

A funeral sermon for Mrs. Esther Sampson, the late wife of Henry Sampson, Dr. of Physick, who died Nov. 24. M.DCLxxxix / by John Howe ... Published principally for the use of such as languish under painful and chronical diseases.

Contributors

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A

Funeral Sermon

FOR

Mrs. ESTHER SAMPSON,

The Late Wife of

Henry Sampson, Dr. of Physick, who
Died Nov. 24. M.DC Lxxxix.

By *John Howe* Minister of the Gospel.

Published principally for the use of such as languish under
painful and Chronical Diseases.

L O N D O N,

Printed for *Thomas Parkhurst* at the Bible and
Three Crowns, at the lower end of *Cheap-*
side, near *Mercers Chapel*. 1690.



T O

My Worthy Friend

Dr. Henry Sampson.

SIR,

I Have perused the Papers which you sent me, and find, as far as I can recollect, they contain in them the Substance of what was delivered : With no more mistakes than is usual, in writing from the mouth of one who is not of the slowest speakers.

Some things besides, which the limits of the time allow'd not to be spoken (having some short memorials of them by me) I have added, conceiving they might, also, contribute towards the good end you proposed to your self, in so earnestly desiring this publication, the assisting of their patience, and their good and placid thoughts of God, who are exercis'd under Long and Languishing Distempers. The observations which your Profession hath occasion'd you to make in the cases of many others, hath, I doubt not, let you see the need of somewhat to this purpose ; otherwise the example

The Epistle Dedicatory.

you have had so long before your eyes of so calm and compos'd a temper in this excellent relative of yours, might have made you less apprehensive how great an addition a fretful, unquiet spirit is, both to the Sin, and the Affliction of a Sickly State. I am sensible your own affliction is great in the loss you now sustain. The relief will be great, and suitable; which the forethoughts of that State will afford, where they neither Marry, nor are given in Marriage, but are as the Angels of God in Heaven. I am,

S I R,

In much sincerity, and affection, yours
to serve you in the work and labour
of the Gospel,

John Howe.

LUKE

LUKE 13. 16.

And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond, on the Sabbath day?

YOU will soon see the occasion, and connexion of these words, by viewing over the whole Paragraph to which they belong, *verse 10. And he was teaching in one of the Synagogues on the Sabbath. 11. And behold there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up her self. 12. When Jesus saw her, he said to her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. 13. And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. 14. And the Ruler of the Synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath day, and said unto the people, There are six days, in which men ought to work, in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day. 15. The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each of you on the Sabbath loose his Ox and his Ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? 16. And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day? 17. And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed; and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.*

Inasmuch as our blessed Lord spake these words, and did the thing which occasion'd them, upon that which was, with the Jews, *their Sabbath day*; it cannot be unfit for us to consider them upon ours, they so fitly leading us to consider also, another release wrought for a daughter of Abraham too on our Sabbath day.

It was formerly told you upon what occasion, and I doubt not but

but you generally know, upon *whose account* we were to divert from our usual course and Subject at this time. Nor could any thing have been more suitable to the present occasion; for not only was this Daughter of *Abraham* releas'd from her Infirmary upon the Sabbath day; but the time, wherein it remain'd upon Her (in a great and manifold complication) was (as her surviving Confort hath acquainted me, and who therefore recommended this Subject) precisely *about eighteen Years*.

There are ('tis true) disagreements between *our case*, and *that case in the Text*, which do not therefore render both together less instructive to us, but the more. And, to make way to what may be so, you must here take notice, that these Words are part of our Lords Defence of what he had done, in performing this work of Mercy, wherein what he says is *justly severe*, and very *clearly convictive*. It is very deserved and just severity, that he call'd him, who cavil'd in the case, by his own true name, *thou hypocrite*. He, under pretence of *great sanctity*, discovers the *highest enmity*, even against our blessed Lord himself, who came (being sent) upon the holiest and kindest design into this World. The zeal which he pretends for the observation of the Sabbath, could not be the thing that he did really mean, or that acted him in this case. For it was not likely he could be ignorant of what was a known adjudg'd Case among

* *Vid. Maimon. constitut. de fundam. c. 5. 9. cum Abrav. N. 13, 14.*

And, as our own Dr. *Lightfoot* says upon that question of our Lords; *Is it lawful to heal upon the Sabbath day?* (quoting divers more of theirs to that purpose,) he violated not the Sabbath so much as their own Cannons allow'd. See his *Works*, Vol 2.

the *Jews* (as some of their own Rabbies * inform us) that all needful endeavours ought to be used for the cure of the sick upon the Sabbath day. So as that he very well knew, no rule could be broken in this case. But this he reckons was somewhat plausible, and he pleases himself in it, that he could tell how to vent his spite against Christ and Christianity, under a *mock-shew* of great Sanctimony. And our Lord justly calls him what indeed he was, when he would thus seem what he was not. It was not that he cared for Religion, or for any thing of real Sanctity, of which a due and just observation of the Sabbath was a real part; but that he had a mind, as far as conveniently he could, to express his displeasure at that evidence and lustre, wherewith the glorious works our Lord wrought evinc'd him to be

be *the Messiah* ; while yet he was struck with that awe of him, that he adventures not to direct his reproof to *him*, but *the people*.

It is here by the way to be noted that *they* were not thus disaffected to our Lord, and the Religion he was about to introduce. No, but this Ceremonious Bigot, a *Ruler of the Synagogue*, was the ill pleased, disaffected Person.

I shall not trouble you with the discussion what sort of power it was that belonged to that Office. Some well acquainted with the *Jewish writings* say, that the *Ruler of the Synagogue* was not wont himself to officiate, as Minister in *Sacris* ; but his business was *circa Sacra*, to regulate the Administration. We consider not his *Power*, but his *ill-will*, and enmity against Christ, and true Religion. The people, in the mean time, throng'd after him in Multitudes, and beheld the great works he wrought with joy, and glorified God. Only where was *more power*, and probably *more knowledge*, there was more too of a peevish spite and envy, that the interest of our Lord was, *by so proper means*, growing in the World. A sad (and not a new) thing ! that Religion should have most opposition, whence it should have most of countenance, and advantage to dilate and spread it self. *Do any of the Rulers believe on him ?* But the people (whom they despised, and pronounc'd *accursed* for that reason) were more apt and forward to receive the Gospel, *Joh. 7. 48, 49.* *The more there is of light, unaccompany'd with a pious Inclination, the higher, the more intense and fervent, the finer and more subtle is the venome and malice against Christ, and real Christianity.*

But our Lord was not diverted from his kind and compassionate design, by any such obstructions as these. His love triumphs over them ; and he makes that discovery of his compassion, which could not but carry the clearest conviction with it, as his reproof carry'd the brightest justice. Why, what, saith he, *Do not any of you loose an Ox, or an Ass from the Stall on the Sabbath day ? and shall not I loose a daughter of Abraham ?* 'Tis like she was a *Daughter of Abraham*, not only as being a *Jewess*, but as being a *believer* ; as being, according to Scripture language, of *Abrahams Seed*, in the *Spiritual* sense, as well as the *natural* ; and he was the more peculiarly compassionate upon that account ; and yet more, because her ail proceeded from the malignant influence of the Devil. Shall not I loose such a one whom *Satan* hath bound, that great enemy of mankind?

kind? Why should not I shew my self so much the more a Friend, by how much the more he appears an Enemy, and give the earliest relief the matter can admit?

'Tis very true indeed, his compassion was never to incline him to do unfit and unseasonable things, or things that were no way subservient to his principal end. But such a subserviency being supposed, his relief must be with the earliest, to day, before morrow, though it were the Sabbath day.

And so now you have the ground of discourse plainly in view before you.

That the Devil cannot be more maliciously intent to afflict those that relate to God (even, when it is in his power, with bodily distempers) than our Lord Jesus is compassionately willing to relieve them, without distinction of time, when it shall be consistent with, and subservient to his higher and greater purposes.

In speaking to this, I shall

1. Touch briefly upon what is here exprest in the Text, *the hand that Satan may have in the Afflictions, yea and in the bodily distempers of men, and even of them that belong to God among them.*

2. *What hand our Lord Jesus has in their relief or releasement.*

3. *How far we may understand, or may reasonably expect his compassion to influence him in such cases.*

4. *I shall shew that however the release be wrought, it is done very mercifully towards them that belong peculiarly to God. And so make use of all.*

1. Somewhat briefly as to that first query, What hand it is supposable the Devil may have in the afflictions of men, and more particularly of them that belong to God; as this woman being a Daughter of Abraham was to be considered, as one within the compass of Gods Covenant, and not improbably as one, that, in the strictest sense, was in Covenant with God.

1. It is plain in the Text, the Devil had a direct hand in her distemper, called a *Spirit of infirmity*. There were more evident, and more frequent instances of this kind in that time, the Devil then setting himself more openly to contend against the incarnate Son of God, upon his more open appearance to rescue and recover an Apostate World from under his Dominion and Tyranny. But as to more ordinary cases we may further consider,

2. That the Devil is a constant enemy to mankind, apt and inclin'd, as far as God permits him, to do men all the mischief he can.

3. That as he first introduc't sin into the World, so he hath, by consequence, all the calamities that afflict it. There had been no Death, Sicknes, or Distemper upon the bodies of men, but from hence. Consider the Devil therefore, as the Prince and Leader of the Apostasie, who first drew man into transgression, and thereby render'd him liable to the Justice of his Maker, turn'd his Paradise into a desert, and a region of immortal undecaying life, into a Valley of sickly Languishings and death it self; So may he be said to have had a (remoter) hand, in binding not only this Daughter of *Abraham*, but every child of *Adam* in all the Afflictions, Maladies, and Distempers which befall them here, and finally in the bonds of Death too, whereof he is said to *have had the power*. Tho the Children of the *second Adam*, (with *Heb. 2. 14, 15.* whom, for this purpose he was partaker of Flesh and Blood, and became with them a *Son of Abraham*, and of his Seed) are, by being so bound, releas'd and made free, both from Death, and the bondage of fearing it, to which they were otherwise Subject all their days, as we shall further see anon.

4. Tho God do not ordinarily allow him *more power*, yet we may well suppose him to have *more malice* against *these Children of Abraham* (who thereby pass into the account of his own Children also) being more intent upon vexing and afflicting, whom he apprehends or suspects he shall never be able finally to destroy; and always apt to use all the power shall be allowed him to this mischievous purpose. We find that the afflictions of the people of God, *in other kinds*, and even in *this kind*, are expressly, often, attributed to the Devil. In other kinds, *Satan shall cast some of you into prison*, Revel. 2. 10. And divers think *that thorn in the flesh* which the Apostle suffered, 2 Cor. 12. was some acute bodily pain, and he says expressly, it was *a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him*. He, 'tis said, *smote Job with the tormenting boils* that afflicted him so grievously, and so long, and brought the other calamities upon him that you read of in his Story.

5. And again it is further to be considered, that whereas in all Diseases, the Morbifick Matter, whether immediate in Mens Bodies, or remoter in the incompassing Air, differs not from other matter, otherwise than only in the various disposition, fi-
B guration

guration and motion of parts and particles whereof it is made up ; inasmuch as the Devil is called the *Prince of the power of the Air*, we know nothing to the contrary, but that he may frequently so modify that, as that it shall have most pernicious influences upon the Bodies of Men, and upon those especially, so far as God permits, that he has any greater malice against.

6. And again, (supposing this) it is not a stranger thing that God should permit him to afflict the Bodies of them that belong to him, than to disturb their minds. Sure their Bodies are not more Sacred. If we should suppose that he may some way or other perniciously agitate the humours in humane Bodies, 'tis no harder a supposition than that he should so variously form the images in the fancy, by which he tempts: for herein surely he comes nearer us, and is more inward to us.

7ly. Nor is it less supposable that God should, in some instances. permit the Devils to follow their inclinations in afflicting his people, than wicked men to follow theirs, which, in the general, carry them to the same thing; when he knows how to turn the one to after-advantage, as well as the other.

But we have no ground to think, notwithstanding all this, that the wisdom and goodness of Providence will ordinarily permit that this Agency of the Devil, in the mentioned cases, should be altogether in a contra-natural way ; but only, by so moving and acting with natural causes, that he may be also obviated, through the ordinary blessing of God, by natural means, and causes too. Much less is it reasonable that diseases should be themselves reckon'd very *Devils*, as was the opinion of the *Gnosticks* of old, wherein they much concurred with the *Manichees*, and whom, together with them, the more honest-minded Pagan *Plotinus* so copiously confutes; (though that that was more anciently a common Opinion, the *Septuagints* rendring the word that signifies *Plague* by the word *δαιμόνιον*, in several places of Scripture seems to intimate. But the commonness of such an Opinion in a *dark time*, signifies nothing to sway ours this way or that.)

But whatsoever hand the Devil may be supposed to have in their afflictions, or sicknesses that belong to God, we are in the

2d. place sure, That our Lord Jesus has a most kind hand (whensoever it is) in their release, which though it were here
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in a more extraordinary and immediate way, and besides the course of nature; the disparity in this case signifies nothing to the lessening of the favour, towards those whom he vouchsafes to relieve in other cases; for the influence that he has in ordinary cases is as truly divine. If the cure of a diseased person be wrought by his blessing upon ordinary natural means, his cooperating with nature is less amazing, but not less effectual, or less kind; as also the efflux from God is (for his own part) as real, when he works with second causes, as without them; and as immediately reaches the effect, in both the senses of immediateness, whereof so much noise is made in the Schools.

And we must further know our Lord Christ is now the universal Regent of all Nature, even as he is *the Christ*, the world being devolv'd into his hands, and all power being given to him both in Heaven and Earth. *He is Lord of all.* When therefore any of you are sick, it is by his disposal, if you are recovered out of that sickness. Nor is his Agency less or lower, whether it be by blessing a Medicine, or working a Miracle. His power and love are the same either way. And know, there is an honour, and acknowledgment due from Christians to their great crucifi'd Lord, who hath founded a dominion over this world in his blood, *who died, and revived, and rose again, that he might be Lord of living and dead.* Therefore you are to reckon you are beholden to Christ for all your recoveries, and all your refreshings that you meet with amidst the many infirmities and frailties of this your present mortal state.

And if the release be by death, as the case is, which we now have specially to do with, that universal power of his *over all lives*, must be understood immediately to reach to that case too. It is he that measures lives, that lengthens them out, and cuts them shorter at his own pleasure. And, as to those that are more peculiarly his own, it is a more peculiar, and favourable superintendency that he has over that affair, even of their very dying. Their death is precious in his sight. He with a most gentle tender hand unties the knot of *Man*, releases and receives the dislodging Soul. *Lord Jesus receive my Spirit, as dying Stephen speaks.* But,

3ly. We are to consider how far our Lord Jesus his compassion concerns him in such cases; or wherein *that* may move him to interpose in them so, as in this case he did.

And here two things are to be asserted.

1st. That his compassion has not *supream and principal* influence in this Case.

2ly. That yet it hath *real* influence.

That it hath not supream or principal influence in such Cases. And this doth really require to be more principally insisted on, as of greater importance to narrow, terrene minds, that are apt to measure all things *by themselves*, and in reference to their own little Sphear and compass; and *to themselves only* in their *present State*, as they are inhabitants of this Minute Spot of Earth; as if all things ought to bend, and yield, to their present convenience, and accommodation *here*; whereupon they wonder when they are sick, and in pain, God doth not presently relieve and ease them; and think they should do so, for any Friend or Neighbour, if it were in their Power.

Know, therefore, 'twas not from compassion, as the *solitary*, or as the *chief* inducement, that our Lord did work this release for this Daughter of *Abraham*. That cannot be supposed. For he can never be understood to make *a creature*, and the advantages of a Creature his *Supream* end. That would have been to invert the order of things, to dethrone God, and deifie man, and had been, it self, a real sort of that Idolatry, which was one, among the many horrid evils, which he purposely came to redress, and give remedy to in this apostate degenerate World. He had a greater inducement, *i. e.* That he might diffuse the Glory of God among the Children of Men; and that he might give evidence thereby, to the Truth of his own Mission, and prove most convincingly, that he was the *Messiah*, the *Son of God*, the very Person that was anointed, and sent about that great undertaking, to recover Gods rights in this lapsed World, to bring about a reconciliation between God and Men. And upon this account, when he wrought cures upon mens Bodies, it was out of an higher compassion to their Souls.

And tho' even this it self of saving Mens Souls was not his highest design, but the *Glory of God* (as we shall see further by and by) yet it being *truly* design'd by him, and *more principally* than their bodily ease and relief, *this* was an apt means to this his lower end. For, whereas, in order to this, he was to manifest himself a *Divine Saviour*, 'twas requisite he should

should give a joint, and an equal demonstration of the two things, which his being so implies, his *Godlike Power, and Love*. The former *alone* it did not serve his purpose to shew, which he might have shewn as much by inflicting plagues on mens bodies, as working cures, by striking them with blindness, lameness, &c. as by giving them sight and soundness. But it was necessary to his end, his Miracles should be beneficent, and that he should (as it is elsewhere said in the Evangelical Story he did) *go about doing good*, and not make men afraid of him, by shewing the Power of a God in destructive strokes and judgments; but, (which became a Saviour) express a *divine good-will towards men*, and thereby make his way into their Hearts, bring them to *understand*, and *own* a Saviour, and, *as such*, to fall in, and comply with his kind design towards them. And this, as it serv'd to exalt God in the World, chiefly induc'd him to work this present cure. If his compassion towards a poor afflicted woman, labouring under bodily infirmity, were his principal inducement, if therefore, she must be presently cured out of hand, even on the Sabbath day, because she had been now bound eighteen years; Why, I pray you, was she to have been bound eighteen years? or why bound at all? His Divine Knowledge of the case, and power to have redrest, or prevented it, had as well serv'd his compassionate inclination long before. Or why was not such a course formerly set on foot, and continued in the world, that men might be cured of Blindness, Deafness, Lameness, Feavers, Dropsies, or whatsoever other Maladies, easily, and by speaking a word, in any former time? Why was it deferr'd to this time? Or why hath not such a course been kept afoot ever since his ascension? Hath Heaven render'd him less merciful, and compassionate? Is it so unkind and ill-natur'd a place?

'Tis true that his apology for the cure he now wrought to *this Ruler of the Synagogue*, seems to have no higher reference, nor was he bound, unseasonably, to declare his utmost end and design, to a prejudic'd, malicious Enemy. *That* was to *speak it self*, to shine by it's own light, and, by such means, and methods as these, gradually to make it's own way into less-obstructed minds, insensibly sliding in upon them; which might better be done (time being given at leisure to consider things) by the *real evidence* which his works carry'd with them, than
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by industrious, and often-repeated *verbal Commentaries and Expositions.*

He sometimes spake it out expressly, as he thought fit, to competent, and more prepared hearers, that his great design was to make *himself*, and *his errand* be understood; *who he was*, and *what he came into the World for*; that he was the Son of God, the promised Messiah; and that his business was to *save them that were lost*; and to restore Gods interest in an Apostate lost world (whose rights were to be cared for in the first place. *He redeemed us to God by his blood, Rev. 5. 9.*) Or for the glory of God, as he summ'd it up, in the case of *Lazarus*, when he was told of his being sick, *Joh. 11. 4. This sickness is not unto death (i.e. it was not to terminate in a continuing death) but for the Glory of God, that the Son of man might be Glorifi'd*, the same account which *this Evangelist* gives of all these his great works, and why they were recorded, that we might believe that *Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. &c. chap. 20. 30.* And otherwise was it so considerable a thing, that a man well got out of this fearful gulf, as *Lazarus* now was, should be fetcht back again! that so mighty a wonder should be wrought! that the inclosure of the grave should be torn open! and the released Soul should be again drawn down, as a bird escaped, caught back into it's former confinement, to converse a while longer amidst the impurities of a world lying in wickedness, and with shadows, in a world the fashion whereof passes away!

No; Miracles were not *so cheap things*. We may observe the great and wise God hath, for great and weighty reasons, been always very sparing in making very observable innovations upon Nature, or any considerable changes in the ordinary course and method of Natural Causes, and their Operations; as a thing less suitable to a *state of probation*, wherein men were to be held in this world. And hath only been wont to do it, where the inconvenience was to be ballanced by preponderating greater reasons; which might as much require that he should depart from the fixed rule *sometimes*, as other reasons might, that he should *not do it often*. It was equally necessary that miracles should not be common, as that there should be any wrought at all, and in great part for the same reason. For if they were common, they must lose the only design, for which they could be at all useful. If God should do, in this kind, what is *not necessary*, he should the less effect
by

by it *that which is*. Inasmuch as they are only useful, as they are strange, and, in the natural way, unaccountable. But there is nothing so great in this kind, but ceases to be thought strange, if it be common. Otherwise, is not the *forming of the eye, in itself* as great a thing, as to give sight to the blind? Or the framing such a world as this, as great a thing, as the most stupendous miracle that ever was wrought in it?

It was indeed necessary somewhat extraordinary should at first be done to demonstrate *that man, Jesus of Nazareth, to be the Son of God*, which it was impossible should otherwise be known. When that was fully done, it was not necessary there should still be a repetition of miracles, from age to age, to prove the former were wrought, or the truth of the narratives, which reported them. *That* was sufficiently to be known in the ordinary way, as other matters of fact are, or other history, about which there is no doubt made among men. And the history of *these things* has greater advantages to recommend it to the certain belief of after time, than most that ever were writ besides, upon many accounts. It was indeed most becoming the Majesty, Wisdom and Goodness of God (taken together) to do what might answer the real necessities of men whom he was designing to save; but not to indulge their curiosity, nor their unaccountable dulness, sloth, or prejudice, whereby they may be unapt to enquire about, or receive plain things.

Therefore miracles were to be done, as rarities, sometimes, not at all times, and at such a time, and upon such an occasion most of all, to notify, and signalize the Redeemer, at his first appearance, to draw mens eyes upon him, that they might take notice of him, and demean themselves towards him accordingly. This was to be done sufficiently once for all. And the *great stupidity* of the world made a matter which needed some supernatural evidence, need *so much* in that kind. *Except you see signs and wonders, you will not believe.* And if he did so far comply with the necessity of degenerate humanity, as to give once some signal convictive evidence that he was the Christ, the divine Wisdom would take care it should not be so often done, as to become trivial, and insignificant to it's proper end; the importance whereof was such, as that it ought to transcend any regard to the welfare of mens bodies; but not to exclude it; which we now come briefly to shew in the next place. viz.

2. That

2. That tho' compassion towards an infirm creature, under bodily distemper, was not the *principal inducement* unto this cure, it was a *real one*. Our Lord doth really compassionate the frailties of those that relate to him, while they dwell in mortal flesh. *He himself bears our sicknesses*. He has a tenderneſs towards them, even while he doth not think it fit actually to release, and set them free; which makes way to what was proposed in the last place to be insisted on, as preparatory to the intended use.

4. That in what way soever our Lord Jesus works a release for them that are most specially his own, from their bodily distempers, he doth it in mercy to them. He lets their affliction continue upon them in mercy; greater mercy, indeed, than would be in an unreasonable deliverance. But when he sees it a fit season to give them a release, that is an unquestionable mercy too; tho' it be not in such a way, as appears such to vulgar eyes.

It is more easily apprehensible to be from compassion, if he relieves a poor, pained, weak, languishing, sickly creature, by giving renewed strength, and ease, and health in this world. But when the release is by death, as in the case we have under our farther present consideration, it is hard to perswade that this is done in mercy; that there is compassion in this case. There is 'tis true in this a manifest disparity, but not a disadvantageous one. Is it a less thing, to release an holy soul from *the body* than from *bodily distempers*? It can only be so in the opinion of such blind moles of the earth, as the children of men are now generally become. But let the case be considered according to it's true and real import. Why! a *recovery from sickness* is but an *adjournment of death*; 'tis but death defer'd a while. When there is a release wrought in such a way as this, in which hers was wrought, whom God hath lately taken from amongst us; here is a cure, not only of *one* bodily distemper, but of *all*; not only of *actual diseasedness*, but of the *possibility of ever being diseased more*; here is a cure wrought, not only of *infirmity*, but of *death*: for the Saints conquer death by suffering it; Yea a cure, not of *death* only, but of *mortality*, of any liableness to death, so as it can never touch them more; Yea further, not only of *bodily diseases*, but of *Spiritual* too, far worse, and more grievous than all bodily diseases whatsoever; a cure of blindness of mind, deadness, and hardness of heart, of all indispositions towards God, his ways, and presence, towards the most spiritual duties, and the best,
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and most excellent of our enjoyments. The *body of Sin*, and the *mortal body* are both put off together. The imprisoned soul is set free, and enters upon a state of everlasting liberty; is *releas'd* from the *bands of death*, of whatsoever kind, and in the highest, fullest sense, shall *reign in life, thorough Jesus Christ*. What is the decease of a Saint, but a translation out of a valley of death, a *Golgotha*, a place of Skulls, a region where death reigns, into the region of perfect and everlasting life? It is not to be called death *simply or absolutely*, but with diminution; 'tis death only *in a certain respect*, when in *an higher, and much more considerable respect*, it is a *birth* rather; a *dying out of one world*, and a *being born* at the same time, into another, a much more lightsome, a purer, and more glorious world. The soul is cured in a moment, of whatsoever was grievous or afflicting to it, and the body put into a certain way of cure, of being made from an earthly, mean, mortal thing, heavenly, spiritual, incorruptible, and immortal; from a *vile*, a *glorious body, like Christ's own*, and by *that power, by which he can subdue all things to himself*, Phil. 3. 21.

And now for Use.

I. Learn, *That there is no inconsistency in the case, that the same person should be at once the subject of long continued bodily affliction, and of divine compassion. These are reconcilable things, sickly languishings, under which one may be ready to fail, and compassions that fail not. This is a common Theme; but the due consideration of it is too little common. Let it now be considered with impartial equity, and with deep seriousness. Do you think the all-comprehending mind of the Son of God now first began to pity this daughter of Abraham? While he was not yet ascended, this attribution is given him; Otherwise, no doubt, than as a false complement; Lord thou knowest all things— Since his ascension, we are assured he hath a feeling of our infirmities, so as to be touch'd with them, a continuing sympathy, remembering the inconveniences of that state he had past thorough (as she once, non ignara mali &c.) and is always ready, therefore, to do the part of a faithful and merciful high Priest. Before his descent, we must, with equal reason, suppose him to have an entire prospect of the sad case of wretched mortals in this miserable world of ours. What else made him descend? And after that he was descended,*
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this mark could not but lye still before the eye of his divine mind^s to which *all his works were known from the beginning of the world.* Yet the cure is defer'd, the release is not given till the appointed season. When it is the case of any of you to be afflicted with long sickness, and to feel the tediousness of a lingering disease (count upon it that it may be so, as 'tis like, it hath been with divers of you;) Do not then permit the matter to the censure of an incompetent, partial Judge. If you consult *flesh and blood*, if *sense* be to pronounce in the case, and give judgment, how hard will it be to perswade that you are not neglected in your languishings, that your groans and faintings are unpity'd; tho' you are so plainly told, that *whom the Lord loves he chastens?* Are you not ready to say, how can this stand with being, at the same time, the object of divine pity? If he pity me, would he let me lye, and languish thus, in so miserable a plight, day after day, and year after year? Yes; these things very well agree, and I would fain shortly evince to you that they do. Why!

1. His Compassion may sufficiently be Evidenc'd in *another kind*, and by another sort of instances. Sure, it will speak compassion, if he frequently visit his frail infirm creatures, and by his visitation preserve their spirits, if he support them, if he refresh them, this is grace. *My grace shall be sufficient for thee*, saith he to the great Apostle, when he refused to release him from that thorn in the flesh, that messenger of Satan that did buffet him.

2. Besides, compassion may appear by this kind of dispensation it self. It may not only carry that *with it*, but *in it*, which may shew good will. If long continued affliction may be supposed to proceed from compassion, it doth much more consist with it. It may proceed from compassion, and bear the relation to it of an effect to the cause. We find it expressly so said in Scripture; and who can so truly speak Gods mind as himself? *He afflicts in very faithfulness*; and, *as many as the Lord loves, he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives*, Prov. 3. 12. quoted, Heb. 12. 5, 6. Rev. 3. Affliction must be the effect of his real, and most sincere good will, and compassion, tho' of long continuance, if it be apt, and intended to do you good, in higher, and in greater regards, than those wherein you suffer; or if the good your affliction does you, or is fitly design'd to do you be of a nobler, and more excellent kind, than that whereof it deprives you, it must be understood, not only

only to be consistent with kindness and good will, but to be produc'd of it. For the same principle that intends the end, must also intend the proper means that serve to effect it. Now the *kind of this good* is thus to be estimated. You read *Psal. 103. 5. As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities them that fear him. As a father.* The relation he is in to them is that of a father to his children. But we must understand, under what notion, he is so related, and we are told, *Heb. 12. 9, 10. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: Shall we not then much rather be in subjection to the father of our spirits, and live? For they, verily, for a few days, chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.* We have here an account where the relation terminates, and see both the *object* of his more special kindness and good will, which accompany the relation, and the *end* of it. He is the *father of their spirits*; whence, therefore, we may collect the *object* of that love which goes with the relation must be *their spirits* also; the *end* of it is their *spiritual advantage*; to make them partakers of his own holiness. *His holiness!*] is a lofty word, and carries the matter high. Understanding it soberly (as we may be sure it was meant) it must signify the holiness, which he hath *himself* imprest, and the impression whereof is the lively resemblance and image of *his own*. And is not this a good of a nobler, and more excellent kind, than we can lose by a sickness? better than the ease of this vile flesh, that was made out of dust, and tends thither? The *object* is *their spirits*; for there the kindness that belongs to the relation must terminate, where the relation terminates. *How much more shall we not be subject to the father of our spirits, and live?* The father of our spirits is there contradistinguished from the fathers of our flesh. God is not the father of our flesh; but the father of our spirits. He is the Creator of our flesh too; our flesh is his *creature*, but not his *off-spring*. There must be a similitude, and likeness of nature between a father and a child, which there is not necessarily, between a *maker*, and the *thing made*. In respect of our spiritual part, we are his off-spring, and he is so a father to us; both, as the Souls of men in common bear his *natural Image*; and, if they be regenerate, as they bear his *holy Image* too. And the case may be so, that the suffering of our flesh is necessary for the advantage of our spirits. Our flesh may suffer so, as that the spirit shall be the

better for it; and then pity it self, compassion it self must not only *permit*, but *cause* and *produce* such a course of dispensation, as whereby that end shall be attained, *the making us partakers of his holiness*; so the Apostle speaks of his own case: *Though our outward man perish, yet our inward man is renewed day by day*, 2 Cor. 4. 15. *Though our outward man perish*. We are compass'd about with Deaths that are continually beating down the Walls of this outward man; they are beating upon it, and are likely to infer it's perishing; and if it perish, let it perish, I am not solicitous (*q. d.*) about that. If it must come down, let it come down; in the midst of all these outward assaults, our *inward man* is renewed day by day, gathers a fresh, and increasing strength, and vigour, whilst this *outward man* is tending to dissolution and dust. And several ways such continued afflictions upon the outward man, may make for the advantage of the inward man in the best kind.

1. As they withdraw, and take off the Mind and Heart from this World; a debasing and defiling thing, and which transforms the Soul that converses too much with it, into a Dunghil, fills it with ill favour. But what doth all this World signifie to a sickly pained Person?

2. As it engages them to be much in Prayer. Nothing is more sutable, than that an afflicted Life be a Life of much Prayer. *Is any man afflicted, let him pray*, Jam. 5. 13. Much affliction hath a natural aptitude to incline men this way. *In their affliction, they will seek me early*, Hos. 5. 15. It is a dictate of nature, even when Grace, as yet, hath no possession; but which, through Gods blessing, may, by this means, help to introduce it. For it urges the Soul Godward, who is the *God of all Grace*; obliges it to converse with him, whereby somewhat better may be gained than is sought. In their afflictions they will be submissive and lye at my feet, saith God; they will *seek me early*, from whom, otherwise, I should never hear, it may be, all their Life long. Oh! that you would understand the matter so, when God afflicts in such kinds, so as his hand touches your very bone and flesh; this is the design of it, to make you pray, to bring you upon your knees, to put you into a supplicating posture, if he can, upon any terms, hear from you, tho' you seek him but for bodily ease and refreshing,

ing, it may be a means of the greatest advantage to you, e're God have done with you, when once he has brought you, by this means to treat; when he has got you into a more tractable disposition, there is hope in the case. If thus he open your ear to Discipline, and be to you an interpreter, one of a thousand, to shew you his Righteousness, he may seal instruction to you, and save your Soul from going down to the Pit, having found a ransom for you, Job 33. 15. &c.

But for those that have a real Interest in God, and Union with Christ, that which occasions much Prayer, is likely to be the means of much spiritual improvement, and advantage to them.

3. It puts several suitable Graces upon exercise, and by being exercised they grow. It tries their *Faith*, and improves it. *Faith* is, in such a case as this, necessarily called forth into act, if there be the principle; and as it *acts*, it *grows*; becomes more and more strong and lively. Their *Patience* is exercised by it, and perfected; and that has a great influence upon their universal perfection. *Let patience have it's perfect work, that you may be perfect*, Jam. 1. 2, 3, 4. There will be an universal languor (as if he should have said) upon your Spirits, if you be impatient; if you cannot suffer (as patience is an ability for suffering) if you can by no means endure, without tempestuous agitations, or sullen despondencies of Spirit. But if *Patience have it's perfect Work*, that will infer an universal healthfulness, and good habit into your whole Soul.

Their Love to God is, in such a case, eminently tried, and improved. *Blessed is the man that endures Temptation* (tentative affliction is there meant, as above, vers. 2.) *For when he is tryed, he shall receive the Crown of Life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him*, Jam. 1. 12. Which implies their love to him is the great thing put upon trial, in that case. And it is a great trial of Love to God; a very improvable opportunity of discerning it's sincerity, when, upon a long affliction, you can appeal to God, and say, *Thou knowest I love thee*; tho' thou smite and kill, I will still love thee. No discontentful motion, no repining thought shall ever be allowed a place in my breast; there may be sighs, but no murmurings; groans, but no tumults, nothing of displeasure against thy Holy Pleasure.

4. It occasions such to live much upon the borders of Eternity. Under affliction we *look not to the things that are seen and Temporal, but to the things that are unseen and Eternal*, which make us count our affliction, *tho' long, but momentany*, 2 Cor. 4. 17, 18. And those Souls will prosper, and flourish that have so unspeakably more to do with the other World than with this. 'Tis in this way, that the afflictions of this present state *do work for us the far more exceeding, and eternal weight of Glory*, ver. 17. as they direct our eye forward, while we look, ver. 18. *not to the things which are seen, which are but temporal; but to the things, which are unseen, and eternal.* Life and Spirit, strength and vigour enter (*q. d.*) at our eye, which is prompted by the horreur of frightful spectacles in this scene of things, to look to another, where all things appear light-some, pleasant, and glorious.

There are other considerations, whereby you might argue to your selves, not only the consistency, but the great suitability of an afflicted state in this World, with Gods Favour, Kindness, and Compassion towards you.

As that *when he is more highly provok'd, he threatens not to afflict, as the heaviest of penalties. Why should they be smitten any more? Isa. 1. 5. I will no more punish your Daughters, &c. Hos. 4. 14. Ephraim is joined to Idols, let him alone, ver. 17.*

That his Covenant obliges him to it, as to them, who are, on stricter terms, in Covenant with him, *Christs own seed* being signifi'd by Davids, as by David is manifestly Christ himself, Psal. 89. Where you may see how, and after what tenour his Covenant runs, ver. 30. 31, 32, 33, 34.

According whereto he himself elsewhere acknowledges, that *in very faithfulness God had afflicted him*, Psal. 119. 75.

That, in experience, we are apt to grow remiss, secure and negligent, when all things are externally well with us. And let us but appeal to our selves, how much a wakeful temper of Spirit, under affliction, is better than carelesness, and vanity of Mind, accompany'd with fleshly ease and pleasure.

That we can our selves easily apprehend that it may, not only consist with the tenderness of a Parent, to have the wound of a Child search'd, tho' with much pain; but proceed from it.

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That in heaven our judgment of things will be right and incorrupt, where we shall apprehend no cause of complaint, that, through many sicknesses, diseases, and death it self, our way was made for us thither. And if that shall *then* be a *true judgment*, the thing it self must be as true *now*. But these I hastily hint, and pass to some further use.

2. We may, next, collect, that since it is out of doubt, the Devil may have *some hand* in our outward affliction, we are concern'd to take so much the more care, that he may not have *his end* upon us by it. An hand he may have, and we cannot determine how far; but whether it be more or less, great care we are concern'd to take how to frustrate his design. He has the most mischievous ends that can be, and designs worse things to us than the affliction, which is the means, whatsoever that be. He would fain engage us in a controversie with God; would have us contend with him, murmur, fret, blaspheme and curse God, and therewith send out our last, and dying breath. That was his design upon *Job*. Let us labour to frustrate it, as he did. Divers of the Antients (*Justin Martyr, Jerome, Cyprian and Austin*) speak much to this purpose, how great a design the Devil drives in being the Author of sicknesses and diseases to men, that he might make them apply themselves to him, and divert from God, as that wicked Prince did, whom by the Prophet we find so sharply reprov'd for it, as if there were no God in *Israel*, that he went to the God of *Eckron* (some Dæmon, or other as we have reason to think.)

The last mentioned of those Authors speaks of it, as just matter of Excommunication, when those that bear the name of Christians, shall in such cases, use means bearing no natural proportion or accommodateness to the end, charms, spells, &c. for ease, or cure of maladies; wherein no relief could reasonably be expected, but from the Devils agency; who may be officious enough, if, especially, he have first hurt, to heal too, that by practising upon their bodies, he may entangle their souls; and (according to his wont of running counter to God, who wounds that he may the more effectually heal and save) by a present temporary cure, wound mortally, and finally destroy.

He hath not left the world (no, not the Christian world) quite

quite ignorant of his methods in these kinds, of training men, by gradual steps, into things, first, that seem innocent, and then into such familiarities (whether their *real distress*, or their *curiosity*, were the first handle he took hold of them by, or the Engine by which he drew them) till, at length, it comes to express covenanting. If the matter come not so far, 'tis rare to come off from the least tamperings without a scratch. *He that is born of God keeps himself, that the evil one may not touch him*, 1 John 5. 18. as knowing he designs to touch mortally, and if he touch, to kill. If it proceed so far, as a solemn league, how tragical consequences doth story abound with! That of Count *Matiscou* (pluckt away by the Devil from among divers persons of quality, whom he was entertaining, and at noon-day, whirl'd in the air three times about the City, in open view of the people, to whom he in vain cried for help) reported by some Historians; and that of an infamous *Magician* of *Saltzburg*, and divers others, are instances both very extraordinary, and very monitory.

But as to a future ruine, which he finally aims to involve men in, with himself, he hath not faster hold of any, than those that have learnt to ridicule every thing of this kind, and who have put so much *Sadducism* into their Creed (consisting of so many negatives, or things they believe not, that they scarce leave enough positive to admit that name) as to think *there is no such creature*: perhaps as being conscious there can be no worse than themselves. But how near is he to them that think him out of the Universe!

3. Since it is possible the Devil may bind even those *that belong to God*, with some kind of bodily affliction or other; it is the more to be apprehended, how much worse bonds they are, in which he binds those *that do not belong to him*. Oh! that you would be serious here! How many such sad cases are there, amongst even them, as may be feared, that are called Christians, concerning which it may be said, here is a soul that Satan hath bound, not *eighteen*, but, it may be, thirty, forty, fifty years! Oh! when shall this soul be releast, that Satan hath so long bound!

4. As from the Devils malice to the bodies of men we may collect his greater malice to their Souls; So we may judg

judg proportionably of Christs compassions; that as they incline him to give them all sutable relief in their bodily afflictions, as far as can consist with those measures, which infinite wisdom hath pitcht upon, for the government of this present world, and as shall fall in with the design of his office of a Redeemer and Saviour to us; So they much more incline him to relieve embondag'd souls; for *this* doth most directly fall in with his design, and is the proper business of his office; the other may be only collateral to it, and, as it were to be done *on the by*. He came not into this world to procure, that men might not be sick, or pained; or be presently restored to health and ease. But he came and died, that souls might live; to procure for them pardon, reconciliation with God, all needful assisting influences of grace, and eternal life. Of these therefore they may be most assured, if they duly apply themselves. And some encouragement to expect so much they may draw even from this instance. This infirm woman, in order to bodily cure, *did apply her self to him*. She came after him, as others did, *for this purpose*; and did, in a sort, put herself in the way of his healing influence. Now if any of you find your souls are yet held by the Devil in worse bonds, apply your selves to the merciful compassionate Jesus, there is hope in the case. Oh! will you not say so much to him for a soul in bondage? Lord loose this poor soul of mine, that Satan hath bound for so many sad years. Do but labour to know you are bound, to feel your bonds. Whatsoever there is of prevailing sin in you, it is a bond, by which the Devil holds your souls. *The wicked are held in the cords of their own iniquities.* Prov. 5. 22. And sins are said to be the works of Satan, from which it is the design of the Redeemer to loose us. *The Son of God was for this purpose manifested that he might destroy* (we read,) *it is, that he might dissolve the works of the Devil.* q. d. that he might release, and unbind souls, that the Devil as yet holds in fast bonds. And you may find you are so bound, when upon self-reflexion you take notice, you are ordinarily restrained from what you should do, against the light, and conviction of your own minds and judgments; *i. e.* you find, if you reflect, a conviction hath taken place in your consciences, you ought to love God; but

there is with you no such motion of soul, no inclination towards him; you ought, in a stated course to pray, and pour out your soul to him; but you are bound, you cannot offer at it; you have no liberty for it; your terrene inclination, or love to vanity plucks you back; you ought to *walk in the ways of God*, but you are fettered, you cannot move a foot; you ought to *do the works of God*, but you are manacled, you cannot *stir an hand*. Are you so bound, and will you not know it? What! never feel your bonds? When once they are felt, you will soon begin to cry, and supplicate. And if once you shall be brought seriously, and incessantly to supplicate, it may be hop't the release will follow. Was our Lord so compassionate towards infirm bodies, in the days of his flesh in this world; and do we think he, above, is less compassionate to souls? Can it be thought heaven hath altered him to your disadvantage? Is he less kind, benign, and less apt to do good, now he is inthroned in glory? Why should you not believe he will give release unto your captiv'd embondaged souls, if you implore his help and mercy, with seriousness, and insist upon it, and do not give him over. Say to him, *Jesus, thou Son of God have mercy on me*; for do you not know it is his office. *The Spirit of the Lord was upon him, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and opening of Prisons to them that are bound.* Isa. 61. 1. What! will you be bound all your days, and never lift up a cry to the great Redeemer and Saviour of Souls to give you release? How deservedly should these bonds end with you in the chains, wherein the Devils themselves shall for ever be bound with you?

5. We may collect, there is an awful regard due to the Sabbath-day. When our Lord justifies the cure now wrought on their Sabbath, only on this account, that it was an act of mercy towards a daughter of *Abraham*, by the exception of *such a case* he strengthens the *general rule*, and intimates so holy a day should not, upon light occasions, be otherwise employ'd, than for the proper end of it's appointment. Tho' *our day* be not the *same*, the *business* of it, in great part, is; by the *reason* given in the *fourth Commandment*, which being plac't among the rest of those *ten words*, so many ways remarkably distinguish'd from the other laws given the Jews, and signifying that these were intended not to them alone, but to mankind, and given upon a reason common to man;
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the words also not necessarily signifying more, than there should be *a seventh day* kept as sacred to God, reserving it to after-significations of his pleasure to mark out, and signalize this or that day, as he should see fit. And our Saviour having told us expressly the *Sabbath was made for man*, (*i. e.* as men, not for Jews, as Jews) These considerations taken together, with many more (not fit to be here mentioned) do challenge a very great regard to the day, which we have cause to think it is the will of God we should keep *as our Sabbath*.

6. That there is somewhat of privilege due by gracious vouchsafement and grant to the children of *Abraham*, to *Abrahams* seed, *i. e.* to speak by Analogy, to the children of covenanted Parents. *Abraham* is considerable here, as being under that notion, a father; whosoever of you therefore are the children of such, as were of the faith of *Abraham*; and you are now come to that adult state, wherein you are capable of transacting with God for your selves, and wherein the *transitus* is made from minority to maturity; if now you own the God of your fathers; if you will now say, My fathers God shall be my God; he keeps mercy for thousands of them that love him, and keep his commandments. *i. e.* if there were a thousand generations of such (generations being spoken of so immediately before, *viz.* that he would visit iniquity upon them that hate him, to the third, and fourth generation; but shew mercy to them that love him, and keep his commandments, unto a thousand generations, *i. e.* to never so many) If you will not when now grown up disavow your fathers God; if you will avow and own him, and devote your selves to him, he will be your God, as well as theirs. Here is now the privilege due to *Abrahams* children, or to the children of covenanted parents. God has an early preventive interest in them, upon which they may lay their claim to him, as their God, if they will but now give up themselves to him, and stand to his covenant. But if you will not do so, but slight, and reject the God of your Fathers, then your birth privilege can signifie nothing to you; then, think not to say with your selves, *We have Abraham to our father*, in that 3d. of *Matthews* Gospel; for God will never want children; he is able of stones to raise up children to *Abraham*, *q. d.* rather stones than you. And then indeed, upon a true account, *Abraham* is none of
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your father; as our Lord Jesus tells the *Jews*, If you were *Abrahams* children, you would do the works of *Abraham*. You do so and so, *thus did not Abraham*. Joh. 8. 39, 40. Pray consider what *Abraham* was, and how he lived on earth, like an inhabitant of heaven, as an heir of the heavenly Country, his business was to seek the better country, that is, the heavenly, wherefore God was not ashamed to be called his God, as in that 11th. to the *Heb.* 16. ver. But if you will go from day to day grovelling in the dust of the earth, *this did not Abraham*. If you will spend your lives in the pursuit of vanity and trifles, *this did not Abraham*. There is a great priviledge belonging by Gospel grant unto the children of covenanted parents, if they do not forfeit it, by neglecting, and practically disavowing their fathers God.

7. But I further infer hence, that since this compassion has a real, tho' not a principal hand in the release that is given to them that belong to God, in whatsoever way they are releast, from all their infirmities, and ails, and afflictions in this world; It very much becomes, and much concerns all the children of *Abraham* patiently to wait for it, in Gods own way. Patiently, I say, in Gods own way wait for it. The children of *Abraham* shall be loosen'd sooner or later, and in one way or other, tho very long, tho so many years bound by such and such afflicting distempers.

You have a great instance of this kind in that daughter of *Abraham*, whom God hath called away from us. In all that long exercise, the main thing she was ever wont to insist upon, was that in all this affliction, she might gain patience submission, and instruction. And in her later time, when she drew nearer to eternity, was more in view of it, that was the great subject wherewith she entertained her self, and was conversant much with somewhat more lately written upon that subject, as by *Mr. Shower* (now known to most of you) and by another Author. And her last entertainment, as I have been told, (as to helps from creatures in any such kind) was the repetition of what some of you have heard concerning the *Emmanuel*, wherewith she formerly pleased her self, as being, 'tis likely much habituated in the temper of her spirit to the thoughts of him, that having, by agreement with her pious con-

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fort, been their *Motto* *, at their first coming together, *Emmanuel*, God with us.

* The posse on their wedding ring.

8. I shall only add one instruction more, to shut up all; that since our Lord Jesus hath such an agency, and even with compassion in the release of those, that do belong to him, from their afflicting infirmities, we should all of us labour, with a due and right frame, and disposition of spirit to behold any such releasment. It is a great matter to be able to behold instances of that kind, with a right frame of mind, and spirit. If one be released by recovery, into ease, health, and strength in this world, 'tis easily and readily made matter of joy. Is one recovered out of a long and languishing sickness, friends and relations behold it with great complacency and gladness of heart. But if a Godly friend be releas'd by dying, truly we can hardly make our selves believe, that this is a release or so valuable a release; so much are we under the government of sense, so little doth that faith signifie with us, or do it's part, that is *the substance of what we hope for, and the evidence of what we see not*. No! This is to go with us for no release. We look only upon the sensible, *i. e.* upon the gloomy part of such a dispensation, when such a one is gone, releas't, set at liberty, (as a bird out of the cage, or the snare) We can hardly tell how to consider it as a release. We will not be induc'd to apprehend it so. There are no dispositions no deportments commonly that suit such an apprehension. And Oh! how unbecoming and incongruous a thing, when Christ is, in that way, about releasing such a one, to have an holy soul just upon the confines of a glorious blessed eternity, compassed about with sighs, sobs, tears, and lamentations. How great an incongruity! I have many times thought with my self, the love and kindness of friends and relations is very pleasant in life, but grievous at death. It is indeed *in some respects*, a very desirable thing, (if God shall vouchsafe it,) to die with ones friends about one. It may be one may need some little bodily relief, in those last hours; besides that, *some proper thoughts* may be suggested by them, to mingle with ones own. And, if God afford the use of reason, and speech, and the supply of his own spirit, one may possibly, in this last juncture, be a means of some good to them. One may

may possibly say that, that may abide with them, and be of future advantage to them. But, *in other respects*, if the related friendly by-standers cannot duly temper themselves; if they are apter to *receive* or *do* more hurt, than good; if Christians do not labour to shew a truly Christian spirit, in such a case, their presence has very little eligible in it. And, indeed, the deportment even of those that profess Christianity, about their deceasing godly friends, is such, for the most part, as if the foundations of all Religion were shaken with them, and as if they had a design to shake them too, if possible, in such with whom they are now to part; as if it were to be called in question, whether what God hath said concerning another world, and the blessed state of the innumerable and holy assembly above be true or no, or were not doubted to be false and a solemn fiction, invented to delude mortals here on earth.

It is little considered how opposite such a temper of Spirit, as commonly appears in us, is to the very design of all Christianity. For doth not the whole of Christianity terminate upon Eternity, and upon another State, and World? Now do but consider the inconsistencies that are to be found in this case, between the carriage, and temper of many that profess Christianity and their very profession it self. They acknowledge, they own, that the design of Christ's appearing here in this World, and of his dying upon the Cross, was to *bring us to God*; to *bring the many Sons to Glory*. They grant that this is not to be done all at once, not all in a day; but it is to be done by degrees. Here he takes up one, and there another; leaving others still to transmit Religion, and continue it on to the end of time. So far they agree, with our common Lord; and seem to approve the divine determinations, in all these steps of his procedure. But yet for all this, if they might have their own will, Christ should not have one to ascend to him, of those, for whom he died, and himself ascended, to open Heaven for them, and to prepare a place for their reception, as their forerunner, there. I say not one to ascend after him! For they take up with a general approving of this design of his. Very well! say they, it is fitly ordered, his method is wise, and just,

just, and kind, and let him take them that belong to him, when he thinks fit; only let him excuse my Family; let him take whom he will, only let him touch no Relation of mine, not my Husband, Wife, Child, Brother, Sister, take whom he will, but let all mine alone. I agree to all he shall do well enough, only let him allow me my exception. But if every one be of this temper and resolution, for themselves and theirs, according to this tendency, and course of things, he shall have none at all to ascend; none to bring with him, when he returns. *Those that are dead in Jesus, he is to bring with him.* No, he should be solitary, and unattended for all them. They, and all their Relations would be immortal upon Earth. How ill doth this agree, and accord with the Christian Scheme and model of things?

But you will say, what! would I perswade you to be indifferent, and not to love, and care for your Relatives, or be unwilling to part with them. No. All that I perswade to is that there be a mixture in your temper; and such a mixture, as that the prevailing *ingredient* therein, may agree with the stronger and weightier *reason*. 'Tis not that I would have love extinguish'd among Relatives; but I would have it moderated and subdued, to that degree, as to admit of being governed by Superiour, Greater, and Nobler Considerations. Do you think Christ did expect or design, that his Disciples should not love him. And yet he tells them, *If you loved me, you would rejoice that I say, I go to my Father.* And who in all this John 14. 28.

World could ever have such a loss, as they of him, dwelling in flesh among them? Yet, says he, if you loved me, you would rejoice, that I say, I go to my Father. And when the Apostle, visibly tending towards death, by the prediction given concerning him, *Acts 21. 13.* said to the Disciples round about him, *What mean you to weep, and to break my Heart? I am ready, not only to be bound, but to die for the Name of Jesus.* If there had not been a faulty excess in the affection they express'd, certainly he would not have rebuk'd it. He would not have blam'd what he thought not blame-worthy.

In short, It were desirable (if God see good) to die amidst the pleasant Friends and Relatives, who were not ill-pleased that we lived; that living, and dying breath might mingle, and ascend together in Prayers, and Praises to the blessed Lord of Heaven and Earth, the God of our Lives. If then, we could part with consent, a rational, and a joyful consent.

Otherwise, To die with Ceremony! To die amongst the fashionable bemoanings, and lamentations, as if we despair'd of futurity! One would say (with humble submission to the divine pleasure) Lord! Let me rather die alone! in perfect solitude! in some unfrequented Wood, or on the top of some far remote Mountain! where none might interrupt the solemn transactions, between thy glorious blessed self, and my joyfully departing, self-resigning Soul!

But in all this, we must refer our selves to Gods Holy Pleasure, who will dispose of us, living, and dying, in the best, the wisest, and the kindest way.

F I N I S.
