

CHAP. XXXIV.

*Shewing the sad estate of such as take more care for a great Trade, then a good Heart: Demonstrating that right Religion will be as careful to the Duties of the first Table, as second; with four marks of an out-side Professor, and three Causes why House-Work is more minded then Heart-Work, with some helps how Christians may keep alive their first love-heat towards Religion.*

SIGN XXXIV.

**W**HEN a watchful care of a godly Life and Christian conversation, is more accidental then habitual.

When a Spirit of indifferency to the highest concern in the World, namely, Religion or a godly Life and conversation, is our business by the bye, and not in the serious or habit of it that is minded and pursued at pleasure, as great Persons do their Hawks and Hounds, take great pains now and then, but not as a daily trade and concern. This frame brings such under this Sign: For as it is evident in the growing Christian, the more Communion he hath with God, the more he thirsts for, the deeper he goes, the sweeter he feels it, and finds it, dying daily to what he once lived mostly; maintaining the savour and relish of Heaven with increases, counting all affairs and business whatsoever, subservient to this. But such as let go this hold, and seldom think of God or Religion, watch for a great Trade more then a good Heart, a rich habit

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Habit more then a rich Conversation, fear and love, to God and man, taught by the precept of man. This is a dying state, and will without speedy recovery end desolate. The best of Men, in the best of their watchful care for a God-like life, need daily to pray for pardon of the imperfections of their best endeavours; and that God would through Jesus the Advocate, overlook what is short, and accept the sincerity of their heart, the root of the matter being their best second. This doubtless is the meaning of *Dauids* prayer, *Lord judge me according to the integrity of mine heart*: his Conversation was not without slips, but it was without his heart. Herein do I exercise my self (or make it my Trade) to have always a Conscience void of offence both towards God, and towards all men, that is, both to the duties of the first Table and second: for true Religion will be as watchful to give God his due with the in-side, as Man his due with the out-side. It were well if all Professors could thus approve their hearts, that bleating of Sheep, and lowing of Oxen, would not be so much heard as it is; but there are a Generation that are more shew then substance; and it is too too much to be feared when weighed in the ballance will be found wanting; such may be known by these few marks.

First, They make the greatest shew and noise on days of solemnest Devotion, hanging down the Head, dejecting the countenance, like *Israel* of old, promise great things at such a time; *Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say, and speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee, and we will hear it and do it.* Here is a flourishing out-side, but its far from the heart, as evidently appears by what return God that knows the heart makes, saying, *I have heard their words, they have well spoken*



spoken all that they have said, Ob that there were such an heart in them, to fear me and keep my Commandments always. I fear I shall find so little of their heart in what they have promised, that at the next trial of scarcity for Bread or Water, they will murmur.

Secondly, Such talk most of Religion, when it is least costly, or most in fashion. Yes, and in acts of publick Charity, outdo their equals in estate, even the sincere, one measuring applause of Men, his rule to give by; the other making Judgment, his rule to give by. None cried *Hosanna* to day, more loud then they, that cried *away with him, Crucifie him* to morrow. Now a truly growing Christian is as well rejoyced with Christ in a Prison as in a Palace.

Thirdly, Such when they have little else to do, will be most publick to the neighbourhood in Family duties of Devotion: scarce allow one hour all the Week from their labour, for any service, but Bed and Board: yet now so zealous, as passeth for God in the form; it may be big with acknowledgment of their Plenty, and what good they will do with it; but the next real neighbour (where Interest is not in the bottom) that comes to try them a few days, for less then the tithe of what lieth secure in their Christ: Yet, it lies so near their heart, that an excuse of near affinity to a down right Lie, shall block up the way; and because Conscience shall say little, it shall be smothered with one excuse or other, like these, Charity begins at home. I know not how soon I may want it my self, &c.

Lastly, Such whose care is more accidental then habitual, may be known by this mark also, they can well dispense with a connivance what Religion they are of, when it will probably tend to the lessening their trade or reputation among men, not mattering or minding the loss, may hence accrue to Religion; while

while some cried, Lord lift thou up the light of thy Countenance upon us; others cry, who will shew us any good. These are such under these marks, as measuring themselves by themselves; say they are *spiritually rich, and have need of nothing, while they are wretched, miserable, blind and naked.* But I shall pass to some Causes of this Decay, briefly what may be assigned as an occasion for this defect. 1. Sensuality or living by sense. 2. Accounting Religion by halves, or thinking the form without power sufficient. 3. Low apprehensions of an hereafter state. Sensuality or living by sense. Faith and sense are direct opposites: where the one dwells, the other cannot dwell; one will have dominion, and sense speaks loudest here, and thinks all well while Trade prospers; *Soul take thine ease.* My rest is in present enjoyments, I find and feel sweetness there, more then in all hereafter promises. Present possessions pierce the senses more, then all that can be said of Heaven it self.

From hence men have no more obligation to be Religious, then what serves Interest and suits with opinion: for take but away Faith in a happiness to come; and you have no more hold to make you God-like, then a drowning man that hath catched a Reed, as the next shift to keep him from sinking.

Secondly, Accounting Religion by halves, or thinking the form without power sufficient. This hath and doth carry many Souls Captive, and placeth them upon a groundless confidence, taking part for the whole, a large profession without possession, crying louder, *the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord.* Then he who indeed can most so approve himself unto God. It is Satans device to keep any back from the form of Religion; for the form ought to be,



be, and is honourable in its place; also his malice to cause any rest onely here in the form, both must go together shell and kernel; empty baggs will not purchase Lands. *Lord we have eat at thy Table, and thou hast taught in our streets, and in thy name we have done many wonderful works. Depart (saith Christ) for all this you are workers of iniquity. You are great sayers, but little doers. Behold the days come saith the Lord, that I will punish all them that are circumcised with the uncircumcised, Edom, Moab, and Ammon, for all these are uncircumcised in flesh, and the house of Israel are uncircumcised in heart. Jer. 9. 25, 26.* From hence its most clear, that Form and Power must go together; and woe be to one when alone.

But Thirdly, Another cause why a godly Life and Christian conversation is more accidental then habitual may be this, Low apprehensions of an hereafter state. When those two great truths Heaven and Hell are not believed to be in their verity, nor so apprehended, where remotely believed, as the greatest of glory or good, and the greatest of woe or bad. It hath like effects upon such subjects as the Angels message had upon *Lots* sons in Law, they preach, up get you hence, *for the Lord will destroy this place.* But all seemed to them like Idle Tales, they believed not the message, till they felt the flames; and now it is too late, the Sermon is ended, and the season is over. Nothing keeps a Christian in his first heat like the maintaining large apprehensions of hereafter Glory; *For you had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods; (Whence came this great change) Know in your selves that you have in Heaven, a better and an enduring substance. Heb. 10. 34.* I shall leave this to consideration, and so pass to the 35th. Sign of dying to Godliness.

## CHAP. XXXV.

*Setting forth the different ends of labour for Temporal and true bread, that is, to be in onrege, and that our calling is not to take us off our high calling. With three Causes why Care for necessities, prevails beyond care for necessities.*

## SIGN XXXV.

**W**Hen care for your body is usually most pleasant, and care for your soul usually most irksome.

The light of the understanding is now certainly grown very dim, when chief care runs in the wrong Channel. As the Soul-concern is much more of true value then the body, so it calleth for much more of our service. But it may be very meet, first, to explain these two terms in the Sign, Soul and Body; by Soul here I would be understood, whole man considered in his Resurrection state, and by Body, whole man in his present state. No man except he be a Bruit, but believeth that he shall be as compleat man in Body, Soul, and Spirit hereafter (though first worms may eat his flesh) as he is at his best state, so here now for present.

But further, By Soul and Body I would also be understood, Man considered as one that knows he shall live but a few years at most here, and after this life is ended, live in spiritual joy or Torment hereafter. This premised, here are two parts to be provided for, and that as matter of Duty, one is a temporal part, the



the other is an eternal part. Food and Raiment we owe as a dew Debt, which both God and Nature requires us to pay; and to that end it is as lawful to take care by industry, to earn wages for the relief of Natures necessities, as it is to avoid Poison, for fear it should annihilate the whole man. Hence it is called in Scripture, a Labour, and the hand of the diligent is said to make rich, and Idleness to cloth with Rags. And therefore saith our blessed Apostle. *We hear there are some among you are Idle, not working at all; Now them that are such, we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work and eat their own Bread.* 1 Thel. 3. 11, 12. And he that provideth not for his own, namely, them of his Family hath denied the Faith, and is worse then an Infidel. All this, it must needs be granted forbids Slothfulness and makes him Brother to a great waster. So that Christ Jesus when he saith in *John* 6. 27. *Labour not for that meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth to everlasting life,* doth not prohibit labour for perishing Meat (no more then his saying, he was not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, intends not any benefit, at any time to the Gentiles) but corrects that grand extream, in our toyling to early up rising, and late going to bed, and eating the bread of carefulness from a wrong Principle, and by a wrong end; that is, not so labouring in the pleasure of industry, because God commands it, (which is the right Foundation of all Action) But because of the sweet profit that follows this labour in conjunction, with a covetous desire to be great, rather then good, suitable to that Spirit in Christs time, *Verily I say unto you, ye seek me not, because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.* This also appears, may be to a wrong end, for doubtless,

less, Gods end is, that men labour that they maintain good works for necessary uses; it being more for Gods honour to give, then to receive. Now to labour for perishing meat, for meats sake onely is below the principle of a Heaven-born man, who doth all by Rule, and for the sake of the Ruler. But again, as labour is commanded and laudable for perishing things, in its place, the wisdom of a Christian; and indeed his Interest lies in this, to fort his labour to his work; God hath given man here, a Calling or Trade, and a high Calling or more noble Trade. The first is to work with suitable diligence for necessities or things that we cannot well want, as to our well being; the second is, to work for necessities or things that must be, without which our being is taken away; we may live for a little without common bread, and we can but die to the Grave for want of the fruit of the field, but for want of true Bread, we shall perish or be tormented in Hell to all Eternity. So that our blessed Lord, rebukes that extream in his words to *Martha*, who doubtless did well in her place, had she stood there; for she was making ready Christs Dinner, but layeth out her self more then the service of right could call for, which occasions these words of Christ, *Martha, Martha thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful*. She was overcumbred, or took too much pains, too much of her Spirit and Meditation bended that way; she left little or no room for better thoughts, but was given up as it were to mind this, while a matter so weighty, calls for the whole of our strength and might. *Thou shalt serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might*.

Now this extream, reduceth Christians to this dying frame. And from hence, care for their bodies is



most pleasant, and care for their souls most painful, that is, days in one, is less irksome than hours in the other. But I shall speak more of this in the Cause and Cure. Which may be reduced to these three heads. 1. Ignorance what a frail body in its best estate we thus labour for. 2. Want of understanding of what a real worth a souls weal is hereafter. 3. Want of understanding of the irreparable woe of a Souls loss hereafter.

First, Ignorance what a frail body in its best estate we thus labour for. If the husband-man was sure that after all his toyl of Plowing, Harrowing, Tillage, and Cost, an Enemy should Reap, it would certainly cool his courage, and take off that edge that whets on his Spirit, in good hopes to enjoy a desirable Crop. How easily may this proposition be reduced into practice? How many careful *Soul-Robbers*, while worldly industrious Fathers, toyl early and late, to set that son on horse-back, who rides but the faster, to enrich and puff up with Pride the young, up start Tavern and Ale-house owner? How many greedy Husbands, that grudged themselves rest in the night, trying, when will it be day, *that they may add house to house, and land to land*; and when a fair possession is thus raked together, then comes Death and arrests them, and admits a stranger to enjoy what they thus Sweat and Toyled for; the like may be said of the miserable scraping Mother, that robbeth her Servants back and bowels with pinching Hunger, all which in just judgment to her, is but laid up for a stranger. These Instances the wise preacher comments upon *Eccl. 4. 8.* *There is one alone, and there is not a second, yea he hath neither Child nor Brother, yet is there no end of all his labour, neither is his eye satisfied with Riches, neither saith for whom he doth labour and bereave his Soul of*

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*Good. This is also Vanity, yea it is a sore Travel;* and for remedy, the same Preacher doth apply this, saying, *There is nothing better for man, then that he should Eat and Drink, and make his Soul enjoy good in his labour;* this also I saw that it was from the hand of God

Secondly, Want of understanding what a real worth a Souls weal is hereafter. Who if he knew what he did, would lose the blessed company of Almighty God, the Lord Jesus Christ, the holy Spirit, the elect Angels, and glorified Saints for ever and ever. And this exchange to be made for so corruptible a thing as Gold and Silver, which God doth not forbid in its use, but abuse; while we keep it under as a Servant, and not let it reign as a King, it is allowable; But to do good and to communicate. Forget not forthwith such Sacrifices, God is well pleased. And for this very end is substance lent us, not to spend upon our Lusts; would we therefore be recovered from this Decay, where it is begun, or prevent it where like to come: We must then labour with all our might for an enlightened understanding in the precious worth of a saved Soul; this was the pitch unto which the holy Apostle in his primitive love for the *Ephesian Church*. Chap. 16. 18. reached after, wherefore, *I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers, that the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance among the Saints.* Oh! Could we but conceive what a gain it is, for our Souls to dwell with God for ever, we would omit no care and diligence to make our calling and election sure.

Thirdly,



Thirdly, Want of understanding of the irreparable woe of a Souls loss hereafter, that loseth God, and getteth Damnation. Tell me Christian, who in his right wits, would rise early, and sit up late, and toyl all the year, like the *Egyptian Brick makers*; for the reward of a *torturing Death*, or to be *Sawn asunder*, or *Rosted on a Grid-Iron*? How much worse is *HELL*? The loss of a *SOUL* cannot be valued, no price can be set against it, nothing but the *blood of God* could redeem it; and therefore saith our Lord, *What shall it profit a man to gain the whole World, and loose his own Soul, or what shall a man give in exchange for his Soul.* The Wisdom of God could find no price to purchase a Soul out of Hell in this World, therefore is the loss irreparable; and yet for this woeful state do many Labour, and weary themselves to commit Iniquity; daring God to damn them, as if their Judgment slept, or Damnation slumbered. Now the good Lord bless these three Cautions to every considerate Reader; and so I pass to the 36th. Sign of dying to Godliness.

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## CHAP. XXXVI.

*Proving solemn and set times of Meditation, one essential to the being of Christianity; shewing of what efficacie to our beginning, persevering, and ending in Godliness Meditation is, With Directions on what. Four Objects we are to place our Meditation; also shewing three blessed advantages it brings; with a description what right Meditation is, and direction about fittest time and place for this excellent Soul-enriching work.*

## SIGN. XXXVI.

**W**Hen you are much a stranger to the practical part of Meditation on the word and works of God.

How essential Meditation is, not onely to a Christians well being, but to his very being, may appear upon deep enquiry; it being one of the great lessons God gives in charge to his redeemed, expecting they ever continue in the practice of so great a blessing; insomuch that no sinner can be said to begin well, or rightly break off his sins by Repentance under God, but by the means of Meditation. Till a stout-hearted Rebel begins to stand still, and to think, what am I a doing? Whither am I a going? What will be the end of this my sinful Trade? There is no hopes of Reformation, therefore saith God of Iesuram, *They are a Nation void of Councel, neither is there any understanding in them; oh that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end,* that



that is, that they would but ponder or meditate on the dreadful effects that will follow this their way and doings. In the 50 Psalm, you have a notable passage added, as the essentiallest remedy to a doleful complaint. *verse 19, 20, 21. Thou givest thy mouth to evil, thy Tongue frameth deceit, thou sittest and speakest against thy Brother, and slanderest thine own Mothers Son. These things hast thou done, and I kept silent, thou thoughtest I was altogether such an one as thy self.* So that here it is clear, they had sinned under such Aggravations as had turned them into perfect Atheisme, they thought God like themselves. Well, here is the disease, and it is next to Mortal, What is the remedy God in mercy prescribes? *verse 22. Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces;* There is but one medium between you and utter desolation, and that is, stand still, and bethink your selves, before my fury break forth like fire that none can quench.

*Quest.* But why is Meditation so powerful an advantage to the reforming a Rebel to God.

*Ans.* Because none but such as are stark Mad, out of their Wits, will run into a Caldron of Boiling Oyl, which will certainly destroy them in an Instant. Thus do they and much worse, that run in a way of sin, and to Meditate or consider whither they are running, is the effectuallest way for Remedy; and indeed that without which remedy can never come.

But Secondly, As it is impossible to begin well, except this rule of Meditation be submitted unto. In like manner, it is impossible to continue in well doing, without continuing in this Duty of Meditation, not now and then by fits and girds, but all the day long. *Josh. 1. 8. This book of the Law, shall not depart out of thy month, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night,*

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night, ( mark that ) and why day and night ( mark that also ) that thou maist observe to do according to all that is written therein; and then shall all thy way be prosperous, and thou shalt have good success.

Less then this is not taught hence, That Meditation day and night on the word and works of God, is the onely means to keep up in its vigour and burning; beams, the glorious and desirable apprehensions of God, and longings with increases after God. Its a Duty carries with it so much of true Dignity, that nothing but Ignorance keeps Christians from being ravished with desire after it. What brings the heart to God, but Meditation? What makes sin continue to appear sinful, but Meditation? What keeps up affection to God, but Meditation? What makes grace and glory continue to appear amiable, but Meditation? What makes Gospel-ordinances the way to Glory appear easie and light, though to the flesh otherwise burdenson, but Meditation? In a word, its essential to our ending well, without which we can never persevere with that true courage, and constant serenity. When *David* comes to describe the true blessed man, he tells us, its one that in Gods Law doth meditate day and night: this makes him like a Tree, planted by the River side, which bringeth forth his fruit in his season, whose Leaf doth not fade, and whatsoever he doth shall prosper. To be a stranger here, then, must needs render us in a dying frame. By this time I trust you are convinced of the necessity of continual Meditation from the consideration of the advantage or loss by doing or omitting.

It may be asked now seeing Meditation must be constant day and night, on what Objects must this Meditation be placed?

*Ans<sup>r</sup>.*



*Ans.* First, On God, Let your Meditation be placed on God, as the Fountain of your all, eye him in this Duty, as the Founder of that vast fabrick of Heaven, Earth, the Seas, and all that liveth in them.

Secondly, On the Lord Jesus Christ, Let your Meditation be placed, remembering from what glory he came for your sakes, what curse he took upon him for your sakes; and what he is now performing by way of Mediatorship for your sakes.

Thirdly, On your Duties and Frailties meditate. *Psal. 119 15. 99. I will meditate on thy precepts, thy Testimonies are my Meditations. Lord! What is Man, that thou art mindful of him, or the Son of Man, that thou visitest him; Verily, every Man in his best estate, is altogether vanity. Lord make me to know my end, and the measure of my days, what it is, that I may know how frail I am.*

Fourthly, Meditate on the ordinances you practice, or have subjected unto, Let no command pass you without a serious sight, by a pondering Meditation into the spiritual Author, Use, and End of that commandment. We loose the Spirit or Marrow of many a duty and priviledge, for want of a narrow enquiry into the meaning of that duty; it was easie for *Israel* to perform the services yearly, some hundreds of years after the Institution, and never the better if they did omit enquiring into the use and end of those services, by way of Meditation.

Go not to any solemn duty, as Prayer, hearing the word Preached, reading the holy Scriptures, the Lords-Supper, Fasting, or any other solemn part of Gods worship, without solemn meditation whither you are going, and why; and so doing, then God will bless you with the instituted end of those appointments you are in the practice of. But it may be questioned

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ed again, what is meant by practical Meditation, and when that must be performed.

*Ans.* By practical meditation is meant a reducing universals into particulars; for what is always a duty in the general, must to keep it alive in the spirit of it, be reduced into particulars; else a constant form, may lose the power; it is therefore doubtless, essential to the well being of every Christian, that according to the circumstances of his condition in the World, he set certain time, or times apart, such a day, such a part of that day on purpose aside, from all worldly, or religious business else, onely to this serious practical work of Meditation on some one, or such like past particulars premised already. The next question may be.

*Quest.* 4. But why must we thus meditate, as to object, subject, and Time.

*Ans.* First, Because it will make it become habitually pleasant & delightful. Secondly, Because it will make it become perpetually profitable. Thirdly, Because at all times, and in all conditions, doing every work in a dew deliberate weight of Meditation, brings Heaven to us in the earnest of it, before it carry us to Heaven in the full possession of it. A fifth question may be this,

*Quest.* 5. But what is this Meditation, that is so highly extolled so universally essential and profitable? And how must we set about it, and when may we be said to be in the practical part of it?

*An.* It is not the bare thinking on truths, and rowling them in the understanding, and memory, by way of *pro* and *con*, with a common acceptance, from a common apprehension of truths necessary usefulness; because thus may persons imploy their cogitations without any rooted



rootd advantage; and thus far and farther, undoubtedly went the thorny ground hearers, for, *they heard Gods word, and anon with joy received it*, which could not be without some over-acts of Meditation. But they did not so Chew upon it, as to turn all the faculties of Soul, into the Image or likeness of it. Therefore as it is not this, so by way of Affirmation; Meditation rightly considered, It is to bring essential truths about certain Salvation, or certain Damnation into practice.

For if the truth of these, in their most comprehensive sense possibly attainable into Credence, be not premised as a forerunner to prepare way for this blessed guest Meditation. It will have but like acceptance as a *King*, in the habit and Equipage of a *Common Man*; because though really a *King* of great estate and dignity; yet being not so understood by us, meets not with that reception from us; so Meditation, when right, it is a carrying truths from the Head, down to the Heart; and calling into a most solemn Council, all the Powers of the Soul, retired into the Cabinet of Consideration from every other debate or business whatsoever, and a continuance till it turns (like the Churming of Milk) all its truth into thy Blood and Spirits, and from thence into life and practice; Just as the contemplation of the wicked, upon wicked objects, makes them burn with Lust in their inward man, till a vent into action, it hath passage; they think of, or meditate on wicked objects in the Night, and when the Morning awakes they act it. *Psal. 34.* I shall explain this right Meditation, what it is, by this experienced similitude; A Certain Man hath an Arm or Leg fallen into a slight hurt, which being unconcerned about, it festereth, and so breaks his rest night and day, that its now high time to call  
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for advice, which upon view of the premises, tells him, this Member must be cut off, or his Life must pay for it; this sorely amuseth the Man: on one hand he feeleth Anguish and Fears, the Issue on the other hand, he dreads the extremity and loss of Sawing off a Member; upon the whole, he enters into such a deliberate consideration or meditation, as you may well imagine, takes in the whole counsel of his inward parts; and from sense of pain on one hand, and danger on the other hand; his vital heat is so augmented, that upon the whole, a resolution is taken to submit himself to the parting with that Member, neer and dear, in value, beyond a Kingdom, rather than hazard Life; this is the truest motive. Gain of Heaven in its magnificent Good, or portion of Hell among the Damned, in its intollerable Bad, calls all the powers of the Soul to practical Meditation; and this is that that you may call **RIGHT MEDITATION**. So that it is not a bare thinking, or meer employment of the Brain, or improvement of the memory, from the apprehension of Truth, as Truth barely, but as essentially good, and the one thing needful, without which, the person must perish, that gives not true acceptance or entertainment to this powerful Duty in the understanding.

*Quest.* But it may now be asked, what may be the fittest time and place for the performance of this great Duty of Meditation?

*Ans.* Its certainly needful that Christians pitch their set time, so the work be done, and a time be allotted for the work; God in mercy to the various conditions of Christians, hath not limited it to just this or that day, or hour. But from hence lets beware of omission, the time being at our choice, doth not allow a prohibition of the Duty, but rather calls for



a more generous resignation to the Duty; if a man hath done you a signal kindness, his leaving thankful acknowledgment to your choice, as to time and measure is no Argument to damp your Spirits, but rather animate them to the more noble return. And now having resolved upon the set times, and that nothing common shall alter you. The next work is to say something about the fittest place for this Service; But first give me leave to advise you in Humility, to be frequent in this work; do not let your times be of long distance, lest that occasion strangeness, or a freezing of the Affections, and make thee also less apt or skilful in it, which in time, may end in cooling thy Spirits to that degree of barrenness, that at length its wholly become a burden without delight, and so what once was a *Soul-raising Duty* after God and Heaven, is by this means become a *Soul-lothing Service*.

Now as to the fittest place for this Duty, the example of Christ Jesus, is certainly our best rule in this matter, who was wont often to be retired into some Garden, Mount or other solitary place. *Mark* 1. 35. to be retired from sight and noise, and converse with all company, is doubtless fittest place to meet God; therefore it is said of *Isack*, he went forth as he was wont at the evening Tide. Oh! the rich advantage and Banquet that this prepares for us in its solemn and frequent use. None knows it but such as have felt it by experience; and all such will with me conclude, he is deeply a dying to Godliness, that is a stranger to this practical part of Meditation on the word and works of God. I shall pass this: Consider what I have said, and the Lord give you understanding in all things. *Amen.*

## CHAP. XXXVII.

*Shewing that in the true belief of the truth of Heaven and Hell, rests the Authority of Religion, and what Torturing Deaths many have chearsfully chosen for the sake of Heaven; with three Causes why some decay in this spiritual frame.*

## SIGN. XXXVII.

**W**Hen Communication about Heavens Joy and Hells Terrour, hath less lasting impression in Duties of Obedience to God and Man, then an olds Wives Fable.

In the true belief of these two great truths, rests the Authority of Religion; take the sense of them away, and you take away the hedge of Government, and Bounds of Christianity; I would not be Religious, and deny myself of these pleasing and profitable Objects, saith many, were it not that I believe there is a Heaven of Joy Eternal, and a Hell of Terrour Eternal to come: What else indeed is Religion, Man is born to Trouble, his Life but a Span? What can carry him above this, but conversing with the Joys to come. A Barren apprehension of this, leads to the height of Atheism, and turns us Brutish. Hereafter good; is so desirable in its self, that it hath carried many beyond themselves, to these passages of obedience in doing and suffering, that are next to a miracle; insomuch, that to admiration, persons have given themselves over as a free choice to those Torturing Deaths, which nothing but the belief of a God, and  
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the Truth of an hereafter enjoyment with him, could have lead them too; *Abraham* was carried Captive upon this very Pillar. *Heb. 11. 9, 10.* By the belief of this great Truth of hereafter glory; *he sojourned in the Land of a promise, as in a strange Countrey, dwelling in Tabernacles, with Isaac and Jacob, Heirs with him of the same promises.* Now, whence was this, that he should be a Stranger to his own, in a Land of Liberty; the same Spirit that reports it, gives for our Learning, the reason of it; namely, *Because he looked for a City, which hath Foundations, whose builder and maker is God.* *Moses* while a Child, was invested with Royal Priviledges, and chosen the adopted Son of the Kings onely Daughter, wanting nothing that a Princes Court could bestow; and if we may believe History, was not like to be long without the Crown, having the chief affection of the apparent Air, yet no sooner comes he to understanding of that present Princely Glory, in competition with what was to come hereafter, and finding one could not stand under these circumstances with the other; what upon this doth he do? *verse 24, 25, 26. of the Chapter before cited; By faith Moses when he was come to years, refused to be called the Son of Pharaohs Daughter. A very great piece of self-denial; what! Refuse to be a Princes Son? But that is not all, for he in this loss, rests not a Negative Sufferer, But chooseth rather to endure Affliction with the People of God, then to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.* Well! He leaves the Court, and now betakes himself to the Society of a contemptible company of poor *Israelites*, that served *Pharaohs* Task-masters, and were used with Rigour, groaning under their Burdens and Bondage so much, and relief to visibility so far off, that God onely must bring Plagues and Miracles upon the Land of *Egypt*,

or

*may now*

or no deliverance can be seen any way to come at this juncture of affairs, and under these circumstances, *he esteemeth the reproach for Christ, greater Riches then Egypts Treasure*; and the Argument of all this, lies in these words, *For he had respect to the recompence of Reward*, about which, if he had not had considerable communings, he could never understandingly have made himself so despicable with that affectionate choice; as great a Testimony of the prevelency of this great Argument of hereafter joy; we have also in the 25th. verse, of some that *were Tortured, not accepting deliverance*. Tortured, Imagine they were drawn with *Wild-Horses*, Limb from Limb, or *Sawn asunder*, or laid upon a *Hot Grid-Iron*, or run through being alive, with a stake fixed in the Ground, or tied up by the Hair of the Head to a Tree, till famished with Hunger, or thrown into a Vessel of *Boyling-Oyl*, or pulled in pieces with *Hot Pincers*, or run through with *Hot-Irons*; and at the Instant of all these cruelties, had deliverance offered upon conditions, easie to the flesh thus mangled, yet did not consent to be freed from these cruelties, *that they might obtain a better Resurrection*. Thus we may behold as in a Glass, to what a degree beyond themselves in doing; and suffering persons were carried out upon their belief of; and communications about hereafter Glory; and it is as evident both in Scripture and Experience, that where the understanding is blinded to the knowledge of these great truths *Heaven and Hell*. The Actions of such Men and Women, are beyond common bounds, *Buitish*, or *Beast-like*; For in the first of the *Romans*, verse 26. downwards, *Their Women did change the natural use, into that which is against Nature*; even the Men likewise, leaving the natural use of the Woman, burned in their Last one to-



ward another, Men with Men, working that which is unseemly to be named, being filled with all unrighteousness, Fornication, Wickedness, Covetousness, Maliciousness, filled with Envy, Murder, Debate, Deceit, Malignity, whisperers, Back biters, haters of God, Despitiful, Proud, Boasters, Inventors of evil things, disobedient to Parents; Who that reads this black list would not conclude Hell is brook loose? Now upon a little further enquiry, it will appear this Hellish Tribe came from blindness in their minds, as to the true God. *verse 28.* And even as they did not like (or approve) to retain God in their knowledge; therefore God gave them over to a reprobate mind. We have a like Testimony for this, by the Apostle St. Paul. *Eph. 4. 18, 19.* of some, who being past feeling (the force of Heaven or Hell in the promise of the best of good, or threatening of the worst of bad,) gave themselves over unto *Lasciviousness* to work all uncleanness with greediness. And as the grand Cause of all the Spirit of God adds this, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the Life of God, through the Ignorance that was in them, because of the blindness of their heart, God and Heaven-ward. Let us but a little come down to our own experience, what dreadful Murders, Whoredoms, Swearing, Damning Oaths, Thefts, Idolatries, Witchcrafts, Adulteries, Drunkenness, Revelling; and a Multitude of other worse then beast-like practices are committed in our Land; against, and even in contempt of the Promises or Threatnings of Heaven and Hell, so that in a word, non-communication with these two states, opens the Door to all manner of Licentiousness, and puts such upon a post haste speed into the jaws of Hell, of which, they are no more feelingly aware, then was *Lots* Son in Law, who never believed the Flames, till they irrecoverably

felt them to their endless Anguish, from which like state, the good Lord deliver us. *Amen.*

Thus may we read the Blessed, and Woeful effects that must inevitably follow, and do attend a continued communing with *Heaven* and *Hell*, and a continued estrangedness to such high concerns. And how doth this call upon the growing Christian to double his diligence in making the Joys of *Heaven*, and Torments of *Hell* the constant objects of his Meditation? And how doth this also bespeak the Dying Christians state, *Wretched, Miserable, Poor, Blind, and Naked*, whatever thoughts he may have of himself, and calls upon him to Repent, and do his first works, by being in a restless frame of Spirit, till he finds the Joys of *Heaven*, and Woes of *Hell*; the fervent objects of his Meditation: otherwise, God will most certainly remove his Candlestick off his place for ever, except he repent.

I shall now speak of the Causes of this Decay in Godliness, namely, why communications about *Heavens* Joys, and *Hells* Terroures, hath less lasting impression to duties of Obedience, then an olds Wives Fable; and they are three, which being learned, may serve as signal helps to prevent this Decay, where like to come, or remove it where begun.

1. Unbelief. 2. Unaptness to practical Meditation. 3. Indisposedness to fervent Prayer.

First, Unbelief. This is such a Soul-starving sin, that it bars up the way of Gods Spirit, from doing any mighty work upon that heart. Thus prepossess *Heaven*, though the chiefest good in God, and *Hell*, though the chiefest bad, bears no force either to deter or perswade the Heart where Infidelity dwells. *Mat. 13.58. And he did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief.* A giving to Christ Jesus,

Credence



Credence in his words and works, is the great Inn-let to true Lasting Joy; and calls upon Christians to the use of all possible means that their Faith may increase.

*2 Thes. 1. 3. We are bound to give thanks to God always for you Brethren, because your Faith groweth exceedingly; and the just shall live by his Faith: thy faith hath made thee whole. We have access by Faith, Thou standest by Faith; by Faith Noah made an Ark, and saved his House; By Faith Abraham became a Stranger in the Land of promise; by Faith Moses forsook Egypt, and without Faith, its impossible to please God. And he that believeth not, shall be Damned.*

Secondly, Unaptness to practical Meditation. As Faith receives the Truth, so Meditation digests it; its the digesture of the Food, that makes it turn to nourishment. We lose the benefit and true advantage of many a Sermon, for want of a Churning it into nourishment by Meditation. *And all they that heard it, wondred at those things which was told them by the Shepheards. But Mary kept all these sayings, and pondered them in her Heart, or addicted her self to the habit of Meditation. From hence, her Heart became a lodging place for her Lords sayings. Nothing turns Preaching into Practice like this; the great reason next to Unbelief, why men hear so much, and profit so little, is want of making what we hear our Meditation, or calling into Councel the inward parts, and pondering deeply there.*

Hence comes a laying to Heart. This makes the Impression take deep Root downwards, and bring forth Fruit upwards.

Hence, became David more wise then his Teachers, *I have more understanding then all my Teachers, for thy Testimonies are my Meditation.* He gave up himself

to meditate this carried truth, from his Head to his Heart.

Hence, the blessed Father to his Son, *1 Tim. 4. 15.* gives in charge as a most Sovereign remedy against Ignorance, or unprofitableness in the Ministry. *Meditate upon these things, give thy self wholly to them, (mark that)* so shall thy profiting appear to all.

Thirdly, A third Cause why communication about Heaven and Hell, hath no more lasting impression; may be this, Indisposedness to fervent Prayer. When Truths are believed, and by Meditation taken as is a piece of Raw-meat, and put into the Pot of the Heart, and boiled, then comes fervent Prayer, and obtains a Blessing: for all is sanctified by the word of God, and Prayer. This is a true maxim; a barren Soul to Prayer, is always a barren Soul to Practice. It is the Counsel of Jesus Christ, if we would be secured from that fatal sleep coming upon the World. *Luke 21. 36.* to watch and pray, mark that always, that we may be counted worthy to escape all those things coming upon the World, and to stand before the Son of Man three times together. When Christ was about to drink his bitter Cup. *Mat. 16. 39. 42. 44.* *He went a little further and fell on his face and prayed, and he went again the second time and prayed, and he went again the third time and prayed;* And when he was about to send his Disciples to preach the Gospel, mind for your Imitation, his Practice. *Luke 6. 12.* *And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a Mountain to pray, and continued all Night in prayer to God.* Mark that, Your Lord is all Night in Prayer to God to obtain a blessing for you; How many whole nights have you spent in Prayer for a blessing upon your selves? Its no marvail why you are so like Pharaoh's lean Kine, in fruits to God and Man-ward, when you are



are so seldom upon your knees in your Closet. For my Love, they are my Adversaries saith good David; but I give my self unto prayer. *Psal.* 109. 4. *I will that Men pray every where.* 1 Tim. 2. 8. *Pray without ceasing.* 1 Thes. 5. 17. *Men ought always to Pray, and not to Faint,* Luke 18. 1. *In every thing by Prayer and Supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known.* Now the Blessing of God go along with these Cautions, and bring them whom to thy Heart *Amen.* So I pass to the 38th. Sign of dying to Godliness.

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CHAP. XXXVIII.

*Shewing how prevalent to a Christ-like Conversation, the True thoughts of Heaven and Hell is, Demonstrating how much rather the Argument of Christs passion, ought to oblige, Dialogue Wise; explained by two despicable Prisoners, pittied by two pittiful Strangers, with three or four helps assigned for practical Application.*

SIGN. XXXVIII.

**W**hen the thoughts of a dying Jesus, for your sin, doth little dissuade you from an unchristian Conversation.

God in his Wisdom and unspeakable Mercy, hath provided a Body of Blessed Arguments, as so many cords of Love, to deter from sin, and oblige to Virtue; not that he hath need of either our Persons, or our Services. *For the whole Earth is the Lords, and the fulness thereof.* But he is a God, full of Love and

276 *Signs of a Dying or decaying Christian.*

Pity, taking no pleasure in the death of a Sinner, but rather that he should turn and Live, hath therefore prepared Heaven as the blessed end of reward, to encourage to Virtue, as the way to this end. And this Argument hath proved of Blessed advantage in all Ages, to encline the heart and will, to make Virtues ways, though grievous to the Flesh, yet desirable, and as voluntary choice, at that time when attended with the utmost hazard of whatsoever was neer or dear, even to Life it self, parting with, and choosing not Death barely in common, but the Torturings of Death at the same time, in the hope and expectation of this blessed state hereafter. *Abraham* the Father of the Faithful, saw Christs day, and was glad, or comforted, so that he accounted himself a stranger in the Land of promise, dwelling there in Tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, Heirs with him of the same promise. The great Argument to this great self-denial, lies here, For he looked for a City, which hath Foundations, whose Builder and Maker was God. *Moses* chose Affliction with the Israelites, while in Egyptian Bondage Brick-makers, rather then enjoy the pleasures of *Pharaohs* Court; and that which is very remarkable, this was a voluntary choice. The *Israelites* its true, were compelled to their Task; but he in *Pharaohs* Court, the adopted Son of his onely Daughter; and nothing to the Crown it self, thought too much for him, had no manner of restraint lay upon him, onely this Argument before premised; namely, This blessed Load-stone of enjoying God in heavenly places; for saith the Text, he endured or gave his back to all this burden, as seeing him who is invisible; for he had respect to the recompence of reward, others had trial of cruel Mockings and Scourgings, yea moreover of Bonds and Imprisonments; they were stoned



stoned, they were sawn asunder; *others Tortured, not accepting deliverance.* All these upon this blessed load-stone Argument, *That they might obtain a better Resurrection.*

This in general, but more particularly having reference to the body of this Sign of Decay, which hingeth upon the Passion of our blessed Lord: Shall the expectation of future Glory thus enamour persons, that nothing near or dear to them can stand in the way but is sacrificed. And shall the ransom of the Lord; by whom, and through whose *Groines and Blood* this came, be forgotten, in point of Argument to a holy Conversation. (*God forbid,*) What Mother can look upon the Anguish of a Dying Son, and be destitute of bitter Reflections? What Child can remember the past Travel and Sorrow that did beset his tender Mother for him in the day when he was Born, and cast off all Child-like Pity? What Sinner can remember the inward impressi<sup>o</sup>n of Grief, that once lay upon his Lord in the day, when for the sinners sin, the severity of God caused (*God-Man*) the Lord of Life, under the heavie stroak and mortal Wound, to cry out, *My Soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto Death*; and not in the Majesty of this Argument, give it prevalent acceptance; to deter from Sin, and oblige to Virtue. His Visage was marred more then any mans; he was despised and rejected of Men. A MAN OF SORROWS, and acquainted with griefs, his Face Spit in, his Hair plucked off, stricken, smitten and afflicted, bruised, wounded, his hands and his feet nailed to the Cross, a spear thrust through his tender side; and so great and bitter was the Agony, that lay upon him, that in the anguish of his Soul he Sweat, great drops of Blood running down to the ground. and all this poor sinner for thee and for me,

For he was wounded for our Transgressions, bruised for our Iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him, and with his wounds we are healed; all we like sheep, have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the Iniquity of us all. Oh! What sinner can make this the object of his Meditation, on one hand, reflecting upon the bitter Cup this Lord drank; on the other hand, reflecting on the subject for whom it was drank; on the third hand, reflecting upon the worthiness of the Person that drank it; and not be melted into Tears, crying, *My Lord, and my God!* Whatsoever thou commandest I will obey, and wheresoever thou sendest me I will go. But I shall speak briefly of these, in order to our Meditation, they being truths well worthy our constant consideration.

And first, For the bitter Cup of sufferings he drank; As never man spoke, or did like this Man, so never Man suffered like him from his Birth to his Death, a subject of Sorrows; His first Lodging (though the Son of God) in a Manger, when the Foxes had Holes, and the Birds of the Air had Nests, the Son of Man had not whereon to lay his Head, weary with Travelling, sits by a Well, and craves Water, Barley, Bread, and a few Fishes; great Dainties with the King of Glory; in a word, a Man of sorrows to his Death, and that, a Cursed, Painful, Shameful one; taken away by wicked hands, and slain. And shall not this Meditation deter from sin; for it pleased the Lord to Bruise him, and put him to Grief, else must we have grieved to all Eternity.

Secondly, To consider in our hearts for whom he drank this bitter Cup; Come Brother sinner, let us reason together, and look over the black Book of *Heart and Life* before Conversion; and read what



we were, whither a going, with the dreadful Sequel : did not grace take place, when we were without strength; the off-spring of *Amorites* and *Hittites* in due time Christ dyed; for whom, the ungodly Rebels, Enemies in our minds through wicked works, haters of God, Covetous, Proud, Boasters, Inventers of evil things, Traitors, Heady, High-minded, having eyes full of *Adultery*, feet swift to shed Blood; in a word, *Unholy*, and so under Wrath. Now for Explication of this self-reflection to self-lothing, and grace-admiring.

Imagine you were arrested by the hand of Justice among Men, and thrown into a loathsome Jail, for a just Debt of your own contracting, and there must lie and Perish, being never able to pay : A Samaritan stranger passing by, cast his eyes upon the Prison, and through the Iron-grates sees a man half starved, clothed in Rags; begging the Charity of Strangers as they pass by; this Samaritan draws nearer, saying, Poor Man ! What is thy Crime ? Ah Sir ! I am like to lie and a perish for a Debt I am never able to pay ; Water and Bread, Lice and Rags is my best Companions, bare Boards, and a little Straw ; my Lodging in a most noisome Room; I have not had one Morsel of Fresh-meat this seven Weeks, except part of a Maggot-eaten Sheeps head; if you will Mr. please to give me a small Snip of Money, I shall pray for you all the days of my miserable Life, which I pray God may not be many more; for I long to be in the Grave, &c. Now at this sight and Speech, the Stranger takes pity of him, saying, Poor Man ! I see thou art in a miserable condition; Suppose I should send for thy Creditor, and discharge the Debt, and put Cloaths on thy Back, and take thee home to my House, and make thee my serving-man, to Rub my Horse-heels, and

and tend my Hogs; wilt thou thankfully accept this offer? Yes Mr. withall my Soul; thus the Debt is discharged, the Prisoner released; his Rags cast away, his Belly and Back clothed, and Home he is carried, and a sweet Lodging provided; and how thankful he is for all these Mercies. Let the Reader judge: But further, Imagining you were pursued by Hue and Cry for Robbery, and Murder, and being ceased, thrown into a Dungeon, your Hands and Feet shakled with Irons, at the day of general-affize, out you are brought to the Bar, there Arraigned, found Guilty, Condemned; the day of Execution appointed, the Minister sent to acquaint you therewith, and he exhorts to a sense and sorrow for these bloody Crimes. Now the Hands are Wrung, the Heart Smit on, the looks Ghastly, in comes the aged Father and Mother, wringing their hands, with Rivers of Tears running down their eyes, so big with Grief that they cannot speak one word; now the Son goes to meet them, but can scarce move for the Soreness, and weight of the Irons, yet falls down at their Feet, begs their Pardon, and prayers for his Soul, that with the dolefulness of the Prison, noise, and sight of the Irons, remembrance of the bloody Crimes; and that Wednesday next is the day of Execution, and this is Monday; this their Son, and he must be Hanged up by the Neck till Dead, at last their Speech is recovered; and thus breaks forth the sorrowful Mother, Oh Son! Would God I had never born thee, or seen thee carryed to thy Grave, as soon as thou camest into the World; before half her complaint, sighs and tears is uttered, in comes the Condemned Mans Wife, and seven small Children, She looks upon the Husband, they look upon the Father. And now Grandfather and Grandmother, Wife and the Children, and the Malefactor, power

out



out such Floods of Tears and hideous Cries, and Lamentation, that even melts the Jailor into Sorrow, and causeth Anguish to fall upon the Minister, almost to fainting at such dreadful Spectacles. But while all are thus beset with Grief; in comes a Passenger, awakened at the doleful Cry, to enquire what is the matter, at which, the Minister being somewhat recovered, makes relation; upon which, the Stranger moved with Compassion to see the Eyes of the ancient Father and Mother, the Wife and small Children swelled with Sorrow, and the Malefactor in Irons, smiting upon his Breast, lifting up his Eyes and Hands for Mercy, resolves with himself, and thus he speaketh to the Prisoner; Though I never saw thy Face before, but passing as a Stranger by, and hearing such a lament-Cry, and beholding now such deep anguish beset thy Relations, at this thy despicable condition, am moved in my Heart, to part with all my worldly Estate to seek thy Pardon, or lay down my own Life for thy Transgression. Is not this news as welcome as *Lazarus* from the Grave; and how thankful for all this, is the Malefactor? Let the Reader judge.

But Brother sinner, these Narratives do not the tithe reach our Case, though indeed they are Doleful; and the unmerited kindness of these two Strangers, without Parallel, and the Subjects that received them, for ever obliged to be Servants, yea Vassels or Scullions to them. For we for our Transgressions have not only deserved Death temporal, but eternal, but for ever to abide in Hell, gnawing our Tongues for Pain. And if this kindness shewed by these Strangers, doth deserve Thankfulness and Service; What shall we render to Jesus Christ, that came from Heaven his dwelling place; and in this sinful World, took upon him the form of a Servant, humbled himself, and became obedient

dient unto a shameful, painful Death; for he was made Sin for us that knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Shall not this Grace for ever call upon us, to be in a constant inward Meditation of the greatness of this Love, with self-reflection, and a hearty affectionate return of all possible Humble and thankful obedience for ever and ever. *Amen.*

Doth not this severely reprehend those Christians that are frequent in the practice of that Institution of our Lord, that calls for this remembrance of his Death, till he come the second time without sin to Salvation; whose thoughts of a dying Jesus, and what a Glorious Person he is, and what a Glorious State he left, and for what a contemptible People all this was; and yet not in true filial fear, and love-reliance and dependance, be so much united to him, as a Vassel is to his Prince, or bond-slave to his Master. Now if the reading of these Lines, hath taken so much impressiion, as to make our Hearts burn within us, into this melting question.

*Quest.* What shall I do that the thoughts of a dying Jesus for my sins, may not onely be constant, but prevalent to perswade me to a most Christ-like Conversation?

*Ans.* 1. Be fervent and constant in Prayer unto Jesus, to help your Understandings, with a true sight of the Glory of his Person, and the Magnitude of his Passion.

2. Give up your selves to fixed times of solemn Meditation of the Person and Passion of Jesus Christ, this being too much a novelty among Professors (with Sorrow be it spoken.) I shall briefly explain it; namely, that you deliberately ponder, and with some faithful experienced Christian, advise how often every year under your circumstances, you ought in Honour



to God, and Love to your Soul keep a day, or such a part of that day, in such a retired place, with such a frame of Spirit, onely in Meditation on the Person and Passion of your Lord; my Soul for thine, thus doing Devoutly, Constantly, and in fervent Prayer; the Profit will be unspeakable.

3. Keep up also a constant remembrance of *past-offences*, and *personal-frailties*; And the Good Lord give his Blessing. *Amen.*

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CAAP. XXXIX

*Demonstrating, that in every Man there is a Master-sin, which must be Killed, or it will Kill; and how in process of Time, this once LOTHED, may come to be again LIKED, with eight Steps, by which it gradually gets new admittance, and four Causes assigned of this Decay, and a necessity asserted of our Mortal Enmity to all Sin.*

SIGN: XXXIX

**V***V*hen you can remember past sins committed, rather with Liking then Loathing.

By past sins here, I would be understood to intend and mean those sins the Scripture calls right Eye, or right Hand sins, that is, such sins as in time past had the sole Dominion and Government over us, to which we yielded up our Bodies as Servants do to their Masters, or Children to their Parents. And that there is such a thing in the world, or body of Man as chief, or a master-sin, may be very proper to speak somewhat unto in