This is the Book which was the Means of the Conversion of Mr. David Brainerd, who was so successful in his Endeavors for the Conversion of the Indians. See his Journals of Life by John Coward.

Or,
The way of directing Souls that are under the Work of Conversion.

Compiled for the help of Young Ministers:
And may be Serviceable to Private Christians, who are Enquiring the Way to Zion.

By Solomon Stoddard, A.M. And Pastor of the Church in Northampton.

With an Epistle Prefixed, by the Reverend Dr. Increase Mather.

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TO THE
READER.

That Preparation for Christ is necessary, before the Soul can be United to him by Faith, is an undoubted Truth. He came not to call the Righteous, but Sinners to Repentance. Men must be convinced of their being Sinners, or they will not be in bitterness for it: Sin must be bitter to them, or they will not forfake it. As long as they love their sins, it is impossible, that they should believe on Christ, Job.5:44. Nor will they come to Christ for Righteousness, and Life, except they have an humbling sense of their own unrighteousness, Ro.10:3. These are Truths which cannot be denied. But whether there is any preparatory Work, which is saving before Faith, has been controverted among Divines. My Learned Tutor, (whom for honour's sake I mention) Mr. Norton (once a Famous Teacher in Boston) in his †Orthodox Evangelist has Elaborately proved the Negative, with whom the Worthy Author of the Ensuing Discourse does concur. It has been an Error (and a Tyrannical one) in some Preachers, that they have made their own particular experiences a Standard for all others. When as God is pleased to use a great variety in bringing his Elect home to Christ, altho'

† Chapt. 8.
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Conversion as to the substance of it, is the same in all, that are brought into a State of Salvation. Some have experienced such terrors, and distress of Conscience, as others have not been acquainted with, who nevertheless are true Believers on Christ. To that Question, What measure of preparatory Work is necessary to Conversion? Mr. Norton answers judiciously, As the greatest measure has no necessary connexion with Salvation, so the least measure puts the Soul into a preparatory capacity, or Ministerial next disposition to the receiving of Christ. There is not the like degree of humiliation in all those, that are Converted, for some feel a greater measure of trouble, others a lesser, but all that are truly Converted, are humbled: Nor can it be determined how long a man must be held under fears and terrors, before he is truly Converted. To affirm, that men must be so many years or months under a spirit of bondage, before they can believe on Christ, is contrary to the experience of many Pious Souls, and to the Scriptures. The preparatory work of the Converts mentioned in the Sacred Writings, was not of long continuance. That super-eminent Divine Dr. Thomas Goodwin observes, That a man may be held too long under John Baptist's Water, and that some have urged too far, and insisted too much on that, as preparatory, which includes the beginning of true Faith. Such Authors as have asserted, that men cannot be sincere Converts, except they have been some considerable time under great legal terrors, have caused groundless fears, and perplexity in the minds of many gra-


*In his Preface before Mr. Hooker of Preparation.
To the Reader.

Vicious Souls, for the Relief of whom, Reverend Mr. Firmin Published an Excellent Book, Entitled, The Real Christian. Very often the Children of Godly Parents, who have had a Religious Education, and been kept from all scandalous sins, that wound and waste the Conscience, have been favoured with an Easy, as well as with an Early Conversion: The seed of Grace has sprung up in their hearts, they know not how. Ma. 4. 27. So as that, altho' they can say, as the blind man restored to his sight did, One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see, yet the particular time, they cannot account for. It is (says Mr. Norton) * our duty to bless God, that we are Converted, and not groundlessly to afflict our selves about the time of our Conversion: And he cites Mr. Pemble, whose words are; To tell the month, day, or hour, wherein they were Converted, is in most Converts impossible; in all, of exceeding difficult observation; tho' I deny not, but that time may be in some, of sensible mark. That Eminent Man of God, Mr. Baxter † relates, that he was once at a Meeting of many Christians, as eminent for Holiness, as most in the Land, of whom divers were Ministers of great Fame, and it was desired, that every one of them would give an account of the time, and manner of his Conversion, and there was but one of them all, that could do it. And, (says he,) I never from my heart, that I neither know the day, nor the year, when I began to be sincere. Nevertheless, for the most part, they that have been great Sinners, are not Converted without dreadful Terrors of Conscience. Our great Hooker,

* Ubi supra: p. 162.
† Of Infant Baptism, p. 129, 133.
To the READER.

(of whom Dr. Goodwin says, that if any Man, in this Age, came in the Spirit of John Baptist, Hooker was the Man) his Doctrine * will be found a sad truth, viz. That as for gross, and scandalous Sinners, God usually exercises them with heavy breakings of heart, before they are bro't to Christ. Especially it is so, if the Lord intends to make use of them in great Services for his Name. Saul (afterwards Paul) had a terrible Conversion, altho' he was not long in the pangs of the Newbirth. The like has been noted of Luther. Famous Mr. Rogers * of Dedham had been very extravagant in his Youth. Mr. Richard Rogers of Weathersfield, who was his Kinsman, helpt to maintain him at the University, where he Sold his Books, and spent the Mony, so that his Kinsman and Patron would have utterly cast him off, had not the entreaties of a near Relation prevailed with him, to try him once again. When he saw what a wonderful change Converting Grace had made in his young Kinsman, he would often say, I will never despair of a man for John Roger's sake. God designed, that this very Ungodly Youth, should be made a great Instrument of Glory to his Name, and of good to many of his Elect. He was bruised to purpose under the hand of the Almighty. Great were the terrors of his Soul for some time, when he would get alone under bushes in the Field, praying, & crying to God for mercy. When he was Converted, 'tis thought he was an Instrument of Converting more Souls, than any one Minister in England. He was inspired with an extraordinary zeal; had

* Sermons on Acts 2. 37.

* See Mr. Firmin's Real Christian.
To the Reader.

A way of delivering himself in his Sermons, which in any other Man would have been Ridiculous, but in him was very becoming, and awful; which made Bishop Brownrig say to Mr. Ward, John Rogers will do more good with his wild note, than we shall do with all our sweet Musick. But this is God's usual Method, with such of his Elect, as have fallen into great Sins; he brings them home by great Terrors. For the Confirmation of this, I might have instanced in Mr. Bolton, whose excellent Books have made him famous in the Church of God. Before his Conversion he was very Wicked. He loved Stage-Plays, Cards and Dice; was an horrible Swearer, Sabbath-breaker, a Boon Companion, that neither Loved God, nor Good Men; he hated Puritanical Preaching. Hearing the fame of Mr. Perkins, he went to Cambridge to hear him Preach, and having heard him, said, he was a Barren Empty Fellow, and a passing mean Scholar. This Man, after his Conversion, was an Eminent Saint, and a successful Minister of Jesus Christ. But the manner of his Conversion was terrible. His Sins were so heavy upon him, that he Roared for anguish of heart, would sometimes rise out of his Bed in the night for very anguish of spirit; and to augment his misery, he was afflicted with grievous temptations, horribilia de Deo, terribilia de fide. These heart-piercing sorrows continued for many Months. They issued in a sound Conversion.

There have been some, who have maintained, that a man is not sufficiently prepar'd for Christ, except he be brought to that pass, as out of respect to the Will and Glory of God, to be content to be Damned Eternally. An horrid assertion.
To the Reader:

on justly disclaimed by the Author of this Discourse, and refuted by the *Orthodox Evangelist*, yet there are some unhappy Passages of that nature, in a Book of Humiliation, which goes under Mr. Hooker's Name, by which, incredible wrong has been done to that great Author. It may be, it will be to the satisfaction of some Readers, to see what Dr. Goodwin has written concerning Mr. Hooker's Books, about preparation for Christ, who, in his Epistle prefixed to Mr. Hooker's Sermons on Act. 2. 37. has these words; There has been published long since many parts, and pieces of this Author, upon this Argument, Sermon-wise, preached by him, here in England, yet having been taken by an Unskilful Hand, which upon his recess into those remoter parts of the World, was bold, without his privy or consent to Print, and Publish them (one of the greatest injuries that can be done to any Man) it came to pass his genuine meaning, and this in points of so high a nature; and in some things differing from the common Opinion, was diverted in those printed Sermons, from the fair, and clear draught of his own Notions, and intentions, because so utterly deformed, and misrepresented in multitudes of passages, and in the Rest, but imperfectly, and crudely set forth. That which the Doctor says is a sufficient Vindication of the Renowned Name of Mr. Hooker, from the Reflections cast upon him, on the account of some crude expressions in those Books pretended to be his, which were never Printed with his allowance: The like is to be said with reference to some passages in Mr. Shephard's Sincere Convert, which have occasioned

* Chap. 7. p. 154.
great disquietment in some Godly Minds, and made them afraid to believe on Christ, when deeply sensible of their misery without him. Concerning which Book Mr. Shepard in a Letter to Mr. Firmin, Dated December 27, 1647. * Expresses himself thus; That which is called the Sincere Convert, I have not the Book; I once saw it, it was a Collection of such Notes in a dark Town in England, which one procuring of me, published them without my Will or Privity; nor do I like to see it. He that published it, confesseth it came out altered from what was first written.

It is usual with New Converts to be molested with fears left they have committed the Sin against the Holy Ghost. I am far from being of Dr. Tillotson's Opinion, who supposeth, that none in these Days are, or can be guilty of that Sin, nor any besides those, who were Eye-witnesses of the Miracles wrought by our Saviour Christ. I rather Concur with Dr. Collings, whose words are, Give me leave to speak my fears. I profess they are my thoughts, my sad thoughts, that we live in an Age as full of persons, that have sinned that Sin, that shall never be forgiven, as any Age ever was, since our Lord was on the Earth. Are there not many in our Days, who having been once enlightened, have not only sinned against the Light of their Education, but are become malignant haters of those Holy Truths, and Ways of God, in which they were initiated, and malicious persecutors of all such, as profess the true and pure Gospel? Do not such sin wilfully after they have received the knowledge of the Truth?

† See the Real Christian. p. 214.
Discourse of Providence. p. 559.

And
And have they not done despite to the Spirit of Grace? As for such as are troubled with groundless fears of their having been guilty of that Sin, The Reverend Author of the Discourse Emitting herewith, has therein offered that, which may ease and satisfy their disquieted Consciences. Mr. Baxter notwithstanding the Dispute which had been between him and Mr. Tombs about Pædo-Baptism, after that wrote a Commendatory Epistle before a Learned Book of Mr. Tombs's against the Papists.

It is known, that in some points (not Fundamentals in Religion) I differ from this beloved Author; Nevertheless, (as when there was a difference of Opinion between Jerom and Austin) Jerom said for all that, I cannot but love Christ in Austin; so do I say concerning my Brother Stoddard. And I pray the Lord to bless this, and all his holy Labours for the Conversion, and Salvation of many of God's Elect.

Increase Mather.

Boston, November 15. 1714.
THE Work of Regeneration being of absolute necessity unto Salvation, it greatly concerns Ministers especially, in all ways possible to promote the same; and in particular, that they guide Souls right who are under a work of Preparation: some there be that do deny any necessity of the Preparatory work of the Spirit of God, in order to a closing with Christ, this is a very dark Cloud, both as it is an evidence that such men have not the experience of that work in their own Souls; and as it is a sign that such men are utterly unskilful in guiding others that are under this work: if this Opinion should prevail in the Land, it would give a deadly wound to Religion, it would expose men to think themselves Converted when they are not: if men do understand that there is a work of Humiliation before Faith, then if they get some common affections, love, sorrow, delight, yea, and a common faith too, they will lay these are not of the right kind; for men must see the plague of their own hearts, their helpless-
ness, and that they are like Clay in the hand of the Potter, before they come to Christ, and so will be afraid, and be searching of themselves; but if they do not know any necessity of preparation, they will take the first appearances of Holiness for Holiness; and if they find religious affections in themselves, they will grow confident that God has wrought a good work in them. It would likewise expose them to boulster up others in a false confidence: a man that knows there must be a work of preparation, will be careful how he encourages others that they are in Christ, he will enquire how God has made way for their receiving of Christ; but another that is a stranger to it, will be ready to take all for gold that glitters, and if he sees men religiously disposed, will be speaking peace to them; he will be like the false Prophets, saying, peace, peace, when there is no peace. To men will be hardened, it is a dismal thing to give men sleepy notions; and make them sleep the sleep of death.

The truth of this Opinion is much to be suspected from what has been left on Record to the contrary, by Hildersham, Perkins, Dod, Sibbs, Bains, Dike, Ball, Preston, Hooker, Shepard, Norton, & others of the like Stamp, whose judgment in matters of this nature does outweigh the judgment of thousand of others, though otherwise Learned men: but besides this, there is a great deal of light held forth in the Word of God in this matter. I will not argue from Is-
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Israel being led by Moses the Law-giver out of Egypt through a land of pits and drought, and fiery flying Serpents, before they were brought into Canaan by Joshua: Nor from the Legal Dispensation of the Covenant of Grace foregoing the Evangelical: Nor from John Baptist's being sent as a Forerunner of Christ to prepare the way of the Lord: Nor from the Parable of the Prodigal, being in want, and becoming a Servant of a Citizen of the Country before he returned to his Father: Nor from the Dry Bones being in a disconsolate condition, before God put life into them: these things may better be made use of for Illustrations than Proofs.

But there are other Scriptures which hold forth, that there must be PREPARATION for Christ before our Closing with him: it does appear by Instances recorded in the Scripture: One is of Paul, Acts 9. 4, 5. he was terrifyed, in way of preparation to his receiving of Christ, and about the same time was led into the understanding of his own helplessness, Rom. 7. 9. Another is of the Taylor, Acts 16. 29. 30, 31. he was greatly scared, least he should fall short of Salvation; and since we have such instances, and none to the contrary, we may well judge that this is God's method in Converting Sinners.

It also appears from such DOCTRINES as are held forth in the Scripture: As that some Sinners are near the Kingdom of God, and others are far from it: Mark 12. 34. this shews that some
some men are in a more prepared way, and more hopeful to receive it than others: So that doctrine that some are not in a present incapacity to come to Christ, because under the power of a carnal design: Joh. 5. 44. this shews that men must be broken off from their carnal design before they come to Christ; so the doctrine of the difficulty of getting into a state of Salvation. Mat. 7. 13. Luke 13. 24. this shews that there be many difficulties in the way of Conversion; and that by striving, they may get into a nearer preparedness for faith.

It also appears by that PROPHESY of our Saviour, where it is foretold that God will first prepare men, and then bring them to Christ, Joh. 16. 8. here it is foretold what method the Spirit will take with men; he will not reveal the Righteousness of Christ to men in the first place; but in order to this, he convinces them of sin, makes them see their danger and miserable condition: first he searches their wound, and then applies the remedy: It appears also, by the particular application of the Call of the Gospel to those that are prepared: Sometimes the Call is propounded generally to all, but at other times it is propounded particularly to such as are in distress by reason of their sins; that see themselves miserable and undone. Mat. 11. 28. Isa. 55. 1. Rev. 22. 17. the Call is applied particularly to these, as being in the next capacity to give entertainment unto it: intimating the condition that men must be in before they do receive it.

EXPE-
EXPERIENCE also gives considerable light in this matter: we learn by experience, that men's hearts are generally set for carnal things before they are terrified, and for their own Righteousness before they see their own hearts. Generally such men as have not had the terr-
sors of God in them, don't much mind Eter-
nal Things; if they be not rude and vicious, yet they are worldly, vain and proud. Eph. 2. 3. And such convinced sinners as have not been led into the understanding of their hearts, are set to build up a righteousness of their own, they are taking encouragement from their frames, with a neglect of Christ. Experience also shews that many men highly reputed of for Religion, have had a work of prepara-
tion. Many men that have a special interest in the hearts of others, can give a fair account how they have been prepared for Christ: and many Professors that have not had such experience have not proved well. Several that have had some lighter touches of Conviction, though they have made a blaze a while, yet have proved themselves carnal Men at last; or at least have rendred them-
``elves much suspected. Many that have been strangers to the work of preparation, have crackt their credit at last. Mat. 13. 20, 21. Yea, many Godly People do know that they were Hypocrites, and never saw Christ, till after they had a work of Humiliation: they know they were not godly, though they have affections,
affections, enlargements and encouragements; it was all common work, and they had no spark of grace in them; their Religion was but the fruit of nature improved. Rom. 7. 9. Yea, this is exceeding agreeable to REASON; the light of Nature cannot give a demonstration of it: for it is a voluntary dispensation; there is no necessity in nature of any preparation before the infusion of GRACE. Christ changed the Water into Wine, and raised the Dead to Life, without any previous preparation; so he can do in this case. The work of preparation does not make the work of the new Creation the easier; for after men have a work of preparation, sin reigns in them as much as before; preparation does not at all destroy the principle; & men when prepared, can do nothing to help God in planting Grace in them: and men that are not prepared, can do nothing to hinder God in implantsing Grace: but yet it is very agreeable to reason, that the Spirit do work a work of preparation, before it does infuse Grace: for it is the duty of Ministers to preach such things to Sinners, as are proper to work this preparation; they are bound to preach the threatnings of the Law, mans Insufficiency, and God's Soveraignty: Yea, the manner of God is to deal with men, after the manner of men. Man is a rational Creature, and therefore God deals with him in a moral way, sets Convictions before him. Men would make Enemies submit, before they pardon them; so does God. Besides, it is the du-
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By the Sinner to do those things wherein preparation does consist; it is their duty to seek to God; to reform, and to make an absolute resigna-
tion of themselves to God. No wonder then if God holds them to it; Yea further, there is an absolute necessity in nature, that men be prepared before the Exercise of Faith; men cannot exercise Faith, till the heart be prepared by a sense of danger, and the insufficiency of other things. If they don’t see their danger, they can see no occasion that they have to come to Christ: if they don’t see themselves liable to Wrath, how can they come to Christ to save them from Wrath; as long as they imagine that they can help themselves, they will not come to Christ for help: men can’t trust in Christ alone, till driven out of themselves; they cannot come as helpless and undone, until they see themselves so. Phil. 3. 3.

And seeing there is such a work of preparation foregoing mens Closing with Christ, it must needs be of great consequence for awakened Sinners to be guided aright under this work. If men have the best Guides, yet they may miscarry, but undoubtedly many do perish for want of suitable help; some after they have been in trouble a while, do grow discouraged, under apprehensions that their seeking will be in vain, and so leave off endeavouring after a Converted Estate. Some wander up and down under fears and hopes as the Children of Israel in the Wilderness, until they dye: they can-
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cannot be quiet in a way of sin, neither can they find the way of deliverance; and many others, after a little trouble are comforted under a notion of being at peace with God. Unskilful Chyrurgeons make a palliate cure, and persuade them that the bitterness of Death is past: multitudes of Souls perish through the ignorance of those that should guide them in the way to Heaven: men are nourished up with vain hopes of being in a state of Salvation, before they are got half the way to Christ.

Those therefore whose business it is to lead Souls to Christ, had need furnish themselves with skill and understanding to handle wounded Consciences in a right manner, that they may be serviceable to them in their distresses; who would venture his Ship with an unskilful Pilot? Who would venture his wounded Body with an Unskilful Chyrurgeon? Who would willingly put his distressed Soul into the hands of an Unskilful Minister? Men should not sate themselves with other points of learning, but labour after that they may speak words in season to every one that is meary: that as Moses said to his Father-in-law, they may be instead of eyes to them that are in the Wilderness.

There are two things especially serviceable to this end.

One is, that they get experience of this work in their own hearts: If they have not experience, they
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they will be but blind guides; they will be in great danger to entertain false notions concerning a Work of Conversion: they will be inclinable to think, that there is not so much necessity as is in order to Conversion; they are in danger to be deceived with pretences of mens being delivered from their own righteousness, with shews of humiliation, faith and love. Whatever Books men have read, there is great need of experimental knowledge in a Minister; many particular things will occur that he will not meet withal in Books: it is a great calamity to wounded Consciences, to be under the direction of an unexperienced Minister.

The other is, to be acquainted with the observation of those who have travelled much in this work: if a man have experience in his own Soul, that will not reach all cases that may come before him; there is great variety in the workings of the Spirit, and in the workings of mens hearts under the convictions of the Spirit; and men that have had to do with many Souls in their distresses, may afterward meet with such difficulties as may puzzle them very much; therefore it is of great use to get the knowledge of the observations of those who have had to do with great variety of cases, whereby they may get a larger Understanding how to manage themselves, when things are difficultly circum-

This
The Preface.

This small Treatise, composed upon the desire of some Younger Ministers, is offered to the consideration of such as do desire to be further instructed in the right way of dealing with distressed Souls: and if the Author shall be hereby the instrument of the Salvation of any perishing Souls, he shall count his Labour well bestowed.

Directions
Directions
How to guide Souls through the Work of Conversion.

WHEN a Sinner wounded in Spirit, does apply himself unto a MINISTER of the Gospel for Counsel, it is profitable, after some Enquiries concerning the time, means and degree of their Convictions and Terrors to use this method with him.

1. To confirm and establish him more in the apprehensions of the dangerousness of a Natural Condition: shewing him that every man that dies in a State of Nature, will certainly be damned, that a State of Damnation is intolerable, that the continuance of his opportunities for deliverance is very uncertain: for there is danger that if his convictions be not cherished, they may by degrees wear off: many men's terrors are but short liv'd: they harden their hearts
hearts by company, clogging themselves with worldly business, and their natural disposition
to flatter themselves.

2. To incourage him to be in the use of means, in order to his Conversion: for if they have not
hopes of obtaining mercy; either they will not seek after it, or they will do it in such a care-
less & dull way that it will come to nothing: God leads men through the whole work of
preparation partly by fear, and partly by hope. If they run into either extremity, to have fear
without hope, or hope without fear, they are like a Ship that goes beside the Channel, and
is in danger to be broken to pieces; a mixture of fear and hope makes men diligent: they
may be incouraged from such considerations as these: that God has provided a glorious way of
Salvation through Christ, that all that do believe in him shall be saved; that there is an
infinite Ocean of mercy in the heart of God; that God has had compassion on many greater
Sinners than they, that the day of grace is not yet gone; that God is now striving with
them by his Spirit, which is many times the forerunner of Conversion.

3. To direct him what course to take at pre-
sent: As,

1. Daily to seek God in secret. As this is a
duty, so a special means to cherish the moti-
os of Gods Spirit in his heart: if this be
neglected, it would be no wonder if his Con-
victions should dye away: he is also to be di-
rected, not to content himself in putting up some good requests to God, but he should open his case plainly before God, as he would do to a Physician if he were sick: this is a way to keep him from wandering thoughts in Prayer, and further to affect his own Soul with his condition. Isa. 55. 6. Seek ye the Lord while he may be found.

2. To Reform his Life, and not to indulge himself in any sins of Omission or Commission: in any external sins, nor in sinful thoughts or desires; neither in sinful actions, nor in doing good actions in a sinful manner: Men that are seeking Salvation, must not allow themselves to go on in a way of Damnation: that terror is not sufficient that will suffer men to live an unreformed Life: if men be thoroughly scared, they will dread doing what wounds their Con sciences; fear of Hell will make men afraid of sin: if they be thoroughly wounded, those temptations that formerly carried them away, will be overcome, Luke 13. 10, 12, 14.

3. To lay himself open to the Convictions of the Spirit. Sometimes men are desirous to be convinced and terrified, but not too much, they would over-rule their Convictions as to time and degree; but as a Patient leaves himself in the hand of the Chyrurgeon, so should they in the hand of the Spirit, when it pleases him, and as much as it pleases him, not shutting their eyes against the light, Joh. 3. 20.

After the awakened Sinner has been using means
means awhile, he oftentimes gives an account of some ALTERATION; he finds some affections, sorrow for sin, delight in Sabbaths, love to the People of God, love to reading of the Scripture. What is to be said to him in this Case?

1. He is to be told, that he must not rest in Ease, but labour after healing. If a Wise man by applying Plaisters to a Sore be delivered from much of the anguish that he was in, he will not satisifie himself with that, and give over the use of means, lest the anguish should return again; so the Sinner had need be careful that he don't satisifie himself in the ease of his Conscience, but must get it healed by the application of the Blood of Jesus Christ.

2. It is extremly dangerous to tell him, that it is hopeful that God has put the seeds of Grace into him. There is not one in a thousand but does experience such religious affections long before he is Converted; these religious affections are nothing else but the workings of self-love and natural conscience; natural Conscience discovers the danger of sin, and somewhat of the baseness of it, hence he is sorry for it; the man conceives some hope that by praying, reading, &c. he shall get Salvation, hence he delights in them; the man hopes that he has accepted of God, hence he has some affections to him; and if a Minister does but speak encouragingly as if the man were Converted, he lays a foundation for his ruin; for he is in great danger to fall in with the flattery.

3. He
3. He is to be warned against a self-righteous Spirit. Men are exceeding ready to think that their good works and religious frames will abate the fierce anger of God, and incline God to pity them, and have mercy on them; they are proud of their Services, ignorant of the Righteousness of Christ, and of the freedom of Gods mercy; they think God cannot love them, unless they be lovely; and that he cannot but love them if they be lovely, and so they are ready to dote upon their own righteousness, Rom. 10. 3. They go about to establish their own righteousness therefore the man is to be warned against this, and light is to be hold forth to him, to convince him of the insufficiency thereof.

4. He may be put upon to examine these affections, whether they be not in hypocrisy; and signs may be given to him, whereby he may discern them to be so; but there had need be great care that the signs be found, and warranted by the Word of God; otherwise he is in danger to be established in his mistake.

Quest. 1. Are Sinners that are awakened to be directed to labour to work up their heart to sincere terror for sin, and love to God and Jesus Christ?

Answ. 1. If their terrors are great, they are ready of themselves to labour to do this, from a self-righteous Spirit; that they may win the heart of God and assuage his anger, they commonly take a great deal of pains in order there-to, that they may work up gracious qualifications in themselves; they set spiritual confide-

rations before themselves, read and hear, and use all the methods that are in their power, to enliven their own hearts.

2. It is a presumptuous thing for them to strive for this, for it is impossible for them to work up such things in their own hearts; they are dead in sins, and cannot sanctify themselves, no principle that they have, will produce such an effect; fear will not make them do it, the fear of Hell cannot make men hate sin more than Hell: Self-love will not make them love God above themselves: they cannot by Consideration work any such effect upon their hearts, for they don’t understand spiritual things: Encouragements will not make them do it, for it is beyond their power: Resolutions will be ineffectual, they may as easily remove Mountains as to do this; therefore it is they should not strive to work their own hearts to it.

3. There can be no benefit of such direction but only this, that they may find by experience their own Inability; that after they have done their utmost, they may by their experience understand their own helplessness: it is the duty of men to love God, and to repent of sin; and it is the duty of Sinners to labour that they may love God, and repent of sin, &c. but it is not in their power to work up their hearts to the love of God, and Godly Sorrow; they should labour to be convinced, they cannot do it.

Sometimes it is much to be suspected, that they do not reform all that is amiss: and in this Case;

1. The danger of a Natural Condition is to be solemnly set before them; though their terrors seem to be great, yet they need to be greater; men must have so much terror as to bring them to a separation from sin: therefore there is need to represent their danger in the most lively and dreadful way, that the sense thereof may pierce their heart deeply; if they be but thoroughly scared, they will be brought to an universal Reformation: Isa. 2: 20, 21.

2. They are to be urged to Reformation: their duty in this matter is to be particularly pressed upon them, their Consciences must be stirred to part with all sin, as Christ urges the Jews, Mat. 5. 29. If thy right eye offend thee pluck it out. For the neglect of Reformation will put a stop to the work, & they will not get forward in the work of Humiliation, till they are Reformed; as the first Consecration prepares for the second, so Reformation does for Humiliation: Men must overcome the next and more immediate difficulties before they overcome those that are remote: he that will not part with sinful practices, will not yield himself into the hands of Justice: if they don't reform, they put the work to a stand; yea, such men do aggravate their own torments, for trouble will lie upon them, till their hearts are brought to be humbled, and their terrors will be multiplied, if they belong to God, till they are persuaded to reform: Psal. 32. 3. When I kept...
kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day.

Sometimes some particular sin lies exceeding heavy upon his heart. In this Case the Minister may tell him,

1. That it is not his duty in ordinary cases to publish such sin to him, it's fit he should confess it to God; but ordinarily there is no just occasion to publish a scandal to him; it is best that secret sins be kept secret, except the circumstances of the person do call for the making of it known.

2. That the sin is pardonable: This he may demonstrate, from several examples in the Scripture; from the sufficiency of Christ's Redemption; from several Offers and Promises of the Gospell, that the mans heart may not sink with discouragement.

3. That in case the Rule does call for any satisfaction to men, he must not delay that, but that must be attended as soon as there is opportunity; if he can make satisfaction without confession, there is no necessity of confession; for satisfaction answers for the wrong that has been done to man.

4. That he must not be sensible of that sin only, but of all other sins; every sin being provoking to God, and deserving damnation: and particularly that his Impenitency and Unbelief is more dangerous than any former act of sin. Joh. 3. 19. This is the condemnation that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light.
Sometimes after the man has been in trouble a while, before he has any great experience of his own heart, he has some promises come to him with a great deal of refreshing; and he hopes God has accepted him; in this case the Minister may tell him,

1. That it is a common thing for God to give encouragements unto men, before they are carried thorough the work of Conversion; that as God gives them encouragements by his Word, so he does many times by his Spirit: God always maintains in the hearts of Sinners that are seeking of him, some hopes that they may obtain mercy: and sometimes he gives them very great refreshing, by some sense of the Glory of Heaven, Luke 14. 15. by some superficial discoveries of Christ: Matt. 13. 20. thereby holding forth some promises before them, the design whereof is to draw them on in a way of seeking, and to support them under their temptations.

2. That God never gives a Faith of Assurance, before he gives a Faith of Dependance; for he never manifests his love till men are in a state of Favour and Reconciliation, which is by a faith of dependance. When men have comfortable Scriptures come to them, they are apt to take them as tokens of God's love: but men must first be brought into Christ, by accepting the Offer of the Gospel before they are fit for such manifestations. God's method is first to make the soul accept of the Offers of Grace, and then
then to manifest his good Estate unto him.

3. That if his Comfort be not of the right kind, it will not continue: And usually after such encouragements, mens terours are wont to return with as much violence as ever. God commonly interminglest smiles and frowns, and if such vain confidences as men took up from refreshing Scriptures, be but nipped in the bud, they generally quickly wither away; and their fears return as strong as ever.

WHEN the Sinner that was hoping he was in a good Estate, because some refreshing Scriptures came to him, sees his mistake, he is in danger to be discouraged. In this case he may be told,

1. That it is a common thing for persons that are afterwards Converted, to pass thorow such Changes; it is not a peculiar thing to him, but a thing of ordinary experience in such people as God is about to deliver out of a Natural Estate. They commonly have some lightsome times, and then returns of darkness: there was no reason to expect that that should last very long; such comforts are like Jonats Goard, that rise in a night, and perish in a night.

2. That it is a great mercy that those confidences are taken away from him; had they continued, they would have ruined him; false confidence is better lost than kept. His condition is the more hopeful now those confidences are lost; while he had those confidences he was like a Ship that stuck in the Sand, and now he

is delivered from them, there is more ground of encouragement.

AFTER he has had affections and enlargements for a while, he is wont to complain that he grows more dull, and he is afraid that his Convictions are about to leave him: In this case he may be told,

1. That there is no reason to expect that his Convictions should always be in the like degree. Persons in such a condition, are subject to many alterations, as it is with a Ship at Sea, sometimes it has a fair Wind, sometimes it blows more moderately, sometimes it is becalmed; yea, sometimes it has Storms and cross Winds: There be many Changes that pass over such men. So men in a Journey, have sometimes good way, sometimes bad; they meet with Rivers and miery places, where they cannot make speed.

2. That he must be very careful that he do nothing to quench the motions of the Spirit, 1 Thess. 5:19. There be many ways whereby men do it, sometimes by discouragement, sometimes by presumption and flattery, sometimes by rebelling against the light, sometimes by Companykeeping. Men that are much addicted to company, do commonly lose these Convictions; so by crouding themselves with Worldly Business: tho diligence be no hindrance, yet cumbrance of themselves will be a great impediment to the abiding of Convictions.

3. That this is his best way to improve the Con-

victions

Evidences that he has. Sometimes persons are wont to argue, that it will be to no purpose for them to strive. If they have not greater Conivcitions, they shall but tire themselves to no purpose; and they conceive it best for them to tarry, till they have stronger Convictions; but the Seaman is wont to hoist his Sails, and improve the Wind he has, whether it be less or more: if men improve moderate Convictions, they may get forward, and do that which will further their Conversion: and if they do improve lesser Convictions, that is the way to have more: it is their duty to do it, and in that way God owns them; to him that hath shall be given. Some that have complained of the smallness of their Convictions, have within a while changed their note, and complained as much of the greatness of them, that they have been such, that they could hardly live under them.

A Person that is under the work of Conversion, is subject to many affrightments, and discouraging Temptations, a dreadful found is in his Ears: all such persons have not the same temptations, and they have them not in any certain order; but care must be taken to give suitable support and advise to them according to the variety of their temptations. One Temptation is, That he is not Elect; but God has Overlooked him, and appointed him to Condemnation; this sometimes lies upon the heart with great weight: In this Case he may be told,

1. That those things that make him fear that he is not Elect, are no certain signs of it, there be no certain tokens of reprobation upon him. Those things that he takes to be signs are very uncertain; the greatness of his sins don’t argue Reprobation: Many that have been guilty of great sins have been Elect. His being of Elderly years don’t argue it; sometime God turns such to himself, Mal. 4. 5, 6. Gods leaving of him till in a Natural Estate, though he has sought God a long while does not shew it; Israel was a great while travelling from Egypt to Canaan.

2. That it is a sinful thing for him to draw any conclusions about his Election. It is a secret reserved in Gods own Breast, and he cannot determine any thing understandingly about it: Deut. 29. 29. Secret things belong unto the Lord our God. When he undertakes to conclude that he is not Elect, he acts presumptuously: his conclusion may be false for ought he knows; he pretends to know what he is ignorant of.

3. That Gods striving with him by his Spirit, is an hopeful sign that he is Elect, for many times it is the fruit of Election. When the Spirit convinces of Sin, it is in order to his convincing of Righteousness, Joh. 16. 8. This is the course that God is wont to take with those that are Elect; frequently he lets Reprobates live in security, but he is wont to terrifie the Elect in order to their Conversion; and the more earnestly the man follows after God, and labours to get into a Converted Condition, the more hopeful

hopeful it is that God has Elected him; for where God has appointed the end, he has appointed the means also.

Another TEMPTATION is, That he has committed the UNPARDONABLE SIN; that he has committed the Sin against the Holy Ghost, that Sin which is unto Death, he has carried badly after Illuminations, and it sinks into him, that now there is no remedy.

In this Case he may be told, That it has been a frequent thing for men to fear that they have committed this Sin, who have afterward been Converted; that it is not the manner of those that have committed that Sin, to be perplexed and exercised with fears about it; but the principal way to help in this Case, is to inform him from the Word of God, what this Sin is; particularly he may be informed,

1. That it is an External Sin, not a Sin that is committed in the heart; men have some wicked thoughts after enlightenings, and then fear that they have been guilty of that sin; but that is an outward sin, it is a sin that other men may see, I John 5. 16.

2. That it is a Course of Sin, not any particular act of sin, which a man breaks off from, and is troubled for, but a way of evil that he does continue impenitently in.

3. That it is one particular sort of sin, committed with great aggravations; namely, A rejecting of the Profession of the Gospel: There be many other grievous sins, but none of them howe
A Guide to Christ. 15.
however aggravated, are the Unpardonable Sin; it is a rejecting of the Truth of the Gospel, and renouncing the Profession thereof: they are said to fall away, Hebr. 6.6. they are said to forsake the Assemblies of the People of God, Heb. 10.25. they are said to tread under foot the Son of God; and to deny their Baptism, Heb. 10.29. So that if any person among us should turn Papist or Heathen, having a blasphемous spirit against the Ways of God, and a bloody persecuting spirit towards the People of God, there might be reason to fear that he was guilty of the Unpardonable Sin; but there be no footsteps in the Scripture to judge that men that are following after God, and labouring to get into a Converted Condition, have committed that Sin, tho’ they are guilty of much Unbelief, of many de-
cays and backslidings, and of very vile tho’ts and risings of heart; for multitudes of men that have been guilty of such things, have had experience afterwards of the Pardoning Grace of God.

Another TEMPTATION is, that his day of Grace is past; he had a time when he might have obtained Mercy, but he has let it slip, and it is in vain for him to strive: In this Case the Minister may tell him,

1. That it is a common device of Satan, when he can’t persuade men that it is too soon, then to persuade them that it is too late. He is set

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to hinder men from using of means; and first he tells them that there is no haste; and when that temptation will do no longer, then he changes his voice, and tells them that the season is gone.

2. That there is no such Doctrine in the Scripture that any sort of men's day of grace is past, before the day of life is past, except they be guilty of the Unpardonable Sin. It is taught in the Scripture, that God will strive with some men, only a limited time, and then destroy them, Gen. 6.

3. My Spirit shall not always strive with man; yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years. It is also taught, that God does harden some Nations in order to great misery, Isa. 6. 10, 11, and sometimes in order to their Unchurching, Joh. 12. 40. It is also taught, that God may harden some particular persons before Death, and never more strive with them in any remarkable way. Rev. 22. 11. Let him that is filthy, be filthy still. But there is no such thing taught, that there is any sort of men that may be described, or any particular person that may be known unto himself or others, whose day of grace can be said to be past before his death. When men say their day is past, they only fear, they do not know it.

3. That such Scriptures as seem to evidence that their day is past, do not determine any such thing; it is said, Prov. 29. 1. that he that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed.

destroyed. But it is evident, that God waits longer upon some persons than upon others: Some Threatnings are universal, and some are indefinite: shewing what God does many times do; so it is said, Heb. 10. 28. If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him; but the Backsliding here spoken of seems to be the Unpardonable Sin; he had been speaking of that, ver. 26. and seems here to have reference to the same sin; for in other cases God does speak encouragingly in his Word unto Backsliders, Jer. 3. 22. Hos. 14. 4.

Besides the Temptations mentioned, there is ANOTHER SORT of Temptations that are very exercising to him, his Conscience being guilty, he is much subject to frights.

1. One Temptation is, That he shall be left to some great and dreadful sins. In this Case he may be told by the Minister,

1. That one special reason of these fears is that he sees more of the badness of his heart than formerly; Men under troubles of Conscience, are wont to see much of the Corruption of their hearts, and they see that which is sufficient to lead them to all sorts of wickedness; and because God is angry with them, they are afraid he will not keep them, but avenge himself on them, by leaving them to such wickedness.

2. That God is now striving with him in order to his Eternal Good; God is exercising a

A great deal of mercy, and he has no cause to conclude that God will so leave him; though God might justly do it, yet he has reason to hope in God to preserve him.

3. That it is fit he should be humbled under the sense of the depravedness of his nature, & be sensible of the insufficiency of his own Righteousness, to bring him into the Favour of God; his heart being a sink of all manner of Sin; he can never be justified but by the perfect Righteousness of Jesus Christ.

4. That his best way is to make haste to get into a Converted Condition. If he were once Converted, he would not be in so much danger to fall into great Transgressions; because he would have then an holy principle to resist temptations to Sin; and then he would have an Interest in the Favour of God; & it would be more hopeful that God would preserve him.

2. Another Temptation is, That he shall get a false hope, and so satisfy himself that he is in a good Estate, when he is far from it; he understands that it is so with many: Prov. 30. 12. Rev. 3. 17. In this Case the Minister may tell him,

1. That he is indeed in danger of it, both because of the pride of his spirit, ready to magnify his own performances; and because of his fears of Hell, the tediousness of those fears make him ready to catch at any appearances of Conversion, and therefore he had need be exceeding
'A Guide to Christ.'

2. That he must leave himself as to that matter in the Hands of God: it is beyond his own power to deliver himself; if God delight in him, he will carry him through all the difficulties of the Work, and shew him the right way; it may be God may have purposes of grace to him; and if so, he will shew him the path of life.

3. Another Temptation is, That Satan will appear to him. This is a great terror to him; especially he is possessed with this fear when he withdraws himself to Secret Prayers: sometimes this makes him neglect his duty, sometimes it makes him attend it with distraction. In this Case the Minister may tell him,

1. That he is under God's keeping; and that when he is doing his duty, he is under God's protection. There is less reason to be afraid of Satan appearing at that time, than at many other times; it is not Gods manner to suffer Satan to appear at such times.

2. That if Satan had power and liberty to appear to him, it is not probable, that he would fright him with the expectations of it;
it; he would not give such notice of his coming; but his design in terrifying of him, is to prevent him from doing that which might be serviceable to his Soul.

3. That it is too much honour to Satan, to be so far out-bid with the temptation, as to change the time of his prayer; but if he cannot attend his duty suitably, and the temptation do prove too overbearing to him, it is better to attend the duty by day-light.

I may add to this Case another that now and then happens, that he says he has heard some voice, seen some shape, felt something on him; this I apprehend at least sometimes to be only the effect of strong imagination: a strong fancy may make men to imagine such things; as it is with persons in their dreams, and with distracted persons; all Sensation is in the brain, and therefore by some disorder of that, men may think they see, feel, or hear things which they do not see, feel, or hear.

4. Another Temptation is, That it is best to destroy himself; many have been urged to this, some have attempted it, and some have performed it, as Judas did. In this Case the Minister may tell him,

1. That the Devil is very active in this temptation, though he has that in his own heart, that may lead him to it; yet it's Satan that stirs him up thereunto. The Devil entered into Judas when he betrayed Christ, and was

not gone out of him when he destroyed himself. The Devil has a double design in it; one is to secure the man, he is afraid he shall lose him, now he is troubled about his Condition, and is taking pains for Salvation. Satan is jealous lest he will escape out of his hands, and labours to make him destroy himself, that he may presently secure him, then there will be no danger of his running away. The other design is to bring a reproach upon trouble of Conscience, and discourage others from giving way to Convictions. If there be but one such Instance in a Town, that will make many others to strive Convictions, lest they should come to the like End.

2. That there is good reason to hope that he may obtain Salvation. It is discouragement that leads men to such practices: And if he have but considerable hope of obtaining peace with God, there is not much danger of his hearkening to the temptation; therefore such things may be suggested, as are proper to bear up his heart, as that the Spirit of God is striving with him in order to his Salvation; that Satan is afraid he will be faved, that his fins are no other than what God has pardoned oftentimes, and the like.

3. That it is a dreadful sin to destroy himself. It is a sin against nature, it is unthankfulness for Gods mercy in saving his life; that this is far worse than other sins that are very terrifying to
to him; this is the way to throw himself immediately into endless misery. Whatever may be said of the possibility of the Salvation of such persons, there is no reason to think that one in a thousand is saved; this sin is heinous, and quickly cuts off their opportunities: Such a man as is tempted to this Sin, would be afraid to tell a lye, or to prophan the Sabbath; how much more has he reason to fear this sin, which will bring him presently to Eternal Damnation? It is a poor remedy to deliver himself from anguish, to throw himself into that, which is unspeakably greater; certain damnation is far more dreadful than the fears they are oppressed by: this will make their condition much worse, and not better.

SOMETIMES he complains of a self-righ-teous Spirit; that he is ready to trust to every thing he does: that especially when he feels any affections, he is proud of them, and ready to make a righteousness of them: In this Case it may be profitable,

1. To convince him of the insufficiency of his own righteousness to save him: that his own righteousness will not bring him into favour with God; for his own righteousness is utterly imperfect, and so falls short of what the Law requireth. The Law stands for perfect Obedience, but he never did perform one perfect act of Obedience: all his Obedience was stained with Corruption. Besides, while he was a
Natural Condition, he does nothing sincerely, but is an Hypocrite in all his performances; and accordingly God is so far from justifying of him for the sake of them, that he will not accept of him, but holds him guilty for the sake of them. Besides, his own righteousness han't the nature of satisfaction in it; there can be no satisfaction for sin, but by bearing the Curse of the Law. Obedience is a natural debt, and cannot satisfy for his contracted debts; if our Obedience would have procured our acceptance, there would have been no need of the Death of Christ: Christ's Death would be in vain, Gal. 2. 21.

2. To direct him how to get delivered from this self-righteous spirit, viz. by getting an understanding of the badness of his own heart: for let him hear never so often of the vanity of his own righteousness, yet he will trust to it, till he sees he has none, and can get none. A thorough discovery of his own heart, will break him off from trusting in himself; for then he will see nothing in himself to trust in: he will be afraid because of his duties, his strong holds will all be thrown down; but a notional conviction of the insufficiency of his own righteousness to save him, without an experimental conviction of the badness of his heart, will not deliver him from confidence in himself.

SOMETIMES he complains that he does every thing from a spirit of self-love: he don't aim at
at the Glory of God in any thing; but fear of Hell, and desire of Salvation, are the great things that do set him on work: were it not for fear of Hell he should leave off. In this Case he may be told,

1. That it is impossible he should act from an higher principle. He has no principle of love to God, Joh. 5. 42. Self-love is the reigning principle in him, and therefore it is no wonder that he does all in Religion from that spirit; it was his weakness that he formerly thought he did any thing out of love to God. No Natural man ever did act with an higher spirit, then a spirit of self-love: A bad Tree cannot bring forth good fruit.

2. That he should make use of this for Humiliation, and not for Discouragement. There is no reason that he should be discouraged because of this, for every one is an Hypocrite at first; and many that have fought God for a while with a selfish-spirit, have afterward been turned, and have had another spirit given to them: but he should make use of this to his Humiliation, and learn hereby his own badness, the insufficiency of his own righteousness, and the justice of his Condemnation, and that he has no cause to think much that God does reject his Services, and not give peace unto him.

After this the Sinner gives an account that he finds a spirit of love to God, sorrow for Sin,

Sin, aiming at the Glory of God, hating of Sin, &c. In this Case he may be told,

1. That there is a great resemblance between common and saving Grace: Common Grace is the picture of Sanctifying Grace, and common affections are sometimes stronger than saving. Pharaoh justifies God, Saul weeps, one who was far from sincerity, tells Christ, he will follow him whithersoever he goeth, the Jews cry, Hosanna to the Son of David, the Israelites sang God's praise, but soon forgot his works.

2. That while they have such pangs of affection, it will be very hard for them to see their Hypocrisy. Their fear of Damnation makes them catch at any appearances of sincerity, and their pride makes them have an high opinion of their attainments; men sometimes in that frame make such signs as do indeed shew their hypocrisy to be arguments of their sincerity.

3. That it is a very dangerous thing for them to think that they are sincere, while they are not: then they will bless themselves, when God curses them; then they will continue quietly in a Natural Condition, and neglect the means of Conversion: and if they don't see the deceit quickly, there is danger that they may grow hard-hearted, that if they do see it afterwards, they will not be the better for it.

4. That they may be satisfied from such things as these, that they don't love God sincerely, whatever appearances there be, viz. That they never had a work
work of Humiliation; and sincerity does never forego that: that they never Closed with Jesus Christ, and the heart is never purified without Faith. All those affections that go before faith, let them be never so strong, are deceitful; the first good action that any man does perform, is to give entertainment to the Gospel: other things follow upon that.

SOMETIMES he gives an account, that he does believe on Jesus Christ; he don’t trust in his own righteousness, but places his hope in Christ. In this Case the Minister may tell him, that there is a great deal of faith that does not justify. Some do believe for a time, Luke 8. 13. some receive the word with joy, and in time of temptation fall away, Matthew 13. 20, 21. Some believed on Christ, but did not confess him, John 12. 42. several sorts of faith do not justify: As,

1. An Historical Faith. Men do receive the History of the Gospel for a truth, and take it for granted, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and Saviour of the World; and if any should deny it, or dispute against it, they would be very zealous against him, it would stir up their indignation; if they have any workings of infidelity, yet generally they go with that persuasion, that the Gospel is true; but this is no more than a Turk will say for his Religion: this Historical Faith, don’t mortifie mens corruptions. John 2. 23, 24, 25. many profane men have this Historical Faith.
2. A considerable confidence that Christ will save them. They are persuaded that they shall obtain Salvation by Christ, and do rejoice in the hope of it: This Confidence is a distinct thing from Justifying Faith; it is good or bad according to the grounds of it. Godly men have frequently such a confidence from the experience of a work of Grace in their own hearts, and the manifestation of the Love of God; but this is not Justifying faith, but a Faith of Assurance. Carnal Men may have such a confidence, arising from an imagination that God loves them, and from a sense of their own goodness; but this is not Justifying Faith, but Presumption.

3. A depending upon Christ, on the encouragement of a man's own goodness. He hears the Gospel, or has some common Illumination, discovering somewhat of God's readiness to pardon Sinners through Christ; and considering what he is, he ventures on Christ. When a man savagely believes, he ventures upon Christ upon Gospel encouragements; but another ventures, being encouraged from the consideration of his Prayers, Tears, Conscientiousness, or on that encouragement that he is not very bad, so he thinks such an one as he may venture; whereas if he did see himself so bad as indeed he is, he would not venture on Christ; the man makes partly his own righteousness, and partly the Righteousness
ness of Christ the foundation of his Faith; he does not exclude the Righteousness of Christ, but the preponderating consideration, and that which especially imboldens him to venture, is his own righteousness; his own righteousness is the first foundation of his hope, though he takes in the plea also of the Righteousness of Christ; he sees enough in Christ for such an one as himself, but not for the worst of Sinners.

But possibly he will plead for himself. That he was much affected with Christ, and with the mercy of God, it was more than ordinary, he never had such a light before. In this Case he may be told, That Carnal men have sometimes superficial discoveries of Christ, and are affected therewith, Mat. 13. 20. men have considerable inlightnings and tastes, yet may fall away; and it is no wonder they should be affected with the mercy of God: if men do apprehend that God has pardoned them, they cannot but be affected with it: as pardon does affect men, so does Imaginary pardon.

He may further plead for himself, That it was just so with him, as it has been with Godly men, as he has heard them to express themselves; that all his objections were answered; he was backward before, but he had such a discovery of Christ, that all his objections did vanish away, and he had nothing to say.

But he may be told, that the reason why

Some mens objections are all answered, is not from the greatness of the light that God gave them, but from their ignorance of their own hearts. They did not see so much of their own badness, as thoroughly to feel the power of an objecting spirit; if they had seen how bad they were, their objections would not have been answered. A little matter will answer the objections of an ignorant and conceited man, they have not light enough to make such strong objections as they would do if they knew themselves; and so all their objections are easily answered.

SOMETIMES he builds his Confidence upon some PARTICULAR SCRIPTURES.

ONE Scripture is, 1 Joh. 3. 14. We know that we are passed from death to life, because we love the brethren: He says he finds such a spirit in himself, and he thinks his Condition good. But he may be told,

1. There is a great difference between loving the People of God for their Piety, and honouring them for their Piety. Many Natural men have some Convictions that Godly men are choice men, and happy men; and if they think a man is a sincere man, they honour him, and have a respect for him; so Herod had for John, Mark 6. 20; but these men have not a sincere love to them for their Piety; they don't love God nor Godliness, therefore don't love Godly men for their Piety.

1. There is a great difference between loving Godly men for their Piety, and loving them for their Morality. Godly men are moral men, some of them are eminent for Justice, Sobriety and Faithfulness, and these are very lovely things in the eyes of many natural men; they love them upon that account, Dan. 6. 3. 18. Darius had a great love to Daniel, but it was not upon the account of his Piety, but his Prudence and Morality: Morality is lovely in the eyes of many carnal men. Some love Godly men, because they are related to them; some because they are friendly to them, and some because of their moral qualifications, that have not any love to them upon the account of their Piety. The moral Carriages of the People of God flow from a Spirit of Piety; but Morality & Piety are very different things, and some persons that have a love to them upon the account of their Morality, may have no love to them upon the account of their Piety.

Another Scripture that he may build a confidence on, is, 1 John 5. 11. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God. By this Rule he says he is in a good condition, he does believe this, therefore is Regenerate. In this Case he may be told,

That the believing here spoken of, is the receiving of it as certain upon the testimony of God. Many men have a common persuasion that Christ is the Son of God from tradition, and from his Miracles, which is in a more ge-
noral acceptation called believing. Joel 2. 23. and yet they are not born of God: but more properly they are said to believe it, who receive it, upon God's testimony; and those men who have only a common persuasion are indeed Unbelievers; they that have not Grace, don't properly believe the Word of God.

ANOTHER Scripture that he takes notice of to strengthen his confidence, is, Matt. 5. 6. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after Righteousness; his Conscience testifies that he does so, therefore he hopes he is blessed. In this Case he may be told,

That though some desires of grace are grace, yet all desires of grace are not grace: As men may act hypocritically when they pretend to desire grace, so when they do desire grace. For

1. Many Carnal men do desire Grace. It is a common thing for Ungodly men to desire Grace, especially when terrified with the word; they desire to be Converted: Some men have slighter Convictions, and they have faint and languishing desires, and some have more smart terrors, and they have more earnest desires to be Converted: they think they would give all that they have in the World, that they were Converted: So the Foolish Virgins, Matt. 25. 8.

2. Desires of Grace may arise from natural principles. Grace is not only desirable, for its own sake, but there are several benefits that do attend it, which may make natural principles
crave it. Grace is an honourable thing, Heb. 11. 2. it gains respect among men, it procures men a good name in the World; hence Pride makes men crave it: Grace is a means of many outward blessings, 1 Tim. 4. 8. And upon this account, men out of a selfish spirit may desire it; grace is necessary in order to Salvation, Heb. 12. 14. And upon this account, nature makes men crave it.

AFTER he is delivered from his constant opinion of his good estate, and sees himself to be in a natural condition still; it may be needful upon that occasion,

1. To encourage him: For he is in danger to be too much cast down, so as to hinder his future diligence: He may be encouraged from the consideration of God's Goodness in discovering that deceit which would have proved his bane; he was in a dangerous way, but God has delivered him, and so put him into a nearer capacity to be Converted: God's not suffering him to continue in his delusion, is an hopeful sign, that God does intend mercy to him; he is now under greater advantage than before; John 9. 41.

2. To warn him that he don't run into the same error again; for he is still under the reigning power of a self-righteous spirit, and may get a false opinion of Conversion again. Some do several times strike upon that rock, therefore he must be cautioned not to be deceived with the appearances

Appearances of grace; nor to give way to the flattery of his own heart; if he should take up such a persuasion again, it is doubtful that he would not be delivered, relapses are dangerous; and if he should begin to think so, it were best to advise with those that can inform him, before he be confirmed in such an opinion.

3. To lead him into the understanding of his own baseness, and insufficiency to help himself. This is an advantageous time to drive him out of himself, and bring on the work of Conversion. When he sees his own hypocrisy, the best way is to follow, till he is quite emptied of himself; it is good policy to improve a victory, and to help him to a thorough sight of himself, that he may be prepared for Christ.

Sometimes after a man has been seeking a while, and has passed thorough many Changes, there is reason to fear that he will leave off; he has a great deal of discouragement; others obtain, and he is left; God don't make the Word powerful on his heart, he don't get forward, and it may be perceived, that he is more slightly than he was. In this Case it is best,

1. To encourage him: for the discouragements that he is under, are a great cause of Apostacy; therefore it is best to hearten him up: the notion of the giant-like stature of the Canaanites, and the strength of their Walls, was a great inducement to Israel to entertain thoughts of returning back to Egypt. So it is in this Case:
Case: And he may be encouraged two ways.

1. By shewing him the possibility of his obtaining mercy. So Caleb told the people they were well able to overcome, and if God delighted in them, he would bring them in; thus he may be encouraged, by shewing of him that God can help him, and that nothing does appear to shew that God will not help him; his mercy is free, he has pardoned others as bad as he; his Providences to him are consistent with designs of Grace.

2. By shewing him the wonderful benefit that he will have if he does obtain mercy; besides that peace and communion with God which he will have in this Life, he will enjoy Eternal Salvation in the other World, which is inconceivably great. It were a great thing to have his punishments moderated, much more to be delivered from them; it were a great thing to be saved out of Hell, after hundreds of years, greater to be preserved from coming there: It were a great thing to be kept out of Hell, and suffered to live a natural life always upon the Earth; greater to be translated into the glorious presence of God, and to be like the Angels of God always beholding the face of the Father; it is worth the while to go through any difficulty for Heaven; Heaven will make amends for all: if all the way to Heaven were Rocks and Mountains, yet it is worth it while to travel thither. The People of God were often
ten told of the excellency of the Land of Canaan, that it was a Land flowing with milk and honey, and a land of vineyards, and olive-yards, &wheat and barley: So it is useful to set before him the glorious Happiness that the People of God will enjoy in another World.

2. To warn him of his danger, for security has a great hand in Apostacy; to remember him what a miserable condition he would cast himself into, if he should cast off fear, and restrain Prayer before God. Sometimes when men Apostatise, they fall into despair; and God suffers them to be miserably hurried and haunted by their own evil Conscience, and no means can deliver them; so it was with Judas. Sometimes God shortens their days, and don’t suffer them to continue in this world: When they draw back, God withdraws protection from them, and they quickly dye: When they neglect seeking Eternal Life, God denies temporal life to them; and sometimes he leaves them to be very wicked; they sometimes become of the number of the basest of men. 2 Pet. 2. 20, 21, 22. Mat. 12:44, 45. and they are in dreadful danger of Eternal Fire; and that misery that no Creature knows how to grapple with. Such Considerations as these may help him against the sloth and lightness of his spirit.

SOMETIMES he complains he is followed with Atheistical thoughts; he is frequently fol-

Loved with questions about the Being of God.

In this Case the Minister may,

1. Acquaint him that though this is a great sin, yet it may be forgiven. There is abundance of Atheism in the hearts of men, the lives of men shew that they have much of this spirit, Tit. 1. 16. And many persons that have complained of this, have been afterward converted; and some Godly men are much exercised with this temptation, Psal. 73. 12, 13. And therefore though he should not make light of it, yet he should not draw up any dark conclusions against the possibility of his Salvation.

2. Convince him that there is a God; and settle his heart about that great Truth.

1. By evidencing to him the Being of God, which he may do, especially from the Works of Creation thus. The things which we see, are made things; they are finite, compounded, corruptible, and therefore it is impossible they should be of themselves; that which is finite, is not Eternal, but was made in time, out of nothing; that which is compounded, was compounded by some other thing; that which is corruptible, has not its being from it self; we could not be of our selves, and therefore the First man, who was of the same nature with us, could not be of himself; and he that made these things, must be an Infinitely Glorious God: He that could bring the World out of nothing,
nothing, and make the Creatures that are therein, with wonderful variety of properties and vertues must be one of infinite perfection, this is God. Rm. 1. 20. Psal. 19. 1.

2. By removing those Objections that prove snares to him: If that be a snare to him, that we do not see God: He may be told, That we don't question many other things which we never saw. We doubt not that there are such Countries as France and Spain. Several things are invisible, as the Souls of Men, Angels and Devils, unless they assume a Shape; yet we may be satisfied about these: There be other ways to satisfy us about the Existence of things, besides seeing of them. We know some things by reason, and some things by faith, Heb. 11. 3. If that be a temptation to him, that others don’t believe the Being of God, he can plainly perceive by the lives of men, that whatever they pretend, they do not really think that there is a God: He may be told, That though they are not fully persuaded, that there is a God, yet they cannot be fully persuaded that there is not a God; they have so much light that they cannot extinguish it; there is not a perfect Atheist in the World: Besides, Carnal men are led by their Corruptions, and their reason is very much darkned, and there is no weight to be laid upon their thoughts. Shall we think there be no Antipodes, because some ignorant men denied it? Shall we question the roundnes
ness of the Earth, because some others think otherwise? We may not offer violence to our reason, because of the fottishness of other men. If that be a snare to him, to conceive how God can be of himself; how it is possible he should be, without being made: He may be told, That if that be above his reason to fathom, yet that is not contrary to reason; as it is to think that a company of finite things, should be of themselves: Besides, if there are beings, there must of necessity be some First Being: If the rest be made, yet there must be one that was not made: To say that nothing was made, and to say that all things are made, are alike absurd; those things that are made could not have been, unless there were something that was not made; seeing many things have a being, there must be one of them that is of himself; they could not interchangeably make one another, but there is one who was not made, but is of himself, who is GOD.

SOMETIMES he complains that he is followed with horrible injections, blasphemous thoughts, and other wicked thoughts, that are a great affliction to him, and take away the comfort of his life, they make him a terror to himself. In this Case he may be told,

1. That so far as they are injected by Satan, they are not imputed to him. The heart of man, is very bad, and from that fountain of sin, exceeding wicked thoughts may arise; but when per-
ions are violently followed with such thoughts, they are usually injected by Satan, they are some of his fiery darts spoken of, Eph. 6. 16. And when he casts them in, the man is no more guilty, than he that hears a man blaspheme: if a man were perfectly holy, that could not prevent such injections if God let Satan loose upon him.

2. That his Nature is so corrupted, that those injections do less or more taint him. The heart is like tinder, and these temptations will make some impression, though he has a detestation of those thoughts, and labours against them, yet there is a principle in the heart to fall in with them; and generally upon such occasions, persons do contract guilt; and it is but rare if ever, that men are meerly passive at such a time: The Sin that is in men, does easily beset them, Heb. 12. 1. And therefore it becomes him to be confessing before God the wretchedness of his own heart, in fodering in any degrees with those temptations.

3. That such temptations are no sign that God don't love him; he may not gather from thence, that God has given him up to Satan; for this has been the condition of some very Godly men. This is an exercise that God has brought upon some that have been dear to him: As Satan is wont to tempt the best of men, so some of the choicest with these suggestions; this is not too great an affliction to be bro't upon.

upon such men as God does love; the Devil may in this manner hurry those that he shall not be able to destroy. Paul in like-lihood had some such temptations, 2 Cor. 12.

7. God for holy ends may suffer those whom he loves to be thus exercised, that they may leave their own weakness, and be humbled before God.

4. That it is not very usual for God to suffer men to be long followed with these injections. Tho' there be some instances to the contrary, yet more ordinarily after a while God does re-strain Satan, though no man can determine any precise time, yet after a while they are wont to be removed. God may so far hear Prayers, as to remove this affliction.

SOMETIMES he complains bitterly of the badness of his own heart, speaks of it as exceeding bad; he says he never saw it so bad as of late, and seems to be almost discouraged thereby. In this Case he may be told,

1. That the heart of every natural man is exceeding bad. Many times through restraints of corruption and common grace, the badness of it is hidden; but the heart of every natural man is desperately wicked, Jer. 17. 9. Whatever appearances it may make, it is utterly corrupt; every sin is unmortified: those sins that they have not been accustomed to, those sins that their tempers don't dispose them to; those sins of whose baseness they have the deepest sense & their hearts are totally empty of all goodness,
there is not one spark of goodness in them: that
the principle of sin is as strong in them after
they are enlightened & reformed as ever it was.

2. That it is necessary for him to be convinced of
the badness of his own heart. When men see the
badness of their own hearts, they are ready to
be discouraged; but they are then in a more
hopeful condition than before: if men be
strangers to their own hearts, they will trust
in themselves, and neglect Christ. God first
discovers to them what they are, and then he
discovers the excellency of Christ to them:
men will never come to Christ, till they are con-
vinced what corrupt, blind and dead creatures they
be. And therefore the more God shews him
of the badness of his heart, the more gracious-
ly he deals with him: The badness of the
heart is matter of sorrow, but the sight of that
badness is matter of encouragement; the more
they see of that, the more hope there is of
their being prepared for Christ.

3. That it is his best way to search his own heart
further. Many times men will complain bit-
terly of the badness of their own hearts, and
one time after another give an account that
they have seen more in their hearts than ever
they did before; and yet are far from seeing
what they must see in their own hearts. And
while it is thus, they should be put upon it to
study their hearts, that they may see more of
them: Persons are afraid to see their own
hearts,
hearts, and are wont to strive against it, seeking to persuade themselves that they are better, than indeed they be: it crosses their pride, and their false hopes, to see the badness of their own hearts; therefore there is need to stir them up thereunto, and to tell them of what consequence it is. The sight of the heart is like the opening of a festered wound, it prepares men for healing; they should be put upon it to search themselves, and led into the way to do it: particular things may be propounded to them to search after; this is a very material thing, for the sincerity of their Conversion has a great dependance upon the thorough knowledge of their hearts.

Quest. Whether at this time it is not best to urge him to believe on Christ, though he does not thoroughly understand the badness of his own heart?

Answ. I. It may not be amiss while he is in this condition, to mind him that it is his duty to believe in Christ. And to set forth sometimes the Excellency and Sufficiency of Christ before him, it may be several ways beneficial to him; it may help him to take notice of the contrariety and opposition of his heart to this duty, and lead him into a further understanding of the corruption of his Nature; it may give some check to that spirit of self-righteousness that prevails in him, and make him sensible of the necessity of the Righteousness of Christ unto his Justification; it may serve to
to encourage as to the possibility of his Salvation, and convince him, that he is capable to be brought into a state of Salvation.

2. Yet there is no ground to hope, that till he thoroughly sees himself, he will accept the offer of the Gospel. Men must be first humbled before they will believe. Invitations to come to Christ will never be successful, till men are driven out from all their false refuges; they may hear the most powerful arguments with a great deal of evidence and affection, but they will not be obedient; either they will be afraid to come to Christ, and have one thing or other to object; they will be fearful, because they see so much sin, or because they don’t know that God means them, or they have not the inward Call of the Gospel. Under some notion or other they will not come, or else they will come in a presumptuous manner, and pretend to believe, when they do not indeed believe: Either they will be born down with Unbelief, or they will get a false Faith.

SOMETIMES the man complains that he has not encouraging Scriptures come to him; and therefore he fears that he is not under the work of the Spirit: Other men have encouraging Scriptures brought to them, and therefore God don’t deal with him, as with those he is wont to Convert. In this Case the Minister may tell him,

1. That if he have supporting considerations e.a.
into his heart, that is sufficient; there is no necessity to have encouraging Scriptures to come with a great deal of power upon his heart; there is need of some supporting considerations, to maintain an hope, and to keep him from despair: and if the heart be but supported with an hope that he may obtain at last, that is sufficient. God deals very variously with men; some that have many encouraging Scriptures, do never obtain mercy.

2. That if he does continue to wait upon God, he may have encouraging Scriptures come to him after a while. God knows what he stands in need of, and don't tie up himself to the same method, as to the circumstances of the work: He uses a great deal of variety; scarce two persons are carried on exactly after the same manner; some have more encouragement towards the beginning, & others towards the latter end of the work.

SOMETIMES he says, that if he were sure to obtain, he could be willing to take any pains: Yea, though God should hold him waiting a long while; and he could be content to go through any anguish of spirit; but that which sinks his heart and makes him dull, is, that he is not certain of success. In this Case he may be told by the Minister,

1. That all that have obtained mercy, have sought upon the encouragement that they might obtain mercy. They did not know what the issue of it would be; the possibility of it was that which
which bore up their hearts in using of means; they had some hope mingled with fear, and if they had not sought upon the incouragement of the possibility, they had certainly gone without mercy. The Sick man does not say he will not use means, unless he were certain of a Cure The Merchant don't say that he will not send his Ship to Sea, unless he were certain of a prosperous Voyage: The Husbandman don't say that he will not Plow and Sow his Land, unless he were certain of a good Crop; Men must wait upon God, upon this encourage-ment, that they may obtain mercy, *Jon. 2:8, 9.*

2. That the meer loss of their pains is a small matter. It will be a dreadful thing for a man to lose his Soul; but the meer loss of their labour is a small matter. A man may well venture the loss of his labour, in hope of the Salvation of his Soul: A man that is sick, will venture the loss of a little expence for the preservation of his life: Men have no cause to be very scrupulous about the loss of their pains: The loss of their Souls will be far forer.

3. It is not fit that men should be sure to obtain mercy, till they do believe in Christ. There is security enough, that if they do believe in Christ, they shall be saved: And there is no reason that God should be desired to make a New-Cov-enant, and secure Salvation to any other Conditi-on: God has descended low enough when he promise Salvation to believing; and it is too much.
much for any man to desire that God should promise it to Praying, to Reading, to Reforming, &c. Especially seeing those things are done with a false heart, only for Salvation.

4. If men be thoroughly scared with the danger of Damnation, they will readily improve their possibility, and not stand for assurance of success. Men will be glad of a possibility, and not neglect means, because they have no more encouragement: If a man be cast into the Sea, he will not neglect Swimming, because he is not certain that he can swim to the Shore: If a man be pursued by an Enemy, he will not stand still, because he is not certain that he shall get clear. If men stand convinced of their dreadful danger in neglecting to seek, they will betake themselves to the use of means at a venture, rather than run the hazard of their Souls.

SOMETIMES he complains that after he has told the Minister how it is with him, it seems to him as if he had told a company of lies; and he is terrified with the apprehension of it. In this Cafe he may be told,

1. That these thoughts rise partly from the frightfulness of his Conscience. He is in a terrified condition, and so the sound of a shaking leaf will scare him; and he flees when none pursueth; he imagines dangers where there be none; he has a humbling guilty Conscience, and is afraid that he sins when he don't, and is ready to charge things upon himself without cause.

2. That these thoughts arise from those contrary workings that are in his own heart. Sometimes he has a great sense of danger, sometimes he has but little sense of it: sometimes he is afraid he has committed the Unpardonable Sin, and then he is not afraid of it: he has great variety and change of frames, and whatever account he gives of the workings of his own heart, he has had some contrary workings thereunto; so that after he has told what workings of heart he had, he has reflections, because he remembers some contrary workings of heart.

SOMETIMES a man that has been seeking after peace with God a great while, leaves off for some months together, he is followed with guilt, and comes and makes his Case known unto the Minister: In this Case it is very suitable,

1. To reprove him for his backsliding, and set before him the sinfulness of what he has done, and the danger that he has exposed himself unto: he has quenched the Spirit, the tendency of whose motions was for his good; he has sinned against a great deal of light; when he was in a more hopeful way, he has relapsed into a sorrowful condition; he has lost ground, and has a great deal of his work to do over again: God must needs be greatly provoked with him.

2. To encourage him notwithstanding, by assuring of him, that he is capable of mercy. God invites Backsliders to return unto him: Persons are sometimes

If it; they seem as if they would presently come to an understanding of them, and then there is a stop put to it for a pretty while; a great deal of time is consumed before they come to have a thorough understanding of themselves: Men are sometimes years under trouble before they do attain unto it.

Quest. What must men know of their own hearts, before they be Converted?

Answ. In general, They must know so much as is sufficient to bring them off from trusting in their own righteousness and their own strength. Some men know a great deal more of their own hearts than other men, they see many particular deceits and workings of corruption that other men don't see; and no man knows his heart so before Conversion, but he may learn a great deal more after he is Converted; but so much must be known by every man, as is sufficient to break him off from trusting in himself: It is the sight of his own heart that does take him off from trusting in himself: let him hear never so much about the insufficiency of his own righteousness, he will trust in himself, till he sees his own heart; but when he sees that thoroughly, it is impossible that he should trust in himself, for he sees there is nothing there to trust unto.

Particularly, 1. He must see himself under the reigning power of Sin. If men imagine that they have no great disposition to sin, or that their corruptions are in any degree mortify'd, they will commend themselves to God upon that account; and won't see it just and fair for God to condemn them. There is no absolute necessity they should have the particular consideration of every.
every corruption that is in their hearts; but they must see that they are under the dominion of sin, that a spirit of self-love reigns in them, and that their heart is contrary to that which is good; they find such workings of pride, discontentment and enmity to Christ, as shews to them they have abominable hearts; that their hearts are like the hearts of Devils; as full of sin as a toad is of poyson, Rom. 7. 9.

2. To be empty of all goodness. He has no inclination to any thing that is good, that there is no disposition to that which is good, but a total emptiness. It may be he does not think particularly of every grace that he is destitute of that, but sees that he is utterly void of spiritual life, that he has no power to do any good; he is dead in sin, wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. Before that he was convinced of a weakness, but now he finds himself dead: he thought before that he had little strength, now he sees he has none: there is not one spark of goodness in him, nor any power to get any, he is stript out of all his perfections, and sees an utter emptiness in himself of all that is good; he has no love, no godly sorrow, no thankfulness, no humility, no spiritual desires; those appearances that he had are all vanished out of sight, he can’t do any thing, there is no seed of any goodness in him; if he be advantaged with all manner of helps, yet it is quite beyond his power to work up any good frame in his heart; he prays, but there is no goodness in his prayers, and he is incapable of working up any; he is not in a wound, rubbing and chafing will not fetch him to life, but he is everlastingly dead in sin, unless God will put a principle of life into him.

SOMETIMES the man says that he sees he can do nothing of himself. In this Case he may be told,

That the best Saint in the world can do nothing of himself, John 15. 4. Those that do a great deal for God, and have a gracious principle, do yet know that they can do nothing of themselves: And a Natural man may stand convinced of this, that he can do nothing of himself, though he be very proud, and imagines that he does God a great deal of choice service; when he says, he can do nothing of himself, he only means, that he can do nothing without assistance from God. This a man may see, and yet be a great stranger to his own heart. The thing that he wants to see is, that he has no principle of doing any good, that there is no power nor inclination in him, but that he is totally and everlastingly dead in sin, unless God infuse a new principle into him.

SOMETIMES men have great discoveries of their own hearts for a pretty while together, and yet don't come to lye at God's foot, they say themselves they can't do it. In this Case they may be told,

1. That they cannot deliver themselves; that it is utterly impossible for them to mend their own hearts. For men may see themselves bad and insufficient, yet not be brought to despair as to their own power; be nourishing a secret hope, that in time with some advantages their heart will be brought to a better pass; therefore it is best to possess them with a sense of their utter insufficiency to help themselves; they may as well make a world, as make their own hearts good; they can't work faith in themselves, John 6. 44.

2. That they cannot deserve that God should give Grace.
Grace to them. They can't force God to work Regeneration in them, they have no natural excellency to engage God, they can't work upon the Mercy of God, nor engage the Justice of God to save them; God is not bound to them to help them, there is nothing to hinder him if he pleases, there is nothing to oblige him, they can't compel God; God is free to help them or deny help, as it pleases him.

3. That it is dangerous to stand it out long against God. If they do not yield, they are in danger either to be left of God to a senseless spirit, or to get a false confidence, or to be snatched away out of the world; men stand in slippery places that continue to be stubborn against great Conviction; it is not like to be long before the scale turn; if they do not quickly submit, there is danger of their rejection.

SOMETIMES the man says, that now he can justify God, however he deals with him, and yet it is evident that he is not brought off from his own righteousness. In this Case he may be told,

1. That he must beware that he don't make a righteousness of this. Pride will feed upon any appearance of good qualifications, and if he lots upon it that now his heart is better than it was, and that God is taken with him, he will greatly deceive himself; his justifying of God, is no justification of himself; his justifying of God, will not make God to justify him; though he justifies God, yet God condemns him.

2. That some men do justify God from a partial conviction of the righteousness of their Condemnation. Conscience takes notice of their

Infidelity, and tells them that they may righteous-ly be damned; as Pharaoh, who justified God; Exod. 9. 27. And they give some kind of consent to it, but many times it don't continue; they have only a pang upon them, that usually dies away after a little time; this justifying of God differs much from that which does immediately go before Conversion, which is a fixed and thorough Conviction, arising from a thorough understanding of their own hearts.

SOMETIMES the man seems to be upon the very borders of despair. For some men are nearer to it a great deal than others, he is in anguish of spirit, and does almost conclude, that there is no mercy for him. In this case he may be told,

1. That there is no hope in any Creature. He can't help himself, he has no wisdom, power nor worthiness that can help him; there is no way that he can take that is sufficient for his deliverance; that Ministers are not able to deliver him, and that if others pray for him, yet that will not secure his salvation; All Creatures are as cyphers, and can't work out any salvation for him; if God will destroy him, there is none that can save him.

2. That God may help him; it is not beyond the power of God to change his heart, and it is not beyond the Grace of God to help him. The reason that men are not pardoned, is not the greatness of their sins, but because they do not come to Jesus Christ. That though God be angry, yet he should not be discouraged, God is always angry with Sinners, when he comes to bestow Converting Grace upon them. That God has done a great deal for him, insomuch as he makes him sensible of his danger; that these discoveries of danger are many times fore-runners of Conversion: That his Condition is a great deal more hopeful now, than when he pleased himself with his frames and attainments; every man must despair in himself, before he comes
comes to trust in Christ; that there is enough in Christ, he is able to save to the uttermost, Heb. 7. 9. Christ came to save the chief of Sinners, 1 Tim. 5.

3. That there is no way left him now, but to yield himself into the Hands of God. If God destroy him he may, he lies at the mere mercy of God; if God will deliver him he may, if he does not he does not; he can't run from God, he can't force him; if he stands it out against God, he takes a way to ruin himself: the safest course he can take, is to fall into the hands of God; it may be God may help him, however he can but perish.

SOMETIMES a little before the work of God is completed in him, he complains that he seems to be as before he was under Conviptions, careless & senseless; his terrors have left him, and he is not affected with his condition. In this case he may be told,

1. That now he may see what an heart he has, and how insufficient he is to deliver himself. His heart is empty of all that is good, and there is no possibility of his attaining Salvation by his own power, he has no principle of Grace, and never had; the frames that formerly he had, were nothing else but the workings of self-love and natural Conscience; and unless God does deliver him, he will never attain unto life.

2. That his way must be to wait upon God still. This is no sign God has given him over, his terrors may quickly return again, and he may find mercy for all this: When he had his good frames and affections, they could not save him, nor make his peace with God; and if God do shew him his own emptiness, he may quickly after discover to him the Excellency of Christ. At length the man seems as if he were thorowly brought off from himself, and brought to lie at the foot of God. All his selfish hopes are taken away, he sees his own heart, and his will bows, he seems to resign up himself to God. In this case,

1. It is best to examine whether there be no deceit in it. Sometimes it is so plain that there is no great occasion of

to examine, sometimes it is more doubtful. When they are thoroughly humbled, such things as these do concur.

(1.) He sees all his own righteousness to be utterly empty and vile, that it has no power to draw the heart of God; he sees nothing at all to commend him, but he has been provoking God thereby. (2.) He is at an end of his contrivances to change his heart. Formerly when things appeared dark unto him, he was wont to think that if he did thus or so, that would bring him into a more hopeful way; but now he is beyond all his contrivances, he can't do any more. (3.) He sees his heart spiritually dead. He is utterly destitute of power to do any good thing; yea, he has no inclination to any good. (4.) He sees he is in God's Hand. It is free for God to do as he will with him, and he resigns up himself to God, so he is more quiet now than he was; both because his will is brought down, and he is satisfied that God can, and may help him.

2. It is no ways fit to tell a man that God will shew mercy to him. For though this be the manner of God, when men are prepared for Grace, to bestow Grace upon them, yet there is no promise in the Scripture made to such persons; the promises are made to Coming to Christ: Faith is the Condition of Salvation; and though there be many promises made to Humility, yet there are none made to Humiliation. And he is to be told, That he is in God's hands, God is at liberty to do as he will with him, and that he must wait upon God to open his eyes, and shew Jesus Christ unto him.

3. It is very meet to set the Gospel before him, and mind him of God's sending of Christ into the World to Save Sinners. That Jesus Christ has satisfied the Justice of God, and performed perfect Obedience for us: That God has pardoned many thorough Christ, that he offers Salvation to him through Jesus Christ; and that God has promised Eternal Life to all that do accept of Christ: That though that have nothing to bring with them shall be welcome to him; that God is of infinite
finite mercy, and delights to glorify his Grace in Saving the Chief of Sinners: That because we had no worthiness, God has provided a worthiness for us in Christ: That Christ is the Author of Eternal Salvation to all that come to him: That God's love is free, and there is no danger in venturing upon Christ; whoever believeth on him shall not be confounded.

Quest. Is there at that time any true meltlings of heart because of Sin? Is the Soul truly grieved for its Sins against God, as some men have thought?

Answ. That though there is such a Conviction of Sin as makes men to justify God, yet there is no godly sorrow for Sin. Men are not at this time affected with any Godly sorrow.

1. Because such sorrow is inconsistent with the work of Humiliation. When the Sinner is humbled, he sees himself emptied of himself, and sees his own heart dead in Sin; this could not be, if he had any gracious sorrow for Sin; if there were true sorrow for Sin, there must be love to God, a spiritual understanding, a new heart, a divine principle put into the man; for nature cannot produce any such effect.

2. Because Faith is the first act of Grace. If the man had a gracious principle, he would immediately Entertain Christ and the Gospel; after a man has received a principle of Regeneration, the first way that it works in is by drawing the heart to Christ; when mens hearts are changed, and a new Nature put into them, it does not first work in a way of sorrow for Sin, or thirsting after God's Glory, or delighting in Holiness; but always the first act of Grace is to close with Christ: God leads him into the exercise of this, that he may be justified, Rom. 5. 1. If 'he did any other gracious act before this, it could not be accepted, for the person is not accepted before Faith: All Sanctification is the fruit of Faith, Acts 26. 18.

Soon after the Soul is brought to lie at God's foot, he is wont to give an account of his Closing with Christ; that God has revealed Christ to him, & drawn his heart to him. So he does accept of Christ. In this Case it is best, 1. To
1. To examine whether his faith be right. And in this work there is no weight to be laid on it, whether it was in Hearing, Reading, Praying or Meditating, that God gave the light to him; God does not confine himself to any of those ways: neither is there any weight to be laid on it, whether it was by any particular word or without it; if it be according to the Word it is sufficient; nor must we lay weight upon it, whether it were by a word of promise, or some other passage of the Gospel; nor whether he had one word came to him or many. Sometimes many promises flow in, one after another, in abundance; but special Enquiry is to be made, [1.] What condition he was in just before, whether he was wholly emptied of himself, or found any imaginary goodness in himself; if his humiliation was right, there is no doubt of his faith: [2.] Whether by that light that was given him, he saw Christ and Salvation offered to him, or whether he saw that God loved him and pardoned him; for the offer of Grace, and our acceptance goes before pardon, and therefore much more before the knowledge of it: [3.] Whether he saw a glorious fulness in Christ, a sufficiency for the greatest sinners, so as to make him admire the excellency of Christ: [4.] Whether the Offer came with Divine Authority, whether he saw God calling of him so that he could not but accept thereof.

2. If upon Enquiry the Case be more doubtful, as it may be, partly because some things were not so clear to himself, or because he has forgotten some material thing, and cannot speak to it. It may be well to tell him, That if it be right, he will see more of it; when God begins to make a discovery of Christ, he will not leave men, but is wont to liew them more. The path of the just is like the morning light, &c. Prov. 4.

3. If the Case be plain, it is best to encourage him, tho' there is no need to be positive. But he may be told, That it is hopeful that God has drawn his heart to Christ, and made a gracious change in his Soul; and that if he does indeed believe on Christ, he shall certainly be saved;

saved; his sin don't make such a breach between God and him, as to hazard his Salvation.

4. To warn him to depend still on the free Grace of God in Christ; he must expect many dark hours and times of temptation, but his way must be, to grow in the knowledge of Christ; he must not think, that now he shall always live a life of joy and comfort. Satan will be busy with him, and he will have many workings both of carnal confidence and unbelief; & he must get more and more convinced of his own righteousness, and the fulness of Christ; if he live many years, he must never expect any thing to glory in but Christ Jesus; And he is likewise to be warned, That he live up to the mercy of God to him; that he don't fall into a languishing and pining condition, but maintain the life and power of Godliness, that so he may not expose himself to temptation and darkness, and that he may not disown the Holy Name of God; shewing forth the virtue of him that has called him out of darkness into his marvellous light.

There be TWO particular CASES that do require a particular Consideration.

The First CASE is, When the Minister is sent for by a man upon his Sick-bed. The first thing to be done is to get an understanding in what condition the person is. For though a man that does not know his Case may speak several things that may be safe and profitable, whatever his Condition is; yet the more knowledge there is of the state of the man, the more advantage he is under to speak pertinently.

I. If it be plain that the man is in a Natural Condition, it is most proper to insist upon these three things:

1. That he has a present absolute necessity to be at peace with God; that if he should dye in a Natural Condition, he will be for ever undone: It is very fitting he should

should be remembred of his sinful life, and the dreadfulness of that punishment that hangs over his head; which may be let before him in an affecting manner, that if it be possible he may be terrified, and made sensible of those Eternal Miseries that are coming upon him.

2. That he may not rest in any thing short of Jesus Christ. Men in such a Case are like a man drowning, ready to catch hold of any thing that comes near; they are ready to have a dependance upon their Priviledges, upon their Parentage, upon their sorrow for their mispent life, and upon their purposes to live better if God do raise them up again; he must be led into an understanding of the strictness of the Law of God, and the vanity of all carnal confidences.

3. That there is a glorious way of Life prepared by Christ. Christ Jesus has fulfilled the Law, & wrought out Eternal Salvation for us, that the Gift of God is Eternal Life; and that the mercy of God is free, and God does not refuse any that do hearken to the Call of the Gospel, that God will as readily receive him if he comes to Christ, as if he were likely to live many years, and do service to God in the World.

And if his particular temptations may be discerned, care must be taken to remove them; if he be under any special discouragement or any flattering delusion, the share if it be possible must be broken; he must be shewed the vanity of that temptation. Such light must be held out, that if God will bless it he may be delivered.

If at that time, or any other afterwards he does pretend to believe in Christ, it is very meet that he be cautioned that he does not deceive himself; for sick-bed Repenances are seldom true. Many persons that made great pretensions when sick, have proved very badly after their recovery.

II. If it be doubtful whether the man be in a Natural Condition, or Converted, as there may be some occasion to hope because of his profession, because of his
his estimation among men; because of an orderly carriage, and yet occasion to fear, because there is no great evidence of Grace, either in his Conversation before, or discourse at present: Sometimes there is more grounds for hope, sometimes for fear. These three things may safely be spoken to him.

1. The Doctrine of the Law and Gospel may be set before him. They may be somewhat explained and cleared up: It is fit men should be remembered of the Rule they are to be judged by. Many times when the Rule is clearly laid down, Conscience makes application, and witnesses to men how it is with them, Heb. 4. 12. The Word of God is quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword &c.

2. Promises may be applied conditionally. He may be told, That if he have been thorowly broken off from himself, and brought to rely upon Christ, God has accepted of him; that if his heart have been drawn by Gospel Encouragements to rely on Christ, he is out of danger; that if God's Glory be upon his heart indeed, he is an heir of Glory; he may be told, that only his own Conscience can tell what the workings of his heart have been: That if he be not mistaken, but has indeed made Christ his refuge, all his sins are pardoned.

3. He may be warned that he do not deceive himself. It may be meet to remember him, that the heart is deceitful; that many false hearts do go hoping out of the World, that there be several things that do resemble Faith, and every Grace may be counterfeited: That he had need to beg of God to discover things plainly to him: That it would be a dreadful thing to be mistaken; and so he may be charged that he do not trust in any thing in himself, but betake himself alone to Christ.

III. If it be considerably plain, that he is Converted and Gracious; either from his known eminency in Religion, or from an account that he gives of Communion with God, or discoveries of Christ, and gracious workings of his heart: It may be very meet, To

To comfort him with those great and precious promises that God has made, to remember him of the freeness of God's Grace, and the preciousness of the Blood of Christ; he may be minded of those things that are the pillars of our Faith, and the foundations of our comfort; how God in all Ages of the World has promised this way of Salvation, in this way the Saints of Old have lived and dyed: How the Faithfulness of God stands engaged for their Salvation, that their sins and iniquities are cast behind God's back; this must be understood or spoken upon a supposition, that their work is a thorough work.

In case he desires the Minister to tell what he judges about his sincerity; it may be suitable to tell him, that as far as he can discern, his heart is upright, and that the root of the matter is found in him; he must tell him that he has no infallible knowledge, God alone does know the hearts of men; there is no depending on his judgment, but so far as he can perceive, his Soul has been renewed by the Spirit of God.

If the man has any particular temptations, it is very suitable to remove them; he may be under temptation, because he has great deadness, a great deal of pride and hypocrisy; because he has not had so much discovery of the favour of God, as he perceives others have had; because many others have been mistaken; because God has afflicted him very much; because he is withdrawn now in the time of his Sickness: Such particular temptations are to be answered. It may be shewed

shewed to him, that the dealings of God are various with his people; that such things are not inconsistent with Grace; that the best way is to live upon the free mercy of God in Christ.

The OTHER CASE is, when such persons as have made an high profession of Religion for a long while, are in darkness about their Condition.

In this Case, the first care of the Minister must be, to get satisfaction concerning the state of the person, whether he be Regenerate or not. Not but that many things may be spoken that may be profitable to them, whether they be sincerely Godly or no: But if the Minister do not know their condition, he can't apply proper remedies; and he may speak that which may be very dangerous, if he supposes the man to be Unconverted, when he is Converted; he may torment him, and discourage him needlessly; if he supposes the man Converted when he is not, he may do him much damage by comforting him up in a false way; therefore it is very needful that he do get what satisfaction he can about their condition, that so he may be helpful to them in their distresses.

In order to his pass ing a right judgment upon their condition, he must be careful that he do not lay too much weight upon it, that they have been in Church-fellowship many years, that their Carriage has been orderly, that they are well accounted of where they live, for these are very fallible signs, such things are common to Saints and
and hypocrites; though these things may be grounds of charity; but a minister had need have better grounds to go upon when he comforts up persons with hopes of reconciliation.

Neither must he lay too much weight on bad signs, that are not demonstrative; if the man do not know the time of his conversion, or first closing with Christ, if he have any notable blemish, if he be not well accounted of, the minister may not draw any peremptory conclusion from thence that he is not Godly; yea, if he do judge himself confidently to be unconverted, it is best to enquire somewhat further in it. It is best discovered by three sorts of enquiries.

1. Whether they have passed through the several steps of the work of conversion. Some can give so full an account thereof, as will abundantly satisfy the minister, that the work is right; some are so strangely to seek, that he may be much confirmed, that they have no grace; in some others after they have given what account they can, the work is more dubious.

2. Whether they have lived a life of sanctification. There is great diversity in the measures of sanctification that men have attained unto; very holy men live an holy life, and by enquiring what knowledge they have of God? Whether they prize the glory of God? Whether they hate all sin? Whether they do draw their encouragement from Christ? Whether
ther they love Holiness, for Holiness sake?
What Conflict they have with Pride, Un-
belief, a self-righteous Spirit and Self-love?
A Minister may come to competent satisfacti-
on whether they be in a state of Grace or not;
in discoursing such things with them, a man may many times feel the workings
of a spirit of Holiness.

3. Whether they have had sensible Communi-
on with God. God is wont at times to draw
nigh to the Souls of his People, sometimes in
Meditation, sometimes in Prayer, and in other
Ordinances; and to make discoveries of him-
sfelf, and of Jesus Christ to their Souls, and to
draw their hearts to him; and if there has
been any thing considerable that way; the
Minister may be well satisfied of their good
Estate.

In Case the Minister be satisfied that the
man is not Converted, he must use his prudence
to judge whether it will be for the mans profit,
that he do in plain Terms tell him so; some-
times it may be a prejudice and a means to
exasperate him. Sometimes there is no such
danger, but he may freely tell him what he
judges, and the reasons of his judgment.

But in case he do not see it his way to
tell the man his thoughts concerning him,
yet he ought in conscience in the wifefst
way he can, put him into the understanding
of his own condition: He may not suffer the
man

man to go away with an opinion, that he
thinks well of him, much less may he
leave him ignorant of such rules whereby
he may come to understand his condition;
it becomes him to lay such signs of tryal be-
fore him as are most likely to bring him to
fight of himself, and convince him of his:
Dangerous Estate.

In case the Minister be satisfied on good
grounds about the mans good Estate; He
ought to endeavour to clear it up to the
man, laying convincing light before him;
and answering those temptations that make
it doubtful to the man himself; and also
to direct him in such ways, wherein it is
hopeful that God will help him, and deli-
ver him from his Temptations.

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