

Signs of a Dying or Decaying Christian. 13

First, to get a mighty sense of their ignorance, which is the grand cause they do not profit.

Secondly, to be greatly burthened that it is so with them.

Thirdly, to set their faces towards the Lord God by prayer and supplication, without ceasing, both to be and to abide otherwise: Is not the Prophet *Daniels* Writing for our learning, and to encourage us to take the same course? God sorely dislikes the contrary, *Isa. 32. 9. Rise up ye women that are at ease, (not troubled or burthened) hear my voyce ye careless Daughters, and be troubled:* Thus much may serve to inform a willing mind, how to get from under the power of this Dying Sign of indifferency to Assemble, and so pass to the second.

CHAP. II.

Containing three Causes of weariness to spiritual Worship, and the principal Reasons thereof.

SIGN II.

WHen in your solemnest Worship, you are quickly weary without warrantable cause.

It is possible to come to this pass, at but a seeming occasion, and persons create some kind of pretence why they are weary; if it happen that at some time they are not so particularly and personally concerned, in that part of Gods Worship, where they are present; It so falling out, that the matter God is intreated about, they are not so at want in, or what is preached, they to some considerable degree are informed in already: This may fall out in numerous Congregations, where different conditions, ministers different occasions

14 *Signs of a Dying or Decaying Christian.*

occasions as to the manner of carrying on Gods Worship; and though at such a time for a growing Christian, there is no room to be weary, he being as well delighted occasionally to hear, or pray over again what he knows, as he is to hear what he knows not: in the one he takes occasion to *praise* for what was; in the other, to *praise* for what is; yet declining persons will in such a case as this, when they are not so nearly concerned, take advantage not only to be weary, but from hence plead their justification so to be.

But this Sign speaks to persons under a further consideration, such as in their solemnest Worship are quickly weary in their most intimate, private, Personal, Closet performances, retired from company, and set to the most intimate Worship of God, in *fasting, praying, self-examining*, and the like; yea, from a sense of mighty Need drawn to this, and yet *quickly weary*, must needs argue them deep in this decay; and that in such there is a very strong combat, who shall now gain the field, they being a weary in their solemnest Worship: It is evident hence, that the enemy hath got more than ordinary advantage, and strikes now at the very Root of their Religion, aiming at once as it were, to make a speedy end; and puts such Christians, instead of Worshipping Faintly, to cease Worshipping at all; its high time therefore at the first sight of such declining, which in our days is not the portion of a few; for *surely, surely, many there are in Churches, that in their solemnest Worship are quickly weary*; I say again, its high time that those that find the case thus with them, do even like the *Ninevites* at the preaching of *Jonah*; They believed God, proclaimed a fast from the greatest to the least, *Jonah 3. 5*. Even so let such go to their knees, humble themselves, and cry mightily that they perish not.

Signs of a Dying or Decaying Christian. 15

A barren heart to *Closet-work*, hath lost the principle part of a *Gospel Spirit*; the Kings Daughters chiefest glory being within, although her Clothing be of wrought gold: Outward services demonstrate our Religion to men, it is *Closet* services demonstrate it to God: he looks not as man looks; for man looks at the outward appearance, but he at the heart: and indeed this is not onely a Christians greatest duty, but his highest *Priviledge*, it alone setting the seal in his spirit to the truth of his Profession; when he can in secret appeal, and approve his heart to God-ward, that though no eye besides Gods eye see him, yet can truly say with the good Prophet *Isaiah 26. 8. With my soul have I desired thee in the night, yea with my spirit within me will I seek thee early.* When *Paul and Silas* were shut up in the innermost Prison from all the visible Society of Saints, they prayed and sang Praises unto God; though their feet were made fast in the Stocks, yet now most at liberty with their spirits, while least at liberty with their bodies, verifying the true Proverb, *When I am most alone, then I am least alone.* A Christian, if with God in *Closet-work*, though in a Wilderness, far from any other eye, hath most company then, and meat to eat that others know not of. Solemn Publick Worship in the Congregation of Christians is an especial duty; then they that fear the Lord, spake often one to another; but woe will be to this, if alone, that that will put a Crown upon the head of this, is the having the like frame and heart warmth in private personal *Closet* performances; he that is a Stranger here, his Palace will be a Dungeon, whilst a Dungeon is a Palace to that soul that can entertain heart-entercourse with God in secret places. Let me ask you Christians, and beg you ask your hearts; Are you as often as is possible in publick

16 Signs of a Dying or Decaying Christian.

lick solemn Worship, and not usually there weary ; but are you much oftner in Closet Worship, and there delight to be often : Can you goe burdened with trouble, powring out your souls to God in complaint into your Closets, and come forth like Age renewed : When and how often have you experienced that blessed word *Isaiab 40.29. He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength?* If this in truth be your state you are not under the power of this dying sign. O how many Professors are there now in *England*, it is to be feared that are great strangers in Closet Worship, not onely in that solemn part of Gods service, quickly weary, but are gone further back to *Egypt*, seldom or not at all in that worship, let this be matter of lamentation, for it will end in desolation. Now the Causes of this Decay seem to be these three,

1. Self-conceitedness that we know enough.
 2. Luke-warmness in our Religion.
 3. Unapnrness to personal Duties, which being heeded may serve as helps to remove this decay where begun, or prevent where like to come.
1. Self-conceitedness that we know enough ; now this comes to pass either,
1. Through Ignorance of what we ought to know, or,
 2. Through Carelesness to put into practice what we do know.
1. Through ignorance of what we ought to know, a man may be very tall in knowledge in his own opinion, and at the same time a very Novice in knowledge : a large notion in the brain, and a little depth in the understanding, it is very evident to the experience of many Christians, that a great part of our time and study may be, and hath been spent in feed-

ing upon Ashes in getting a more remote knowledg of things, while a more personal essential knowledg hath not been our study. Now this is a grand Engine of the Devil to teach us to fill up all the spaces of our time with matters less material, and to study all the Mathematicks, and be able to give an account of the nature and vertue of many Vegetables, while a stranger to the chief part of knowledg, *Nosce teipsum*, or know thy self. Alas what will it avail us to be able to tell all the diseases of our Neighbours body, and cannot tell one disease of our own heart : what book can we better study than the *BOOK OF SELF*, there we may read all our natural frailties, and all our sinful deformities ; yea, know by this study, how often we have been sick in *Person*, and how much oftener sick in *action* : What more hard than to know our selves, and what more easie than to deceive our selves : Did we but study the frailty of our lives, and the frailties of our manners at best whilst we live, we should live much more like those that know their foundation is in the *Dust*, at their best state altogether *Vanity*, their life but a span, a Weavers shuttle, a hands breadth, a vapour, a nothing, till the Resurrection. Now ignorance in these chief concerns makes us so soon weary in our most solemn Worship ; we little consider to day at *Prayer*, to morrow at the *Grave* ; ignorance of our frail state makes us little prepare for our immortal state. Did the Daughters of *Sion*, *Isaiah* 3. 16. that are haughty, and walk with stretched-out necks, and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they goe, and making a tinkling with their feet, but study self knowledg, that they carry up and down with them (even while they walk with stretched-out necks and wanton eyes) four Sinks or Channels to cleanse nature by ; and a stop to any of these Channels would

18 *Signs of a Dying or Decaying Christian.*

quickly prove destruction unto them. Where would upon such self-knowledg any room be for this pride: O Christians be less studious in the knowledg of what will little avail in the great Day: Study; study while it is called to day the *knowledg* of what you ought to know.

But secondly this Self-conceitedness comes through a negligent carelesness to put into practice what we do know. Persons are very apt to complain of their ignorance of plain duties, yea as though they were holden and hindred from the knowledg of them, though the promise is full, *then shall ye know if ye follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared for such as the bright beams of the Sun-shine in the Morning: If thou criest after knowledg, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasure, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God, Prov. 2. 3, 4, 5.* Here is a double defect, we are not as laborious for knowledge as for silver, for which gain we will rise up early, and goe to bed late, and eat the bread of painfulness. Neither do we make it our chief care, to be still as we gain in knowledg, putting it into practice the way to make profitable dispatch of business is to end one before we begin another, remembering this true Proverb, *The way to know more is to do that we know*; thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the Exchangers, and then at my coming I might have received my own with advantage.

But I shall proceed with a second cause of this decay, namely this, A luke-warmness in Religion. that is so indifferent to solemn Worship, that we care not whether we go forward or backward When persons are come to this pass Gospel work hath little Authority with them, they are easily carried another way;

way; A shower of rain, an aking head, a faint fit, a cold frosty morning, and twenty such trifling occasions will appear ground enough to damp our devotion. Many Christians now a days are too too ready to fulfil the complaint of old. *Ephraim* is like a silly Dove without a heart. A work to do, but no heart to do it. A man without heart is like a Cupboard without meat. It is no satisfaction to hunger to see an empty Table. This Luke-warm spirit is desperately threatened in Scripture, *Rev. 3. 15. 16. I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would that thou wert either cold or hot, so then because thou art lukewarm I will spue thee out of my mouth.*

Thirdly, a third Cause of this decay, is unaptness to personal duties; every Professor in order to his growing, hath personal duties constantly to carry about with him, aptness wherein fits him for publick employment; but the contrary makes him unhandy or unskilful in the word of righteousness; as children by vertuous education; or the unexpert Souldier by frequent discipline, are both made ready for man-like actions; even so, aptness in personal duties, as *Family and Closet Prayer, Family and Closet Reading,* a careful Exercise, and execution of those choice and nearly concerned duties, with the addition of frequent fastings, watchings, humblings, patience, meekness, temperance, zeal, fear, love, giving all diligence; for if these things be in you and abound, they make you that you shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, but he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off: so briefly I pass to the third sign of decay in Godliness.

CHAP. III.

Briefly shewing the Reason of weariness to hear any Truth often, with three Causes of this Decay.

SIGN III.

When you care not to hear one matter often, though both essential and a suitable Truth.

By Often here, I would not be understood so, as that those that preach should day after day when they assemble without intermission, preach the very same thing word for word to their hearers, for indeed this may give just occasion of burthen to the hearer; therefore such preaching up one truth in respect of the season must surely be so observed, as to leave room for the making known other truths of equal necessity to be believed; therefore let the considerate Reader in this case construe my words, as he upon another case judgeth he ought to construe the holy Apostles words, *Often*, 1 Cor. 11. 26. *As often as you eat this bread; Often* here doth not in the least intend, that not at all persons be in this service; neither doth it surely intend, that they do it every time they meet together, but so do it as it have its season of being administred, and such season as may not extinguish, or leave no room for the administration of other Ordinances; so that by *Often* I would be understood, so frequent a preaching, the same Truth already known and believed, as stands with the wisdom and judgment of persons, that by God are entrusted to preach: with this alwayes premised, that as they see a possibility of any truth losing its proper force in the memory and heart,

heart, through want of repetition. And when suitable truth upon this very score is over and over preached, and meets with such spirits as care not to hear it, that are mindless, careless and displeased; this bespeaks such to be of the *dying hand*; for indeed, such carriages withstand Gods ordinary method; which he frequently useth in Scripture to his own people in covenant with him; for two great ends, the one is, that they may *remember it*; the other is, that they may *do it*.

Is not one great end of many institutions imposed on *Israel* of old, and they found according to commandment in the same services yearly, lest they should forget what God would have them remember: and when they are pleased to choose them a King, it is Gods express charge, when he sitteth upon the Throne of his Kingdom, that he shall write him a Copy of the Law, and read therein all the dayes of his life; that he may learn to keep Gods word. The safety of this to the same people, that have already believed is plainly expressed, and faultiness in them that care not to hear it, plainly implied; and one of the great ends I have noted, is also assigned in *1 Cor. 15. 1, 2.* *Moreover brethren, I declare unto you the Gospel which I preached unto you, which also you have received, and wherein you stand, by which also you are saved, if you keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless you have believed in vain.* Then he goeth on and sheweth the particulars he had preached to them, Principles even so plain in the Letter of them, that one would think they could not be forgotten; which strongly implies, that through want of preaching the same things to them again, they might either lose the bare knowledg of the Principles there laid down, or at least the spiritual force and nature of them; how then doth

This very Scripture reprove such as care not to hear a suitable truth often? charging them with faultiness in forgetting : that of all truth at best. they know but in part; and that by hearing one and the same truth again and again, a man may see some excellency further than yet he ever saw : experience will witness this to the considerate, *Psal. 3. beginning.*

Now this defect seems to arise from some wrong judgment or apprehensions, that such persons have of themselves; they are notionally conceited of some large reach they have in the knowledg of those very things they care not to hear; and this defect in them is occasioned through want of humble dependance upon God, and sensible feeling the Spirit of that word; *All my springs are in thee, Psal. 87. last.* Let any that find the case thus with them be intreated to be restless in themselves (not quiet or content) but pray earnestly to God, that he would both heal them from this foul distemper, and also forgive them for this great evil, of entertaining, or giving way to burden at hearing again; that that grace hath taught them to know already. This was that good Shepherd St. Peters great care, *2 Pet. 1. 12. 13, 15. Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you alwayes in remembrance of these things, though you know them, and be established in the present truth; yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this Tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance;* plainly implying that without a frequent repetition of the same truths, it was very easie not onely to lose the remembrance of them, but the spirit of them also. It was Gods method and expresse charge to *Moses*, that he should keep the memorial of the Passover from year to year in its continued season, such a year, such a moneth, such a day must the same Institution be revived and performed, plainly putting us in mind how

apt we are to lose the true remembrance and relish of an essentiall truth. How often Christian hath thy heart been so warmed at the hearing of some truth, as to say with the two Disciples, *Did not our hearts burn within us whilest he talked with us, and opened to us the Scriptures?* While the Minister hath been preaching hath not thy heart been burning, and thy mouth ready to say with Israel, *All that the Lord commands us we will do, and whether he sends us we will go!* and yet the next assault by the want of bread or water hast thou not also with Israel cried, *Wherefore hath the Lord brought us hither to die in this wilderness? would to God we had died in Egypt, where we had bread to the full.* How often do we behold spectacles of mortality carrying to their long homes, and though this is our high concern to lay it to heart, yet do we put the remembrance of them into the grave with them?

How often do we pray, watch, fast, or weep the more, to behold the Messenger of death come so near our door? doth not rather the often repetition of this practical, and the other preceptive repetition of Gods Council turn to surfet or loathing at least to a lessening the very spiritual sense and life that truly lodg in the veins of those great institutions. Now the Causes of this decay, which being duly heeded, may serve as remedies for recovery are these.

First Decay in the spiritual appetite.

Secondly Ignorance of the great end of all Institutions.

Thirdly, want of Spiritual digesture.

First, Decay in the spiritual appetite. When wholesome food is become loathsome, the fault is not in the meat, but in the man; such a person wants physick; *The full soul (saith Solomon) loathes the honey-comb, but*

24 *Signs of a Dying or Decaying Christian.*

to the hungry every bitter thing is sweet. The Stomach may be full under a double consideration; First from a real supply of food, this is both pleasant and profitable business. To be hungry is a mercy, and to have a supply to stay or satisfy this hunger is a double mercy. But secondly, a Stomach may be full and yet empty, meat enough but no appetite to it, through some decay or defect in the stomach. We see this in many persons, that may have what heart can wish, but desire faileth in them to their dainty dishes, now loathing what once they loved. We conclude when in this natural kind appetite faileth, a Consumption approacheth, and without speedy remedy will end in dissolution. It is counted in common less misery to want meat than to want appetite. Now when we have an essential and suitable Truth, and our ear itch to be gone, it is an evident sign of sickness at heart. And this may be, and yet the person very unsensible of it. *Thou sayest I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art poor, miserable, wretched, blind, and naked, Rev. 3. 17.* Here is a dreadful deep decay, but so far are they from feeling it, that they say they are rich and have need of nothing. O Christians, woe be to us if once we are full; let us look to our spiritual appetite, daily hunger is a sign of daily health. My soul thirsteth for God as the Hart thirsteth for the water brooks; it was thus with *David*, the more he drank, the more he was athirst; the deeper the sweeter is the fountain of God: *Mat. 5. 6. Blessed are ye that hunger and thirst, for ye shall be filled.*

2. A second Cause of this decay may be this ignorance of the great end of all Institutions; no service of God but is special and appointed for special ends, and is profitable in the Use of it for Doctrine, for Re-
proof,

proof, for Correction, for Instruction in righteousness, to this noble end, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to all good works. Every service for God will be burthensome, if we are ignorant of the great end of that service; we should never go to hear Gods Word, but should carry along with us knowledg of the two great ends of that Institution, his own Honour, and our Eternal Good: this will be like a large Mornings walk by a pleasant river side, it will cause an appetite to wholesome food with *David*, to say my soul longeth for God. The least Nail in Gods Temple hath its meaning, and did we study the meaning of all Appointments, we should with *Curius* thirst long for the time of Gods unfolding them. The worth of a Precept where men perish for want of counsel is best known, the sweet that is lodged in every Promise is onely understood by the needy soul: and the advantage that may be gathered by a Threatning is best known to such, as carry daily up and down with them the feeling sense and weight of eternal miscarrying.

3. A third Cause of this Decay, is want of Spiritual Digesture: Customary Meals are a great burden to the soul that hath an ill Digesture; it is a certain symptome of a foul stomach, when the food rests and corrupts there, not turning to usual nourishment such persons are listless, dull, heavy, and slow of motion, running towards an apparent decay, which is demonstrated by their thin visage, faint spirit, feeble knees, and trembling joynts, hollow eyes, inward speech. No Mother can look upon her Son in this case, but with deep lamentation, and utmost diligence to obtain remedy, with a feeling sense of that fatal consequence that will attend so sad a disease, crying out, except speedy release God will write me childless.

Now

Now there is in the natural Body truly diſtinguiſhed two kinds of Diſeſtures, both undue, yet both very applicatory to the work in hand, one is when the food digeſts ſo eaſily, that it hath not turned to nourishment, the Cud cheweth not; it paſſed through in the ſame nature and kind as it was received in, not remaining in the ſtomach a due time for ſpace to turn to nourishment. Another is, when it lieth too long, and ſo corrupts in the ſtomach; theſe are true Emblems of an ill ſpiritual diſeſture, when the word heard goes as it comes, takes not root downwards, nor bringeth fruit upwards, or elſe it is received, and ſtayeth undigeſted into a ſuitable practice, not answering the end for which it was ſent: It bringeth forth, but it is briars and thorns, envying and ſtrife; one of *Paul*, and another of *Apollo*, another of *Sephas*, and another of *Chriſt*: the word is heard by all, but not rightly digeſted by many.

CHAP. IV.

Briefly ſhewing how want of humility and charity in hearers, cauſeth them diſlike what is preached.

SIGN IV.

When few Sermons will pleaſe you, either you like not Matter, or Manner, or Man, or Place.

When Perſons come to this decay, that they not onely are weary to hear one matter often, but few Sermons pleaſe them; they are then ready to throw off all, and it is uſually known by this very character in Sign, viz. They will either find ſome fault with the matter;

matter; or else dislike the manner, or else the man, or the place; and wherever this is found in person or persons, without just occasion given them, such certainly cannot stand long in their Profession, without penitent reformation.

Let but hearers, when they come to Sermons, leave charity behind them, how easily may they disturb themselves and others in one of these cases; As for matter, will they not reply, it is such as I know already as well as the Minister can tell me; otherwise it is but poor weak ordinary matter: and as to the manner, will they not reply, either he speaks too high, or too loud, that they like not; or in their account not high enough, too low that they like not; otherwise in their account, too fast or too slow, and all this they like not.

Now as to the man, this being first premised, he is one that hath ordinary approbation and seal from Heaven to his Ministry, in the bringing through grace sinners to conversion; why as to such a man, they dislike him, and manifest their dislike; yet being asked can give no reason; nay it is probable to say truly, they cannot tell why they dislike him, but yet they do, they are not free to hear such a man. Is not this a silly weakness got among some Professors, the good Lord undeceive and humble such: surely it's possible for some to shew dislike in some, or all these cases, and as little cause for it, as *Corah* and his Company, had to dislike as they did, *Moses* and *Aaron*, Numb. 16. 3. *They gathered themselves together against Moses, and against Aaron, and said to them, ye take too much upon you, seeing all the Congregation is holy, every one of them; and the Lord is among them; wherefore then lift ye up your selves above the the Congregation of the Lord.* How causeless this carriage was from *Corah*, *Dathan*, and *Abiram*;

28 Signs of a Dying or Decaying Christian.

Abiram, with two hundred and fifty Princes, the Lord from Heaven in a way not common discovers, they that die, die not the common death of all men, as that Chapter fully shews; so heinous was their sin in Gods account, to murmur against his servants without a cause: And is it then a new thing, that such be in Churches now under this decaying sign, of disliking matter, manner, or man? was not this very spirit got into the *Corinth* Church, and bold even to shew it self against the holy man *St. Paul*, that had begotten them to the faith, 2 Epist. 10. *For his Letters*, say they, *are mighty and powerful, but his bodily presence weak, and his speech contemptible.* Here they were not sparing to vent themselves; the small cause they had, yea the unreasonableness of that their dislike, let the considerate judge, whose conscience is not asleep. Again in 1 Cor. 4. such a like spirit discovers it self, after so ungracious a rate, as that Wise-man's reply will evidence, in verse 3. *But with me it is a very small thing, that I should be judged of you, or mans judgment;* they account the Apostles fools, themselves wise, the Apostles weak, themselves strong; by all this, without adding what Scriptures more might be added, it is very evident, if we will take the holy Spirits testimony, that such persons under this very sign were in the Apostles dayes; and doth not also the testimony of a good conscience say, there are such even now?

It is very possible for some tempers to find fault, or pick as it were a quarrel at one thing or another in the Ordinance of Preaching even as it were to create occasion. There is a disease attends some persons that will not be pleased, it is next to impossible to gratifie them to content; neither *Barnabas* nor *Bonar-gis* will satisfie. This Sign takes notice of four Complaints. Here is a hand of Divine Providence throws a stone;

stone; Designs good in its fall where it resteth, the hand is not discerned, nor regarded, namely the end wherefore the stone is thrown, but by and by like the thorny ground, Hearers, offence is taken, and several complaints are brought in against the stone, but no regard is still had to the hand that threw the stone; one Complaint is, the Matter is not liked, it is some truth they know already, their ears itch at this, and they want some Novelty. This is truly emblem'd in wanton Children, who are so full fed they know not what to eat, but are ready to nauseate those Dainties that their poor Neighbours Children would leap at the remnants of. This Disease in the spiritual and natural Body is a fore-runner both of a Famine of Bread, and of the hearing the Word of God. Another Complaint is against the manner of delivery; we are got so far perhaps that we will not take offence at the matter, but the manner; something is to be said against that; it was not dished up in such a Dress, with such a Voice and Presence as liked this full stomach: thus the Manner is quarrelled at. Another Complaint is against the Man; you like perhaps the Matter and Manner, but it is such a Man, for whom you have little charity, and as little cause perhaps; but so it is you like not the Man, all this while the Devil's Trade goes on, if he can bring you to quarrel at Matter, Manner, Man, or Place; so you lose the profit he gains his End, and God loseth his Honour: Professors look to your hearts here, and lay aside these excuses. or quit your Profession; examine if you live up to that mean Matter you account you heard this day; examine if the Manner will stand in Gods sight, for you to contend against to your own loss. And for the Man, examine in your own spirit, whose Ox or Ass hath he taken, while he is robbing perhaps himself

30 Signs of a Dying or Decaying Christian?

himself and his to do you service for this requital. Give Christ Jesus leave to speak here a concluding word, *Matt. 11. 16, 17, 18, 19.* But whereunto shall I liken this Generation, 'tis like unto Children sitting in the Market, and calling to their fellows, saying, we have piped unto you, and you have not danced; we have mourned to you, and ye have not lamented. For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say he hath a Devil; the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and ye say, behold a man gluttonous, a wine-bibber, a friend of Publicans and sinners; but let me tell you this, that wisdom is justified of her Children.

Object. What Causes may be assigned for this Decay?

Ans. These two:

First, Want of Humility.

Secondly, Want of Charity.

First, Want of Humility. The humble Soul where ever he comes he is so debased at his own worthlessness and undone state, that the meanest morsel, if really bread, is mercy to him, he can feed heartily upon pulse, and look fair with it, and is thankful, finding matter for praise, and none for repining, his humiliation leads him to contentedness, and his contentedness to thankfulness; the lower he lies, the more he thrives. It is a famous Instance which Doctor Taylor gives us of the Duke of Conde. I have read (saith he) that when the Duke of Conde had entered voluntarily into the incommodities of a Religious Poverty, he was one day espied, and pitied by a Lord of Italy, who out of tenderness wished him to be more careful and nutritive of his person. The good Duke answered, Sir, be not troubled, and think not that I am ill provided of conveniencies; for I send an Harbinger before me, who makes ready my lodgings every

every night, and takes care that I be royally entertained. The Lord asked him, who was his Harbinger, he answered, The knowledge of my self, and the consideration of what I deserve for my sins, which is eternal torment; and when with this knowledge I arrive at my lodging, how unprovided soever I find it, methinks it is ever better than I deserve. Oh! let us alwayes remember, all is well on this side hell.

But secondly, Want of Charity, It is a true Proverb, *Love maketh the Law easie*. What Sermon, or Person, or Place may not a man find occasion to quarrel at, if he comes to it without charity. Charity, saith the blessed Apostle bears all things, its Contrary bears nothing; Charity covereth a multitude of sins; its Contrary multiplies aggravations of sins; Charity thinketh no ill, its Contrary thinketh nothing else but ill; Charity puts the best interpretation upon all actions, its contrary puts the worst: nothing liker God, than Charity, for God is love; nothing liker the Devil than its Contrary: Love wrought with God, when we deserved no pity, to send his dear Son full of pity; love to our misery made him lose his life to save ours. When I saw thee in thy blood to the loathing of thy person, I said unto thee, live; that time was the time of love, *Ezekiel 16. He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him, that with his stripes we might be healed, Isaiah 53.* Christians, would you get from under this decay; Doth few Sermons either as to Matter, Manner, or Man, please you; get into the spirit of love, that will give grains of allowance, that will put the best construction upon every action, when Preaching, Hearing, Contention ceaseth, yea when these glorious lights of Faith and Hope hath done shining, then will love be in its greatest lustre, *1 Cor. 13. 13.*

CHAP. V.

Containing five Causes of deceitful thinking we know enough; with four marks to know when we are under that deceit.

SIGN V.

When you think you know enough.

The greatness of this defect, and the danger of it may be seen, if something be premised and considered. When you think you know enough; that is, you are grown so tall in the knowledge of God, and the Ordinances of his House, the way to his Kingdom; the strength of your adversaries, the Flesh, World, and Devil, and the plague of your own heart; for all this must be premised, as being in such persons as think they know enough; if their thoughts be not gross deceit, and then what need of Hearing or Assembling, or crying after knowledg, or lifting up the voice for understanding? Is not this gross deceit grown somewhat common, but of dangerous tendency, to knock both heart and hand from off the means God hath ordained to encrease and sanctifie knowledge? Is not such a conceit the road way to Atheism? Were it not gotten among some sleepy Christians in the Apostles time? Doth not that saying, 1 Cor. 8. 2, 3. directly aim at such? *If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. But if any man love God, the same is known of him:* As much as if the Apostle should say, you think you know much, truly if you know so much as that you love God, you are known of him; and if you know this, you know what you can know in this life; but if you know not this, you know nothing yet as you ought to know,

know, whatever you think of your selves: and therefore look to it. that you love God, and dwell not about this or that tall conceit of your knowledge; but if you or any man love him, the same is known of him: And this I shall humbly add, if any man love God, the same hath learned to think soberly or meanly of himself.

But the danger of this appears further, if we consider, that some for being under this dying Sign, were about to be spewed out of Gods mouth, *Revel. 3. 17. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing;* (yet art so ignorant) or knowest not that thou art wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. How doth the holy spirit illustrate to us the miserable estate of this People, under this dying Sign? *Wretched*, one would think that enough; yet he adds *Miserable*, and that is not enough to set it out, but they are *Poor, Blind, and Naked*; in a word, they are quite the contrary to what they think of themselves, and what is in growing Christians.

It is a true Character of a gracious growing Soul, he never thinks he knows enough of the deceitfulness of *his own heart*; the other knowledge it is that cometh under this dying Sign. This knowledg encreaseth *humility*, the other encreaseth *pride*: 'Tis certain that persons under this conceit that they know enough do little study their *own heart*, which is *deceitful above all things and desperately wicked, who can know it.* I the Lord search the heart, plainly implying, that when we have studied all our dayes the knowledg of our hearts, we shall still be but Children in that knowledg. It is one of the Lords Prerogatives, both to know the heart and search it. Therefore when God had said the heart is deceitful above all things, who

34 *Signs of a Dying or Decaying Christian.*

can know it, he gives this Resolution, No mortal man can, *I the Lord search it.* Christians may very truly discern the difference between spiritual and carnal knowledge, the Pulse of the one beating strongly to a large attainment in knowledge for knowledge sake, the other as diligent to increase in knowledge for practise sake; the one the more he knows himself, the more he loaths himself; the other the more he knows himself, the more he falls in love with himself; Ah Christians, if we know God in his greatness, so as to fear him, and in his goodness so far as to love him, and in his mercy so much as to be thankful, and in his justice so much as to be humble; this will lead us into the study of our self to that degree of self-acknowledgment with good David, *Psalms 119, 120. My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments.*

Now I shall with Gods help shew some causes of this Deceit; you may think you know enough.

First, when you measure what you know by your own eyes or light; you do think so, not measuring what you know by the Rule of Knowledge, the Word of God, *1 Cor 10. 12. For we dare not make our selves of the number; or compare our selves with some that commend themselves; but they measuring themselves with themselves, by comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise, Prov. 30 12. There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, yet not washed from their filthiness.*

By these Texts you may see what miserable judgment men will make of things, when they walk by the light of their own eyes, contrary to God's express charge, *Deut. 12. 8. You shall not do after all things we do here this day, every man what is right in his own eyes.*

Secondly, Another Cause may be this, when you measure what you know by what once you did know; not

not considering that further knowledg forceth further light, and calls for proportionable practise : *When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child; but when I became a man I put away childish things.*

Thirdly, When you measure what you know, by seeing others that profess they know, do as they do, *Tit. 1. 16. They profess they know God, but in works they deny him.* Other mens actions must no further be a rule for us, notwithstanding their knowledg, then as their actions accord with Gods Word, the rule of knowledg.

Fourthly, When you measure what you know, by what you are disposed to practice, or do; men pick and choose what Commands they will observe, and how to observe them, in our dayes : Some Commands suit more with the nature and disposition of persons than other Commands do; they that cannot endure *Drunkennes*, can give way to *passion*; they that cannot endure *Uncleanness*, can give way to *Covetousness*; but as the victory is glorious when gotten over, what was most difficult; so measuring what we know, not by what we are disposed to doe; but what God commands us to doe is the truest way or rule to measure by; for the carnal man will make the Law of Nations his guide, the moral man the Ten Commandments his guide; the Antichristian man the false Spirit his guide; and all measure themselves by their guide : but the undeceived Christian man makes Gods Word his guide, and measures what he knows, by his walking like that; *To the Law and to the Testimony, if they speak not according to this Word, 'tis because there is no light in them,* Isa. 8. 20.

Fifthly, When you measure not what you know, by what God in his Word calls you personally to do, when those especial Commands that lie upon you; as *Husband to Wife, Wife to Husband, Father to Child,*

36 *Signs of a Dying or Decaying Christian.*

Child to Father, Master to Servant, Servant to Master, are left undone, or so lamely done, that they are full of cracks and flaws; the Religion of such is vain, and contrary comparisons to this, as vain and deceitful. This was the evil of the Scribes and Pharisees, they minded Annis and Cummin, but neglected judgment, mercy, and faith, the weightier matters of the Law: all doings are shews without substance, while the weightier matters are left undone, James 1. 26. If any man seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, he deceives his own heart; this mans Religion is in vain: Consider this in the fear of God.

Object. But how may we know we are deceived with this deceit.

Ans. First, When you have a low value of those means, that under God first brought you to know: Is not a Sermon a low thing with you? this and that Preacher, that one was high in your account, now weak and mean in your esteem? Now you are full, now you are rich, and have reigned as Kings without us: I would to God you did reign, that we also might reign with you, 1 Cor. 4. 8.

Secondly, When you are mighty prodigal of what you know, thinking no matter well managed, that you have not most voice in, Prov. 15. 2. *The tongue of the wise useth knowledg aright, but the mouth of fools poureth forth foolishness.* So Prov. 29. 11. *The fool uttereth all his mind, but a wise man keepeth it in while afterwards.*

Thirdly, When you please your self with the thoughts that few or none in knowledg outstrip you, having a secret scorn to compare your selves with any; that is, when you think none is able to say more to a Text of Scripture, than you have done; or knows the holy spirits mind more than your selves,

Per.

Signs of a Dying or Decaying Christian. 37

Jer. 8. 8. We are wise, (We by way of singularity,) and the Law of the Lord is with us : At the same time God saith, What wisdom is in them ?

Fourthly, When in all matters material, you are not careful to take counsel of God, before you bring them to action, *Prov. 15. 28. The heart of the wise studieth to answer, but the mouth of fools poureth forth foolishness.* And *Chap. 3. 6. In all thy wayes acknowledg him, and he shall direct thy paths.*

CHAP. VI.

Containing in it Christian apiness, through weakness, to neglect coming to Christs Table; with a short description of offences, that seemingly may hinder; and three Causes of this Decay.

SIGN. VI.

When a small occasion will keep you from Christs Table, or communion with the Church of God.

By Christs Table here, I would be understood Christ Jesus his own institution the night he was betrayed; which he set on foot to his Penitent, Believing, Baptized Disciples, *1 Cor. 11. 23, 24. For I have received of the Lord, that which I also delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks he brake it, and said; Take, eat, this is my body broken for you; this do in remembrance of me; And after the same manner he took the Cup, when he had supped, saying, This Cup is the New Testament in my blood; This do, as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.*

38 *Signs of a Dying or Decaying Christian.*

These Scriptures prove it to be Christ Jesus his own institution, and therefore a duty for his people to be found in often.

But it being somewhat beside the business in hand, to treat in particular of all the uses and ends of this blessed institution, my work here is to be instrumental, if the Lord will, to deter believers upon some occasions that they have taken, to neglect this duty that is weighty and not to be omitted or abused, as they will answer Christ Jesus, who is ready to take an account; it being that Ordinance that doth in a most lively manner express the certainty of his suffering, in his body being broken, and his blood poured out, that he might finish the work of mans Redemption, and remain at the Fathers right hand, Mediator between God and Man, the Man Christ Jesus, against all the opposition of that corrupt Spirit, that seeks in our dayes to disparage and extinguish this blessed Ordinance, thereby to root out of mens understandings the certainty of Christ Jesus being a personal fleshly substance; and so converting him into a Spirit, contrary to this saying of his, after his resurrection; *Behold my hands and my feet, that it is my self, handle me and see, for a Spirit hath not flesh and bone as you see me have,* Luke 24. 39. Acts 1. 9, 10, 11. The necessity of believing this is evidenced by the sad consequence of the contrary, for denying Christ Jesus to be a fleshly substance, and converting him into a Spirit, any Spirit, or every Spirit; and so in truth deny the Christ of God: And then blind, injudicious men, may form to themselves, and world, what they will fancy to call their Christ: This premised to the Explication of the Lords Table.

Now when a small occasion will hinder us from this Service, it is a certain mark of decay in the
Power

Power of Godliness, and that the Authority of the Person that gave Being to this Truth, and the great end and uses of this Service have little presence *in our hearts*: What Friend can behold his Friend, not onely weep for him, but bleed for him; not onely bleed for him till a fainting fit, but till death seize on every part, and put a perfect period to his Life, and not weep with him, yea and bleed with him, yea and dye with him. Our Lord Jesus saith peradventure for a good man one would even dare to die, much more with such a common good man that is innocent, and dies for a fellow good man that is guilty; surely who would forbear to die with such a one.

But this is not a sufficient Parallel to the work before us: Here is not a Friend dying for his Friend; but here is one that never did sin, *neither was guile found in his mouth*, crying out, *my soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death*, brought as a Lamb to the slaughter, beset with a bitter agony, sweating as it were great drops of *Blood* a man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Griefs, oppressed, and afflicted, and bruised; then taken from Prison, and from Judgment; his hair pulled off, *his visage marred more than any mans*, his face spit on, his head crowned with thorns, his hands and his feet nailed to a Cross, a Spear thrust into *his side*, and his whole Body fixt on a Tree in a bitter torturing manner, for three full hours together he remains in deep anguish, so that the Vail of the Temple at *Jerusalem* was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and the *Earth did quake*, and the *Rocks rent*, and the *Graves open'd*, and many dead bodies came out of their Graves, and appear'd unto many, and darkness was upon the whole Earth for that three hours, and the Keepers tremble, and become as dead men, and fear with anguish came upon all flesh, and in this bitter

40 *Signs of a Dying or Decaying Christian.*

bitter Agony he cries out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me.*

Come now and let me take thee by the hand, my Christian friend, and we will walk to *Emaus*, and talk as we go of what hath happened; surely it will make us *sad*; for the person on whom this Tragedy was acted, was one *Jesus of Nazareth*, a Prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people. But who will believe this report, and to whom is this arm of the Lord revealed; for he was thus wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our Iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him, that with his stripes we might be healed: All we like sheep have gone astray, and have turned every one into his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

(US ALL) is a word of great emphasis, worthy to be enquired into: Who this *Us all* meaneth, I shall tell you, and the Good Lord open your eyes, that you may tell your selves; it is *Transgressors, Rebels, Traitors, Enemies in their minds*; It is *Sauls, great Persecutors, Mary Magdalenes*, in whom were *seven Devils*; it is *Manasses, Charmers, Sorcerers, Blasphemers, Swearers, Fornicators, Idolaters, Adulterers, Thieves, Covetous, Drunkards, Revilers, Extortioners*, and such like, *Worshippers of Idol Gods made of Wood and Stone*. So that here is not a Friend dying for his Friend, nor a Child for his Father, nor a Brother for his Brother, nor a Servant for his Master, nor a Subject for his Prince, but here is *the Son of God, the Lord of Life and Glory* coming from the bosom of God, taking upon himself a contemptible life, and a cursed, painful, and shameful death upon the Cross, that he might redeem these very persons from the wrath of God and pangs of Hell to all eternity, where otherwise deservedly they must have been alwayes dying, yet alwayes living

living in endless flames, *gnawing* their tongues for pain, weeping, wailing, gnashing of teeth in that place prepared of old, the pile whereof is fire and brimstone, where their worm *never dieth*, and their fire *never goeth out*, but remains tormented for *ever and ever* with the *Devil* and his Angels, from which state this blessed Son of God delivers and proclaims the greatness of this his love to every sinner, and hath instituted this great service in remembrance of this his bitter Passion, that such for whom he drank this bitter Cup might shew forth this his death till he shall come the second time without sin to salvation. Can any then cast their eye upon the person, worth, and wounds of this bleeding love, and not fall in love, yea be sick with love after daily Communion with such a one. What can such thus redeem'd from this great woe, by this great Lord, to such a great state, as to be called the adopted Sons and Daughters of God, and yet let a small occasion keep them from communion with their Lord and his redeemed, and not be under deep decay, &c.

For any therefore to estrange themselves from Christ's Table, it being no less than a refusing the food he hath prepared; because things go not just as they would have them, doth greatly argue the lett to be in themselves though not by such heeded; they being great wanderers abroad in the wayes of others; perhaps more busying themselves than they ought, and yet as great strangers at home to self-examination, and due personal preparation, which where ever it is, is that indeed that so warrantably calls persons to come to Christ Jesus's Feast, of *Bread and Wine*, purchased with his *Blood*; that negligence therein will prove no less than their great sin: What is it therefore that should keep us from that service, wherein by faith
we

42 Signs of a Dying or Decaying Christian.

we are to feed, as it were upon the flesh of the Son of God? *whose flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed.* I ruly nothing but self-unworthiness or unpreparedness: Surely, surely, the spiritual growing Christian, whose hungrings and thirstings are after hourly communion with Jesus Christ, can better forgo his natural food a thousand times, than yield to a lett from this performance: Let us therefore examine our selves, that we are meet subjects, *discerning the Lords Body, and so let us eat that Bread, and drink that Cup.*

Now the Causes of this decay, or yielding upon small occasions, to absent from Christs Table, may be these three.

First, Too great Ignorance who are the Subjects Christ calls to this Service.

Secondly, Too too great aptness to be easily provoked.

Thirdly, Want of love to Jesus Christ, the Author of this Service.

First, Too great Ignorance who are the Subjects Christ calls to this Service; which consists in a misconstruing his general invitation to all penitent, believing baptized Disciples, who have had an orderly admittance thus far, and by way of Precept are enjoined both to come to this Service, and continue in it; *The same day were added to the Church three thousand souls, and they continued stedfast in the Apostles doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer:* it is peculiarly unto such appointed and sanctified, that they may keep in remembrance their Lord and Saviour's Passion. *So often as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do shew forth the Lords death till he come.* But I would not be mistaken here, as that I mean, the outward badge of these onely, makes right Subjects for Christ's Call;

Call ; yet this *outward* must be , but *no* to it when it is alone : The Kings Daughter is to be all glorious within, as well as her garment of wrought gold : The hungerer and thirster after his supply, that sensibly sees all his springs to be in him ; and as the Hart panteth after the brooks of water, hath his soul crying. Oh when shall I come and appear before him ? negligence to be thus fitted, causeth ignorance of Christs Call.

But secondly , Too too great aptness to be easily provoked : Some Christians are so weak , that they will be still forming discontent to themselves, ill interpreting others actions, and straining at every Gnat, which generally comes through weakness in judgment, and unaptness to be busying themselves with their high Calling, and the worth of Gods gracious privileges afforded them ; by which means the inward man is too much raked or made raw, and so apt to smart at every little touch ; as special care therefore must be had in Churches, that none give just offence ; so that none upon too light account take offence ; for it doth but argue such Children or Babes in Christianity, and greatly rob themselves of that spiritual refreshing strength, that otherwise might be their present portion , and fill their heart with disquieting thoughts to the hindring their spiritual appetite from taking in that rich refreshment, Christ Jesus Table is furnished with for every prepared Guest.

But Thirdly, Want of love to Jesus Christ, the Author of this Service ; All those motives that provoke the heart to love Jesus Christ, should be active now ; viz. The greatness of his love to purchase this Service for us, with no less price than his precious blood ; the smalness of our desert to procure this ; together with the high privileges it signifies us heirs unto : Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that
we

44 *Signs of a Dying or Decaying Christian.*

we should be called, (or accounted) the Sons of God, who were before without Christ, &c. But now made nigh through the blood of Christ. How should this provoke our fervent love to him, to be crying out with the Spouse in the Canticles; My beloved is fair and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand. Certainly, my friends, were our hearts truly spiritual, we could not choose but see singular desert in Jesus Christ; calling for the greatest of our love, in a holy affection to the enjoying of him, and making us prefer our communion with him in this service, before all things that in this world may challenge our dearest respect: It must needs therefore follow, that want of love makes way for small occasions to keep us from Christ's Table; I shall leave this to consideration, and pass to the seventh Sign of a dying Christian.

CHAP. VII.

Shewing the great decay to Christianity, when mindless to Prayer; with a plain discovery of the Necessity, Excellency, Lets, and Helps to Prayer, in sixteen Particulars, with four Directions as to the Manner of our approaches to God in this service, and what we are to do after Prayer.

SIGN VII.

W*hen you have usually no great mind to Prayer.*

When a Christian is mindless of this bosome, blessed, intimate service of Prayer, which is a drawing nigh to, and talking with the great Lord God Almighty; here is then ground enough to conclude his state, and his decay very great. Now in Prayer there is considerable.

First,

Signs of a Dying or Decaying Christian. 45

First, The Necessity of Prayer.

Secondly, The Excellency of Prayer.

Thirdly, Lets to Prayer.

Fourthly, Helps to Prayer.

First, The necessity of Prayer appears from the Command of God, *1 Thes. 5. 7. Pray without ceasing; Col. 4. 21. Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; 1 Phil. 4. 6. Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.*

Secondly, It appears from example, *1 Sam. 12. 23. God forbid that I should sin in ceasing to pray for you; Psal. 55. 27. Evening and morning, and at noon, will I pray; Dan. 6. 10. Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house, and kneeled upon his knees, three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did at other times.*

Thirdly, the Necessity appears from the importunity that goeth along with prayer, *Luke 22. 44. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly, Luke 6. 12. And it came to pass in those dayes, that he went into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God: Acts 12. 5. Peter therefore was kept in Prison, but prayer was made without ceasing of the Church to God for him: Luke 11. 8, 9. I say to you, though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.*

Secondly, The Excellency of Prayer, appears in this,

First, It engageth Gods strength.

Secondly, It holds with holy reverence Gods hands.

Thirdly, In no condition we can be barred from it.

For the first, *Exod. 17. 11. And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hands, Israel prevailed; and when*

46 Signs of a Dying or Decaying Christian.

when he let down his hands, the Amalekites prevailed, Josh. 10. 12, 13, 14. Then spake Joshua (or prayed to the Lord) in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the Children of Israel; and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou Moon upon the Valley of Ajalon; and the Sun stood still, and the Moon stayed until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies; and there was no day like that before it, or after it, that the Lord hearkned to the prayer of a man, for the Lord fought for Israel.

Secondly, Prayers Excellency appears in this, it holds with holy reverence Gods hands, Exod. 32. 9. 10, 11, 12. And the Lord said to Moses, I have seen this people, and behold it is a stiff-necked people; Now therefore let me alone that I may destroy them, and I will make of thee a great Nation. And Moses besought the Lord, saying, Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot, turn I pray thee and repent of this evil against them, Numb 14. 11. 22. And the Lord said to Moses, how long will this people provoke me, and how long will it be ere they believe me? now therefore let me alone that I may destroy them.

Thirdly, Prayers Excellency appears, in that in no condition we can be barred from it, Daniel in the Lions Den, Chap. 6. Jonah in the Whales Belly, Chap. 1. 2. Then Jonah prayed to the Lord his God out of the Fishes Belly, and said, I cried by reason of my affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me: out of the belly of Hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice: so Paul and Silas in Prison prayed, and sang praises to God, and the Prisoners heard them.

Now we come to Lets to Prayer, i.e. what hinders Prayer from prevailing with God.

First, Presumption in an unreverent adventuring before the Lord, 2 Chron. 14 and 20. 33, &c. For as yet

yet the people had not prepared their heart unto the God of their Fathers, therefore thus will I do unto thee O Israel; and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God O Israel, Amos 4. 12.

A second lett or hinderance to Prayer is, wandring thoughts, Jer. 4. 14. O Jerusalem wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou maist be saved, how long shall thy vain thoughts lodg within thee? Therefore take no thought saying; what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be cloathed? but seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you, Mat. 6. 32, 33.

The third lett to Prayer is bosom sin, or pleasant delight in some secret lust, Psal. 66. 8. If I regard iniquity in my heart God will not hear me. Josh. 7. 8, 9, 10, 11. The Lord saith to Joshua, get thee up, wherefore liest thou thus upon thy face; Israel have sinned, they have also transgressed my Covenant, which I have commanded them; for they have taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen and dissembled; and they have put it also among their own stuff, therefore they could not stand before their Enemies, but turned their backs. This good man Joshua in Chap 10. 12. at another time is so prevalent at prayer, that the Sun and Moon stands still; yet now in his seventh Chapter, because there is some bosom sin in the Camp, he cannot prevail till this is removed.

A fourth lett is, want of reconciliation to brethren, Mat. 5. 23, 24. Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the Altar, and there remembrest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the Altar, and first go and be reconciled to thy brother, Mat. 6. 12. Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors; but if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive ye your trespasses.

48 Signs of a Dying or Decaying Christian.

A fifth lett is despairing doubts of being answered, *Jam. 1. 5, 6.* If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God that giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him; but let him ask in faith, nothing doubting, for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind, and tossed; let not that man think he shall receive any thing at the hand of the Lord. Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, believe that ye shall receive it, and ye shall receive it, *Mark 11. 24.*

We shall now speak of Helps to Prayer; for faith some, I would, but I cannot pray, I want words, all that I can do is to sigh; for a Help to this.

First, labour to get a feeling of the necessity and excellency of Prayer, so as that thy heart goeth under a grievous burthen, because thou canst not pray, *Jer. 5. 3.* O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth, thou hast stricken them, but they are not grieved. Here the Prophet complains, that though Israel are stricken, smitten, and afflicted, yet they have not grieved; clearly implying, that a grieved, burthened state at the sense of want, is a fair step in the way to obtain supply, *Psal. 38 4, 6.* For mine iniquities are gone over my head, as a heavy burthen, they are too heavy for me; I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly; cast thy burthen upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee, *Psal. 55. 22.*

Secondly, study much how to get deep sense of your our great wants of Gods daily help; All my springs are in thee; Without me you can do nothing: For in him we live, move, and have our being. *Acts 17. 27, 28.*

Thirdly, Consider God hath provided no way for you to acquaint him with your wants, but prayer, and if you cannot pray, how will you make your wants known to God, *Phil. 4. 6.* In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known

Signs of a Dying or Decaying Christian. 49

known unto God, 2 Chron. 26. *Uzziah sought God in the dayes of Ezra, and as long as he sought the Lord, God made him to prosper : Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorifie me, Psal. 50. 15. Hos. 5. 15.*

Fourthly, Consider that all your outward mercies become blessings through Prayer, 1 Tim. 4. 5. 6. For every creature of God is good, if it be received with thanksgiving, for it is sanctified by the Word of God and Prayer : Give us this day our daily bread ; When Jesus had made the multitude sit down upon the ground, he looked up to heaven, and gave thanks ; or said grace, as the old translations read it.

Fifthly, Consider what a miserable condition will yours be, if cast into the Lions Den, Whales Belly, or Stocks, if you cannot pray : They poured out their supplications when thy chastning was upon them.

Sixthly, Intreat Jesus Christ to teach you to pray, Luke 11. 1. And it came to pass, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his Disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his Disciples : as the Lord commands us to do, so he must help us to Pray Ezek. 36. 37.

But I shall close this with a brief Caution about the practical part of Prayer, beseeching you that you would labour with all your might, after these few things.

First, Get your hearts possesst wit a reverent estimation of the great and gracious priviledge of Prayer, that such a great Lord God Almighty, King of Kings, Maker of heaven and earth, should admit such a creeping worm as thee and me ; and less than this, such a polluted and undone miserable creature to approach so nigh such a Glorious presence, think still oh what a favour is this.

50 *Signs of a Dying or Decaying Christian.*

Secondly, Never be rash in adventuring into such a Glorious presence in the act of Prayer, deliberate, ponder, recall, and recollect thy self before thou go down to thy knees, whither, and why, and before what a great Majesty thou art now going to plead for thy life, and the life of thy Relations, and above all for the souls of all, that they may not everlastingly miscarry. Who will suffer the Chyrurgion to cut off his arm without great deliberation; shall we be less concerned to approach the *Presence of God*? O Christians, give your selves not only time for the Duty, but also time to prepare for the Duty, Call home your wandering thoughts, set thy heart in order for thy duty before thou fall upon thy duty, by such means you shall not onely pray but prevail.

Thirdly, Pray without ceasing, that is, get into the habit of prayer, be alwayes in a *praying* frame, pray at work, pray at meat, pray when thou walkest by the way, sitting by the fire, pray at going to bed, and at up rising in the morning; pray alwayes, and in all things prayer is one of Gods great lights in this World, which he expects his Children should keep alwayes burning, unto which great light let me beseech you watch every opportunity to add the oyl of reading this will make it burn much clearer, it is undoubtedly one great preparative to solemn family, and closet prayer, that we first read some blessed portion of holy Scripture, ever remembering that good saying of Davids Psalm 119. 105. *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.*

Fourthly and lastly, when you rise from your knees, and cease the act of prayer, then humbly in faith expect and wait for the *return of prayer*; do not in a formal manner run over a *formal prayer*, remembering what you have prayed for no longer than while in the service,

Service; It is good for a man both to hope and also quietly wait for Gods salvation; many it is certainly evident miss the end of their prayers, because they do not hope and wait with inward thirst for a return. David was much of a contrary frame, *My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning, I say more than they that watch for the morning.* Let us be at no rest short of this frame, *Psal. 130.6.*

CHAP. VIII.

Shewing the great Decay to Christianity, when mindless to reading in the holy Scriptures; with six Calamities very observable, which Scripture ignorance brings; shewing also the blessed priviledges of those that have the Scripture, with a confutation of that Atheistical style that the people called Quakers put upon them.

SIGN VIII.

WHen reading the holy Scriptures is more burthensome than delightful.

When Israel was pleased to choose them a King, God is pleased to set him his work, lest they lose their end, and God lose his honour.

And it shall come to pass, when he shall sit upon the Throne of his Kingdom, that he shall write him a Copy of Gods Law in a Book, and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the dayes of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren. In like manner when Joshua enters upon the Government, he hath this charge from God, that the Book of the Law should not depart out of his mouth, but he must meditate therein day and night; that he might observe to do according to all that's written, then should he make his way prosperous, and have good success. And when King David declar e

52 *Signs of a Dying or Decaying Christian.*

declares who is the blessed man. He is one that delights in the Law of the Lord, making it his meditation day and night. This premised, discovers most precious worth attainable through Scripture reading, and if need were might call for a multitude more witnesses, both from Scripture and Experience: But it being not so much my proper work to assert Scripture Excellency; as to shew and prove that Christian to be dying to Christ, that is not delightfully taken up with reading Gods Word. I shall therefore proceed in a plain method.

Thus, where delight to reading grows low, there negligence to reading must needs grow high, there decay grows great, and such must decline in their spiritual estate, this negligence bringing with it much ignorance, and so covers the eyes and hearts of such as with a veil, so as that they cannot so see as the spiritual growing man sees, Gods Precepts how they command him, Gods Promises how they uphold him, Gods threatnings how awfully they perswade him, the Scripture being his Treasury or Storehouse, from whence he is made able through the spirits help to withstand the fiery darts of the wicked one, saying after Christ Jesus his Captain, thus and *thus it is written*. It is evident to the meanest capacity, that doth but consider, how great incapacity all such must needs be in, to understand and resist the manifold temptations and wiles of the evil one, except they be well acquainted with Gods holy Word, that hath in it armour for the whole man, with directions how to put it on; Ignorance therefore here must make sore desolation, and bring as I humbly conceive upon persons, these six Calamities.

First, It makes you in a wilderness when sickness and affliction comes, because you will not know how
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and why they come. Sickness and Affliction are of two sorts inward and outward; inward are such as seize upon the mind, as a judgment caused by the persons upon whom they come, *Isa. 6. 9, 10. And he said, go and tell this people, hear ye indeed but understand not; see ye indeed, but perceive not, make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert and be healed.* So *Rom. 1. 21. 28. Because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were they thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened: And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient. For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.* Now such sore judgments as these are come upon and procured by many, who turn the grace of God into wantonness, professing to be most spiritual, live as the almost most carnal, little minding (because greatly ignorant) of those spiritual causes they may run into, to the bringing upon themselves such spiritual judgments or sicknesses and afflictions as these. And indeed how comes it to pass, that such afflictions are not feared, before they come to the provoking such to walk so as they may prevent their coming, but ignorance of the Scripture? they not conversing often with them, to the well informing themselves, what judgments may come on their minds, and what are the Causes God assigns of their coming, so as to be in trembling and dread continually, to the keeping themselves out of that channel, where such bitter waters run.

54 Signs of a Dying or Decaying Christian.

Again, there are outward sicknesses and afflictions, and they are such as these, Deut. 28, 58, 59, 60. If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this Law, that are written in this Book; that thou maist fear this glorious and fearful Name, the Lord thy God; Then the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues of thy seed, even great plagues, and of long continuance, sore sicknesses and of long continuance: Moreover he will bring upon thee all the diseases of Egypt, which thou wast afraid of, and they shall cleave unto thee. Levit. 26. 15, 16. If ye shall despise my statutes, and if your soul shall abhor my judgments, that you will not do them, but that you break my Covenant; I also will do this to you, I will even appoint over you Terror, Consumption, and the burning Ague, that shall consume their eyes and cause sorrow of heart; and ye shall sow your seed in vain, for your Enemies shall eat it. But I shall speak fully to the Causes of Affliction in the twenty second Sign, and therefore proceed no further here, but come to the second Calamity, that Scripture ignorance brings.

Secondly, that your uneven walking with God may bring upon your selves death before its time. This Particular is proved thus; Long life promised to the obedient, Exod. 20. 12. Honour thy Father and thy Mother, that thy dayes may be long in the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee. Also Deut. 32. 46. 47. Set your hearts to all the words which I testifie among you this day, and command them your Children; for it is not in vain, because that through this thing, (mark that) ye shall prolong your dayes in the land, whither ye go over into Jordan to possess it. This is also proved by the contrary, which comes upon the disobedient, Deut. 11. 16, 17. Take heed to your selves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside and serve other Gods, and when the Lords wrath be kindled against you, and ye pe-
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rish quickly from off the good land, which the Lord giveth you, Eccles. 8. 13. But it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his dayes, which are as a shadow, because he feareth not before God. So Chap. 7. 17. Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish, why shouldst thou die before thy time?

Thirdly, by means of Scripture Ignorance you cannot know to ask in faith the things you want for soul or body; that is, you will not know where to be absolute or positive in your asking, and where to be submissive and conditional in your asking: Now the Scripture gives directions as to the putting up petitions to God, and men may easily erre by not observing them, *Gen. 32. 26. And he said (to wit the Angel) Let me go for the day breaketh; and he answered, (to wit Jacob) I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. So Exod. 32. 12. Wherefore should the Egyptians say, for mischief did he bring them out to slay them in the Mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth; Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people So Acts 12. 5. Peter therefore was kept in prison, but prayer was made without ceasing unto God for him.*

By these Scriptures we may observe, that to be conditional or indifferent in our asking, when God may be dishonoured by denying, is not good; therefore in this case, may a man coming in Gods way, be bold to ask pardon of his sins, peace to his conscience, power over his corruptions without condition: in such case, gracious and humble resolutions to have no denial, greatly liked God, and suits with his will, *Isa 62. 6, 7. I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night; you that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence till he establish and make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.* But observe, in all cases Petitions putting up, must not
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56 Signs of a Dying or Decaying Christian.

thus be framed, *Acts 21. 14.* And when he would not be perswaded, we ceased, saying, the will of the Lord be done. So *Rom. 1. 9, 10* For God is my Witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the Gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention alwayes of you in my prayers; making request, if by any means I might now at length have a prosperous journey, by the will of God, (mark that) to come to you. So *Jim 4. 15.* For that ye ought to say, if the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that: I shall leave this to consideration, and proceed to the 4th Calamity.

Fourthly, Negligence to Reading will make you ignorant wherein you may prevent the presence and comforts of Gods holy spirit; that is, that God may either take away his Spirit from striving with you, or you away from his Spirit, *My spirit shall not alwayes strive, Gen. 6. 3.* *1 Sam. 16. 14.* But the spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him. *Psal. 51. 7.* Take not thy holy spirit from me. *Neh. 9. 30* Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy spirit in thy Prophets. yet would they not give ear; Therefore gavest thou them into the hands of the people of the Land. But they rebelled and vexed his holy spirit; therefore was he turned to be their enemy, and fought against them. By these Scriptures we may see, that the holy Spirits company may be put away from us through ungracious walking.

Fifthly, Negligence in Scripture will make you ignorant, that there is a Legion of evil Angels waiting hourly to take advantage against you; no sooner in the Text but now mentioned, had the good Spirit left Saul, but an evil Spirit comes upon him, *2 Chron 18. 19, 20, 21.* And the Lord said who shall intice Ahab? presently there came out a Spirit and said, I will intice him, and be a lying Spirit in the mouth of all his Prophets.

Job.

Job. 1. 6. *There was a day when the Sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them; and so soon as Joshua is standing before the Angel of God, Satan is got at his right hand to resist him.* Now ignorance that there is a Legion, or very many evil Spirits waiting all advantages and opportunities to do us hurt, occasions many to be secure where and when they have no cause, and so their feet come to be insnared in by-paths to their shame, and sorrow; let us therefore be so studious in Scripture, as to say in truth with the holy Apostle, 2 Cor. 2. 10, 11. *To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also, lest Satan should get an advantage of us, for we are not ignorant of his devices.* : Clearly noting, how careful this good man was to keep the tempter at greatest distance, while persons are not sensible that they are continually attended with wicked Spirits, that seek to ensnare them, by drawing them aside from God, they shall be the oftner captivated, and so in their spiritual estate in great danger to be spoiled; *When the unclean Spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through drie places, seeking rest, and findeth none; then he returns to his house [or heart] from whence he came out, and finding it empty, swept, that is, destitute of the good Spirits company, then goeth he and takes with him seven more wicked Spirits than himself, and enters in, and dwells there, Mat. 12. 43, 44.* Hence it is clear that evil Spirits both wait advantages, and take them where they find suitable subjects to be gaining upon. But I pass this, and come to the last Calamity which negligence brings.

Sixthly, It makes you ignorant that you may hinder Gods holy Spirit from working any effectual good upon you. This may possily seem strange to some, that the good purposes of Gods good Spirit upon any
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58 *Signs of a Dying or Decaying Christian.*

may be by them hindered; but if it be considered well, it need not be strange, for if the workings of the holy Spirit were unresistable, then few if any could be ungodly; it strove much with the old World, and yet they were not worthy to be saved from the Deluge; and striving need not be where there can be no resisting. Again the holy Spirit was much grieved with *Israel's* stubbornnes, testifying against them many years, *Neh. 9.* yet would they not give year; how could it be said the Spirit grieved at their withstanding, if they could not withstand? *Turn ye at my reproof, and I will pour out my Spirit upon you, and make known my words unto you, but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the Angel of his presence saved them, but they rebelled and vexed his holy Spirit; therefore (mark that) he was turned to be their enemy.* Now if the workings and strivings of the holy Spirit, were unresistable, certainly *Israel* with whom it so strove, being so bemoaned of God for their rebellion, neither could nor would have so withstood him. *How shall I give thee up O Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee O Israel? how shall I make thee as Adma or Zeboim? my heart is bot within me, my repentings are kindled together: Would it not be blasphemy to say, that Gods thus bemoaning was not real? it is altogether certain, that the very heart of God is set out in these expressions.*

But before I conclude this Sign, I shall, God assisting, take liberty to speak a little to the blessed privilege of such as have the *Holy Scripture*, and how good it is they knew the worth of this Priviledge; for a Jewel is not valued by the ignorant at its worth, though there be great and real worth in the Scriptures, yet to the depraved understanding they are veiled:

ed : And what Nation is so great (saith good *Moses*) that hath Statutes and Judgments so righteous as all this Law which I set before you this day. The holy Scriptures, saith a good man, are the Inditement of the Holy Ghost, full of infinite wisdom and eloquence, containing in them the very heart of God; They are the Saints Counsellors and Comforters in the House of their Pilgrimage : Therefore it is not only our duty to read them, but our great Priviledge and unspeakable happiness that we have them to read. Better saith one want the *Light* of the *Sun* than the *light* of the *holy Scriptures*. Who ever told the world that our *Lord Jesus Christ* died for sinners, yea the worst of ungodly ones but the *Scriptures*, It is not that some fondly fancy of a light within, that ever did or could lead, to the certain belief, that there was one *Jesus* of *Nazareth*, a man approved of God, mighty in word and deed, taken by wicked hands and slain, or made an offering for sin. *The Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all*. As one worthily hath said you have in the Scripture matter for every condition; there is healing for the wounded, wisdom for the foolish, strength for the weak, sight for the blind, feet for the lame, yea help in all conditions for the helpless : In a word, there is Physick to be had for the diseased soul, and a Cordial for the fainting soul, *Had not thy Law been my Counsellor, I had then perished in my affliction, how sweet are thy words to my taste, yea sweeter than honey to my mouth, more to be desired are they than gold, yea than much fine gold. Moreover by them is thy servant warned, and in keeping thereof is great reward, Psa. 19. 10. 119. 72. 103.* Now this will most evidently appear to be a blessed priviledge, if we do but consider the consequence of *Scripture Ignorance*; *My people are destroyed for want of knowledge; yee erre* (saith our

60 *Signs of a Dying or Decaying Christian.*

our Lord Jesus) not knowing the Scriptures. Understandest thou what thou readest. Search the Scriptures for in them ye think to have eternal life, and they are they that testify of me. And he opened their understandings, that they might understand the Scriptures. We have a blessed Story in the 11. of Acts 24-28. of a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, for he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publickly shewing by the Scriptures, that Jesus was the Christ; so that the holy Apostle St. Paul saith, for whatsoever things were written aforetimes were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope. The like Testimony we have in Timothy, the second Epistle, and the third Chapter, and the 16. and the 17 verses: All Scripture is given by the inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: Wherefore is the Scripture thus given, (mark it warily) to this great end, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. This esteem had good Job, and good David of the Scriptures, they were more to them than their necessary food yea, than thousands of gold and silver; therefore blessed is he that readeth and understandeth the sayings of this blessed book. How may this sharply rebuke that Atheistical Spirit risen in our dayes, that puts such an undervaluing style upon the holy Scriptures, calling upon persons to go to the light within for life, and telling them he is not here (meaning in the Scriptures) but is risen, that's a dead letter, thus undermining or pouring contempt upon the highest Blessing and Priviledge that ever the world had on this side the Lord of Life. But at the same time put a high value upon their own Atheistical Pamphlets:

Signs of a Dying or Decaying Christian. 61

Do but read the Titles they give the one and the Title they give the other; what is the Holy Scripture, a **A DEAD LETTER**, that is its name; A three and sixpenny piece: What are their Pamphlets names, **LOVE TO THE LOST**, or a hand held forth to the helpless. *The Ancient of dayes is come. The measuring Reed of the Lord: The Morning watch: Seven Thunders uttering their voices: A Message sent forth from the risen seed of God: The new Creation brought forth: Beams of eternal brightness: The Trumpet of the Lord sounding forth: The Brasen Serpent lifted up: A Salutation from the breathings of life: A tender Visitation of the Fathers love to all the elect Children: A true light shining in England: The everlasting Rule born witness unto: The Banner of love: The scattered Sheep sought after: Joyful tydings to the begotten of God in all; The everlasting Gospel of Repentance and remission of sins held forth; A dore opened to the imprisoned seed in the World; A general Epistle to the Assembly of the First born; The true and everlasting Rule, &c.*

CHAP. IX.

Shewing that an itching ear in Christians after Novelties, bespeaks them decaying to godliness; with four Remedies against it.

SIGN IX.

WHen you are mighty inquisitive after Novelties, or new things, rather than wholesome Doctrine.

This Sign is too too common amongst Professors, and commonly ariseth from some dislike that they take, because things go not just as they will have them, after the light of their own eyes, such may know