have to do when you attend upon God. You must know,

1. God is Lord Creator; of whom are all things. The Man of God, Moses, with wonder and adoration cries out, Psal. 90.2. Before the Mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the Earth or the World, even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God. The Lord was before all, and he was all of, and in, and to himself from Eternity. The Father is of himself alone, the Son is necessarily and eternally of the Father; and the Holy Ghost as necessarily and eternally from both the Father and the Son. And these Three are that one living and true God whom Christians believe in, and in whose Name they are baptized. But though God necessarily is, yet Creatures are not so; but have their being at his pleasure, Rev. 4.11. Thou art worthy O Lord, to receive Glory and Honor, and Power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

It is the Lord, whose Word of Power and Command brought all things out of nothing at first, Heb. 11.3. Through Faith we understand that the Worlds were framed by the Word of God.

Though some have imagined that Angels were created, and many of them fell, long before this visible World was made; in Scripture there is not sufficient ground for such an Imagination. It is probable those excellent Creatures were made the first day; when 'tis said Gen. 1.1. In the beginning God created the Heaven: The Heaven may take in the highest Heaven, and the Host of Angels there. Oh what a powerful Word was that which commanded Angels to be, which before were nothing, and gave them Spiritual and Immortal Natures, endued with such mighty Strength and Understanding? And when the Lord laid the Foundations of the Earth, and stretched the line upon it; these glorious Angels, called Morning Stars, sang together, and all these Sons of God shouted for joy, Job 38.4, 5, 7.

This Lord Creator did but say, Let there be Light, and there was Light: The Sun, the Moon, the Stars, the Earth and Seas, and all their Hosts, were what his Word made them. And Man, who was to have Dominion over this lower World, God did make in his own Image, his Body indeed was formed of the Dust of the ground; but to show that his Soul was not of earthly Original, God is called the Father of Man's Spirit, he breathed into his Nostrils the Breath of Life, and Man became a living Soul, Gen. 2.7. This great Creator whom we attend upon, made all things very good, Gen. 1.31. and though Sin entering into the World, spoiled much of his Workmanship; he can easily new make what Sin has marred, and he can easily, and will certainly destroy those who are finally unwilling to be made new Creatures.

2. God is Lord, Preserver of what himself has made. The word of his power sustains all things, Heb. 1.3. it continues things in those beings into which at first it brought them, Psal. 148.5, 6. Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded, and they were created. He hath also established them forever and ever: He hath

made a Decree which shall not pass. The same Lord who called things out of nothing by his word, hinders their returning into nothing by the same word of command, Psal. 33.9. For he spake and it was done, he commanded and it stood fast. There is so much power exerted in upholding the Creation, that the Preservation of the Universe is rightly called a continued Creation of it. If God should totally draw back his supporting hand, all the Luminaries in Heaven would presently lose their Light, the Earth and Seas would become a Chaos of Confusion; nay, Men and Angels, and all things else would immediately lose their beings and become nothing.

As the Creation, so the Preservation of all things is of the Lord alone, Neh. 9.6. Thou, even thou art Lord alone, thou hast made Heaven the Heaven of Heavens with all their Host, the Earth and all things that are therein, the Seas and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all. How worthy is he to be worshipped by the Host of Heaven, and by the Sons of Men the Inhabitants of the Earth! God is called Almighty or All-sufficient, and <H&G> signifies Mamma, a Pap or Breast; all Creatures, from the mightiest to the very meanest, do hang and depend upon God, as Children do upon the Breasts, that he may nourish and sustain them. And if God thus upholds all things, surely he will not fail to preserve his Church and Saints, they may with Confidence attend upon him for defense, no Human nor Hellish Force shall prevail against them.

3. God is Lord Proprietor and Possessor of Heaven and Earth. So Melchizedek called the most high God, when he blessed Abram the Father of the Faithful, Gen. 14.19. Blessed be Abram of the most high God, the Possessor of Heaven and Earth. Psal. 24.1. we read, The Earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof; the World, and they that dwell therein. All Persons and things are properly God's own, and he may do with them what he pleases. By Creation the Lord began, and

by Preservation he continues to be the Proprietor of all things. Propriety is the ground of Power, and Power of Government; now a most absolute and universal Propriety and Power, the Lord does rightly challenge to himself; he is accountable to none, not to be resisted by any; none can stay his hand, or say to him, What doest thou? It was a good answer that Elihu made to Job, Ch. 33.12, 13. God is greater than Man, Why dost thou strive against him? For he giveth not an account of any of his matters.

It is a wise part to attend upon God, who has a Propriety in us and in all things besides, and all things are really in his Hands and Possession; so that he can with-hold or bestow them according to his own Will. If God be for us, he can make all things for us; if he be against us, nothing shall be for our help and benefit. There is nothing which we need, but a superabundance of it, is in God's hand. The Possessor of Heaven and Earth has the Blessings of Heaven and Earth to give forth. Every Beast of the Forest is his, and the Cattle upon a thousand Hills, Psal. 50.10. All Sheep and Oxen, yea, and the Beasts of the Field, the Fowl of the Air, and the Fish of the Sea, and whatever passeth through the paths of the Seas. How easy is it for him to provide things of this nature, who has so much, who has all of them in his own keeping? But far better Blessings than these he has in his hand to bestow; and of the best Blessings he is most liberal: When we knock at his door, we should remember how rich he is, whose all things are; and that this Lord over all, is rich unto all that call upon him, Rom. 10.12.

4. God is Lord Redeemer of his People, and a mighty Lord indeed he shows himself in the Redemption of them, Jer. 50.34. Their Redeemer is strong, the Lord of Hosts is his Name, he shall thoroughly plead their cause, that he may give rest to them. Redemption supposes that redeemed ones were enslaved, lost, and

under a Curse: To redeem must needs be granted an high act of Mercy and Grace, and of force and might likewise: The Lord is a Redeemer by Power and Conquest, he throws down the Dominion of Sin, demolishes its strongest holds, he thrusts Mammon out of the Throne of the heart, he treads Satan under his Peoples feet; in a Sense also he is a Redeemer by Commutation, God became Man, that he might stand in Man's room, suffer in Man's nature; and be Man's Surety and Savior: And he redeems by paying a price, and that the Price might be of infinite value, he gave no less than himself for those whom he has redeemed, 1 Cor. 6.20. Ye are not your own, for yea are bought with a price, therefore glorify God which bought you, in your Body and in your Spirit which are God's. And in Gal. 2.20. He loved me, says the Apostle, and gave himself for me. The Prey and the Captives are delivered out of the hands of that terrible Enemy the Prince of Darkness. Believers are redeemed from the Curse of the Law by him who was made Flesh, Sin, and a Curse for them. They may triumph indeed, because the first death is unstung, the Grave has lost its Victory, and none of them shall be seized and hurt by the second death. This Lord Redeemer, How should he be attended upon! How should sinful and lost Souls, before they are lost past recovery, being sensible of their danger, come flocking to him in great numbers, flying as a Cloud, and as Doves to their Windows!

5. God is Lord and Law-giver, and all are bound to obey those Laws he gives them. His Laws are the best that ever were given. In the keeping of these Laws lies true Goodness, and Sin, which is incomparably the foulest, and most pernicious, and worst of all Evils, is a Transgression of these Laws which God has delivered to us. How often in the New Testament do we read of the Kingdom of God! And Kingdom implies a King and Laws; and that there are Subjects who must obey the one and the other: The Cross of Christ excludes not Christians Sufferings, but their Sufferings are not expiatory of Sin, as

his were; and the Obedience of Christ excludes not Christians Obedience; but his was meritorious, theirs is not. How strictly soever some may take the Gospel, and say 'tis all Promises; I am sure the Gospel, as it represents itself, takes in Commands. Christ is a King to be obeyed, as well as a Propitiatory Sacrifice to be rested on; and he is the Author of Salvation to all them that obey him; and they that obey not the Gospel, which shows it has Laws to be obeyed, shall be punished with everlasting Destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, Heb. 5.9, 2 Thess. 1.8, 9.

Faith in Christ does not make Believers lawless; nay, the Apostle speaks with some vehemency, Do we then make void the Law through Faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the Law, Rom. 3.31. Indeed we are not under the Law, i.e. under the Curse of the Law, if we are true Believers; nor under it as a Covenant, Do this and live; we are not to hope for Justification, nor to fear Condemnation by it. But the Law is a Rule which we are bound to act and walk according to; and unto this Rule our Hearts and Lives, with great Care and Conscience, should be conformed. And that these Laws may be the better observed, the Lord and Law-giver must be more eyed. He takes notice whether we yield Obedience, and is most ready to assist us to obey: And he should always be set before us, both as our Observer and our Helper too. Psal. 16.8. I have set the Lord always before me, because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

6. God is Lord, who has power to save and to destroy. James 4.12. There is one Law-giver who is able to save and to destroy: Who art thou that judgest another? He has the power of Life and Death; Death that is eternal, Life that is everlasting: He is the Lord of Hosts; all Creatures are at his command and beck, and are ready either to be the Executioners of his Wrath, or to serve him in his gracious purposes and pleasure: He is that mighty God who lifts up his hand

to Heaven, and says, I live forever. I kill, and I make alive; I wound and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand, Deut. 32.39, 40.

All sorts of Life are from God, that of Nature, Grace and Glory: He can raise those that attend upon him from the brink of the Grave, and rescue them out of the very jaws of Death, Psal. 30.2, 3. O Lord my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me. O Lord thou hast brought up my Soul from the Grace, thou hast kept me alive that I should not go down into the Pit. 2 Cor. 1.9, 10. We had the Sentence of Death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the Dead; who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver; in whom we trust, that he will yet deliver us. God is he who quickens and makes those Spiritually alive, that were dead in sins and trespasses. He reverses the Sentence of Death which the Law had passed upon them; gives them a new Life and Nature, and enables them to walk in newness of Life. 'It is a mighty Voice, attended with his powerful Spirit which raises the Dead in sin, and makes them live to God, John 5.25. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the Dead shall hear the Voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live. And when this Spiritual Life is wrought, 'tis really eternal Life in the Seed and Blossom; and into eternal Life at length it shall be ripened and perfected. The sanctifying Grace of the Spirit is likened unto water, because 'tis of a cleansing, refreshing, and fructifying nature; and this Grace shall still be acting and increasing, till it issue in glory, John 4.14. But the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a Well of water springing up into everlasting Life.

And as all sorts of Life are from God, so all sorts of Death he has power to inflict: All Afflictions and Plagues, when this Lord sends them, do say, Here we are: The King of Terrors, Death, is God's

subject, and says, I am ready to strike, young or old, high or low, few or many, as the Lord of all, does give me Commission and Command. And the second Death at God's righteous pleasure opens its everlasting doors, to receive and eternally to swallow up all that he sentences thither, Isa. 5.14. Therefore Hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure, and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth shall descend into it. Such a Lord, the effects of whose love and anger are felt not only in this World, but also in the other, and indeed run parallel with Eternity, should certainly be attended on with a great dread of offending him, with the exactest care in everything to please him.

7. God is a Lord, obeyed by the whole Creation, but only Men on earth, and Devils and damned Spirits in Hell. These greater lights, the Sun and Moon, that rule the day and night, are perfectly ruled by their Maker, and rise and set at his command: And to show that he can stop the Sun in its swift motion, at Joshua 's entreaty, he commanded it to stand still in Gibeon, and the Moon in the Valley of Ajalon, Josh. 10.12. Nay, in the days of Hezekiah, he makes the Sun to move backward, and to return no less than ten degrees by which it had gone down, Isa. 38.8. All the Stars of Heaven he calls by their names, and they observe their courses according to his Ordinances. The Sea does ebb and flow according to his appointment, and keep within the bounds that he has set it when it roars and is most tempestuous: The Storms and Winds fulfil his word, and if he do but say to them, Peace be still, presently there is a great calm. He calls for the Thunder and the Lightning, and how terrible is the Voice of the one, and the flashing of the other! The Thunder is silenced, and the Lightning extinguished at his pleasure. All Creatures that glide through the Air, or slide through the Ocean, that feed and grow upon the Earth, in their way and manner obey their Maker and Preserver's Will. Eye, Oh Eye upon Apostate Angels and Men, that they should

be the only Rebels! Look upward, downward, on the right hand and on the left, and the many Thousands of Creatures which your Eyes behold, are so many instances of Obedience to God. Why, Oh why should not all we be ready to yield our utmost Service?

8. God is a Lord who over-rules them that rebel against him, though they break his Commands; they cannot get from under his power, but he can check, restrain, disappoint, and destroy them at his pleasure. The Seed of the Woman has been hated by the Serpents brood, and they that have been born only after the Flesh, have been strongly inclined to persecute such as have been born after the Spirit, Gal. 4.28, 29. Now we, Brethren, as Isaac was, are the Children of Promise. But as then he that was born after the Flesh, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit: even so it is now: And so 'tis likely to be still. When Heathen Emperors and Kings were Converts to the Christian Faith, the Prince of Darkness did not turn and change. He always was, and is, and will be full of Malice against Christ the Head, and against his true Members. And those who are of their Father the Devil, the Lusts of their Father they will do; and they that are Saints must expect find their Hearts set against them, and as far as they can, their hands too.

But that Lord who is with his People, is greater infinitely than the evil one, 1 John 4.4. Ye are of God, little Children, and have overcome them, because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the World. As Satan's Subtlety is nothing to God's Wisdom; as his Power is small to God's Almightyness, so his Wrath, though never so great, is a little and contemptible thing, when the Love which God bears to his People is believably considered. The mightiest Men whom Satan employs to run down the Church of the living God, shall never affect their wicked purpose; the Church triumphs over her most furious Enemies, looking unto her Mighty Helper, Psal. 46.5, 6,

7. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early. The Heathen raged, the Kingdoms were moved. They stirred up themselves with their united force, and in their rage they would have devoured the Israel of God; but He uttered his Voice, and the Earth melted: All these Enemies were dispirited and came to nothing, and no wonder, for it follows, The Lord of Hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah. Well may the voluntary Subjects of such a Lord attend upon him with forwardness and Faith, since he has such an absolute uncontrollable Dominion over all his and their Enemies!

9. God is a Lord infinitely above and better than any other Lord's whatsoever. As he is infinitely superior to all in Majesty and Greatness, so also in Mercy and Goodness: The whole Earth is full of Divine Goodness, Psal. 145.9. The Lord is good to all and his tender Mercies are over all his works: It is special and peculiar Kindness which is shewn to his Saints, Psal. 103.11. As the Heaven is high above the Earth, so great is his Mercy towards them that fear him. What are other Lord's if compared with God? As for Mammon, who has most of Mankind to be his Vassals, his delights are low, his Riches uncertain, his all is Vanity. Satan is a cruel Lord, he is a Liar who deceives, a Murderer who destroys all whom he can keep under his Power and Dominion. And the Wages which Sin does give to them that serve it, is eternal Death; and the more diligent they have been in the Service of Sin, and the more laborious Workers of Iniquity, Hell will be so much the hotter, their Sorrow and Misery so much the greater.

Are such Lord's as these, comparable to the Lord Jehovah, whose Strength, whose Love is everlasting? What care does he take of all that are truly his Servants! How mild and gentle is his Government! His Kingdom is Righteousness, and Peace, and Joy! It was a Pious

Ejaculation of one of the Ancients, *Da Domine quod jubes*, O Lord give that which thou commandest. His Servants are by himself created in Christ Jesus unto the good works in which he has commanded them to walk. He teaches them by his own Spirit to do his Will, *Psal. 143.10*. Teach me to do thy Will, for thou art my God, thy Spirit is good, lead me into the Land of Uprightness. He works in them to Will, inclining their Hearts unto his Testimonies; and he works in them to do of his own good pleasure, *Phil. 2.13*. And directs their ways to keep his Statutes. All the good, that good Men do, God is the doer of: his Preventing and Assisting Grace, is, and does all in all; And after all, *Dona sua coronat*, he crowns that Grace which himself has wrought, and made active with an eternal weight of Glory. Well may his attendants Glory in such a Lord as peerless! *Psal. 34.2, 3*. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. O magnify the Lord with me: and let us exalt his name together.

10. God is the Lord and Judge of all, at whose Barr Angels and Men, the Quick and the dead must at last stand. Apostate Angels believe and tremble at the foresight of future Judgment. Satan's time is short, his Wrath great; but his Dread is greater of that great day of reckoning and retribution. And as for the Children of Men, all must be judged; the Day is appointed, and is hastening: Every one of us, says the Apostle, must give account of himself to God, *Rom. 14.12*. And an account will be taken of all that has been done while we were in the Body, *Eccles. 12.14* For God will bring every work into Judgment, with every secret thing; whether it be good, or whether it be evil. How should this Lord and Judge be feared! With what diligence should his Commandments be kept! Since this is the whole of Man. Man's Duty, Safety, grand Concern and Interest lies here. He that will Judge all at last, with his own Eyes observes and sees all at present, *Psal. 11.4*. The Lord's Throne is in Heaven, his Eyes behold,

his Eye-lids try the Children of Men, Job 31.4. Doth not he see my ways, and count all my steps? And when all the Children of Men, that ever were or shall be do appear before him, his faithful Attendants he will own and put great Honor upon; and will say, Well done good and faithful Servants; you have been faithful in a few things, I will make you Rulers over many things, enter you into the Joy of your Lord: But how shall the Children of Disobedience stand before him! Who lived and died in their Rebellion and Wickedness, and did nothing but treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous Judgment of God!

In the second place I am to manifest what influence and effect the apprehension of God's being the Lord, should have upon us when we attend upon him.

1. When we look upon God as Lord, we should be sensible of our distance, and how we are infinitely below him. What a sense was there of the Divine Majesty, and of his own meanness, in the Patriarch Abraham when he spoke those words, Gen. 18 27. Behold now I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, who am but Dust and Ashes. We read that Dominion and Fear are with him, that the brightest Stars are not pure in his sight; how much less Man that is a Worm, and the Son of Man that is a Worm? Job 25.2, 5, 6. The Grace of the Gospel does not exclude a holy Awe and Reverence of God, but include it. And the more there is of grace, the more there is also of this godly fear, and the Service is the more acceptable, Heb. 12.28, 29. Wherefore we receiving a Kingdom that cannot be moved, let us have Grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming Fire. We are indeed encouraged to come with boldness; but that boldness is upon the account of our great High Priest and Mediator; but though we are the Members of Christ, we must remember, that God is inconceivably

above us. The Man Christ Jesus himself when he prayed, fell on his face before his heavenly Father, Mat. 26.39. Nay, he calls himself a worm too, Psal. 22.6. But I am a worm and no man, a reproach of men, and despised of the People.

2. When we look upon God as Lord, we should be deeply humbled and abased for our Affronts Offences, and Rebellions against him. 'It is the Law of the Lord Almighty which sin breaks; and 'tis the Lord himself that sin causes to be despised. When David was truly penitent and contrite, he cries out, Against thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight, Psal. 51.4. His sin had been an injury, and indeed a deadly one to Uriah his Subject; but it was a gross and foul breach of the Law of God, and so was committed against him. And as his sin was ever before him, so was that Lord against whom he had sinned. This lays him very low, and makes him readily condemn himself, and ready to justify God, how severe a Sentence soever should be past; how sore a punishment soever should be inflicted upon him; that thou mightest, says he, be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Job had not been so careful of God's Honor, as he had been to vindicate his own innocence; at length the Lord himself does manifest his Glory to him: he confounds him with that question, Job 40.8. Wilt thou disannul my Judgment? Wilt thou condemn me that thou mayest be Righteous? Job at length has a clearer view of the Greatness and Sovereignty of that God with whom he had to do; and says, I have heard of thee by the hearing of the Ear, but now mine Eye seeth thee, wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in Dust and Ashes, Job 42.5, 6.

3. When we look upon God as Lord, we should admire his concernedness for the Salvation and Happiness of such as we are. It was the expression of one who was an eminent Saint, and a great King, O my Soul, thou hast said unto the Lord thou art my Lord, my

goodness extendeth not to thee, Psal 16.2. He is a Lord so high, so glorious in himself, so far exalted above all, that the goodness of the best cannot in the least degree be beneficial to him. He stands not then in need of Man, therefore his good will which he bears towards Men is the more to be admired. If the whole human Race after the first defection from God, had perished, and every one of them had been miserable forever; the blessedness of God would have been no more impaired, than it was by the loss and misery of those Spirits that first sinned, and left their own Habitation; none of which ever was recovered, or shall be. Oh, whence is it that the Lord of Glory should show such discriminating Grace to the Sons of Men! Lord! What is Man, that thou who art so much above him, should be so mindful of him, as to visit him with thy Salvation, who was unable to save himself, unworthy to be saved; nay, unwilling to be saved, till thou didst make him willing in the day of thy Power!

4. When we look upon God as Lord, we should exceedingly dread his Wrath, and value his Loving-kindness. The Rebukes of such a mighty Lord, when provoked, must needs be terrible, Psal. 18.7. Then the Earth shook and trembled, the foundations also of the Hills moved and were shaken, because he was wrath. Exod 15.6, 7. Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in Power; thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed in pieces the Enemy, and in the greatness of thine excellency thou hast overthrown them that rose up against thee, thou sentest forth thy wrath, which consumed them as Stubble. And as the Anger of God has all evils in its power to inflict on those who are so fool-hardy to provoke it, so his loving-kindness is ready to open the treasures of his goodness. How bountiful is his love to his beloved ones! The Psalmist having meditated on it, justly stands amazed at it, and cries out, How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! Psal. 36.7. It transcends all created love: if all the love that is in Men and Angels were united together, it would not be so much, compared

with the love of God; as the light of a Glowworm is to the Sun, shining forth in its Noon-day Glory. And as the love of God is so excellent in itself, transcendently excellent also are the acts and beneficial effects of it.

If the wrath of a King be as the messengers of death, Prov. 16.14. what is the wrath of the King of Kings and Lord of Lord's! If in the light of the King's Countenance is life, and his favor is as the Cloud of the later Rain, Prov. 16.15. the favor of the blessed and only Potentate must needs be infinitely more refreshing, and better than life itself. It is from this Lord that every Man's Judgment comes. He ministers Judgment at present; good and evil is dispensed by his hand; and 'tis he that will pass upon all the final Sentence of Absolution or Condemnation at the last day. What care then should there be to have his Wrath appeased by a Mediator! What fervency of Spirit in suing for peace and reconciliation! Solomon tells, that many seek the Rulers Favor; but certainly Divine Favor is much more desirable, because every man's Judgment is from the Lord, Prov. 29.26.

5. When we look upon God as Lord, we should trust in him for deliverance from other Lord's who have had the Dominion over us. He can work whatsoever, and in whomsoever he pleases, and none shall be able to hinder. The Psalmist was sensible of sins force and power; he was weary of sins Dominion; he cries unto God to deliver him from the Reign of all the sins he knew: and those sins which were secret and concealed from his view, he begs that he might be convinced of them, and thoroughly cleansed from them, Psal. 19.12, 13. The Lord can turn the Heart perfectly to hate the sin that was most of all beloved; and the strength of sin is gone when once 'tis hated; and as the hatred grows stronger and stronger, sin becomes weaker and weaker daily. Saul was a proud self-confident Pharisee, a

furious Persecutor; the Lord meets him, and stops him in his persecuting Rage; he humbles him, works in his Heart Faith in Christ, against whom he had such a mighty and seemingly invincible prejudice; of a Wolf he turns him into one of the Sheep of Christ; nay, into a zealous and careful Shepherd of the Flock; so that he preached that Faith which once he endeavored to destroy, Gal 3.23.

The Lord can subdue Iniquity where it has born the greatest sway. If he speaks the word of power, down go all strong-holds; reasonings that before were thought strong, are seen to be absurd, imaginations vain, high things and thoughts are brought into Captivity and Obedience, 2 Cor. 10.4, 5. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into Captivity every thought to the Obedience of Christ.

The very Prince of the Devils, Beelzebub himself, the Lord can easily dispossess. He cast him out of Heaven, and surely he can cast him out of the Heart also. If the Lord speak the Word, Satan falls like Lightning: How sudden and remarkable is his Downfall! If he charge this unclean Spirit to come out, he must presently quit his Habitation; and if he command him to keep out, he must enter no more, Mark 9.25. He rebuked the foul Spirit, saying unto him; I charge thee to come out of him, and to enter no more into him.

When the Lord by the preaching of the Gospel, made himself known in the World, how were Heathen Idols destroyed? 1 Thes. 1.9. Ye turned to God from Idols, to serve the living and true God. And whatever Worldly Enjoyments have been idolized, he can show the Vanity of them, and mortify inordinate Affection to them. He is jealous of his Honor, likes not to have his Throne usurped; we are to

trust in this Lord, and to desire he would take unto this his great Power, and Reign in us; and that no opposite Lord's may be any longer served.

6. When we look upon God as Lord, we should be careful to know his Will, and always forward to do it. That is one of the first Inquiries of a true Convert. Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Acts 9.6. Man's Will, till renewed by Grace, is foolish, perverse, wicked, and perniciously inclined. He wills that which is to his own Woe. 'It is but reason that such a Will should yield to the Will of God, who is wise, holy, and good. Whoever acted according to the Will of God, and saw cause to repent of it? And sure I am, that they who do contrary to the Will of God, must repent of it in this World, or too late in the next. We find that Wisdom is very much placed in knowing the Will of God: Eph. 5.17. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the Will of the Lord is: And Happiness is placed in the doing of it. Joh. 13.17. If ye know these things happy are ye if ye do them. We should approve ourselves better Servants, if we did but mind more our Lord and Master's Will. In Temptation we should consider what is the Will of God, and then the Tempter would be withstood: When earthly Treasure is laid before us, to draw our Hearts to covet it; we should remember, 'tis the Will of the Lord, that our Heart and Treasure should be in Heaven. Whatever Duty we are setting about, towards God or Man; we should inquire how would God have this Duty to be done? What acceptable Service then would God have from us! And what Blessings should we be to those, whom we are related to, and converse with! Lord, show me thy Will; and let my Will, in all things, and at all times, be determined by thine! This is becoming Language, and every Soul should sincerely speak it. He is the most eminent and perfect Christian, who stands most perfect and complete in all the Will of God.

7. When we look upon God as Lord, we should never quarrel or murmur at anything he is pleased to do to us or with us. Arbitrary Power is very much affected by the Potentates of this World; though it would be much more truly great in them, to do as they ought, than to do as they please. Arbitrary Power is justly challenged by the Lord the universal Sovereign: He may do whatever he pleases; and it will please him to do nothing but what becomes his own Wisdom, Goodness, and other glorious Excellencies. A mighty Monarch who had walked in Pride, at length was so abased, that he acknowledged and honored this highest Lord of all; and he says, All the Inhabitants of the Earth are reputed as nothing, and he doth according to his Will in the Armies of Heaven, and among the Inhabitants of the Earth, Dan 4.35. The Dispensations of Divine Providence must not fall under our Censure. He that reproveth God will ill answer for it. 'It is sinful Boldness to strive with him, and say, What dost thou? As if he had not done so well as he might: 'It is more becoming, with obedient Patience and Submission, to cry out: Oh the Depth of the Riches, both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways past finding out! Rom. 11.33. and Psal. 145.17. The Lord is righteous in all his Ways, and holy in all his Works. When under his severer Dealings with us, we charge him with Rigor and want of Care; we do but charge God foolishly. His Understanding is infinite, Psal. 147.5. therefore he is not liable to the least Mistake: His Bowels are tender, and he can never become Cruel 'It is inconsistent with his Justice, to lay upon any Man more than is right, that he should enter into Judgment with God, Job 34.23. He is so gracious that he afflicts when his People need, and tis good for them to be afflicted. That Man spake very ill who said I do well to be angry. Whatever the Lord does to his People, he does wisely, justly, faithfully; how then can their Fretting and Impatience be justified! It would be far better for them to cease their Contention and Disputing, and to answer as Job at last did, Job 40 4,

5. Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my Hand upon my Mouth; once have I spoken, but I will not answer, yea twice, but I will proceed no farther.

8. When we look upon God as Lord, we should long to behold his Glory in his Kingdom. It was the Desire of Moses, Exod. 33.18. I beseech thee show me thy Glory. It is but little that the Saints see of the King of Saints, in comparison of what they shall see. They know but in part, and how should they long that that which is perfect may come, and that which is in part may be done away, 1 Cor. 13.10. The Earth is the Lord's Footstool, and here we behold but some Footsteps and Shadows, and have a darker Discovery of him; but the Heaven is his Throne, and when we come to stand before his Throne; how bright will be his Majesty in our Eyes! How glorious his Holiness! How will his Face be all Light and Love! And how ravishing will the fullest Sense of that Love be! It should be our Care by a continual Increase of Purity in Heart, to be fitted for this beatifical Vision of the Lord of Glory. Mat. 5.8. Blessed are the pure in Heart, for they shall see God. And this Vision should the more longed for, because it will be transforming. When we behold the Lord's Glory, we shall partake of it; when we see him, we shall, to our eternal Excellency and Satisfaction, be like him. 1 Joh. 3.2. Beloved, now are we the Sons of God, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

In the last place follows the Application.

USE I. shall be of Reproof. Well may the Mouth of his Messengers be full of Reproof, since the Lord that sends them is so generally disregarded. Several sorts of Persons are worthy Reprehension.

1. They are to be reprov'd, who say with Pharaoh, who is the Lord that we should obey his Voice? How many are there who will not acknowledge they owe him any Service; or if they do acknowledge it; they are so wicked and unrighteous, that they will not render what they cannot but confess is due to him! How many say, Our Lips are our own, who is Lord over us? Psal. 12.4. who is he that would give laws to our Tongues; and put them under a Bridle? They say also, our Members are all our own, and therefore we will employ them as we please; though that employing is abusing and abasing of them, to be Instruments of Unrighteousness unto Sin. Our Time also is our own, and therefore we will pass it according to our own Pleasure, as if Time were a thing of no Value, and to have it well or ill with them to Eternity, were a matter of mere Indifferency. They that now cry, Who is the Lord? When they stand, as they all must, before his Judgment Seat, he will make them know who he is. How terrifying will his Looks be! How heavy will his Hand be felt! They would not obey the Scepter of his Word; and he will break them with his Iron Rod, and dash them in pieces like a Potter's Vessel, Psal. 2.9.

2. They are to be reprov'd who have a greater Reverence for Man than for God, who is the sovereign Lord of all. They dare not displease great Men; but the great God they make bold to offend. Men whom they depend upon, they are careful to keep in with; but that God, in whose Hand their Breath is, and whose are all their Ways they do not glorify, Dan. 5.23. They depend upon this Lord for their Being and Blessedness, and all things. Their Life is continued only during his Pleasure; all things that they have are of his bestowing; and if ever they are blessed, 'tis God must make them so; and yet the Favor and Anger of this God, are contemned in Comparison of the Love and Hatred of Man. How many will comply with the Lusts of Men that will not conform to the Will of God? Men's Inventions are regarded more than God's Institutions. Thus

the Statutes of Omri were kept, and all the Works of the House of Ahab, and Israel did walk in their Counsels, Mic. 6.16. when they rejected the Counsel of God against themselves, and cast the Laws of Jehovah behind their Backs. But how poor a thing is Man's Help against Divine Anger! Nay, here the mightiest Man can be no Security. Job 9.13. If God will not withdraw his Anger, the proud Helpers do stoop under him: And those whom the Lord does undertake to comfort, why should Man that shall die dismay them. Isa. 51.12, 13. I, even I am he that comforteth you. Who art thou that thou shouldst be afraid of a Man that shall die, and of the Son of Man which shall be as Grass? And forgetest the Lord thy Maker, that stretched forth the Heavens, and laid the Foundations of the Earth? His Power may well make the Fury of Oppressors contemptible: But God's Power is irresistible, as his Wrath is intolerable.

3. They are to be reprov'd who prefer the worst Lord's before the greatest and the best of all. The true God is certainly the best Lord; and Sin and Satan are the worst that can be served; and yet how few has the former, how many Servants have the later! The Lord's Government is most gracious; the Paths he requires us to walk in are Pleasantness and Peace, Prov. 3.17. But the Ways of Sin are quite contrary. No Peace saith my God to the wicked, Isa. 57.21. Whatever, Sin in the beginning may seem, its End is bitter as Wormwood, sharp as a two-edged Sword; and they that serve it, their Feet go down to Death, and their Steps will quickly take hold of Hell. Shall I show you the manner of Sin and Satan's Reign? Their Vassals are put upon Cruel Hard Service, and they must stick at nothing. If the fulfilling of their Lusts call for it, the Estate must be wasted, Health must be endangered, Repute and good Name must be disregarded, Posterity must be beggared, Life itself must be shortened, and the precious Soul lost forever, rather than sin not be gratified and served. Sin has a Law, and what Command does it impose upon those that are

subject to it? Its Injunctions are such as these; Fight against God, and slight the Wrath of the Lord Almighty. Mind neither thy Duty, nor thy Safety. Pursue Vanity and Vexation of Spirit, but care not for the truest and eternal Blessedness. Be sure to please thy Flesh, and seek thyself and mind thy Carnal Interest, though thou art in the worst Sense undone thereby. Go on impenitently and securely in thy Wickedness, till thou fall into Hell Flames. Do all this and die, and damn thyself unto Eternity. What hard sayings are these! Yet Thousands and Millions hear and obey them! It is amazing that those who have reasonable Souls, should act so void of all sound Reason, as to refuse his Service, who commands them to be wise, and safe, and good, and should choose to be Fools, and to be miserable!

4. They are to be reprov'd, who have begun to serve the Lord; and afterwards forsake his Service, and revolt from him. These revoltors show a great Zeal and Forwardness in Religion, many of them, for a time; they seem to have escaped the pollutions of the World, and to have got the Victory over it, and to have overcome the evil One: but being again entangled and overcome themselves by Mammon and Satan, they are a credit to these Masters, and to their false and pernicious ways; but they are a great dishonor to Religion, and to the Author of it the Lord of Glory. These revoltors discover an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God, which is so much cautioned against, Heb. 3.12. and if without Faith 'tis impossible to please God, how much must he needs be provoked by infidelity! And with what Torments will their unbelief at last be confuted and punished together! These Revoltors quench a great deal of Light which has shined into them, this aggravates the works of darkness unto which they return; though they have under Conviction felt the Terrors of the Lord, yet they venture more than ever to incense him; in a special manner they grieve the Spirit of God, and deeply wound their own Spirits: But these Wounds are not felt at present; their

Consciences are seared, Satan has fuller and faster possession of them; fullness of sin quickly follows; and the last state with them is worse than the first, Mat. 12.45.

USE II. Shall be of Advice in these particulars.

1. Hearken to the Lord inviting and calling you all to his Service. There is room in his House for many Thousands more than are there; and there is plentiful and abundant provision for their entertainment. In my Father's House, says the Prodigal when he came to himself, there is Bread enough and to spare, Luke 15.17. Christ's Sacrifice of himself can put away multitudes of sins more than as yet have been pardoned. And though Millions of empty and lost Souls more come to him, out of his fullness they may be all replenished, and secure under the shadow of his wings. His Messengers say to you Come, himself says Come, his Spirit says Come; your Wants which none but he can supply, speak aloud to you to go to him; keep therefore no longer at a distance. He is most ready to receive you graciously, and to communicate grace of all sorts to you.

2. Behold how willing this Lord is to pass by all past disobedience upon your believing and repentance. The Apostle Paul was not upbraided with his persecuting Rage and Hellish Fury, when once he submitted himself to the Lord, and laid down his Weapons wherewith he had fought against God. The Grace of our Lord, says he, was exceeding abundant, with Faith and Love that is in Christ Jesus, 1 Tim. 1.14. and v. 15, 16. he tells us, that he the chief of sinners obtained Mercy, that the greatest sinners hereafter may hope and expect Mercy upon their believing and Conversion. Howbeit for this Cause I obtained Mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering for a Pattern to them who should hereafter

believe on him to Life Everlasting. Whatever your Rebellions have been; if now you be willing and obedient. All shall be forgotten and forgiven. Scarlet and Crimson Sins, shall become white as Snow and Wool, Isa. 1.18, 19.

3. See where your Righteousness and Strength lies. Jesus Christ the righteous is the Righteousness of them that do believe. His Obedience and Sufferings can satisfy for and cover all your Disobedience, and 'tis through him alone that you attain the free Gift of Justification of Life. He became obedient to Death, even the Death of the Cross, Psal. 2.8. and 'tis by the Obedience of this one, the second Adam, that all, as many can believe in him are made righteous, Rom. 5.19. And as in the Lord you, have Righteousness, so in him you have Strength too. His Power must rest upon you, else no good will be done by you: Through his Strength all things may be done, but he himself says, without me ye can do nothing, Joh. 15.5. Never think by good Works to satisfy for bad ones: The best Works have much amiss in them: And by no means entertain an Imagination, that at your own Pleasure you can work in yourselves to will and to do; but always acknowledge, the necessity and Efficacy of the Grace of Christ, and glorify that Grace, saying, when you obey and labor, it is not I, but the Grace of God that is with me.

4. Earnestly desire that your Hearts may be circumcised to love both the Lord himself, and his Service likewise. It is a Promise worth more, and if made good to us, will enrich us more, than the Wealth of both the Indies: Deut. 30.6. The Lord thy God will circumcise thy Heart, and the Heart of thy Seed to love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, that thou mayst live. A Heart to love him is his own Gift, and the Heart must be circumcised by himself, before it will be brought to love him. The Prophet speaks of the Foreskin of the Heart; that must be taken away. Now this Foreskin of the Heart

is Carnal and Worldly Love, together with Enmity against God and his Law. Cry to the Lord according to his good Word of Promise to mortify the one, and to subdue the other: And that he would give you a new Heart and Nature, cause a new Light to shine that may manifest his glorious Goodness in the Face of Christ, and so direct your Hearts into the Love of himself. If he be truly loved, he will be the more willingly obeyed; and truly his Precepts are worthy to be loved too; the better they are kept, the more truly excellent are those that keep them. And themselves are kept in more perfect Peace. The Psalmist says, My Soul hath kept thy Testimonies, and I love them exceedingly, Psal. 119.167. and no wonder, for he had said before, v. 165. Great Peace have they that love thy Law, and nothing shall offend them. Such a Lord, such a Law deserves Love, and Love will sweeten Service, it will not count this Service tedious, but mightily incline the Heart to Perseverance in its Duty.

5. Let your Fear and Awe of the Lord's Majesty, when you attend upon him, be joined with a Hope in his Mercy. If Fear and Hope are thus joined together, as you will be the more encouraged in God, so God will take the more Pleasure in you: For the Lord takes Pleasure in them that fear him, and in those that hope in his Mercy, Psal. 147.11. The Mercy of God is magnified in his Word, on purpose that Hope may be raised, and rise still higher and higher. This Lord on whom you ought to attend, is rich in Mercy; His merciful Kindness is great, Psal. 117.2. He has Mercy, not upon the account of Merit in Man, but because he will have Mercy, Rom. 9.18. And how often is it said, Psal. 136. that his Mercy endures forever! Here is a large and firm Foundation for Hope to build on. And if your Hope be not presumptuous, but of a purifying Nature; you may from such a merciful Lord, confidently expect that Grace, and those good things you need in time: And when your short time is at an end, the best things of all unto eternity.

I have done with the second Doctrine.

Doctrine. III.

Attendance upon the Lord should be without distraction

I come now to the third and last Doctrine, which I principally design to insist on, That Attendance upon the Lord should be without Distraction. 'It is not only Apostasy from the Faith, and the Practice of Religion, which the Apostle bids us to take heed of, which is a more gross departing away from God; but he cautions against any Withdrawing's of Heart from that Lord with whom we have to do. Therefore in a time of Distress and Persecution, he prefers a single State before Wedlock; not that Marriage in itself considered, has anything of Sin in it, for 'tis honorable in all; not that a single State in itself has anything of Holiness, but because the Cares that attend Marriage, are apt to distract the Mind, and to hinder the things that belong to the Lord, from being cared for as they ought and might be. Indeed in the Context there is a plain Intimation, that 'tis a great part of Christian Prudence, so to order our secular Affairs, and to make choice of such a Condition of Life as may be most subservient to our spiritual Designs, and may least interfere with our main Business, which is the Lord's Service, that that may be done without Distraction. They are pronounced to be the blessed ones, who keep God's Testimonies, and that seek him with the whole Heart, Psal. 119.2. And since the whole Heart must seek him; the Thoughts, the Affections, the all of the Heart must attend upon him, nothing of the Soul must be absent or withdrawn. The Prophet speaks of the Hearts

engaging to approach unto God, Jer. 30.21. For who is this that engageth his Heart to approach unto me? Saith the Lord. That the Heart may be thus engaged for God; it must be disengaged from other things, and all that is within it too, must be engaged to approach to him. When Moses and the Children of Israel were to go into the Wilderness to serve the Lord: They went with their young and old, with their Flocks and their herds, there was not a Hoof left behind, Exod. 10.26. And when we go to serve our God, we should go with our all: No Power of our Souls should be exempted, not so much as a Thought should be left behind.

In the handling of this Doctrine I shall;

First, tell you what Distraction in attending upon God is;

Secondly, What it is to attend upon the Lord without Distraction.

Thirdly, Assign the Reasons why, with such Care, we should take heed of Distraction in serving him.

Answer in the fourth place, some Cases of Conscience about these Distractions.

Fifthly, make Application.

In the first place, I am to tell you what Distraction in attending upon God is. 'It is the first Step to the Cure, to know our Disease, and to have a right Sense of it. Several things are here to be premised.

1. Distraction is the Fault of the Heart: That deceitful and wicked thing; how many Faults has it! And how often does it withdraw when we have to do with God, flying as Jonah from his Presence! And being anywhere but where it should be! Indeed sometimes this

Distraction does but too visibly and scandalously appear by unnecessary Whisperings, by Salutations when Persons are in God's Sanctuary and Service, by the wandering of the Eye, and other irreverent Carriage and Behavior in the time of Worship: These, when ordinarily allowed, are plain Indications, that the Heart is not in God's Work, and which is worse, cares not to be engaged therein: And how blameworthy then is it! It is the Heart which foolishly departs from the Lord. It is not so right and steadfast with him as it should be. Psal. 78.8. A Generation that set not their Heart aright, and whose Spirit was not steadfast with God; has a Brand set upon them, that we may take heed of being like them.

2. Distraction is a Fault that is most easily incurred; as the Leaves of some Trees waver with the least stirring of the Wind, so the Mind of Man is apt to waver, and discover its natural Instability, when Corruption stirs within, or Satan endeavors to put the Heart into Disorder. How far may the Heart, if it be not strictly watched, start of a sudden! As far as the East is from the West! Nay, as far as Earth is from Heaven! 'It is natural to the Soul to lift up itself to Vanity. This is intimated plainly by the Psalmist, when he describes the acceptable Attendant on God to be one that hath not lift up his Soul to Vanity, Psal. 24.4. By Vanity we may understand Idols which are called by that Name; or the Vanities of this World, which the Heart is so prone to gad, and rove after, even when Duties of the greatest Importance are performing, and which ought to be performed with the greatest Fixedness of Thought, and Seriousness imaginable.

3. The longer the Distraction is, it is the worse. A Heart which is truly good and honest, may be seized on by Distraction before it is aware. The evil one may step into the Chariot and begin to drive it away from God; deceitful Sin may suddenly arise in the Soul, and begin to disturb and defile it: But when this is quickly observed, and the

wakeful Conscience checks the Heart, and the upright Heart is glad of the Admonition, and presently checks itself, and immediately returns to its Lord, and to its Work and Duty: Satan misses his Aim, and the Duty shall not be lost. The Soul which follows hardest after God, may sometimes stumble; but if as soon as 'tis down, 'tis up again, and runs the faster: This running will not be in vain.

But when Distraction continues for a great while, it argues the Conscience is not so vigilant and faithful as it should be, in that it does not correct these vagrant Thoughts which come into the Mind. There is a Fault also in the Heart, that it can so patiently endure, such vain Guests to lodge in it for so long a time before they are turned out of doors. The Psalmist says, that his Spirit made diligent Search, Psal. 77.6. A Spirit that does so will quickly take notice of these roving Imaginations; and there is an endeavor to thrust them out as soon as they are found out: But if there is a Carelessness, and too great a Connivance at these Wanderings; though the Soul may not be quite dead in Sin; yet there is much of a Spiritual Lethargy and Sleepiness, which is the Image of spiritual Death.

4. If Distractions in holy Duties are ordinarily allowed of, they argue the Heart not right with God. When the Heart is constantly absent from Ordinances, and does not care to be better inclined and disposed to them; when it willingly is at Mammon's and Satan's Command, even then when the Body draws nigh to God, and there is a Lip-honor and Service given to him; this argues plainly that the Heart is unrenewed, and remains alienated and estranged from the Lord. The Heart must needs be still carnal and wicked, and Enmity against God, that is like the eyes of Fools in the End of the Earth, Prov. 17.24. When things above should be sought, and Heaven should be minded.

These things being premised, I shall tell you what Distraction in attending upon God is, in in these Particulars.

1. The Heart is distracted in this Attendance, when its Thoughts are impertinent and vain. These kind of Thoughts may well be called Legion, for they are many. They are like the Motes in the Sun, or the Bubbles in the Water, on a rainy Day, innumerable. These Thoughts hover about the Minds of the best, when they engage in holy Duties, and will presently intrude, if they are not kept out with a very strict Guard. But where they are entertained, they draw off the Heart from the Work in hand, and the Lord sees it, and is displeased. Psal. 94.11. The Lord knoweth the Thoughts of Man, that they are Vanity; and Impertinency, is not the smallest part of this Vanity. Vain Man is compared to a wild Ass's Colt, Job 11.12. The Silliness of that Creature, and its Frisks and Motions to little purpose, are a fit Representation of the Mind of Man, and of its foolish Sallies and Vagaries in the Lord's Service. Who has not reason to cry out with the Psalmist, Psal. 69.5. O God thou knowest my Foolishness, and my Sins are not hid from thee. If in the Performance of holy Duties the Tongue should fall a talking of some other matter, and idle and vain Discourse should proceed out of the Lips; this would be a scandalous Distraction that others might take notice of: Now thinking is the Minds speaking, and the Heart-searcher can and does more easily take notice when the Mind thinks impertinently, than we can observe when the Tongue speaks so.

2. The Heart is distracted, when in religious Duties its Thoughts are wicked and vile. Our Lord who well knew what is in Man, tells us, Mat. 15.19. Out of the Heart of Man proceed evil Thoughts. These are the first bad Offspring, and the greatest Wickedness that is acted, begins with them: How great was Man's Wickedness upon Earth! When God saw that every Imagination of the Thoughts of his Heart

was only evil continually, Gen. 6.5. If Thoughts are evil continually, they don't cease to be evil, when Duties of Religion are engaged in. When proud Thoughts, or wanton filthy Thoughts, or worldly Thoughts, or envious, malicious, and revengeful Thoughts, or any other wicked Imaginations have place in the Heart: These, as Swarms of noisome Flies, corrupt Men's Services, and make their Sacrifices unto God to become abominable. By these the Mind does not only wander from God, but is alienated and estranged from him. The Heart is in Hell, while the Eyes are looking up to Heaven, and the Tongue is speaking to the God that dwells there. When a Man with an Heart full of such sinful Thoughts approaches unto God; how loathsome must he needs be unto his pure and piercing Eye! The Lord beholds and knows him afar off, Psal. 138.6. And indeed, what Fellowship can there be between Holiness and Pollution? Its much more unbecoming and dangerous for such a one to approach the Presence of God, than it would be for the foulest Leper, with the nastiest Garments, to come before the greatest Emperor upon the Face of the Earth.

3. The Heart is distracted in attending on God. When hellish Injections are entertained, Satan showeth his deep and inveterate Enmity against God, in these blasphemous Injections, and he creates a very troublesome Disturbance to us in the Lord's Service; he has fiery Darts whereby he does endeavor to cause Hell Fire in our Consciences, by despairing Agonies and Horrors: And blasphemous Thoughts are like fiery Bombs which he shoots into our Souls; to put us into Disorder in our Duties, and utterly out of Frame. Sometimes this wickedly bold and foul and wretched Spirit will give the vilest Names to the blessed God, which are given to the worst of Men. Sometimes he will say that divine Favor and Fury are both contemptible, and as if he were a mere Idol, that 'tis not in him to do good or to do evil, Zeph. 1.12. whereas indeed penal Evils are all from

him. Amo. 3.6. Shall there be evil in the City and the Lord hath not done it? And the Psalmist tells, Psal. 33.5. He loves Righteousness and Judgment, the Earth is full of the Goodness of the Lord.

Sometimes Satan will deny the Providence of God, and say, how doth God know? And is there Knowledge in the most high? As if he did not regard Men or their Ways; but that all things in this World fall out, either according to blind Chance, or fatal Necessity; whereas the Psalmist, with great Force and Evidence of Reason argues, Psal. 94.9, 10. He that planted the Ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the Eye, shall he not see? He that teacheth Man Knowledge, shall he not know? Nay, sometimes this evil one, though himself believes a God, and trembles before him, yet will inject atheistical Thoughts, and confidently deny the very Being of a God, that he may discourage all Religion and Application to him: Whereas the Heavens declare the Glory of the Lord, and as the Light of the Sun is evident, so it is evident there is a God, by whom that Sun was made, and all things visible besides.

Finally, this lying Spirit will bear in with great Violence, blasphemous Falsehoods against the Word and Gospel of Jesus Christ. Christ was manifested to destroy the Works of the Devil; and the Devil will endeavor to hinder the Word of Christ from being believed; though God himself did bear witness to the Truth of this Word, both with Signs and Wonders, and with divers Miracles and Gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own Will, Heb. 2.4. and miraculous Operations of Grace cease not to this Day. When a blind Mind is made to see, when a Heart of Stone is turned into a Heart of Flesh; when the dead in Sin are made alive to God, and Righteousness is their Practice, and their Conversation is in Heaven; all this shows a divine Efficacy in the Word, and its divine Authority, and most certain Truth.

These hellish Injections must by no means have an undisturbed Abode in the Mind; for if they have, they will cut the Sinews of all religious Endeavors: They will damp the Affections, dead the Heart, and eat out all manner of gracious Inclinations and Purposes. These blasphemous Injections show that there is a Devil, for even Nature, as bad as it is, will rise against some vile Thoughts, which he casts in, and he is an Enemy to God, to Righteousness, to the Souls of Men, and as great a Liar as an Enemy; therefore he is not at all to be credited, but his Wickedness and Falsehoods to be abhorred.

4. The Heart is distracted, when though its Thoughts are good, they are unseasonable. A good Thought becomes a bad one, when 'tis entertained at a time that is not proper for it. If when we are confessing Sin, a Thought, good for the matter of it, arises that is utterly alien, that draws the Mind away from thinking of Sin, and that has no Tendency to humble and break the Heart for it: This Thought, by its Unseasonableness, becomes evil. If when we are Petitioning for Mercy, a good Thought should intrude, and make us forget what we are doing, and we neither mind what we are asking, nor to whom we are speaking. A good Thought in this Case causes a sinful Distraction: Solomon says, that everything is beautiful in its time, Eccles. 3.11. A Word spoken in due season, how good is it! And as Words, so Thoughts are the better the more seasonable they are. If the subtle Serpent cannot divert the Mind from the Duty performing, by bad Thoughts, he will endeavor to do it by good ones. If when hearing the Word preached, we fall a reading the Scripture to ourselves, or our Minds are upon a Piece of a Sermon hat we heard at another time, and the Truths that are propounding, and the Duties that are pressing, are not at all regarded: Alas, we are but too much like the very high way ground, and the Seed is caught away as soon as sown.

5. The Heart is distracted when the Mind and Judgment are so carnal and perverted, as to esteem earthly things above spiritual and eternal. When our Lord says, The Light of the Body is the Eye, Mat. 6.22. He intimates, that what the Eye is to the Body, the Judgment is to the Soul, and indeed to the whole Man: If the Judgment be rectified, and apprehends things aright, the acting's of the Soul will be the better; but if the Judgment be darkened, and does not discern between Truth and Falsehood, between good and evil, between Substance and Shadows, the Soul must needs wander away from God, and lose itself quickly. When the Judgment is perverted, there is a very wicked Distraction of Mind, for the Judgment gives Sentence against God, and for the Creature, as if a Portion in this Life were more worthy to be chosen, and secured than an Inheritance that is eternal. It was said to the rich Man in Hell, Son, remember thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things, Luke 16.25 They are called his good things, because his mistaking Mind apprehended them to be the good things indeed; and the best things of all, were not in his Judgment so good as these. How can the natural Man choose but be distracted in all his Duties he performs to God, since his darkened Mind thinks such Duties unprofitable, and that the things of God are Foolishness, 1 Cor. 2.14. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are Foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned.

6. The Heart is distracted, when the Will and Affections withdraw from God and fasten upon Vanity: A false Judgment being past, no wonder that a foolish Choice is made. This is an ill distraction indeed: When the Bias of the Will turns away from God, and it refuses to be subject to him, though the best Lord, and cares as little to enjoy him as to obey him. The Lord observed and complained of this. Psal. 81.11. My People would none of me. He offered no less than himself to them; who is so infinitely desirable, who was so all-

sufficient and able to fulfil their Desires, in whom the truest Delight was to be found, yet this greatest and best Offer was contemned. And when the Heart and Affections are thus denied to God, how are they bestowed? Pleasures are loved more than God, and even in his House, and when there is an external Service yielded: the Heart goeth after its Covetousness, Ezek. 33.31. There is a Greediness after Gain; no hungering and thirsting after Righteousness: Iniquity, though so hateful and hurtful, is regarded in the Heart, but there is no regard unto God there. How can there be a worse Distraction, than for the Heart to forsake Fullness and Goodness itself, and to embrace and fix upon mere Emptiness and Evil! In this Distraction there is Frenzy in the highest Degree.

7. The Heart is distracted, when carnal self and interest in attending upon God, is the great end designed. The end is that which directs an action; and the eye and heart of him who acts, is upon the end which he pursues. If the end be wrong, the action cannot be right. Without a sincere aim, no religious Duty can sincerely be performed. Now if we look no higher than our carnal selves, in those Services we pretend to do for God, our selfish design will be in our Thoughts, and distract them: Acceptance with God, and the Enjoyment of him, will not be at all minded. The Captives in Babylon were blamed in their Fasting and Mourning, that God was not in their Eye; his Approbation, his Glory not regarded. Zach. 7.5. Did ye at all fast unto me, even unto me? They minded returning to Canaan, more than returning to God and to their Duty. If indeed we are truly selfish, God will not be angry with us; for there is an inseparable connection between God's Honor, and our truest interest. When we seek and eye him most, we most truly eye and seek ourselves: God has the highest Honor from us, when we look for the highest Happiness in him, and love him for himself, and delight in him and bless and magnify him to eternity. But when God himself is not our end; but his Service is

made use of, that we may the better bring about our earthly and worldly designs and projects: Our Duties then are Hypocrisy and Distraction. Such were those whom the Prophet so severely taxed. Jer. 12 2. Thou art near, O Lord, in their Mouths, and far from their Reins. They gave good words, but their Hearts were far off from that God to whom they spake: It was outward Prosperity and Plenty which they sought; and this Plenty and Prosperity was most wickedly abused.

8. The Heart is distracted, when the worship performed is Will worship of Man's Invention, not of God's Institution. How can there choose but be Distraction, if there be a wandering out of the Way in which he has appointed us to serve him? The Jews of old were very culpable in this respect. Isa. 29.13. Their Fear towards me, says God, is taught by the Precepts of Men: When Man aspired to be like unto God in Wisdom, he deprived himself of the Knowledge of God, and grew unacquainted with his Will, so that he is utterly unfit to be his own Instructor in Religion; there is a necessity of a Revelation from Heaven, that God may be known, and the right way of serving him may be understood. The vilest Impurities, the greatest Cruelties have been practiced under the Name of Devotion, when Man has been contriving how God should be served. Nay, Will-worship is condemned by the Apostle, though there be never so great a show of Wisdom and Humility, and neglecting of the Body, Col. 2.23. The Will of God is to determine what Worship pleases him, not the Will of Man; and whatever Mortifications and Austerities some may fancy; God allows an honor and satisfaction to the flesh, as long as the Lusts of it are not fulfilled. Worship that is not of God's Institution, is mere distraction, labor to no purpose, unless it be to ill purpose. When God is represented by Images, he is grossly misrepresented; the Glory of him who is an incorruptible Spirit is changed. When other Mediators in Heaven are made use of, besides

that great High Priest who is passed into Heaven, Jesus the Son of God, worship becomes carnal, sinful, and the mind of the Worshipper instead of drawing near to God, is distracted and drawn away from him.

In the second place I am to tell you what it is to attend upon the Lord without distraction.

1. To attend without distraction, is to set God just before us, and ourselves just before God. When our Eye is fixed upon his Eye, and we behold him looking most steadfastly upon us. He searches the Hearts, and weighs the Spirits of the Children of Men. Nothing can escape his finding out, for he knoweth the Secrets of the Heart, Psal. 44.21. Doth not he see my ways? Says Job; not only the ways of the Feet, but the ways and Workings of his very Soul, were open to God's View. We are all here present before God, says Cornelius, Acts 10.33. I have set the Lord always before me, says David, Psal. 16.8. This is undistracted Attendance, when the Lord is still kept in our view; and we keep and behave ourselves as just under the inspection of the all-observing Eye of his Holiness.

2. To attend without distraction, is to have right apprehensions of God, whom we attend upon. God is a Spirit, and as such he must be apprehended when we worship him; that we may worship him in spirit and in truth, and that our Conceptions of him may be spiritual, and suitable unto his Nature. As he is without Passions, which Men are subject to, so without those bodily parts which Men have. Indeed metaphorically, Eyes, and Hands, and Feet, and Heart are in Scripture ascribed unto God; but by these is signified, his Knowledge, his Working, his Accesses and Departing, his Will and Pleasure. We must take heed of entertaining gross Idea 's and Images in our Minds concerning God, Act. 17.29. We ought not to think, says

the Apostle, that the Godhead is like unto Gold, or Silver, or Stone graven by art or Man's device. Such kind of Representations are very improper of him, who not only fills the Earth, but the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain him. Our worship is distraction, and the heart is drawn away from God unto a mere Vanity and Idol, if God is conceived in the likeness of any Creature. How severely are the Gentiles censured, and how dreadfully were they punished, and left to their vile Lusts and Affections, to dishonor their own Bodies; because they glorified not God as God, but changed his Glory into the Image of corruptible Creatures! Rom. 1.21, 22, 23. Because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened; professing themselves to be wise they became Fools, and changed the Glory of the incorruptible God, into an Image made like to corruptible Man, and to Birds and four-footed Beasts, and creeping things.

In our Attendance upon God, we must think of him, as an incomprehensible Spirit, of infinite Wisdom, Power, Truth, Holiness, Mercy and Goodness; ready in Christ to receive returning Sinners, but full of displeasure against those that go on still in their Trespasses. God must be believed to be One, yet in the Unity there is a Trinity. This one God is Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Nazianzen an ancient Greek Father, thus expresses his apprehensions of God, when he came to worship him. I am not able, says he, to apprehend One, but I am presently struck with the brightness of Three. I am not able to distinguish Three, but I am presently brought back to One again. Regulate your Apprehensions of God by that Revelation he has made of himself in his own Word; and pry no farther than what is written, that so you may undistractedly worship God himself, and not the fruit of your imagination instead of him.

3. To attend without distraction, implies the greatest intention of mind. As all the Lines from the circumference of a Circle, meet together in one point of the Center, so the Thoughts of the Mind should center upon God, and the Duty that is done to him. God should be so minded, as that all other things should be out of mind. Though the Soul is united to the Body, yet it should be in a sense separated, as risen with Christ, and with him ascended, and sitting in heavenly places, Eph. 2.6. And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. How intent upon God, and his Praises are the Spirits of Just Men made perfect! And the Spirits of Saints Militant should imitate those that are Triumphant. It is storied of that famous Mathematician Archimedes, that when Syracuse was taken by Marcellus, he was so intent in making Figures upon the ground, that he minded not the taking of the City, and was slain by a Soldier that knew not who he was; for Marcellus had given a Commandment to save him. If such a danger could not disturb the intention of Archimedes, for the saving of a City, the saving of a Soul, does justly challenge a greater intention in every Duty we perform to God.

4. To attend without distraction, implies the highest concernedness of Soul. Faith should be strong, and constrain the Mind to be serious; things invisible should be represented so evident and substantial, as if they were most visible and apparent. God should be addressed, as if he appeared to us as he did to Abraham; as if he talked with us, as he did to the Children of Israel from Mount Sinai; With humbleness of Mind, and self-abasement, considering our distance, guilt and vileness: we should cry out, Let not the Lord be angry if we entreat the forgiveness of Sin, and that our Souls may live before him! Now we should stir up ourselves and take hold of God, Isa. 64.7. Now his Strength, and his Son, and his Covenant may be laid hold on; within a little while, it may be too late, and impossible to do it. We should be

concerned in all Duties, and perform them with such a solicitous care, as if we saw the Dart of the last Enemy ready to pierce us, and the Grave open for us; as if we saw the Judge upon the great white Throne, and all both small and great standing before God, and the Books opened, that they might be judged according to their Works, Rev. 20.11, 12. There should be a concernedness of Spirit, as if we saw the World in a flame, Hell naked before us, and we beheld the flashings of eternal fire, as if we saw Heaven opened, and all that Glory that is there. Weight, and Worth, and Necessity command Concernedness; now when we attend on God, we draw nigh to him about those things that are of most absolute necessity, and of the greatest worth and weight imaginable.

5. To attend without distraction implies, the fullest bent and inclination of heart; there must be *intensivum velle*, a strong propension of the Will towards God, and this is expressed by longing, by panting, Psal. 42.1. As the Hart panteth after the Water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. 'It is the Lord himself that thus determines the Will towards himself; and this he doth without compulsion; for he alters the Nature and Inclination of it, so that the Will being made free by Divine Grace, uses its liberty aright, and chooses God as its end, and the way of his Testimonies. Such an end, such a way is most worthy to be chosen. The Heart now designs and desires the enjoying Fellowship with God, as infinitely more valuable than all other Enjoyments. And this full bent of the Heart, mightily fixes it; so that the stream of the Affections is kept the better in one undivided Channel: When the Psalmist said, there was none on Earth he desired besides God, it plainly showed, that his desire after God swallowed up his desire after worldly things; and when he says, Whom have I in Heaven but God! He signifies that he should not count Heaven itself to be Heaven indeed, without the Enjoyment of God there.

6. To attend without distraction, implies a sincere care to please the Lord in that attendance, his Approbation being principally minded. Man's good thoughts and word, are more easily gained, but the Jew inwardly, his praise is not of Man but of God, Rom. 2.29. And indeed all other Commendations are insignificant, unless the Lord commandeth, 2 Cor. 10.18. The undistracted Attendant, studies to approve himself to God. With what confidence does David speak before his all-discerning Judge, that he had walked in his integrity, Psal. 26.1. and Psal. 17.3. Thou hast proved my heart, thou hast visited me in the night: Thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing. He was not conscious to himself of regarded sin, or of allowed guile and negligence in the Lord's Service: Care to please that God whom we serve, is a necessary ingredient in every Service that is acceptable. This care commands the heart into the presence of God, and keeps it there; and he loves to see Hearts before him, set on him, and seeking after him.

7. To attend without distraction, implies resisting all attempts to draw away the heart from God. Satan and Mammon will be knocking at the Door of the Heart, while 'tis attending upon the Lord, and the flesh which lusts against the spirit, will be apt to show its treachery, and to open the Door: Undistracted Attendants do use great Vigilancy, for they are full of Jealousy over themselves. They bid Satan to get him behind them, for they are worshipping the Lord their God, and 'tis wickedness and boldness in him to disturb them in the Lord's Service; and when the Affairs of the World would crowd in upon them, they reply, They have some greater and more important affairs to mind, and therefore those worldly matters must be regarded only at a convenient season. At all times it should be our care to keep unspotted from the World; to keep ourselves that the wicked one touch us not, 1 Joh. 5.18. but this care should be greatest when our approaches to God are nearest. For if the World and the

God of it should all bespatter and defile us, even while we are engaged in holy Ordinances, how uncomely would this be! How inexcusable should we be! How much displeased would the Lord be!

8. To attend without distraction, implies refusing to be diverted from attending upon God without great necessity. Indeed since the Lord will have mercy and not sacrifice; he will excuse our attendance, when unavoidable necessity, and the Mercy he requires us to show, does divert us from it; but Hearts that are truly gracious, are troubled when they are thus diverted. When our Lord admonishes his Disciples to pray, that their flight might not be in the Winter, nor on the Sabbath-Day, Mat. 24.20. he plainly intimates, that to be disturbed on the Sabbath, and to be hindered from engaging in Ordinances, ought to be looked upon as a very great Affliction. Carnal Minds are glad of occasions that seem to justify their omission of Holy Duties; but sanctified and renewed hearts are otherwise minded; they are sensible that Worship and Duty is owing to the Lord, and that he is not benefited, but they, by giving it. The Farm, the Merchandise, and things of that nature cannot hinder their coming to the Marriage Supper. They are deaf to the persuasions of carnal Relations and Friends, who would draw them off from Exercises of Religion. They know that time was given them, not that chiefly they should mind things temporal, but those things that are invisible and eternal. To be far from God is the way to perish, 'tis good, 'tis pleasant, 'tis safe to be near him, Psal. 73.27. To be diverted from attending on the Lord, is to be diverted from the most blessed thing on earth, Psal. 65.4. Blessed is the Man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee that he may dwell in thy Courts, we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy House, even of thy holy Temple.

9. To attend without distraction, implies abiding with God, and perseverance in his Service. The undistracted attendant, is steadfast in the Lord's Covenant; his Bonds and Cords, are Bonds and Cords of love; and why should any say, Let us break these Bonds asunder, and cast away these Cords from us? They were good words, and they that spake them were as good as their word, Jer. 50.5. They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, saying, Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual Covenant that shall not be forgotten. This perpetual Covenant should be kept in everlasting remembrance; and there is good reason for it, Psal. 25.10. All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his Covenant and his Testimonies. He that attends without distraction, ceases not to be an Attendant, but perseveres in his Lord's Service; he takes care to have his Loins girt about for spiritual Labor, his Light burning, for he is waiting and expecting his Lord's coming. An ancient Father wished when Christ came that he might find him, aut precantem aut praedicantem, either Praying or Preaching. Every Christian should have a wish of this nature, that he may be found either praying, hearing, or practicing what he hears. Blessed are those Servants whom the Lord when he comes shall find so doing, Luke 12.43.

In the third place I am to assign the reasons why with such care, we should take heed of distraction in the Lord's Service: And these Reasons shall be of two sorts.

The first sort shall be drawn from the evil of distraction.

The second sort shall be drawn from the benefit of attending without distraction.

The first sort of reasons shall be drawn from the evil of distraction, and the evil of this I shall make manifest and apparent.

1. In distraction there is great irreverence and contempt of God. Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? Says the Psalmist, Psal. 10.13. There is no reason he should do it; nay, there is all the reason in the World to the contrary, that he should adore and serve him. The wicked contemn God by running away from him, and a total neglect of his Service; but his Attendants contemn him when they make their addresses to him, if instead of offering spiritual Sacrifices, they offer Affronts to God, and there is a special offensiveness in so doing; therefore he protests that such Service were a trouble to him, that he was weary to bear them, that his Soul hated them, Isa. 1.14. If a Man should address an earthly Potentate, and instead of speaking to the King, should ever and anon talk to some inferior Person that stood by, instead of hearing the King, should turn his Eye and his Ear away from him, and not mind a word he should say; Royal Majesty would look upon this as an Affront insufferable. But thus in distracted Duties, the King of Glory is treated, the Mind is upon the Creature, and this and that and toother worldly affair, when the Tongue is speaking to the Creator; and what he speaks, the Ear many times hears not, and the Heart is farther off from heeding: Thus what would not be done to a Governor, is done to the highest, and best, and greatest King, whose dreadful Name all the Earth should stand in awe of.

2. In distraction there is a taking of God's Name in vain, the third Commandment is broken, the Transgressors whereof, the Lord says, he will not hold guiltless, Exod. 20.7. This may be called the first Commandment with threatening, as the fifth is said to be the first Commandment with promise: For though in the second Commandment mention is made of the Mercy of God, and of his Jealousy, yet the one is provoked by them that hate God; the other is promised to them that love him, and keep his Commandments; so that Commandments in the general are mentioned, not this

particular Commandment specified. To what purpose is a Duty performed, where distraction is allowed? The Name of God is not hallowed but profaned, when it sounds from the Lips, but the heart thinks not of, nor sanctifies him whose Name it is. When distraction prevails, all Ordinances are engaged in vain; nay, there is not only a missing of that benefit that is promised unto serious Engagers, but guilt is contracted; and by such distracted Duties, the distance becomes greater between God and the performers. Bernard complains, *Aliud canto, aliud cogito*: I sing and pray one thing, and think another. And afterwards, *Vae mihi quoni. am ibi pecco ubi peccata emendare debeo*. I commit faults, woe is me! Even in those Duties, by which my faults should be amended. It was well he said, Woe is me! Because of these distractions; else God would have said, Woe to thee, because of them. And indeed where they are not minded nor bewailed, the case is woeful. God takes it amiss, and is very much displeased, that such Hypocrites take his Name into their Mouths.

3. In distraction there is a slighting of Jesus the Advocate and Mediator. Our Lord's Heart and Soul was in the Work of our Redemption; he was forward to undertake it, Heb. 10.7. Lo I come to do thy Will, O God, and as willing to finish it; therefore in his greatest Agonies, he said, Not my Will, but thine be done. His Holy Will, notwithstanding the reluctancy of innocent Nature, perfectly submits to his Father's Pleasure, Joh. 18.11. The Cup which my Father giveth me to drink, shall I not drink it? How undistracted and fervent was our Lord in praying for his Church, whom his Father had given him out of the World! And now he is in Heaven, his Heart, and Thoughts, and Care, are upon, and for his Members Militant below: His intercession for them is incessant: his Life now in Heaven, is a Life of continual interceding; and the end of his intercession is, that the Blessings he has purchased by his Sufferings may be bestowed

upon Believers, whom he suffered for. Now what a Slight is put upon this great High Priest, who is passed into the Heavens, where he is so serious to intercede, if we are not serious in petitioning! If we hardly think what we are doing, when we are asking for those Blessings which it cost him not only strong Cries and Tears, but his Blood and Life to purchase! They were not small things that the Blood of God was a price to purchase. They are not small things that a glorified Redeemer is continually praying to the Father to bestow. If these things are scarce thought of, when we ask for them, they are most sinfully undervalued: Christ himself, his fullness, his satisfaction and intercession are despised altogether.

4. In distraction there is a grieving and vexing the Holy Spirit of God, by not valuing his proffered assistance. When Christ ascended into Heaven and was glorified there, he sent the Spirit to abide with his Church forever. And one great work of the Spirit is to aid and assist us in our Supplications. He urges us to attend upon God, and is most ready to help us in that attendance. He is ready to fix our Minds, to incline our Hearts aright, to enlarge our Desire, to make intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered, Rom. 8.26. He offers us his mighty Grace, which will enable us to pray prevailingly, to hear profitably, and fruitfully to improve the Ordinances of God. But distracted Attendants, are a grief and vexation to this good Spirit, they had rather be without his help and grace than have it. They choose rather to lose all their Duties by a wretched heartlessness and formality, than be assisted to take pains in these Duties, that they may fare the better for them forever.

5. In distraction there is an undervaluing of all promised Mercies and Blessings, which God is ready to bestow on them that seriously attend upon him. The Promises of the Gospel are made by him whose faithfulness never fails; and the surety of the New Testament

stands engaged that they shall be accomplished, if they are by a true and lively Faith applied. These Promises are of things which we cannot be without, but we must needs be beyond conception miserable! Peace with God through Christ, and that Peace within, which passes all Understanding, Grace sufficient to succor, support, strengthen and establish; the good things of this Life, with a Blessing from Heaven upon them, and endless Blessedness in the World to come: These are the things that are promised; and who besides God can make Promises so exceeding precious and so great? Now in our attendance upon him, he would have us expect what he has promised, for he keeps truth forever, and what he has promised he is able to perform, Rom. 4.21. Distracted Attendants upon the Lord, look upon these Promises with a strange Eye; they believe not the truth of them, or are not persuaded of the worth of them, and are very careless in pleading of them, and having no serious thoughts and desires after the promised Blessings, the threatened Curses fall upon them.

6. In distraction there is great carelessness of ourselves, and of our main concerns, those of our immortal Souls. In attendance upon God, our Souls are principally concerned. Now these Souls themselves are of more worth than the World, and so are the Blessings we request for them, and to be heartless and trifling here; what Apology can be made for it? What is come to the Soul of Man, that it should be so mindless of itself! That it should have so few Thoughts about itself! Distracted Duties, argue an indifferency what becomes of the precious Soul to eternity; and an indifferency must needs cause a miscarriage and ruin, since striving to enter in at the strait gate is necessary, Luk. 13.24. and Heaven will be missed of, there be not an holy violence to take it. In distracted Services Men put a cheat upon themselves, they only seem to run, and so they will really miss the prize; and in this Distraction there is great Hypocrisy,

which is most hateful to God, and which our Lord has denounced so many Woes against, Mat. 2. Hypocrites Duties, are a most provoking Mockery; and though Hell will have all the Wicked at last turned into it, yet in a special manner 'tis called the portion of Hypocrites, as well as Unbelievers, Mat. 24.51. compared with Luk. 12.46.

7. Distraction exposes us to Satan: Distracted Attendants are Servants of the Lord only in show, but Satan is really served and gratified by their Duties. They expose themselves to this Enemy both as an Accuser, and a Tempter. When their Hearts are absent from the Lord's Work, in which they engage, Satan's Mouth is open against them. He boldly charged Job with being a Mercenary Servant, and yet there was no ground for it, Job. 1.9 Doth Job fear God for naught? But put forth thy hand now and touch what he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face, v. 11. And if he charged so good and upright a Man without ground, surely he will be forward to accuse when there is abundant ground for the Accusation. See, will Satan say, how such and such do serve the Lord with Duties that are things of naught, and good for nothing. See how they mock the God of Heaven to his very Face. And upon such distracted Service, as he is forward to be an Accuser, so he has great advantage as a Tempter. Such Duties bring in no strength from above to withstand him. Nay, the Lord is provoked to withdraw further; and those whom God leaves to themselves, how easily does Satan lead them Captive at his pleasure! All Strays are seized by the God of this World, how close should we cleave to the God of Heaven!

8. Distraction is a great obstruction to the efficacy and success of Ordinances. If we pray as if we prayed not, shall we speed? If we hear as if we heard not, shall we profit? Will doing the Work of the Lord deceitfully, be encouraged by the vouchsafing of Grace, or rewarded with Glory? Carefulness is one effect and fruit of godly Sorrow, 2 Cor.

7.11. For behold this self-same that ye sorrowed after a godly sort what carefulness it wrought in you: And as I said before, this Carefulness is an ingredient in every acceptable Duty. The distracted Attendant has little care that God may be pleased; he cares not that Ordinances in the truest, in a spiritual sense, be beneficial to him: God's Anger therefore remains and abides upon him; nay, he grows more angry because of his negligence: Ordinances leave him as they found him, not at all more safe or better; nay, the Word not being a Savior of Life to Life, proves a Savior of Death to Death, 2 Cor. 2.16. 'It is sad to have the means of Salvation ineffectual to Salvation, but 'tis worse by these very means of Salvation being distractedly used, to have Destruction promoted.

Thus have I made apparent those Evils that are in Distraction.

The second sort of Reasons shall be drawn from the benefit of attending upon the Lord without distraction. The benefit of such kind of Attendance I shall make manifest.

1. Attenders without distraction, their Hearts are right with God, he is in Christ well pleased with them and with their serious Services. That which the Lord chiefly minds and calls for, it is their care to give to him; and that is their very heart. The Lord rejoiceth in the habitable parts of the Earth, and his delights are with the Sons of Men, Prov. 8.31. The Sons of Men that seek him, and whose Hearts are perfect with him. As the wicked Man himself is hateful, so the Sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord, because he never offers his Heart; God is not in his Thoughts even when he is offering Sacrifice to him, but the Prayer of the upright is his delight, Prov. 15.8. The Heart-searcher sees how his heart and his words agree together. The Lord is very much pleased to behold the Thoughts called off from other things, because He's prefer'd before

them all, to behold the Mind fixed upon himself, and the Soul with great vigor desiring his Grace, his Strength, and his Salvation, as that which is most worthy to be longed for. That's the Language of Heaven to such a one, Cant. 2.14. Let me see thy Countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.

2. Attenders without distraction draw very near to God. And if 'tis so good to draw near to him, it follows then, the nearer the better. There are some whom the Lord beholds afar off, those whose proud and hard hearts were never truly humbled for sin, their iniquity is a Wall of Partition between God and them: When the Spouse of Christ herself was given to sleep, though her heart waked, and was loath and lazy in too great a degree in the seeking of her Lord, she complains thus. My beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone, I sought him but could not find him, I called him but he gave me no answer, Cant. 5.6. But undistracted attendance shows great diligence, vehemency of desire, and truth in the inward parts, and God is nigh to them that call upon him in truth; he is nigh to them not in some things only, but in all that they call upon him for, Deut. 4.7. God is nigh, as one reconciled, as one nearly related, as a most compassionate and ready helper, as a sure Shield and Buckler, as a full and all-sufficient Fountain, from whom whatever is needed may be derived.

3. Attenders without distraction know still more of God; they come to be more intimately acquainted with him, and that acquaintance is of all other, the most high and beneficial. Job. 22.21. Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace, thereby good shall come to thee. To understand the Secrets of Nature, to understand human affairs, and how they may be most prudently ordered: To understand the Ordinances of Heaven, the Motions and Influences of the Sun and Moon, and Stars, are pieces of knowledge very desirable; but to know

the Lord himself, is a Wisdom far beyond all other. Now the undistracted Attendant follows on to know the Lord, and gives up himself more entirely to his Service, and God will manifest himself to such a one in a more peculiar way. Psal. 25.14. The Secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his Covenant. And their knowledge shall not be only notional, but to their great satisfaction it shall be experimental. When others only hear of God by the hearing of the Ear, they shall taste and see that he is gracious. Psal. 34.8, 9, 10. Oh taste and see that the Lord is good, blessed is the Man that trusteth in him. Oh fear the Lord ye his Saints, for there is no want to them that fear him. The young Lions lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.

4. Attenders without distraction, have most of the Grace of God, and greatest strength from him. The Lord gives Grace that is greater than the greatest earthly things, or he gives more Grace, Jam. 4.6, still more and more he is ready to communicate; and most of all to them that are most humble, and that draw nearest to him; such as are bent upon it to seek the Lord, and his Strength, and his Face evermore, shall not seek him, his Face or Strength in vain. Holy David who was a sincere seeker, declares the good success he had, Psal. 138.3. In the day when I cried, thou answerest me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my Soul, and as the strength of God did rest on him, so the Face of God did shine upon him to his great Consolation, Psal. 25.5.6. His Glory is great in thy Salvation, for thou hast made him most blessed forever, thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy Countenance. The undistracted Attendant thrives a main, he grows rich in Faith, rich in Assurance, rich in Experience. He increaseth with the increases of God, he grows up into him in all things who is his Head, and approaches still nearer to the measure of the Stature of the fullness of Christ. And where there is the most of Grace, usually there is the most of Peace and Joy, perfecting Holiness in the fear of

God, and the Comforts of the Holy Ghost commonly keep pace, and go hand in hand together.

5. Attenders without distraction, are most victorious over their spiritual Enemies; being strong in the Lord, and in the power of his Might, the power of the Enemies of their Salvation can prevail but little. The nearer any approach unto God, the farther they come out from the World, and they are the more fortified against it, both on the right hand and on the left; the less do they mind the world's honor or dishonor, evil report or good report from it, 2 Cor. 6.7, 8. They are not afraid of the World's terror, and whatever the World offers to them, they see enough in God to make the highest earthly Enjoyments despised in comparison. Thus the innumerable Multitude of Stars, though never so glittering before, do all disappear at the Sun rising. Undistracted Attenders fix their Eye on God, and the more the invisible God is seen, the more all visible things will vanish into nothing. The Psalmist had cast his Eye upon the prosperity of the wicked, and began to admire it; he comes into the Sanctuary of God, and looking upon God, he now wonders at his own Folly in admiring so poor a thing as a worldly happiness, and the Temptation that was so strong, is overcome. Safety from the most dangerous Enemies is of the Lord; they whose thoughts are upon his Name, find it a strong Tower. Satan and Mammon are less able to beguile them, and the lustings of the Flesh, become weaker and weaker against the Spirit, and as they find sin more and more destroyed, so they may behold the last Enemy Death without a Sting, and the Grave as having lost its Victory.

6. Attenders without distraction, have most approbation from their own Consciences. Conscience is a Monitor unto Duty, and a diligent observer how 'tis performed. It will condemn Laziness, it will commend labor of Love; it will upbraid the Evil and Slothful with

their vain Oblations, but to the undistracted Attendant, it will say, Well done good and faithful Servant! And how much Joy and Peace is there in the Testimony of a good Conscience! 2 Cor. 1.12. and we find a condemning and an approving Conscience compared together; the condemning Conscience, is the forerunner of God's Condemning, and the approbation of the Conscience is the forerunner of God's Absolution. 1 John 3.20, 21. If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things: Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God. Duties come off with great comfort when we have been intent and affected, when God has been attentive to us, when we behold his Face shining, and find his Hand open; and Conscience bears us witness, that we have been seriously, and the Lord has been graciously minding what we have been doing.

7. Attenders without distraction, are most beneficial to others. They have the most public Spirits, and all do fare the better, for that interest they have in Heaven, which they daily improve for all. How much is the Church of God beholding to them, who will not hold their Peace day or night, who will give the Lord no rest until he make Jerusalem a praise on the Earth! Isa. 62.6, 7. When the wickedness of Israel had made a great breach for the Wrath of God to break in upon them to consume them; Moses attends upon God, and intercedes with such intention and concernedness, and fervency, that the Wrath of God is appeased, and the ruin prevented, though it was at the door, Psal. 106.23. Therefore he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach to turn away his Wrath, lest he should destroy them. Whole Nations reap the benefit of such undistracted and prevailing Intercessions. The Apostle tells us, that Elias was a Man of like Passions with others, yet he was so intent and servant in Prayer, that he opened Heaven, and fetched Rain from thence, and the Earth brought forth

her fruit, and an end was put to a terrible Famine, which had lasted for several Years together, Jam. 5.16. The effectual fervent Prayer of a righteous Man avails much, he prevails for others as well as for himself. Lot was a righteous Man, and vexed his righteous Soul, because of the Sodomites unlawful Deeds, 2 Pet. 2.8. yet his Deliverance from Sodom's Flames is ascribed unto Abraham's intercession, Gen. 19.29. And it came to pass when God destroyed the Cities of the Plain, that God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the Cities wherein Lot dwelt. Saints should pray harder one for another, and pray for them that are without, with more earnestness, that greater Multitudes may be called out of the World, and brought into the Church, and secured from the Perdition of ungodly Men. Undistracted Attendants upon God, are Pillars to bear up, what else would fall into ruin. The Church, the Nation in which they live, the whole World is beholding to them, as well as particular Persons for whom they are concerned, and whom they bear upon their hearts before the Lord.

I have done with the Reasons of the Doctrine.

Several Cases of Conscience answered, relating to Distraction in Attending on God.

In the fourth place I am to answer some Cases of Conscience, about these Distractions in attending upon God, that so Difficulties which are apt to perplex the Mind in this matter may be removed.

And CASE I. is this,

Whether the Thoughts cannot be off from God in the least when we attend upon him, but there must be a culpable and sinful Distraction?

To this I answer.

1. In all our holy Duties, there should be a constant overawing sense of God upon our Spirits, from the beginning to the end of them: Slavish fear alienates the heart from God, but Filial Reverence keeps the heart close to him. That part of the Duty is lost in which the sense of God is banished.
2. Something else besides God, may be thought of in Duties, and yet this is not Distraction. To think of our sins when we confess them, is our Duty, and to recollect the circumstances by which they have been heightened and rendered more exceeding sinful, Isa. 59.12. For our Transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us; for our transgressions are with us, and as for iniquities we know them. Our Wants also we ought to think of, and the necessity of having them supplied; and the all-sufficient Jehovah, is sufficient to

supply all needs whatsoever, be the Wants never so great and many, and the Persons that apply to him, never so vast a Multitude. The Blessings we desire ought also to be thought of: Others also which we pray for, may be in our Minds when we are before God, with their Distresses under which we would fain be helpful to them, by our Supplications on their behalf. It was not Distraction in the Apostle, but matter of thanksgiving to the Lord, that when he was at the Throne of Grace, Timothy was in his thoughts and remembrance, 2 Tim. 1.3. I thank God whom I serve from my forefathers with pure Conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day.

3. Our Thoughts must not run out so much upon the matter of our Duties, but that there must be a quick and continual return to God, the Object whom we worship. We must not so much be thinking what we are praying for, but we must ever be minding him whom we are praying to. The Psalmist says, Psal. 142.2. I poured out my complaint before him, I showed before him my trouble. He thought of his trouble, but had also a sense he was before God, who he knew could be a present help to him.

CASE II. Whether it be Distraction and withdrawing from God, to think at all of our worldly business and affairs?

To this I answer.

1. In ordering of our earthly Concerns, and in all our ways God is to be acknowledged: His direction makes us act prudently, and his Blessing makes our Labor prosperous The Blessing of the Lord makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it, Prov. 10.22. His Blessing removes the Curse which sin had brought, and very much cures the vexatious Vanity of the Creature. The Word of God is to be eyed as the Rule which we ought to walk by, in our Secular Affairs; we should

inquire after his Will, and aim at his Glory in everything which we do: When Secular Actions are under the conduct and management of Religion, there is not only a Blessing upon them, but also a great Beauty in them.

2. Diligence and Prudence in our worldly affairs, is a Duty, and this cannot be without thoughts about them. Honest Projects, and wise Contrivances, are not at all to be discommended; what is said of the Husbandman's Skill, is applicable to Discretion in any other Calling. Isa. 28.26, 29. God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him. A prudent thoughtfulness in these matters, cometh from the Lord of Hosts, which is wonderful in Counsel, and excellent in working. To be without heed and care in the Works of our Calling, is sinful and scandalous, and 'tis to walk disorderly. Our Lord plainly signifies there must be care and fidelity in worldly things. Luk. 16.11. If ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous Mammon, who will commit to your trust the true Riches? The good Man must needs think of his Secular Affairs, else he could not guide them with discretion, Psal. 112.5.

3. In a special manner we are to take heed, when engaged in worldly business, of being too long without thinking of God, and lifting up our hearts to him. Worldly Men when in the Sanctuary, and they seem to be worshipping the God of Heaven, their thoughts are upon the World, because their Affections run that way. Thus the Saints should do, when at the Exchange, or in their Shops, or at the Market; their hearts even then should frequently be with God; this would not be hypocrisy but sincerity in them, and worldly business would succeed the better for it. 'It is a proper Ejaculation at every turn in our Secular Matters. Psal. 143.8. Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk, for I lift up my Soul unto thee. And our ordinary Employments though never so advantageous and delightful, should

not be so taking, but that with the greatest readiness and joy we should cease from them when called to give our Attendance upon God.

CASE III. Whether the best of Men while in this World, can be totally free from Distraction in holy Duties?

Unto this I answer.

1. The natural Vanity of the Imagination, is not perfectly cured in any Saint alive, and this in some degree will discover itself; the most serious and solid mind has something of levity and frothiness in it, and this froth will be working up, notwithstanding all endeavors to suppress it. Evil is present with the best, when they would do their very best. The Apostle acknowledges there was a law of sin in him, Rom. 7.21. In-dwelling sin remains even there where Grace reigns, and is but too active in the Saints, when they desire to be most active in the Lord's Service; therefore we read that the most spiritual Sacrifices are acceptable through Jesus Christ, 1 Pet. 2.5. Though the House be spiritual, and the Priesthood Holy, and the Sacrifice spiritual, yet all this by itself cannot procure acceptance; there are some sinful imperfections, some Ebullitions of Vanity, as well as acting's of grace; which to cover, there is great need of the Mediation and Righteousness of the Lord Jesus.

2. Saints are not so vigilant, and take not such pains with their hearts, as they ought and might do, and before they are aware are distracted in their Thoughts. The Sluggard's Field was all grown over with Thorns, and Nettles had covered the Face thereof, Prov. 24.31. The heart of Man by Nature brings forth nothing but Weeds; and though the heart be renewed, yet these Weeds will presently spring up in it, if it be not kept with constant care.

3. Though Believers are still haunted and pestered with some vain thoughts, yet 'tis possible for them to be freed more and more from them. The more they are renewed in the Spirit of their Mind, they will be able to serve the Lord with greater intention of mind, and seriousness of Spirit. The more your reason gets power over your fancy, and the more Grace gets power over your Reason, and the more you call in help from Heaven; the more fixed your hearts will be upon God, and the Work of God. Taking pains with the heart in Duty, is hard labor, but the Lord is ready to succeed it.

CASE IV. Whether a true Believer may not sometimes perform Duties so distractedly, as to reap no benefit at all by them? I answer.

1. The more there is of Distraction in Duties, the less Spiritual advantage is like to be reaped by them; the more frequently the heart does start away from God, when 'tis engaged in his worship, the more of obstruction there is unto the Communication of Grace; the nearer we draw to God, the nearer he draws to us; if we at any time withdraw, no wonder if he withdraw likewise. And the less a Saint is troubled at his own Distractions, his heart is certainly in the worst frame, and God is the more displeased.

2. Some Duties may be so distractedly performed as to be totally lost. 'It is true, the Union between Christ and Believers is inseparable, and nothing shall separate them from the love of God in him; for he makes incessant intercession for all his Members: 'It is also certain that the Spirit abides in all true Believers, and will never quite leave them who are his Temples and Habitation, and the Spirit ever dwelling in them, they shall ever continue in a state of Grace, and sin shall never recover its Dominion over them; and yet sometimes they may fall into particular acts of sin; and some particular Duties may be performed after such a careless and distracted manner, as to

become sin. We read Psal. 80.4. O Lord God of Hosts, how long wilt thou be angry with the Prayers of thy People? Prayers of Saints may be unacceptable. Sometimes Unbelief, Despondency and Discontent, and Impatience, quite spoils Prayer: How could the Lord be pleased with Jonah 's Petition? Jon. 4.2, 3. And he prayed to the Lord and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying when I was yet in my Country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish, for I knew that thou art a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. Therefore now, O Lord, take I beseech thee my life from me, for 'tis better for me to die than to live. Sometimes distraction and deadness, and a carnal worldly frame of Spirit, may hinder a Duty from doing any good to the performer of it, though he be good in the main. The perfection of sincerity may be so much wanting in some Services, as that they may prove altogether unavailable, Rev. 3.2. Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found thy Works perfect before God.

3. I add further that Duties may be so performed by Believers themselves, that the bad manner of doing them, shall cost them very dear. A true Saint may do his Duty in a way so displeasing to God, that his Duty shall be his Death. Thus the Corinthians came together to the Lord's Table, not for the better, but for the worse, there was not that care to keep their hearts fixed upon God, and fit for Communion with him, and the Holy Supper was profaned, by a prevailing of sensuality, and Divine Displeasure broke out against them, 1 Cor. 11.30. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep; and they were thus chastened of the Lord, and some with stripes that proved deadly, that they might not be condemned with the World, v. 32. With what Intention, Vigilancy, and godly fear should the Lord's People engage in his Work and Worship! He will be sanctified by them that draw near to him, or he

will be sanctified upon them; he will manifest to their cost, what a Holy and Jealous God he is: Therefore says the Apostle, Do we provoke the Lord to Jealousy, are we stronger than he? 1 Cor. 10.22.

CASE V. What Distractions are they which are mercifully overlooked, and that hinder not the success of our Duties, nor the benefit of them?

I answer.

1. The Lord in much Compassion overlooks those Distractions in his Service, that are grievous to us, and which we heartily lament. He passes by the greatest sins, for the great Propitiations sake, if there be Contrition in him that has been guilty of them. Psal. 51.17. The Sacrifices of God are a broken Spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. And if the heart be broken, because religious Duties are so broken and interrupted by vain imaginations, he will not withdraw his Presence, because of these weaknesses that are bewailed, but according to his Promise, He will be nigh to them that are of a broken heart, and will save such as are of a contrite Spirit, Psal. 34.18.

2. Distractions shall be passed by that are prayed against, before they come, and are resisted when they are come. He that would worship God with great intention of Soul, 'tis a sign his heart is good and honest, and that very Will is wrought in him by the Lord's own Grace, and is pleasing in the Lord's Eyes; and 'tis further pleasing to him, when he beholds a Soul checking these Distractions as often as they do occur, and manifesting a constant dislike of them. The Psalmist tells us, That he hated vain thoughts, but he loved both the Word and the Work of God, Psal. 119.113. His hatred of vain thoughts, was well taken, the intruding of them though they were hated, was overlooked in Mercy. And this hatred of them, and

perpetual conflicting with them is a good way to be rid of them. And certainly those Distractions shall not be imputed to us, which by checking of them and crying to Heaven for help, we do in some measure prevail against.

3. Distractions shall be overlooked, the causes of which we endeavor to remove; when we are upon our guard against the Cares of this Life, deceitful Riches, and those Lusts and Pleasures, that would command our thoughts and entice away our hearts from God, and cause them to be absent, when our Bodies are before him. 'It is mere self-deceit to pretend we are desirous to be freed from the effect, if we like the cause; to say we dislike Distraction, if we are pleased well enough with those things whereby Distraction is caused. The Psalmist, who sighed and said, Oh let me not wander from thy Commandments! Psal. 119.10. Certainly he was watchful against, and groaned to be delivered from everything that might make him wander: Therefore he wishes that his heart might not be inclined to covetousness, and that his eyes might be turned away from beholding vanity, ver. 36, 37. He knew very well, that coveting this World's Wealth, would eat out his Desires after God; and that eying and affecting vanity, would deaden and distract his heart in the Lord's Service.

4. Distractions though very horrid, shall not hinder the success of Duties, which the heart trembles at, and utterly detests and abhors. Satan sometimes apparently shows himself Devil indeed; he roars like a Lyon, he speaks like the old Dragon. Hideous blasphemous Injections and thoughts, are with hellish violence born into the mind of a Believer while attending upon God; and the heart seems to be overspread with the blackness of darkness, and with the wickedness of Hell itself. But when these Satanical Injections are disowned, and the Believer cries out, Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me! And

his Eye is unto Jesus for succor, who is so ready to help, those who by force are ready to be run down by the Devil, Act. 10. 38. Satan shall not prevail against the Believer, but the Believer shall prevail with God for that Grace, which the evil one is so busy to hinder him from partaking of.

5. Distractions shall in pity be covered, that are occasioned by the prevailing indisposition of the head, or other corporal Maladies, that are the effect of excessive pain, or of Melancholy, which causes great confusion, in such cases the Lord's compassion is drawn forth, rather than his displeasure provoked. We read, Psal. 103.13. Like as a Father pitieth his Children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him, for he knows their frame: They are subject to much bodily indisposition, as well as to spiritual Infirmities. Now what earthly Father is angry with a Child, because he does not those acts of Obedience in sickness, which he could and would readily do, were health continued? The Lord is infinitely beyond the tenderest earthly Parent in pitying and sparing his Children: He observes the Spirit's willingness when the Flesh is weak and indisposed.

Distractions by sudden Accidents also, shall not hinder Duties acceptance. God will have mercy and not sacrifice, Mat. 9.13. It will not displease him, neither shall Duty be lost, if we leave off Prayer to help one by us fallen into a Swoon, and that may expire without present succor; in such cases his own Providence calls us off from a Duty of Religion, to an act of Mercy.

6. Distractions shall be passed by, that drive us to Christ for acceptance, and to the Spirit for greater assistance. The looking upon the Defects in our Services, should make us look unto our Lord in whom we are complete, Col. 2.10. and with a more entire dependence to rest upon his righteousness; hereby Christ is honored,

and the Father pleased, and a multitude of faults will be covered. But help against them must be desired from the Holy Ghost. A gracious heart still desires renewed strength and aid from the Spirit, to serve the Lord more acceptably: but a lazy reliance upon Christ, with an allowance of defects and distractions in the Duties we perform, must needs be a very great provocation.

CASE VI. What course are Melancholic Persons to take in their Attendance on God, when Distractions arise from the prevalency of that Distemper?

I answer.

1. They should take heed of prolixity and length in holy Duties. It is not length but life in these Duties that God looks at: It is a thought that may lodge in the Breast of an Heathen, but is unworthy of a Christian's heart, that he shall be heard, for his much speaking, Mat. 6.7. Christians should not think much of the time they spend with God; yet overdoing in this regard, is doing less, than if less were done. When Melancholy hinders Duties from being extended, as formerly with vigor and fervency they were; they that more briefly now perform them, should be the more frequent in short and holy Ejaculations. And they must be sure to take heed of taking more pains to fix their thoughts, than their heads will bear; for when their Heads are out of order, the more they labor to be intent, the further they are off from it, the disorder increases, and so does their discouragement. The Lord pities in such cases, and allows them to spare their pains, which are not only fruitless but hurtful, and to pity themselves, and not to attempt what a distempered Brain is unfit for.

2. Melancholic ones must look unto Jesus in the due use of means, for the cure of Head Distempers. How many corporal Maladies did our Lord heal in a miraculous manner, when he was here on Earth!

And he has not put off his Compassions towards the Bodies of Men, now he is in Heaven. Though the skill of the Lutist be never so great, he can never make good Music if the Lute itself be out of tune: Satan has great advantage by prevailing Melancholy to hinder Devotion, by the disorder of the Head, though the Heart be never so honest and well inclined. And our Lord very well knows this, and being a merciful and faithful High-priest, he is ready to succor in this case also, Heb. 2. ult. All power is given to him in Earth as well as Heaven, all judgment committed to him, Joh. 5.22. so that all Distempers and Diseases come and go at his Command; and though Miraculous Cures are not now to be expected, yet something like them, sometimes has been wrought, in answer unto Prayer and Faith; and where there has been a steadfast looking to Jesus, there has been a mighty Blessing that has attended the means that have been used for the bringing of Blood, and Spirits, and Brain into better order.

3. There are two great Duties which those that are under the power of Melancholy are not so fit for: The one is Meditation, and the other Self-examination. A distempered and disordered Head will make but sorry work of solemn Meditation; the Head will ache, the Mind will be lost in a cloud and mist of Confusion, and the evil one will be ready to strike in, and make the Melancholic Man turn self-accuser, and consequently self-tormenter. Such an one therefore should be wary of attempting the Duty of set Meditation, but that and reading should be joined together. A short consideration of what is read there should be, as the Head will bear, a desire that the Heart may be affected, and by the Grace of God a resolution to act and walk accordingly, and those should be the Petitions, Incline my heart unto thy Testimonies, and make me to go in the path of thy Commandments! Psal. 119.35, 36.

And as for self-examination, Melancholic ones, being now not so well themselves, they should not be forward nor peremptory in passing Censures and Judgment upon themselves, and they should be aware that Satan is now busy about them; and he being a lying Spirit, his Suggestions that they are Hypocrites and have no Grace, that they are cast away, and utterly forsaken by the God of all Grace, should in no wise be credited. Satan's Suggestions may be known by the design of them, which is not to quicken Souls to Duty, as the motions of the holy Spirit are, but to drive them away from God, and to make them say as he did in another case, since the case is desperate, and all hope of Salvation gone, Why should I wait for the Lord any longer? 2 King. 2.33.

4. Melancholic ones in the midst of their Distractions should grieve that neither head nor heart are so disposed to serve the Lord as they desire. That's proper language to be used which came out of the Mouth of holy Job, chap. 10.15. I am full of confusion, see thou my Affliction! And since they cannot actively glorify God, by the exercise of strong Faith, and vehement Love, and Joy and Delight in God, they should glorify him by a humble and patient submission to his Will.

When a melancholic Soul is quite emptied of all self-confidence: and self-conceit is in a manner annihilated: when under a great sense of its own guilt and vileness, it looks unto Jesus, and desires by his Blood and Spirit to be justified, and washed, and made clean, when 'tis ready to acknowledge that if ever 'tis saved and brought to Heaven, Grace will be free, and superabundant, because one of the lowest places in Hell has been deserved, how far is flesh from glorying! And hereby glory is given to the Lord. When melancholic ones, are ready in their greatest Distractions and blackest darkness to justify the Lord, as righteous in all his Ways, and holy in all his

Works, Psal. 145.17, and to condemn themselves, because formerly when their Heads were in better order, their Hearts were no better disposed, and inclined to the Lord's Service, they please and glorify him more than they are aware of. The more there is of self-distrust, self-dislike, self-condemnation, humility, and patient bearing of Divine Indignation, because of sin that has been committed, Mic. 7.9. the more honor by all this does really redound to God.

5. Let Melancholic ones take heed of being quite staved off from Duties and Ordinances, though their performances are but mean and sorry. The Lord can discern sense in the Soul, when perhaps there is hardly sense in the words, he takes notice of the gracious bent and good inclination of the heart towards himself, when the Thoughts against the Will do wander. Hezekiah had a most remarkable answer, and prayed to good purpose, when his Petitions were broken, and were rather chattering than Supplications. Isa. 38.14. Like as a Crane, or a Swallow, so did I chatter, I did mourn as a Dove, mine eyes fail with looking upward: O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me.

CASE VII. What are those Distractions that make our attendance upon God altogether unacceptable to him, and unavailable to ourselves?

To this I answer.

1. Distractions make our Duties of none effect, for which there is no concernedness, that God observes them, as long as Man can take no notice of them. How can it be expected that the Lord should have any gracious regard to them, who have no regard to him, or to his all-observing Eye? They that mind the praise of Men, and not the praise of God; and if Men do but approve and applaud, they are not troubled though God does not commend, but condemn them; the

praise of Men is all the reward they are likely to have, Mat. 6.5. Verily, I say unto you they have their reward. 'It is an argument of a carnal heart, and that Duties are lost, when Distractions are not unwelcome or disliked, but the Heart is quiet enough with them. If this be the ordinary frame and temper of the Heart, to make nothing of heartless performances, as long as Man cannot see the Heart to be absent, 'tis a sign that hypocrisy reigns, and alas Hypocrites go to Hell through the Sanctuary; they tread the broad road, praying, hearing, receiving, all along, till they fall into eternal Condemnation.

2. Distractions make Duties of none effect, that are pleaded for, as if there were nothing of sin or provocation in them. The worse the Duties are, many times the Performers think them to be the better; they eye not their own Hearts and observe not their Deviations and Wanderings; they rest in the external Service, as if God would be pleased with the Work done and not mind the manner how. We read of some that were bold to expostulate with God, because they had fasted, and he took no notice of it, and yet there was good reason for his disliking what they did, because when their Voice was heard on high, their Hearts were inclined to strife, debate, and wickedness, Isa. 58.3, 4. The Scribes and Pharisees contented themselves with an outside righteousness, they minded not that their Hearts should be serious and sanctified in their approaches to God; but this righteousness of theirs, our Lord pronounces insufficient, and we must go beyond it, or we cannot go to Heaven.

3. Distractions make Duties of none effect, that come from prevailing and allowed earthly-mindedness. How can a devoted Servant of Mammon, whose Heart worships Mammon, give acceptable attendance on God? His Covetousness after which his Heart goes, proves him an Idolater, Eph. 5.5. and his Service is most abominable dissimulation. Let the Sin be what it will that is beloved; and there is

a resolution still to love and hide and spare it, that sin will so distract and draw away the Heart from God, that no Duty that is done can please him. If we cover our sins, we shall not prosper in our Services: If we hide our iniquities in our Bosoms, because they are dear to us, God will hide his Face and refuse to hear us when we cry to him, Isa. 59.2.

4. Distractions make Duties of none effect, which hinder all manner of holy and spiritual affections, and desires after God. How can the Lord accept of a Service, when the Heart is dead and cold as a stone, and altogether senseless and unconcerned that it is so? In such a heart there is no desire to know the Lord and his ways, no inclination to become like to him, or to enjoy any fellowship with him. The Apostle says, Let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, Heb. 12.20. Those Distractions that altogether hinder the acting and exercise of any grace whatsoever; so that there is no Faith, no Love, no godly Sorrow, no hungering and thirsting after righteousness, certainly hereby also the success of Duties must be hindered.

5. Distractions make Duties of none effect, which though reprov'd are not striven against; but sloth and negligence, and formality in attendance upon God, are allowed of. Abundance of Idleness, was the sin of Sodom; and abundance of Idleness is to be found in many a Professor, even then when engaged in Duties of Religion. Such bestow no labor upon their Hearts, they do not stir up themselves to take hold of God, when they call upon his Name, Isa. 64.7. As Vinegar to the Teeth, and smoke to the Eyes is very offensive, so is the sluggard to him that sends him. How then must the Lord needs be displeas'd with the slothful attendant, and slight his negligent Service! Will such Service be rewarded? No, no, so far from that, that it will be severely punished. He that took no pains to improve his

Talent, is called a wicked and slothful Servant, Mat. 25.26, and v. 30. the Sentence is past upon him, Cast ye the unprofitable Servant into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth.

Application

In the last place follows the Application. And here I shall;

First, Caution you against the Causes of Distraction.

Secondly, Expostulate with you about these Distractions.

Thirdly, Direct unto Remedies against Distractions.

Fourthly, Insist upon several particular Duties, and show you how you may with less Distraction perform them.

Fifthly, Speak Terror to Sinners and Hypocrites.

Sixthly, Conclude with Comfort and Encouragement to Saints, who would fain do better, and with less Distraction attend upon the Lord.

USE I. Shall be of Caution against the Causes of Distraction. If we would be delivered from the effect, we must find out, and remove the cause. Health and Ease are in vain hoped for, while no care is taken to remove the Causes of sickness and pain. Serious in holy Duties we shall never be, whilst we allow and cherish the Causes which make our Hearts rove and wander from God. Now the great Causes of Distraction, which I am to warn you against, and you are to take heed of are these.

1. I enter a Caveat against corrupted Nature. This is the Cause of Causes, if you trace up any sin to its original, you will see that to be original sin. Corrupted Nature never did any Duty well, has no care at all to do anything better Though the first Adam died, several thousand Years ago, yet in a sense he lives to this Day, he walks and haunts and troubles his whole Posterity; and though this old Man is Crucified with Christ, yet he is not quite dead in any Believer, while the Believer lives upon the face of the Earth; and the evil that remains in him, will show itself present with him, when he would do that which is good, Rom. 7.21. We may truly cry out, Mystery of Iniquity, the great corruption of Nature, the Mother of wickedness and abominations of the Earth. As sin is from hence, so this is the grand obstruction of the serious Service of God.

That depravation of human Nature which is derived from the first Adam, makes the Heart of Man deceitful above all things, as well as desperately wicked, and for such a Heart in holy Duties to act treacherously, and to start aside from God like a deceitful Bow, is indeed, but to act like itself. A Heart totally carnal, is so estranged from God, that it will never come near him; you should therefore value the promise of a new Heart and a new Spirit, Ezek. 36.26. and beg earnestly that what is promised may be given to you; and though your Hearts are indeed renewed, the renovation is but imperfect, there is much of the old nature still remaining, and this, if you are not very vigilant, will catch away your thoughts, while you are worshipping the Lord, and bring a damp and coldness upon your Hearts.

Original Corruption has seized upon all the Powers of your Souls, and makes all of them averse from attending upon God. The Imagination is strongly inclined to wander far off, and the Heart and Affections but too apt to follow. If a free vent be but given to a sinful

and vain imagination, the product and offspring of it will be distracting thoughts without number, like the Locusts, Frogs and Flies, that filled the Land of Egypt, and with these Religious Duties will be corrupted, and rendered unacceptable.

Solomon tells us, that when Man fell from original uprightness, he sought out many inventions, Eccles. 7. ult. and all these Inventions were but Distractions from God, and ways of departing from him; a seeking and trying to find satisfaction and felicity elsewhere, which is indeed to be found in the Lord alone. Let this truth sink deep into you, that your Hearts naturally care not for the Lord's Service; and if it be engaged in, they are very apt to be careless therein. Cry to Heaven, that you may be more renewed in the Spirit of your Mind, that the old Man may be more completely put off, and the new Man more fully put on. The less your Hearts are renewed and sanctified, the more you are likely to be distracted; the more there is of corruption in you, it will the more discover itself in the Duties of Religion which you do perform.

2. A Caution is to be given you against your great Adversary Satan. He catches the Word of God out of the Heart, he draws away the Heart from the Word, and every other Duty. The Spirit of the Lord helps our infirmities, and assists us in Prayer: This evil Spirit resists us in our Supplications. He himself confesses, that he walks too and fro in the earth, and goes up and down in it, Job. 1.7. His business is to persuade the Children of Men to the doing of evil, to hinder the doing of good, or to hinder the good that is done from being well done. Who is the Man that this bold Enemy will not set upon, since he tempted Christ himself, who is God and Man? If he persuaded our Lord to worship the Devil, no wonder if he persuades us not to worship God, or to be heartless in the worship of him. Where is the place in which we may be safe and free from his Temptations, since

he got into Paradise itself, and tempted and prevailed over our first Parents there? In secret Prayer he is ready to disturb us, he is busy in the Sanctuary, that Ordinances there may be lost, and our engaging in them, may be for the worse and not for the better: He set upon Judas and entered into him, while he was with Christ himself at the Table, Joh. 13.27. Great reason we have to watch and pray against this Tempter, and to say to him, The Lord rebuke thee! Zach. 3.2.

Can you imagine that when you are about to draw nigh to God, Satan will not draw nigh to you? He will present objects, and lay baits for your Senses, thereby to divert your Minds from the Work of God, and not only will he tempt you objectively, but by injection too. Though he cannot look into the Heart, yet he can cast a great company of evil thoughts into it; he makes strange impressions upon the Fancy, sometimes endeavoring to please it, sometimes to terrify and affright it; that either the one or the other way the Mind in Duties may be distracted: You had need to be well aware of this subtle and sedulous Enemy, and to look unto your compassionate High Priest, who intercedes for you with the Father, to succor you against the Tempter.

When Satan would interrupt you with this and the other trifle, reply to him, You have to do with the great God, about business of the greatest and highest consequence; and it would show both a neglect of God, and a slighting of your own Souls, to be diverted. The Builders of Jerusalem 's Walls, as they wrought in the Work with the one hand, so in the other hand they held a Weapon, Neh. 4.17. When you are about the Work of God you should have on the Armor of God, that you may stand against the Devil's wiles, the shield of Faith, the breast-plate of Love and Righteousness, the Helmet of Hope, and the Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God, Satan's force is too weak for such weapons as these.

3. A Caution also is highly needful against Mammon as one of the principal causes of Distraction. The Service of Mammon justles out the Service of God, or so distracts it that it is justly accounted no Service at all. As this World is vain in many other regards, so in this respect, that sin hinders the end of it from being attained. Instead of being led up unto God, per scalam creaturarum, by the Creatures which he has made, we are by them drawn away from him, instead of admiring God in the Creature, we admire and affect the Creature and forget God. The World being present and visible, takes the Senses of Men, and their Fancies, and to walk after the sight of the eye, is the way that the heart very well likes, Eccles. 11.9. And hence it is, that the invisible God, and the things which are unseen, though of eternal excellency and continuance, are totally disregarded, or but slightly pursued by the most of Men.

How are Men since the Fall, become Children in understanding! Meer toys and trifles are of great account with them: Husks are coveted, but that which is indeed Bread, they have no hunger after, Isa. 55.2. Wherefore do ye spend your Money for that which is not Bread? And your labor for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your Soul delight itself in fatness: Here is a plain intimation, that diligent hearkening, and serious Service of the Lord, was hindered, by minding things which could not satisfy. These are things which the Flesh purveys for, that the Lusts of it may be fulfilled; these are the things, that Satan puts a varnish upon, that they may be the more ensnaring and bewitching; so that here lies the great danger least while God is near in the mouth, the World fill the heart, and steal it from him.

There are three things in reference to the World, which distract thousands of Hearts, and cause millions of Duties to be in vain. The

one is Love to the World, the other is care about it, and another is Fear concerning it. Of all these you are to beware with the greatest vigilancy and concernedness.

1. Take heed of Love to the World. If the World has your Love, it will have your Thoughts at command, and it will not fail to show its power, and to command your thoughts off from God when you attend upon him. They that are lovers of Pleasures more than lovers of God, will think of Pleasures rather than of God. That Rich Man in the Gospel, while he was alive, had Moses and the Prophets, as well as his Brethren, he was an Israelite in Name, called himself a Child of Abraham, and professed himself a Worshipper of the true God, but all his worship was heartless, his heart was intoxicated with sensual Delights, and his Purple, and fine Linen, and sumptuous fare, which every day was provided for him, Luk. 16.19. That which the Soul takes pleasure in, how will it be revolved in the Mind! Sports and Pastimes, Garbs and Ornaments, Journeys for diversion and delight, Feasts, and Mirth and Music, if the Heart is foolishly fond of such sorry things as these; how will they possess the Soul, and that in the very House of God, and when his Ordinances are administered! They will be present to the imagination, though really absent, and an imaginary satisfaction will be taken in them, and in the mean while the Lord himself will be forgotten, and Communion with him slighted.

They that are greedy after gain, their hearts will be upon their gain, while their Bodies are before the Lord. Covetousness commands the Thoughts, and extinguishes holy Desires, while the Tongue is speaking heavenly words, the Mind will be projecting and contriving how to get the Wealth of this World; as if to be rich towards God, were but a poor thing in comparison. The earthly heart pleases itself with the Thoughts of what it has and with the Hopes of getting more

of the World, that for the flesh more abundant provision may be made. Oh suffer not the World to have your love and friendship; if you are friends to the World and over familiar with it, it will have the more easy and ready access into your hearts at any time, and that without the least check. Familiar Friends you know, make bold to come into your door, without knocking for admission.

2. Take heed of Care about the World. How do these solicitous cares about earthly things distract and divide the Mind! When the Kingdom of God and his righteousness should be sought, there is a taking thought for Food and Raiment, and things of that inferior nature. Our Lord knew the evil of these Cares, and therefore uses a great many words to dissuade from them. He tells us that our heavenly Father clothes the Lilies of the Field, and feeds the Fowls of the Air, which have neither Storehouse nor Barn; and much more will he provide Bread for his Children to eat, and Raiment wherewith they may be clothed; and they are of little Faith, that make any doubt of it, Mat. 6.30. If Cares about such things prevail, they may cause gross omissions of Duty; or if Duties are done, they may miscarry in the doing; there may be such an anxious solicitousness about this earth, and the affairs of it, that Heaven and the God of Heaven, may be hardly thought of. Worldly care is one of the things that chokes the Word, and it will choke Prayer also, it will hinder the Word from being fruitful, and Prayer from being successful. You have leave to cast all your care upon God who cares for you, 1 Pet. 5.7. And if banishing distrust in God, and eagerness after the World, you are careful for nothing in it; you may then by Prayer and Supplication, with thanksgiving make your request known unto God, Phil. 4.6. and he will make it known to you, that this is the very best course you can take for all manner of supplies.

3. Take heed of fear concerning the World; Our Lord says, why are ye so fearful, O ye of little Faith? There is great reason for Faith in God, no reason for fear what the World can do to you. Be not distracted by fear of worldly losses; those shall not befall you, but when God sees them best for you, and they shall turn to your truest gain. Be not distracted by fear of the Worlds hatred, and the effects of it; the Grace and Joy of the Holy Ghost, can be a hundredfold better even at present, than any worldly comfort that Man can deprive you of. If an enraged World can keep you off from the Lord's Service, he will have but little from you. Be not afraid therefore of their terror, neither be troubled, but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, 1 Pet. 3.14, 15. and he has promised to be a Sanctuary to you. The fear of the Lion's Den, could not scare Daniel from the Throne of Grace, but he prayed and gave Thanks as he was wont before his God.

If this present World cannot command your love nor care, nor raise your fear, you will be mightily fortified against one very great cause of Distraction in Religious Services.

4. Another cause of Distraction, which I must caution you against, is Passion and Uncharitableness. Passion has a strange and mighty force, to transform the whole Soul into itself; so that if this prevail, not only Grace shall be under a dark Eclipse; but even Judgment, and Reason, and common Prudence, shall seem to be altogether banished. Passion imbitters, or rather envenoms the whole Heart of a Man, diffusing itself all over, so that all is under the power of it. Passion has a monopoly of the thoughts, and fixes them upon Injuries received; nay, though they are but imaginary injuries, yet being supposed real, how intent is the Mind upon them! Perhaps Revenge, though so contrary to the Nature of Christianity, is wished for, and meditated. Patience indeed possesses the Soul, but Passion catches the Soul away, so that 'tis possessed no longer; all the Powers

and Faculties of the Soul, are disturbed, and most disorderly employed.

Passion rises and lies down with the Passionate Man, and is a very bad Companion all the day long; and when Duties of Religion come to be performed, there is so much anger in the heart against Man, that God's anger is not feared nor seriously deprecated; neither is his love valued, or with any earnestness desired. As the furious Man abounds in transgression, so his attendance upon God abounds in Distractions; and these Distractions being the overflowing's of wrath, and bitterness, and hatred, how displeasing and abominable must they needs be unto the God of Love!

Our Lord presses our reconciliation to our Brother, before we offer our Gifts unto God, Mat. 5.24. Go thy way, first be reconciled to thy Brother, and then come and offer thy Gift. Whilst thou refusest to be reconciled to thy Brother, how canst thou expect that God should be reconciled to thee? Mat. 6.15. But if ye forgive not Men their Trespases, neither will your Father forgive your Trespases. As Charity thinks no evil, so Uncharitableness thinks nothing else. It is severe in censuring, forward to judge, not fearing what is threatened, to be itself judged, Mat. 7.1. It hopes and believes nothing that is good, it bears and endures nothing that it pronounces to be bad, or in the least injurious to it.

Nay sometimes in Prayer, instead of the acting of Grace, uncharitableness will be expressed before the Lord himself; there are most unseemly Complaints, impious Imprecations, and Desires vented, that Divine Wrath may fall upon those whom the passionate are angry with. But if they were so severely punished that offered strange fire before the Lord, and fire come forth from the Lord and consumed them; those that offer this hellish fire of furious and

revengeful desires, may well fear the vengeance of that fire that is eternal. If you give way to this sinful anger, you give way to the Devil, and in this Chariot he will drive furiously your Hearts away from God, in the Duties you perform: but the more meek and composed and sedate your Souls are, the Holy Ghost will the more delight to dwell in them, and to vouchsafe his assistance to you.

5. Another cause of distraction is the prevalency of infidelity. Faith is a coming to God by Christ Jesus; Unbelief is a rejecting of this Mediator, and the Hearts departing from the Lord: Take heed of unbelief, as that which strikes at Religion in the very root, and blasts and withers all the Fruits of it. Doubt not of the being of God, who gives being to all things that are, and who gave and upholds you in yours to this day. Doubt not of his all-seeing Eye, who fills Heaven and Earth with his presence. Doubt not of his being ready to be found; all the true seed of Jacob, are witnesses for God, that they have sought his face, and that they have not sought him in vain, Isa. 45.19. Doubt not of the promises in the Word, which thousands of Saints have found accomplished unto their strengthening, supply, and satisfaction: Doubt not of the Threatening's, which have so often taken hold of them who have boldly ventured upon the sins threatened; so that they have been forced to say, Verily he is a God that judges in the Earth, and like as the Lord of Hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us, Zech. 1.6.

If unbelief has place in you, and the great truths of the Gospel are questioned, or not firmly assented to; how can you be serious in any Religious Service? How distracted must your thoughts needs be, when you question whether the Lord has any regard what you do, or how you do it? This unbelief the great spoiler of your Performances, the Father of Lies endeavors to promote. He will indeed inject

unbelieving thoughts into Hearts that have much Faith and Grace But as Bernard well says, Latrat solum cum suggerit, mordet cum ad consensum trahit. Satan does only bark when he does suggest, he bites when he gains the Hearts consent. Oh never entertain such Injections, never give the least consent that they should lodge in you. Look upon them as errant falsehoods, which an Enemy pesters you with, out of a pernicious design; firmly believe the quite contrary truths, that that Belief may influence your Spirits, and make you more serious when you are before the Lord.

6. The workings of spiritual pride in the heart, are another cause of distraction which you are to beware of. It was a good observation of Augustine, that other iniquity discovers itself in the doing of evil.

Superbia vero bonis operibus insidiatur, ut pereant.

Pride lies in wait as it were about your good Works, to spoil the doing of them, that they may be lost labor. This sin shows itself several ways, and upon all occasions is apt to stir, to puff up and swell the Mind, with high and touring thoughts and imaginations. The Pharisee fasted twice a Week which implies Prayer and other Exercises of Religion, Luk. 18.12. hereupon he became self-conceited, and pride hindered his justification, for he placed his confidence in his own righteousness. What a dangerous distraction is that, when these thoughts are fixed in thy Heart, that by thy Prayers, and other Duties thou canst make an atonement for thy sins, which can indeed be made alone by the satisfaction and intercession of the Lord Jesus!

When the Heart is enlarged in Prayer, and good expressions come with great fluency from the Lips; how apt is he that prays to have high Conceits of himself, and of his Performances? His Mind is prone to wander, and to think what others think of him, and is sinfully pleased in the imagination, that they are mightily pleased and taken

with him; thus Pride draws off the Soul from God, to contemplate its own excellent Gifts, and others Admiration of them. Enlargements in holy Duties are very encouraging and comfortable, when we are humble under them, when we acknowledge the Spirits Grace in them, and though never so much enlarged, despair of acceptance but in Christ alone. But when these Enlargements are so advanced and put into Christ's place, that we reckon those Blessings owing to enlargements, which are the fruit of Christ's merit and purchase; here is distracting Pride which draws off from Christ, and is very displeasing to the Father. Such Thoughts as these. How well do I pray! How broken for sin do I appear! How fervent in Spirit do I seem! What credit and applause shall I get by this Performance! What a choice and precious Saint shall I be accounted! Such Thoughts are apt to hover about an enlarged heart: but if they are not kept out with an utter detestation of them; the Heart will be distracted with hellish Pride, how heavenly soever the expressions of the Mouth are.

And as you are to take heed of the Workings of Pride, so of every other sin which does easily beset you. If when you are confessing any fleshly or worldly Lust, it stirs in you, and your Hearts have some regard to it, and delightful Thoughts about it; this will distract your Prayer, and deafen God's Ear. Oh 'tis an ill thing to have the Heart resolve to spare the sin, which the Hypocritical Tongue does cry aloud, that it may be slain. That sin which your Constitutions, Callings, or the Times in which you live, make you most prone to commit: Satan may in a special manner endeavor to invigorate, that it may be a great distraction and disturbance to you in your attendance upon God. The Grace of God therefore should make you most to watch against and hate that sin, which Nature did most of all delight in, and love.

7. Another cause of distraction is, a zealous affection towards an erroneous way. Errors are of several sorts, some are praeter fundamentum, off from the Foundation; others are circa fundamentum, about the Foundation; a third sort are contra fundamentum, against, and raze the very Foundation of Religion; these last are most dangerous. The broachers and spreaders of them are ravening Wolves that spare not the Flock; and truly the propagators of lesser Errors do a great deal of harm, they are called little Foxes, and are often very prejudicial especially to young Converts, and prove a great hindrance to the good work begun in them: Therefore you read, Cant. 2.15. Take us the Foxes, the little Foxes that spoil the Vines, for our Vines have tender Grapes. Errors, how do they excite the zeal of the Soul! And though they are but about smaller matters, yet they so command the Tongue and Thoughts, that they are more talked of and minded, than the great things of Law and Gospel. Erroneous Opinions do so possess the Heart, that the main truths and things of Religion are little regarded. and less improved.

They that are very fond of Error, when they are praying or hearing, or engaged in other Ordinances: Satan dresses up that error with a disguise of truth, and so presents it to their Minds, and their Minds are drawn away by the thoughts of it, and Ordinances are ineffectual and lost to them. No wonder that zealots for Error, are called, Jud. v. 13, wandering Stars; they wander from the way of truth, and this wandering makes them very much to wander from God in holy Duties, whilst the eagerness of their Spirits, is after their mistakes, in which they are so very confident.

Beguiled Souls are called unstable, 2 Pet. 2.14. the Apostle tells us, they are tossed to and fro, carried about with every wind of Doctrine. The unsettledness of their Judgments, and proneness to run from

one error to another, mightily distracts their Thoughts, and they are little, if at all edified by their Duties. Errors are very apt to knock at the Door, when you are attending upon God; and Satan is very busy then to disturb and distract you with Thoughts about them. The Lord would be served with greater intention, if you did not trouble your Heads with doubtful Disputations, which you are cautioned against, Rom. 14.1. and if you did follow that counsel, 2 Pet. 3.17. Beware lest ye being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.

8. The sloth and laziness of the Heart, in refusing to take pains with itself to keep close to God, is another cause of distraction; a cause it is, which most commonly prevails, there is therefore need of caution against it. The Work of the Heart with its own self, is very hard Work indeed, in the doing of this to purpose, lies both the difficulty, and also the truth of Religion. To be wicked and deceitful, are the two bad properties of the Heart, which are natural to it; the wickedness of the Heart, makes it backward to come to God; the deceitfulness of the Heart makes it very ready to start aside like a deceitful Bow, and to fly off from him. Great pains and labor is absolutely necessary to engage the Heart to approach to the Lord, and to abide with him. These accesses to God are against nature; like rowing a Boat against a swift Stream, or rolling a Stone up a steep Hill. If the Oar be not plied, the Stream carries the Boat back: let the Stone but a little alone to itself, and how presently, and how far will it run downward! The Poet observed the strength of Natures inclination.

Naturam expellas furca licet, usque recurret.

Use greatest force against Natures Will, It shall recoil upon you still.

There is need of constant care and industry, and the aid of supernatural Grace, else the Heart will never be brought to acquaint

itself with God, or to delight in Communion with him.

Take heed of sloth in holy Duties, and carelessness of Spirit, which makes Men indifferent and unconcerned what frame their Hearts are in; as if in these distractions there were no great sin or harm. The Psalmist tells us, The Lord is in his holy Temple, the Lord's Throne is in Heaven, his Eyes behold, his Eyelids try the Children of Men, Psal 11.4. with a pleased Countenance, he does behold the upright Heart, but he frowns upon all careless Servants. Take heed of imagining there is no need of striving against vain Thoughts in the Lord's Service. If these are allowed of, know that God allows not of them; and if they have place in you, what may they come to at last? The greatest sin that ever was committed, began with a Thought, and if the first Thought had been utterly banished, the sinful desire had not been kindled, nor the Deed done

I have spoken of the causes of distraction, with great heed you are all of you to beware of them; for if you give way to these, they will corrupt all your Duties. I read in the old Law, that nothing that had a blemish was to be offered to God in Sacrifice; this shows, that Christ the great Sacrifice, was without blemish and without spot; and 'tis an intimation, what our Duties ought to be. But if Distractions, and the causes of them, are not taken heed of, your Services will be no better than a Sacrifice would have been, that had all the forbidden blemishes, Lev. 22.22. Blind, broken, maimed, with Wens, Scurvy, and Scabbed; which must needs have been very hateful, if it had been offered to the Lord.

USE II. By way of expostulation. I shall expostulate the matter with you about these distractions in your Religious Performances.

1. Without distraction you can mind your Secular Affairs, and why should you not be more intent and serious about your eternal

concerns? What is a small Cypher to the whole Circle of the Heavens? What is Time which is ended almost as soon as begun, to Eternity that will never end at all? Temporal Afflictions are light, and burdens only for a moment, 2 Cor. 4.17. Temporal felicity is but a pleasant and short Dream, and is chased away as a night Vision. But eternal Woes and Joys, are Woes and Joys indeed; they are perfectly possessed all at once, altogether; and as to the Woes, there can be no hope of any release; as to the Joys, there is no room for any fear of deprivation.

2. Without distraction you can hear or read News, or a pleasant History; and is not a Religious Duty of far greater importance to you? Shall the pleasing of the fancy be minded more than the securing of the Soul? Shall the State of Affairs in this World be asked after, and will you not seriously inquire into your own Spiritual Estate? And mind what is likely to become of you, when you go into the other World; where you will be fixed in blessedness or misery that will be unalterable?

3. Without distraction heretofore you have hearkened to the evil one, and with great studiousness contrived to commit sin, and if the worst Master was thus attended upon, shall not now the best much more? Have you not devised wickedness, and set yourselves in an evil way? Psal. 36.4. and will you not now with as great thoughtfulness devise how to do good, and with an undistracted purpose set upon the doing of it? The Apostle would not only have you to change your Master, and being free from sin, become Servants of Righteousness, Rom. 6.18. but as you served sin, so you should serve righteousness; be as forward, serious and diligent in holy Duties, as ever you were in the Works of darkness.

4. Without distraction you have thought upon injuries, and meditated revenge; and shall not reconciliation with God, and your own Salvation, be minded with greater intention? Thou thinkest much of the wrongs that others do to thee, think more of the injury thou hast done to God's Justice, and how thou hast sin'd against thine own Soul, in provoking his Wrath against thee, Jer. 7.19. Do they provoke me to anger, saith the Lord? Do they not provoke themselves to the confusion of their own faces? Let the Thoughts, of the many many Talents which thou owest, swallow up the Thoughts of the few Pence which are owing thee.

5. How often, and for how long a time together, has mere Vanity commanded your Thoughts and Hearts? And will you not watch with your Lord; and in his Work for an hour? Proud Imaginations, silly Suppositions of your having that Wisdom, Wealth, Excellency, and Esteem, which you have not, have prevailed; and you have set yourselves on high in your own fancies. Divers sorts of Wickedness's, how fixed have they been in your Speculations! And why should not your Spirits be much more fixed upon God, and your Duty towards him?

6. Food and Raiment, and providing for your Families are minded in good earnest, and without distraction; and should you not with far greater heedfulness seek the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness? Why should there be so much distraction in minding the one thing needful? If you do not mind the good part quickly, you may miss of it eternally; it may soon be too late to seek it. But if now you choose it, your Hearts being seriously set upon it, you shall have it, and that good part shall never be taken away from you, Luke 10.42.

USE III. Shall be of Direction, I am to direct you to proper Remedies against distraction in Religious Performances. The Disease, I grant is difficult to be cured; but with the great Physician, no Distemper is impossible to be healed. Having therefore your Eye and dependence upon him, use these following Remedies.

1. Let your first Thoughts every Morning be always good ones. A Heart well-seasoned with these in the beginning of the day, is likely to be in the better frame in holy Duties, and better inclined all the day long. As soon as you are awake, let your Souls work Heavenward, and be lifted up to the God that is there. Such Souls he is pleased with, and delights to communicate his Grace unto. If the Lord has the first fruits of your Hearts, the first thoughts and desires, you are likely to be blest with the better thoughts and desires afterwards; as of old the first-fruits being offered to God, his Blessing was upon the whole Harvest. And though you do take pains with your Hearts in the Morning, remember, at no time of the day you must let down your Watch, and become utterly regardless of your own Spirits; for if you are, corruption will quickly, though it has had never so great a Check, return, and that with great force and violence. Thus when the Sea fled, and Jordan was driven back, within a little while they both returned to their former Course and Channel.

When I awake, says the Psalmist, I am still with thee, Psal. 139.18. He saw himself under God's special care, and compassed with his favor as with a Shield; and God's Thoughts about him so full of tender mercy and loving kindness, and amounting to so vast a Sum, were very precious and delightful to him to think of. And how whenever he awaked, did his Heart work towards the Lord, in a way of gratitude and love! Begin the Day well, and all the Day long keep your Hearts with all keeping. If you would not have your Thoughts

vain in Duty, let them not be allowed to be vain at any time. In the space of time between your solemn Duties, be frequent in holy Ejaculations, and mental Applications unto God, this will mightily help to keep a sense of him upon your Hearts, and the more undistracted will your Service be, when at your set times every day you attend upon him.

2. Be sensible that the preparation of the heart in Man is from the Lord, Prov. 16.1. Look unto him therefore to prepare your Hearts for every Duty you engage in. Cries for preparation should be the first Cries, and Cries afterwards are likely to be to better purpose. Preparation for Duty goes before profit by it; and when the Lord vouchsafes to prepare, he intends to bestow benefits His preparation causes Prayer to be so seriously and fervently made, as that it shall in no wise meet with a denial, Psal. 10.17. Thou wilt prepare their Heart, thou wilt cause thy Ear to hear. In this preparation, the Spirit of the Lord affords a mighty help; there is a liberty and freedom to the Duty that is to be performed; and the more free the Heart is to the Duty, the more free and enlarged 'tis likely to be in the Duty. Clogs and weights are removed; and among these clogs, distraction and deadness may well be reckoned.

The prepared Heart by the Spirit and Grace of Christ, is disentangled from the World, stands aloof from it, that it may draw the nearer to God. It is made to see how worthy sin is of its most bitter Sorrow, and utter detestation, and with a holy indignation, it says, What have I to do anymore with any of my iniquities? The prepared Heart prizes the Blessings 'tis about to petition for, and longs to appear before God, from whom alone they can be obtained. 'It is delivered from the vain and injudicious Spirit of this World, and by the Spirit which is of God, knows the worth of those things which are so freely given of

God. And this preparedness of Heart, must needs be a great preservative against distraction.

3. Pray for the fulfilling of that Promise, wherein the Lord has engaged to give you an heart to know him. They that are ignorant of God, must needs be ignorant also how to attend upon him. If their knowledge be only notional, and they know him not as they ought to know him, they will not attend upon him, as they ought to attend upon him. Lay hold therefore upon that good Word of Promise, Jer. 24.7. And I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord, and they shall be my People, and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart. And Heb. 8.11. They shall all know me, from the least to the greatest. This knowledge of God will have a mighty influence upon your Hearts, to bring your very Thoughts into captivity and obedience, 2 Cor. 10.5. We read, 1 Sam. 2.3. That the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed, and they who rightly know this, will take care to serve him in sincerity.

True knowledge of God will bring a great awe of him upon your Spirits. His Majesty, Glory, Holiness, will strike you into great humility and reverence. How will you be emptied of yourselves, and your Souls and Thoughts swallowed up in God, when he does cause his Excellency to pass before you! The appearance of the Lord obscures and darkens all things else, that they are counted not worth minding Therefore the Prophet says, Isa. 24.23. Then the Moon shall be confounded, and the Sun ashamed, when the Lord of Hosts shall reign in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before his Ancients gloriously. The Eye of this God whom you attend upon, is jealous; and yet withal it is all seeing. Oh take heed of being deceived, as if God would be mocked by Man, and Man not be the worse, nor smart for it. Gal. 6.7. Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a

Man soweth, that shall he also reap. If thy Duties are only like a sowing of mere Chaff, how canst thou expect to reap any good by them? The good Angels themselves do reverence the Lord, whom you are worshipping; the Apostate ones tremble before him; the better you know him, the more godly your fear will be, and fear will unite your Hearts and Thoughts both to God, and to the Work and Duty he requires.

4. Be very careful to cherish the Grace of Hope in your Hearts, and look upon holy Duties as highly valuable Privileges: the greater your expectation is of the truest benefit and advantage, the more intent and fixed will your Thoughts be. The Apostle prays to the God of hope; for the believing Romans, that they might abound in hope by the power of the Holy Ghost. Rom. 15.13. Hope has an earnest expectation, and the better the things are, which are hoped for, still the more earnest the expectation is; this the Apostle calls, <H&G>, an emphatical word, and signifies to look for a thing with a Head lifted up, and with great intention both of Eyes and Mind. Such a Hope what a remedy would it be against Distraction! When Hope is very low, the Mind runs very much upon matter of discouragement; and is deadened by it. And the best things of all being almost despaired of, the Heart is the apter to wander after things that cannot profit; but Hope is compared to an Anchor, Heb. 6.19. Which hope we have as an Anchor of the Soul, both sure and steadfast, it keeps the Soul steady and fixed upon what is hoped for, till it be enjoyed.

Duties are not only to be engaged in, as what are due to God, but we are to be persuaded, that the giving what is due to God, is the way to receive still more and more from him. In these Duties, our Hopes should be high in him that is most high, we are not able to conceive how much he can do for us. We are to hope in him as a most liberal

and all-sufficient Giver; we are to expect the yearning of his Bowels in our Distresses and Afflictions, and especially when we are weary and heavy laden with the burden of our Iniquities. We are to expect the unlocking of the unsearchable Riches of Christ, which are enough to enrich the whole beggared progeny of Adam; and all that come to him shall certainly experience the Riches and fullness of that Grace that dwells in him. The Ploughman plows in hope, and hope fixes his Thoughts upon the precious Fruits of the Earth, which in Harvest he expects to reap. Oh study the Promises of God, which are exceeding broad; they are wider than the Earth and Sea, and they reach as high as the highest Heaven. Hope for the promised Blessings which are of all sorts Temporal, Spiritual, Eternal; and the more strong and lively hope is, it will the more fix your Mind, revive your Spirits, and quicken your Desires.

5. Another Remedy against Distraction, is a fervent Love. As love is the first and great Command, so 'tis a most commanding affection: *Amor meus pondus meum*. Love is the weight which sets all the Wheels a going, and inclines them that way which it self is inclined. The Soul of Man has been by some affirmed to be, *ubi amat, non ubi animat*, where it loves, and on the object beloved, rather than in the Body, which is the Tabernacle where it dwells; and the reason is, because Love does so command the Mind and Thoughts after it. If your love be set upon God, Love will set your Thoughts upon him. The Thoughts of the Covetous, how are they intent upon their beloved gain! And the Pleasures which the voluptuous doat on, are hardly ever out of their Mind! If love to God constrain you to attend upon God, it will bring your Thoughts along with it, and very much restrain them from wandering.

The Love of God can never be produced by corrupt Nature, nor by the mere force of reason, 'tis a special Grace of the Lord's Spirit, and

to him you must make application for it. Christ died that he might bring you to God, and Love is the going of the Soul to him. In the Name of Christ put up your earnest Petitions, that this Grace of Love may be wrought in you in truth; and being wrought, that it may continually be increased. The Lord says, he will write his Laws in your Hearts; Oh pray that this great Command to love him, may be written in deep and lasting Characters; and if the Lord once become your desire and delight: the Duties you perform, will become more pleasant and delightful and undistracted. God is light, and in him there is no darkness, nothing but what is desirable. All Excellencies in the Creatures are derived from him, and the Streams are but little if we look to the Fountain from whence they all come. This God, as excellent and glorious as he is, is willing in Christ to be yours: Such loveliness! Such loving kindness; what Love does it call for from you! Let nothing be able to draw away your Love, and the less will your Thoughts be drawn away from him.

6. Be very poor in Spirit: A pressing sense of your spiritual Necessities, will make you very intent and serious in begging Supplies from above, for 'tis from thence alone you can be supplied. They that are pinched with Poverty, how much do they think how poor they are! They have such a smart feeling of their Needs, they can scarce think of anything besides. The condemned Malefactor, when he cries for a Pardon, and has hopes to speed, surely the apprehension of his danger, makes his Words and his Thoughts to go together. When the Man almost famished asks for Bread, no doubt his Mind is very much upon that Bread which may prevent his starving. Be you but sensible how great the Needs of your Souls are, and that 'tis the Father of Spirits only, who can give you the mercy and grace which you need; and the more of sense you have, the less distracted will you be in your Applications to him.

Our Lord pronounces the poor in Spirit blessed, Mat. 5.3. their Petitions come from an inward sense of their want, and of the worth of Blessings, and being earnest Petitioners, they shall be successful ones. You that feel your guilt, and fear Divine Wrath, must needs think of a Pardon, and the desirableness of it, when you ask for it. You that are sensible of your Maladies, how intent will your Minds be upon the Lord the healer of his People! And you will have little list to think of something else, when you are begging to be cured! True poverty of Spirit will constrain to an undistracted seeking of that Gold tried in the fire to enrich you, and that white Raiment to cover you, Rev. 3.18. without which you must needs be wretched and miserable, because you will be poor and naked.

7. Let Conscience be very tender, vigilant and faithful. Such a Conscience will be very helpful to prevent distraction, or quickly to put an end to it. It will observe, and fetch home the Truant, and straying Thoughts, and bring them to your Duties. Conscience acts in God's Name, by his Authority, and urges Obedience to his Laws, and much insists, if it be truly enlightened and faithful, upon the right manner of obeying. Conscience takes strict notice of the whole Soul and all the acting's of it; and this Officer of God, especially does this, in the Souls approaches to the Lord; a sense of being under God's Eye, makes the faithful Consciences Eye more strict and ready to spy all faults, that they may presently be amended. In holy Duties, such a Conscience will be very busy, it will earnestly protest against vain and distracting Thoughts; and it will say, What make such thoughts here, when God and his Work ought only to be minded? The presence of evil when good is doing, such a Conscience cannot brook with Patience, it stirs up the lusting's of the Spirit, against those of the Flesh, that the Law of the Mind may prevail more against the Law in the Members, Rom. 7.23.

If Conscience is asleep in your Performances, how sorry and sinful will they be! The Heart will be dead, the Thoughts will be gone far away, no holy Affections will be stirring. Pray hard for a good Conscience, a Conscience not only purged by the Blood of Christ from all the guilt which by dead Works you have contracted, but also by the same Blood healed of its Sleepiness, Stupidity, and all other faults of it.

And that Conscience may more effectually check your Hearts from roving, and trifling in attendance upon God, look before you with the Eye of strong and steady Faith, and see as far as Death and Judgment, and into Eternity; and then do you judge, whether for your carelessly performed Duties, your Lord will say, Well done true and faithful Servants! The Apostle having looked as far as his own, and also the World's last Day, wherein the Heaven shall pass away with a great noise, the Elements melt with fervent heat, and the Earth and the Works therein shall be burnt up, rationally infers, that Christians Conversations should be very well ordered, Duties of Godliness most undistractedly and seriously performed. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of Persons ought ye to be in all holy Conversation and Godliness! 2 Pet. 3.10, 11.

8. Another Remedy against Distraction, is growing in Grace, and in the knowledge of Christ, 2 Pet. 3.18. This will keep you from being led away by error, and will make you more steadfast in Duty, as well as Truth. When Grace shall be perfected in Glory, distraction will be perfectly cured: and here on Earth the Cure is advanced, as Grace is augmented. The more Grace you have, you will set the higher value upon Communion with God; and this will fill your Hearts with holy Zeal and Indignation against everything that may divert your Minds, and be an obstruction to this Communion. The more Grace you have, the more you are filled with the Spirit; and when you pray in the

Holy Ghost, your Prayer will be in-wrought Prayer, Jam. 5.16. How much of the Heart and Soul will be therein! And the same Spirit in hearing, and other Ordinances, will keep your Hearts with God, when they are about to turn to the right hand or to the left Isa. 30.21. The more Grace you have, the more your Treasure will be in Heaven; and you are told, Mat. 6.21. Where your treasure is, there will your hearts be also.

Now that there may be an increase of Grace, Christ must be better known, for 'tis from him that the first Grace is derived, and all additional degrees of it. Study him more, and understand his fullness, who fills all in all, Eph. 1.23. Desire with the Apostle, that you may know him, and the power of his Resurrection, and the fellowship of his Sufferings, being made conformable to his Death, Psal. 3.10. If you conform to the Death of Christ, and are crucified and dead to the World, and the World to you, the things of the World will appear without form and comeliness, and will be less able to distract your Minds, and ensnare your Affections. And if you feel the Power of Christ's Resurrection, your Hearts and Thoughts will rise with him, and at what a rate will you seek those things that are above! The Angels when here on Earth, they are doing what God commands them, and are in Heaven still as to their Thoughts, and as to the Happiness they enjoy. You should be heavenly when about your earthly business, but especially when you are attending upon the God of Heaven. And the more experimentally you understand Christ risen, the less will things on Earth be minded, and the higher will your Hearts rise and ascend after him.

9. Ever commit the keeping of your Souls to God himself in well-doing, 1 Pet. 4.19. Apprehending how liable you are to distraction in his Service, entreat that he would undertake for you. He that spans the Heavens, and in his Hand does hold the Winds, so that they stir

not in the least against his Will, certainly is able to keep your Hearts undistracted in your Duties, and close to himself. The Lord makes and searches, and new makes and fixes the Heart of Man; and none of this is to be done, by any power less than his. When David 's Soul followed hard after God, he acknowledged it was the Lord's own right hand which upheld him, Psal. 63.8. Call in help from Heaven against distraction, if you would be helped effectually. The Christian, not only when he is leaving the World, but when he is engaging in any Religious Duty, should say with the Psalmist, Psal. 31.5. Into thy Hands, O Lord, I commit my Spirit. He, and he alone can keep it in a serious and composed frame.

USE IV. Shall be of Counsel as to some particular Duties, which I shall insist on, and show you how they may with less distraction, be performed. And there are four Duties which at present I shall speak of.

The first is, Reading the Holy Scriptures.

The second is, Hearing the Word Preached.

The third is, The Duty of Prayer.

The fourth is, Communicating at the Lord's Table.

Of these in order.

I begin with Reading the Holy Scriptures, and that these may be read with less distraction.

1. Be firmly persuaded of the Scriptures Divine Authority and Verity. When you take the Bible to look into it, remember 'tis a Book of God's own making you have in your hands. The Writers of it were but his Penmen, they wrote not their own, but God's Mind and Will, and

were moved and inspired by the Holy Ghost: To be distracted and regardless of what you read, is to condemn God in disregarding his Word. Mind what you read, for the Scripture can make you wise to Salvation, 2 Tim. 3.15. You may securely trust to his Word, its light is infallible, 'tis certain in its Promises and Threatening's, 'twill by all be found true to eternity. The word of the Lord endures forever, 1 Pet. 1.25.

2. Believe the Scriptures perfection and sufficiency, as a means most full and plain to guide you to everlasting blessedness. Here you are faithfully warned to flee from the Wrath to come, and from sin which does deserve it, and here you may find God's Counsel, by which you may be guided safe to Glory, Psal. 73.24. You need not be distracted and doubtful in your own Minds, as if in the Scriptures God's Mind was declared only in part. Man's additions are needless, nay impious, Prov. 30.6. Add thou not unto his Words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a Liar; and Men's Traditions are vain. Heed the Word of God, as that which enlightens the Eyes, converts the Soul, rejoices the Heart; as that which is profitable for Doctrine, Reproof, for Correction, instruction in Righteousness, that the Man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works, 2 Tim. 3.16, 17.

3. Look upon the Scriptures as much directed to you in particular, and laying an obligation upon you; as if they had dropt from God out of Heaven into your hand. The word forbids sin in you, as well as in any other in the World; the Commands of it reach you, as truly as if you had heard the Lord calling to you by Name, to yield Obedience. The offers of the Gospel are really made to you, and upon acceptance; the Blessings offered are your own: if they are refused, how can you escape the Wrath of him, who from Heaven speaks to you for your good? Heb. 12.25. That such a particular application should be made, is signified by Solomon, whose word is as a Goad

and a Nail fastened, to stir you up to your Duty, and to settle you in it, Prov. 22.19, 20. That thy trust may be in the Lord, I have made known to thee this day, even unto thee. Have I not written to thee excellent things in counsels and knowledge?

4. See the Lord himself just by you when you read his Word; and hear him bidding you take heed how you read. As he has magnified his Word above all his Name, so he requires a special regard should be had to it. He looks with approbation and pleasure upon that Man who trembles at his Word, Isa. 66.2. but when he perceives instruction to be hated, and that his Law is cast behind the Back, he admonishes such forgetters of God to consider what this neglect will cost them, if not repented of, and he threatens to tear them in pieces, so as that there shall be none to deliver, Psal. 50.17, 22.

5. Lift up your Eyes to Heaven for instruction from the Spirit, by whose inspiration the Scripture was given. 'It is the Spirit of Christ who opens Men's Understandings to understand the Scriptures, Luke 24.45. Be humbly sensible of your ignorance, and proneness to error and mistake: A promise is made to the humble and meek, that God will guide them in Judgment; so that they shall judge aright of things, and he will teach them his way, Psal. 25.9. Cry to the Lord to make you mind what you read, and to profit by what you mind. Desire Scripture knowledge, that what you know, may have a deep impression upon your Spirits, may excite holy and gracious Affections and Resolutions in your Hearts, and be mightily effectual unto the more thorough amending of your ways and doings.

6. In all your ways seek for light from the holy Scriptures, that every step you take may be rightly ordered. Go not in any way, which the word of truth calls a false way. How well and wisely does he walk, that can say with the Psalmist, Thy Word is a Lamp to my Feet, and a

light unto my Path! Psal. 119.105. When you go, let this Word lead you, and then when you sleep there is a promise to keep you, and when you awake it will talk with you, and be telling you what you must avoid, believe and do, that you may be blessed forever. The Commandment is a Lamp, and the Law is light, and the reproofs of instruction are the way of Life, Prov. 6.22, 23.

And as the Word talks to you, so you should talk of the word you read; it will fix it in your Thoughts and Hearts the better, and make your Discourse more edifying to others, Deut. 6, 6, 7. And these words which I command thee this Day, shall be in thy heart; and thou shalt diligently teach them to thy Children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thy House, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. The more the word is written in your Hearts, the more Grace is there; and the more thou talkest of it unto them thou conversest with, the more it will administer Grace to the Hearers.

The second Duty is hearing the Word preached: And that you may hear the word with less distraction:

1. Look beyond Preachers unto that God who sends them, and speaks to you by them. Look beyond the earthen Vessels, unto the Treasure which they bring; and upon the Word that is preached, as the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ, who is the Image of God, 2 Cor. 4.4, 7. Preachers of the Gospel are Christ's Ambassadors, and they are sent to treat with you about Peace with God, and by them God beseeches you to be reconciled, 2 Cor. 5.20. How beautiful should you count the Feet of them who preach the Gospel of Peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! Rom. 10.15. Such Tidings are too good, distractedly and heedlessly to be heard: And he that sends them is too great to be thus contemned. When you sit before the

Ministers of Christ, and the Stewards of the Mysteries of God, remember what our Lord himself says, Luke 10.16. He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me.

2. Apprehend who are ready if you hear distractedly and without care, to catch away the Word from you as soon as 'tis spoken. Evil Angels are compared to the Fowls of the Air, who hover about the Sower, to devour the Seed as soon as it is sown, Luk. 8.5. These evil Spirits are fitly compared to Fowls, for they are many; and how do they come flocking into our Religious Assemblies! 'It is desirable, to have Souls come flying to Christ, as Doves to their Windows; but it may startle us to understand that Devils came flocking into Churches, to catch away the Word which is preached there! These Enemies as they are many, so as Fowls they are above us; and consequently not so easy is it to resist them! How many Sermons have these evil Angels stolen! And the Sermons they have stolen, they have them to show against heedless Hearers at the Day of reckoning.

3. Make a Covenant with your Eyes, that your hearing may be the less distracted and more attentive. Fix not your sight upon any alluring and ensnaring Objects, or anything which may divert you. And as your Eyes must be turned away from beholding Vanity, that you may be quickened in the way of your Duty, so be sure to keep your Eyes waking. If sleep locks up the Senses, how fast must the Heart the meantime be barred against the Word of God! Eutichus a Church Sleeper, is an Example upon Record, sinking down with sleep while Paul was preaching, he fell down and was taken up dead, Act. 20.9. They that sleep at a Sermon, scandalously reject and despise the word preached: Satan is a most wakeful Witness against them, and his Arms are the Cradle in which they are rocked.

4. Beg that the Lord himself would open your Hearts to attend to his Word. It was he who opened the Heart of Lydia, and then she attended to those things which were spoken by Paul, Acts 16.14. 'It is the Lord that makes way for the Word into the Mind, that it may be heeded and understood; and he makes way for the Word into the Heart, that the Heart may be changed and cleansed thereby, Joh. 15.3. Now are ye clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you. 'It is dreadful to provoke the Lord, so as to be like unto provoking Israel; to whom Moses speaks thus, Deut. 29.4. The Lord hath not given you a Heart to perceive, and Eyes to see, and Ears to hear unto this Day, And it will be worse if you love to have it thus still. O think thus, that distracted hearing may cause the word of Life to become deadly to you; and God may judicially and yet justly harden your Hearts, lest you should see, and hear, and understand, and convert and be healed, Isa. 6.10.

5. Let the word preached be mixed with Faith, and received with Love. The Apostle tells us, that the Word preached did not profit the hearers of it, not being mixed with Faith in them that heard it, Heb. 4.2. Commands will be heeded and obeyed, that are indeed believed to be of God. Threatening's and Promises that are most firmly credited, cannot but be minded, and have a mighty influence. The Word also is to be received in the Love of it, that you may be saved. The design of this Word is your deliverance from sin and misery, your Peace, your Purity and Perfection, your eternal Redemption and Glory; and therefore it commends itself exceedingly to your Affections: A sincere love to the Word, will command the Thoughts of the Heart, and hinder the Word from being disregarded.

6. Remember that the Word which you hear, is your Life. There is a carelessness of life, in heedlessness and distraction in hearing the Word of God, Deut. 32.46, 47. Set your hearts unto all the Words

which I testify among you this Day; for it is not a vain thing for you, for it is your Life, Prov. 7.2. Keep my Commandments and live, and my Law as the Apple of your Eye, Isa. 55.3. Incline your Ear, come unto me, hear, and your Soul shall live; and I will make with you an everlasting Covenant, even the sure Mercies of David.

And further to fix your attention to the Word preached, be all of you persuaded, that you who are now in the Sanctuary, must shortly stand at the Judgment-Seat of Christ, and the Word which he has spoken, the same shall judge you at the last day, Joh. 12.48. Then you must render an account of your Stewardship, and how all your Talents have been improved, and you must be judged, and receive according to your Works. And sure I am, that the Sentence which will then be pronounced, whether it be of Absolution, Come ye Blessed; or of Condemnation, Go ye Cursed; cannot but be heard without distraction. Both the one and the other of these Sentences must needs be heeded by all upon whom they are passed; the one being so very comfortable, and the other so terrible and confounding.

A third Duty which I shall insist on, is Prayer; now that you may with less distraction call upon the Name of God.

1. Consider whose Name it is you are taking into your Mouths, Deut. 28.58. That glorious and fearful Name, THE LORD THY GOD. A Name which should never be in the Lips, without the profoundest Reverence in the Heart. The Gods that made not the Heavens and the Earth, shall perish from the Earth, and from under these Heavens But the Lord is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting King; at his Wrath the Earth doth tremble, and the Nations shall not be able to abide his indignation, Jer. 10.10, 11. This God whom you pray to, is infinitely more above you, than the greatest Emperor is above the meanest Worms that crawl upon the

ground! How should you look to the frame of your Spirits when you are before him! The Passion of fear calls in the Blood to the Heart, that the Vitals may be fortified, and truly the Grace of fear will call in the Thoughts of the Heart, that Duties performed to so great a Majesty, may not be a heedless trifling with him.

2. Sequester yourselves from other business to intend Prayer; the more you are disentangled from your Secular Affairs, the more free and fit your Hearts will be to be poured out before the Lord in your supplications. The further you step out and off from the World, when you come to knock at Heaven Gates, the more certainly will the Door be opened to you. If Mammon has your Thoughts and Desires, when you are praying to God, you have a jealousy provoking Idol in your Hearts, while in his Presence; and how offensive must this needs be to him, to see an Idol there, where he chooses to dwell! One thing, says the Psalmist, have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, Psal. 27.4. Other things were esteemed worthless comparatively. Let not other matters distract you when you are calling upon God, that you may pray in Prayer, and do nothing else but pray. Remember, distracted Confessions increase Guilt and Wrath; distracted Petitions ask for a denial, and distracted Praises will tend very much unto the stopping of the Current of Mercies.

3. Be persuaded that the Lord will attentively mind what you pray, if you intently mind what you pray for yourselves. He takes pleasure in uprightness, and this Heart-searcher well knows who are sincere; and not so much as a Sigh or Groan from a sincere Soul, shall be disregarded. If you from your Heart cry for Mercy, Mercy shall compass you about, Psal. 32.10. The Prophet tells us, That the Lord hearkened and heard, Jer. 8.6. Indeed most speak not aright, they repent not of their wickedness, saying, what have we done? But those who do speak aright, and being truly sensible of the evil of their

doings, fervently pray to have their sins covered, and all their defilements purged away: The Lord who hearkens so attentively, will surely hear all such Cries, and in no wise deny what is cried for. Believe the mighty efficacy of fervent Prayer, and what rich returns this Trading to Heaven brings in, and what Treasures Prayer is a Key to unlock, that you may be enriched thereby! A sacred coveting these unsearchable Riches, will make you mind what you are doing when you are praying to partake of them; and the Apostle tells you, for your encouragement, Rom. 10.12. There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all, is rich unto all that call upon him.

4. Cry earnestly for the holy Spirit of Promise: You will never pray aright, or to any purpose, without his aid. The Holy Ghost is called the Spirit of Grace, because all true Grace is from him, and so are all gracious desires and acting's. He is also called the Spirit of Supplication, all acceptable Confessions, Petitions, and Thanksgivings, are of his enditing. And this Spirit is promised; and how ready is our heavenly Father to give the Spirit to any that ask him! Now we read that he which searcheth the heart, knoweth what is the Mind of the Spirit, for he maketh intercession for the Saints, according to the Will of God, Rom. 8.27. Saints Prayers, are called the Mind of the Spirit; he makes them to be according to the Will of God; and that not only as to the matter of them, but also as to the manner: The Spirit of God at first moved upon the face of the Waters; and how many useful Creatures did he produce out of a Chaos of Confusion! And if that Spirit move upon your Hearts in Prayer, he can keep your Thoughts that they stir not from God, and cause Faith, and godly Sorrow and Hope, Humility and Love, to be in actual exercise; and the more Grace is exercised: Prayer will be the less distracted and more successful.

5. Let Vigilancy and watching go before, keep pace with Prayer, and follow after it. Why has a Christian new Eyes and Light, but that he might watch with the one, and by the other? Our Lord joined watching and praying together; Prayer without watching will be heartless, watching without Prayer, will be insufficient for your security. Watching with Prayer makes it more serious, and to succeed the better. The Apostle says, The end of all things is at hand, be ye therefore sober and watch unto Prayer, 1 Pet. 4.7. Watching unto Prayer, summons the whole Soul with all its Faculties to attend upon God, and to prepare to meet him. We also read, Col. 4.2. Continue in Prayer, and watch in the same with Thanksgiving. Watching in Prayer, is a mighty help against the Heart's straggling: This straggling is the sooner observed, and the straggling Thoughts presently reduced. And he that watches after Prayer, diligently and with all thankfulness observes the Answers of Prayer. And thus to do, will strongly induce you to give yourselves more to Prayer in good earnest, and to wrestle with him, with whom you do so often prevail.

The fourth and last Duty I shall mention, is Communicating at the Lord's Table; and that this may be done with less distraction.

1. Let there be more serious self-examination before you engage in that holy Ordinance. 1 Cor. 11.28. But let a Man examine himself, and so let him eat of that Bread, and drink of that Cup. Look into the State of your Souls, and your State is good, if you know the true God so as to love him and prefer him in your choice before all things besides; and if you know Christ, so as to rely upon him, with consent to be ruled by him, as your Lord and Savior, Joh. 17.3. This is life eternal thus to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent.

Take great notice also of the present frame of your Hearts, that you may know in what Graces they are weakest, and what kind of Lusting's of the Flesh are aptest to prevail; and what things they are which are most likely to distract your Minds, and draw away your Hearts, when at the Table; your watch hereupon will be the stricter, and your thoughts will run the more upon the particular Graces that are to be strengthened, and upon the sins too, which are to be struck more dead by the power of the Death and Crucifixion of Christ Jesus.

2. Let the Death of Christ, put you in mind what you were and would have been still, if he had not died for you, you would have been dead in Law, under the damnatory Sentence of it; and you would have been dead in Trespasses, dead to God, and to anything that is truly good; employed in nothing but dead works, and thereby fitted to destruction. And how should your Thoughts be seized on by the obligation your Lord has laid you under, in freeing you from Death and eternal Destruction, by laying down his own Life a ransom for you! Mat. 20.28.

When the Apostle said he determined not to know anything save Jesus Christ and him crucified, 1 Cor. 2.2. it shows upon whom his Thoughts were. Our Thoughts at the Lord's Table should be fastened to Christ as he was to the Cross. We should behold, admire, and be suitably affected when we behold him that is equal with God, in the form of a Servant, in the likeness of sinful Flesh, and humbling himself so low, as to become obedient to Death, even the Death of the Cross, Phil. 2.8. Let the worth of the Person suffering the Merit of the Sufferings themselves, and the value of the Benefits thereby procured, be believed; and how can they choose but be heedfully thought of!

3. Take due notice, that Christ when he was dying, gave this charge to his Disciples, that they should engage in this Ordinance as a Memorial of him. Christ's Death was infinitely more, than if all Creatures that have Life, had lost their Lives to make an atonement. Just when he was ready to make his Soul an Offering for sin, he bids us to do this in remembrance of him, 1 Cor. 11.23, 24. The Lord Jesus the same Night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks he break it, and said, Take eat, this is my Body which is broken for you, do this in remembrance of me. The command of such a Lord, that Lord dying, and dying such a meritorious Death, and in that Death expressing Love which passes Knowledge; and the Command given on purpose, that he might still be and live in our remembrance, if well weighed, will make us mind what we are doing, and prevent distraction.

4. The Sacramental Elements and Actions being understood, with their signification, will be a great means to fix the Thoughts of the Communicants. When your Eyes behold the Bread, let your Faith behold the Body of Christ. When you see the Bread broken, believe that Christ was wounded and bruised for your Iniquities, and bare them in his Body on the Tree. When the Bread is given you; understand what a gift of God, Christ is. When you take the Bread into your hands, let your Hearts be open, more fully to receive Christ himself, and to receive still more from him. And when you eat the Bread, be sure to feed upon Christ the Bread of Life by Faith. Rely upon his Crucifixion, as your reconciliation; for, says the Apostle, We are reconciled to God by the Death of his Son, Rom 5.10. And as Bread is the staff of Life, so let this Bread of Life be your Souls stay; rest upon Christ for spiritual life and strength more and more abundantly to be given you.

When you perceive the Wine given a part from the Bread, think with yourselves, that your Lord's Life was indeed, though not against his Will, taken from him; Body and Soul were separated, though neither from the Godhead. Look beyond the Wine to the Blood of Jesus; believe it to be more precious than Gold that perishes; and that being the blood of him who is God, it can do away the greatest guilt, and the foulest spots and stains of the sins of Men. When you drink the Wine, believe the Cup of Blessing to be indeed the Communion of the Blood of Christ, 1 Cor. 10.16. Rest on this Blood to justify you from all things, for which the Law condemns you. Rest on this Blood to pacify your Consciences and heal the Wounds which sin has made there, to purify and heal all the Plagues of your Hearts, to make you perfect in every good work, and to open a way for you into the holiest of all, Heb. 10.19. not only to procure constant access to the Throne of Grace, but an abundant entrance into the everlasting Kingdom. Thus you will be helped against distraction in this Ordinance, If what is visible to the Eye, the Heart understands and improves.

5. That you may be the more serious in this Ordinance of the Lord's Supper, remember therein you solemnly renew Covenant with the God of Heaven, you give yourselves from yourselves to him, and disclaim all other Lord's and Owners, and profess to take him to be your Lord your God, your Guide, your All. Oh mind what you do, that you may be sincere in doing it. God has no pleasure in Fools, Eccles. 5.4. who consider not with whom they have to do; who consider not what evil they do, when they do that which is good, after a distracted and deceitful manner.

In this Ordinance the Broad-Seal of Heaven is put into your hand to confirm your Faith in the New Covenant; and that you may with greater confidence expect the accomplishment of its Promises. He that rests on Christ, and hungers and thirsts after righteousness, may

rejoice in this Ordinance more than a Bankrupt would do, that receives an Acquittance sealed, of the release of all his Debts, and with it a Will and Testament sealed, whereby a plentiful Estate is made over and assured to him. And the Communicants solemnly profess a Restipulation; they tie themselves faster and more strictly to the Lord; there is nothing you have, or are, but is his; Will and Heart and Thoughts are to be ever in his Service, and at his Command.

6. Be sensible how dreadful guilt is contracted when you are guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord, and this guilt comes upon you by distracted, careless and unworthy receiving. 1 Cor. 11.27. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this Bread and drink this Cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord. The Communicant, whose Heart cares not how distracted it is, how does he contemn the Son of God, his Blood and Benefits! If he does not count them worth serious thinking of, surely he does not think them worth his thankful acceptance. How precious is the Blood of Jesus! And what an heavy load is the guilt of such Blood! 'It is sad not to be saved by the Blood of Christ, but much sorer, under the guilt of it to sink lower into Damnation. Temporal Punishments that are inflicted upon receiving amiss may be terrible; but how much worse are eternal Judgments! Oh give your Hearts into God's Hand, that he may keep and order them at the Table and afterwards; the more there is of his help in the performance, the less will there be of distraction, and of your own infirmities.

USE V. Shall be terror unto Sinners and Hypocrites, all whose attendance upon God, is void of care, and full of allowed distraction. They freely grant their Hearts a liberty, and their naughty Hearts take it, to be whatever they please, and to run upon whatsoever they

have a mind to, as if the Heart-searchers Eye, had neither Sight nor Jealousy.

1. The Duties of such whose Hearts thus run away from God, are not steps towards Heaven but towards Hell. If they hear the Word of God, they understand it not; the Gospel is hid from them, and the God of this World blinds them, 2 Cor. 4.34. If they attain to some kind of knowledge of the truth, they hold it in unrighteousness. Sin grows stronger by their very Duties; its power not at all impaired by them; for thinking by their Duties to make some amends for their sins, they are the more emboldened to commit iniquity: When they have done their heartless Services; God is the more angry with them. Thus the Jews of old choosing their own ways, and their Souls delighting in their Abominations, and having no delight in God, or in his ways, the hatefulness of their Sacrifices is thus expressed, Isa. 66.3. He that killeth an Ox is as if he flew a Man; he that sacrificeth a Lamb, as if he cut off a Dogs Neck: He that offereth an Oblation, as if he offered Swines Blood: he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol. Not only by impenitency and hardness of Heart, but by heartless Duties, the performers of them treasure up unto themselves Wrath against the Day of Wrath.

2. When terrible Calamities force sinners to cry with some earnestness, for relief, their Cries may be altogether in vain. God may justly be as heedless of them in their distress, as they were impiously heedless of him in their Devotions. Thus he threatens, when distress and anguish cometh upon them, then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early but they shall not find me; nay, which is worse, he says, I will laugh at their calamity, I will mock when their fear cometh, Prov. 1.26, 27, 28. They deserve to be mocked at in their misery; all whose Duties were a mocking of God to his very face. The Prophet speaks to the same purpose, Zach. 7.13.

Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear, so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the Lord of Hosts.

And if he be deaf many times to sinners cries on Earth, and will afford them no help: Certainly in Hell he will be utterly regardless of their Miseries. No Prayers are heard, no Petitions are granted that come from that place of woe, Luk. 16.24, 27.

3. When Sinners and Hypocrites are in Hell, what bitter Reflections will they have upon their Distractions and Negligence's in the Service of God here on Earth! How terribly will Conscience reproach and lash them, because in their Day they knew not the things that concerned their Peace! Most wretched and self-destroyed Fools, Conscience will call them; because it was no more in their Thoughts to fear and escape eternal vengeance; because they were so eager after things on Earth, which now can be enjoyed no more; as to neglect the everlasting bliss and glory of the Heavenly Kingdom! They that will not do their Duty to God now without distraction, shall be forced without distraction to think of their misery to eternity. The greatness of their woe, will immovably fix their Thoughts upon it. When a Sinner in outer darkness, shall thus reflect upon himself, and his inconceivable deplorable and desperate case: Oh what flames, what terrors and agonies do I suffer! What poisoned Arrows of the Almighty are within me! How glorious is his power in my destruction! How righteous though intolerable is his Indignation! And what I do suffer, I must suffer without any hope at all of any ease or end! The undistracted thinking of all this, cannot but make Hell to be out of measure hellish. Knowing now the terrors of the Lord, let all be persuaded to take heed of trifling with a holy and jealous God, and of doing his Work negligently, who will so severely punish all evil, slothful, and unprofitable Servants!

USE VI. Shall be of encouragement and comfort to Believers, who would fain do more and better than they do, and with less distraction serve the Lord. They should indeed go with a low Sail, because of their leaky hearts, which are so born down and hindered by indwelling sin, when they are attending upon God, and yet that they may not be quite cast down, let their Eye be upon these grounds of Consolation.

1. Let the Saints know that 'tis from that Grace which is within them, that their Distractions are burthensome to them. As it is by the softness of the Heart, that the remaining hardness of it is felt: so it is by the Grace in the Heart, that its Wanderings are perceived; and being perceived become matter of trouble. The Apostle speaks by way of encouragement, 1 Cor. 10.13. There hath no temptation taken you, but such as common So say I: Thy Distraction which is thy burden, is so far from proving thou hast no Grace; that 'tis common to all gracious Souls, while Militant in this World: and 'tis part of their Militancy to be conflicting with distracted Thoughts; and the stronger they grow, in this conflict, they are the more successful God has the renewed Will, it consents to the Law of God that it is good, and desires more undistractedly and with delight to do whatever is required; 'tis only remaining Flesh that is otherwise inclined. The Apostles Reflection upon himself and what he did, was not altogether without comfort, Rom 7.25. I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord; so then with the Mind I myself serve the Law of God, but with the Flesh the Law of Sin.

2. God will not impute those Distractions to Believers which they desire so truly and earnestly to be freed from. 'It is a good Rule, Non imputantur, si violenter importantur. They are not imputed if they are violently brought into the Heart, and their stay and abode there is not allowed of. The Man that labors under the Palsy, his Head his

Hands do shake against his Will, he does not shake either himself, but wishes both were more steady. The Saints Distractions are against their Wills, they do not willingly distract themselves; the Lord does not call them Hypocrites for these, and they miscall, if they call themselves by that Name, because their Hearts do sometimes start away from Duty against the Will and Purpose of them. What Saint on Earth could stand, if God should mark such iniquities and miscarriages as these! Psal. 130.3.

3. Christ's Satisfaction and Intercession, may comfort Believers under their Distractions and all their Infirmities. Our Lord by suffering Death has made complete satisfaction, as for their other Iniquities, so for the sins of their holy things. God is so well pleased in the Son of his Love, that very faulty and imperfect Duties being by him presented, are well taken. Oh what a difference is there between a Duty as it comes from us, and as it has its defects covered with Christ's Righteousness, and is so presented to the Father! The Apostle tells us of the Glory of the Grace of God, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved, Eph. 1.6. When Christ was upon Earth, the satisfaction he made was sufficient to make reconciliation for all sins and defects. And now he is in Heaven he ceases not to intercede for Believers; a thousand faults may be found in their best Duties, but how absolutely faultless and prevailing is this Intercession of their Advocate!

4. Many of those Duties, which doubting Saints have thought to be nothing but Sin and Distraction; God sees and owns the acting's of Grace in. He sees some Fire in the smoking Flax, which he will not quench, though there is much that is offensive with it; he sees some greenness in the bruised Reed, though there is much that is dead, and he will not break it, Matt. 12.20. His Eyelids try the Children of Men, and he has a gracious regard to the acting's of Grace and Faith,

though it be but as a grain of Mustard seed. Christ Jesus is said to be quick of understanding in the fear of the Lord, Isa. 11.3. He knows what Key will open every Heart, and when he will open, none can keep shut; he can bring the most fearless and stupid, to the fear of God. And where the fear of God is in truth, though it be in a lower degree, he easily discerns it. When a Well of Water is muddy at the top, there is purer Water working up from the Spring at the bottom: When the Heart is very much discomposed and distracted in Duty; if under all these Infirmities there is a working and stirring of the Grace of God, he will both observe and be well pleased with it. He will not utterly reject a Duty, when there is a hearty desire to do it well, and an hearty grief 'tis done no better.

5. The Lord is ready to give a Blessing to those means which himself has appointed for the cure of these Distractions. These means are effectual when the Spirit makes them so. And is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Mic. 2.7. What infirmity is too great for him to help? What Heart too roving and unruly for him to settle? The means must be used, Cry for help that you may be helped to cry; hear the word with a desire to feel its power; that you may hear it to better purpose. Take encouragement from the mighty Spirit who is so ready to accompany God's Institutions. He can fit you for your Duty, and fix your Hearts in it, and crown the doing of it with the Blessings which are promised. And when your Hearts are fixed, 'tis but reason your Mouths should sing and give praise.

6. When Militant Saints come to be triumphant, their Distractions and Complaints because of them, will be at a perpetual end. In Heaven they shall be out of Satan's reach he shall resist them no more; this World they will have left, which so often troubled both their heads and hearts, and will have exchanged it for a World that's infinitely better; their perfected Spirits, will be perfect in their

Operations; nothing of imperfection will cleave to what the glorified Saints above are doing. The Vision of God Face to Face, will fix the Mind and Thoughts upon him eternally; having once looked on, they will never care to look off more. Perfection of Holiness, Love, Delight and Joy, must needs forever hinder all even the least wandering. None can in the least be weary of the Work that is done in Heaven, it is so full of pleasure, Rev. 4.8 They rest not Day and Night, saying Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty which was, and is, and is to come; and full glad may they well be, that such a pleasant Employment must never come to an end.

If all this Congregation, with their Pastor can but get safe into the House not made with Hands eternal in the Heavens. Oh what Thoughts and Apprehensions shall we have! How shall we be filled with Joy and Wonder, at what we shall then behold! Being entered and swallowed up in the Joy of our Lord, shall we not then cry out. Ah! Ah! What a difference is there between this Heavenly Country, and the most desirable earthly Inheritance! The Sun is but a small Spark to that Light which we now see! When we looked upward, we admired Heavens outside, the Firmament with all its shining Luminaries, but now we plainly see that Heaven is much more glorious within! What an excellent Society is this innumerable Company of Angels that we are among! How does every glorified Saint and Member of Christ resemble his Head! Being all fair and no spot remaining! How pleasant is the Harmony where there is no Sin, no Sorrow, no Defect, or Discord! These Hallelujahs which we now join in, how ravishing and transporting are they! Not like the distracted Services which we used to perform together in the Sanctuary! We are all now fixed in this glorious place, and shall go no more out. Our Complaints are quite ended, and never again shall we do in the least amiss! We are indeed without fault before the Throne

of God, and we shall Live and Reign, Triumph and Magnify the Lord forever!

Thus have I finished my Discourse concerning Distraction in attending upon God, a fault whereof all are guilty; most make nothing, or very light of; and very few mind to have it mended: My design herein has been to do some Service to the Church of Christ, that their Worship may be more pure and Spiritual, being freed from those wandering Thoughts which both distract and defile it; and that the Best of Lord's may still have better and more acceptable Service, from all of you, and from myself also. Whilst we are in this World, truly this World is too much in us; 'tis suitable to our Senses, and apt to entice and draw away our Hearts. Let the Eye of Faith pierce through the Clouds, and see Heavens Joy and Glory, and then this Worlds Vanity will be the more apparent; and how vain a thing 'tis for you to be so thoughtful about it, and eager after it. When Faith has seen how God is attended upon by Saints and Angels above, it may help to kindle in you a holy zeal and a vehement desire, more to resemble those excellent Attendants, and to serve the Lord more gladly and seriously here below.

Oh cry to have the Cure of Distractions carried on further towards completeness. Live as Strangers and Sojourners here on Earth, not concerned about the things of it, as others are. Declare plainly that you are born from above, and let your Hearts and Thoughts more and more ascend thither. Carry your selves as fellow Citizens with the Saints, and as those that are of the Household of God. Let there be more of God, more of Grace in all you do and speak; in all the Powers of your Souls, in all the Duties you perform. And think with gladness and longing of that blessed Inheritance; when you shall be fully delivered from Sin and Death, and all deadness and distraction in Mind and Heart. Everlasting Rest must needs eternally exclude

whatever does now trouble you. And how perfectly healed, and every way perfect in Holiness and Joy will you be, when you have attained to the Glorious Liberty of the Sons of God!

FINIS.

Herbert 's Poem, called "Giddiness,"

Oh what a thing is Man! How far from Power,
From settled Peace and Rest!

He is some twenty several Men at least
Each several Hour.

One while he counts of Heaven as of his Treasure,
But then a Thought creeps in,
And calls him Coward, who for fear of sin,
Will lose a Pleasure.

Oh what a Sight were Man, if his Attires,
Did alter with his Mind!

And like a Dolphins Skin, his Clothes combined,
With his Desires.

Surely if each one saw another's Heart,
There would be no Commerce;

No Sale or Bargain pass, all would disperse,
And live apart.

Lord mend or rather make us! One Creation
Will not suffice our turn;
Except thou make us daily, we shall spurn
Our own Salvation.

Another Poem of the same Author, called, "The Method."

Poor Heart lament!
For since thy God refuseth still,
There is some Rub, some Discontent
Which cools his Will.
Thy Father could
Quickly effect what thou dost move;
For he is Power, and sure he would
For his Love.
Go search this thing,
Tumble thy Breast, and turn thy Book;

If thou hadst Lost a Glove or Ring,
Wouldst thou not look?
What do I see
Written above thee? Yesterday
I did behave me carelessly
When I did pray.
And should God's Ear,
To such Indifferents chained be,
Who do not their own motions hear?
In God less free?
But stay, What's there?
Late when I would have something done,
I had a Motion to forbear,
Yet I went on.
And should God's Ear
Which needs not Man; be tied to those
Who hear not him, but quickly hear
His utter Foes?

Then once more pray;
Up with thy Heart, as well as Voice,
Seek Pardon first, and God will say,
Glad Heart rejoice.

FINIS.

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