

## A Prayer for the right Use of the Means of Grace.

(In the Language of the Offices of the Church.)

O God, who has appointed the means of grace, that by them I may be fitted for partaking of the hope of glory; may I thankfully receive them, and devoutly and faithfully use them to the relief of my spiritual necessities, to the setting forth of thy glory, and to the furtherance of my happiness, both temporal and spiritual. Give me grace, O heavenly Father, to worship and serve thee, on thy holy days, with reverence and godly fear. Affect me with an awful apprehension of thy divine Majesty, and a deep sense of my own unworthiness; that so approaching thy sanctuary with lowliness and devotion, and coming before thee with clean thoughts and a pure heart, with a body undefiled, and a mind sanctified, I may perform a service acceptable to thee. May I with meek heart and due reverence hear and receive thy holy word. May I come to the blessed Sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, with faith, charity, and true repentance; and being filled with thy grace and heavenly benediction, obtain to my great and endless comfort, remission of my sins, and all other benefits of his passion. And grant, O Lord, that with the blessed company of all faithful people, I may be so joined in unity of spirit by the doctrine of thy Apostles and Prophets, that we may be made an holy temple, acceptable unto thee, and finally be inheritors of thy everlasting kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## DIALOGUE VIII.

THE CHRISTIAN DIRECTED AS TO A SAFE AND COMFORTABLE DEATH; in a Dialogue between a Minister and his Parishioner.

*Parishioner.* SIR, I have been since I saw you with several of my neighbours at their death; and I see that weakness and pain of body, and the terrors of death and the attendance of friends and physicians, are so great impediments to men's preparation then, that I earnestly entreat you to help me to prepare myself while I am in health; for I am unwilling to leave so great a work to so weak a state, and so sad and short uncertain time.

*Minister.* God shows his great mercy to you in making you so wise. There is nothing in which the folly of ungodly men more appears than in delaying their serious preparations for death. No man is so brutish as not to know that he must die; and there is no man, most certainly no Christian, who believeth not that death will remove him into another state of life. There is no man can doubt but this change is sure, and may be very near. And how great a change takes place! The body, which is now indulged and gratified, must become a loathsome corpse. The pleasant cup, the delicious food, the adorned room, the gay attire, the soft bed, the delightful garden, walks and fields, the honour and precedence, the power and command, are all at an



end, and turned into a dark and silent grave. The soul must appear in another society, among the spirits that have finished their course on earth, and are gone before to receive their doom. There it must *see* what before we *heard* of; either the misery of those souls, who have cast away all their hopes for ever; or the perfected spirits of the just, the glorious angels, our glorified Redeemer, and the most glorious God. There the ungodly will soon see the truth of that word and that world which they doubted of; and quickly feel what will be their portion for evermore. What a senseless being then is an ungodly man, who can either forget such a day and such a change as this; or can think of it without awakened resolutions, immediately and with the utmost diligence to prepare for it? If he believe not God's word, and the life to come, why dost he not come and hear what we can say, till he is resolved upon the best inquiry whether it be so indeed or not? But if he do believe it, how can he live as if he cared not what should be his future condition for ever?

*P.* I confess, Sir, it is an evident truth and duty which you urge, and it is madness in men to forget so great, and sure, and, perhaps, so near a change! It is no controversy whether we must die. And a man that loveth himself will think whither he must go.

*M.* If we tell men in our discourses of things which they never knew before, they understand us not, and instead of learning, they cavil and question whether what we say is true. And when we tell them of such things as they know already, and all the world knoweth, they despise

it, and say, Who knows not this? We all know it, but too few of us lay it to heart. Our diseases and pains of body forewarn us; our weariness in our labour tells us, that we have a body that must break at last. Our gray hairs tell us, as the golden leaves on the trees in autumn, that our fall is at hand. Our children tell us, that others are rising up in our stead, while we are going off the stage. Every morsel that we eat, and cup that we drink, tells us what bodies we have, that can be no longer upholden than while new reparations are daily made of their decay. Every night's sleep warneth us to prepare for that sleep, from which the resurrection only will awaken us. All the beasts, and birds, and fishes, whose lives are given to preserve ours, tell us, that our life will not be long; and that we must die as well as they; and that a life maintained by so many lives, at so dear a rate, should be well spent for his service who giveth us these and all other things. When we plow and dig the earth for our seed, and cast it in, where it must corrupt before it springs up again, we but represent the digging of our graves, and the burying of this body till the day of resurrection. Every time that the sun setteth at night, and riseth again the next morning, it warneth us how our lives must set and rise again; and so doth every fall and spring. Every bell that tolleth for the dead, is our call to prepare to follow them; yea, every bell that calleth to the church, tells us that the same bell must be tolled for our burial. Every clock that striketh, every watch that moveth, every hour-glass that runneth, hath a voice to call careless sinners to reflection. Death is a powerful

preacher; it teacheth many men that which we have preached twenty years in vain. We preach them asleep; but the sentence of death awakens them effectually.

The serious thought of death teaches ministers how to preach, and the people how to hear. It awakens the preacher, to awaken the hearers. It is a mercy that we have tongues to speak, and you have ears to hear. No wonder if Christ so often calls to sinners, "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear."

Death teaches us the wisest estimate of all the wealth, and honour, and greatness of this world; for it showeth them all to us in their final state, and what they will prove to us in our greatest need. It is the great destroyer of pride. How can that man be proud who is to answer for all his sins before that God who resisteth the proud, and showeth grace and mercy to the humble!

Death teacheth men rightly to estimate all sensual delights. These are now past and gone, and never shall return. It will be no comfort to a dying man to hear what a pleasant, careless life he hath led in the world; but it will be an unspeakable satisfaction to know, that he shall live in heavenly joy with his Redeemer.

Death will teach us how to spend our time. How basely is this esteemed by idle, sensual, and ungodly men! O what a treacherous word is pleasure, in the too common acceptance of it! O, happy are they who have wisdom to use their time for the end for which God created and redeemed them, before it be too late.

Death teacheth men how to behave themselves to each other. On a death-bed we are ready to

say, that we forgive all the world, because we fear that God will be avenged on us.

Lastly. Death teacheth us whether we should rather fly from sufferings or from sin. Die we must, whether we will or no! And is it not better to die for Christ, if he require it, than die without any such advantage? Will it comfort us at our death to think what sufferings we escaped by sinning against God?

Were it an uncertain thing whether we should die or not, covetousness would have no restraint. How dearly would men love this world! O what striving there would be for it! They who will live in sin, and sell heaven for a few years of uncertain enjoyment here, what would they do for a thousand years of sensual joy, or for the hopes of living here for ever? But when this is written, "Thou must certainly and shortly die;" who would say, "Soul take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry," when he may expect to hear, "This night shall thy soul be required of thee; and then whose shall all these things be which thou hast provided?" If death did not preach to the worldly-minded persons, no other preachers could be heard. It crieth out to them—What! mean you to bestow all this labour on a few days of vanity? Is it worth this trouble to make your salvation more doubtful and more difficult? to increase your load, and double your temptations? and all for the pleasures of so short a life?

And were it not for death, ambition would have no bounds; but death foreseen curbs this arrogance, by teaching us that man being in honour, and having no understanding, is as the beast that perisheth.

Were it not for death, sensuality would have no restraint! The fornicator would not be shamed by the light, nor the drunkard fear the effects of his intemperance! Who would not be clothed with purple and fine linen, and fare sumptuously and deliciously every day, if he could do it with prudence? But death, this death, is a sad enemy to such enjoyments. When Belshazzar saw the hand-writing on the wall, in all his jollity, his joints trembled. Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thine heart cheer thee; walk in the way of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. Except the promise of the life to come, there is nothing that so defeats the devil's purpose in tempting us to sin, as certain, foreseen approaching death. I conclude, therefore, with Solomon, that, It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to the house of feasting; for that is the end of all men, and the living will lay it to his heart. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the hearts of fools are in the house of mirth.

Let our prayer then be, first for a safe death, that we may be saved when we die; and then for a comfortable death, that we may die also in peace and joy.

All they, and only they die safely and go to heaven, who are pardoned by Christ's blood, and sanctified by his Spirit. If we have that Spirit, we are justified, and shall be saved; for it is given to fit us for heaven, and to be the pledge, and earnest, and first fruits of our celestial happiness. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

But that besides *safety*, we may have *comfort* in our death, it is also necessary that we have some well-grounded hope that we have the Spirit of Christ; that we have faith, hope, and love, the graces of the Spirit, in suitable exercise. For thus the great impediments of our comfort will be removed.

The knowledge of our safety is the ground of our comfort. And it must needs be a terror to a man that hath any faith and sensibility, to be utterly uncertain what shall become of his soul for ever! to believe that there is a state of punishment for the unholy, and not to know but it may prove to be his lot! to believe that none but the holy shall be glorified, and not to know at all whether he be of that number! When the body is languishing in pain, and worldly help and comforts fail, to be then utterly doubtful of everlasting comfort, must be a most miserable state. It is not the perishing trifles of this world that can comfort a man who still foreseeth their end.

If we be called to martyrdom for Christ, the terrors of death would sorely tempt us to deny him! How can a man be saved who loveth his life better than Christ and life eternal? And how can a man be willing to go out of this life, who hath not some reasonable hopes of a better?

But if a man be ready to die well, he is ready to suffer, and ready for any thing! When he can derive comfort from the thoughts of his being for ever with the Lord, what need such a man to fear? What is there that should much trouble him? How quietly may he sleep! how easily may he suffer! how joyfully may he live!

Nothing can be more evident than that to be

in a continual readiness to die, is the great interest of men; in comparison of which nothing else is worthy to be minded, or named!

*P.* What mean you by saying, that it is also our chief work?

*M.* He who knoweth that it is his chief interest, must needs know that it is his chief work, as long as self-love is so deep a principle in nature, and interest so much actuates and rules mankind. All religion, indeed, is nothing else but preparing ourselves and others for death. It is *sound* doctrine which maketh *sound Christians*; but practical doctrine is the sure preparation for death. Christ is the only way, and heaven is the only end. Christ came from heaven, and is ascended to heaven, and sendeth his Spirit from heaven, to raise our hearts thither, and prepare us for it. Death, therefore, which is our passage into heaven, must be in our view in all the exercises of our religion, and all the business of our lives. Away with those opinions and practices which no way tend to prepare us for a safe and comfortable death!

*How to prepare for Death in Health.*

Particularly we must bestow much care and diligence to strengthen our belief in the truth of God's word, the immortality of the soul, and the life to come. Nothing more strengthens temptations, destroys all hope, desire, and endeavour, than secret doubtings, whether God's word be true, and whether there be another life indeed for man or not. Uncertainties will not prevail against sense and present things. Uncertainties

will not sufficiently comfort a departing soul, when all worldly comforts must be parted with for ever. Every doubt here is as water cast upon the fire; it quenches all our desires and our joys.

Trust then your soul into the hand of your Saviour, and distract not your mind with unbelieving fears. He wanteth neither power, nor wisdom, nor love. You may boldly and quietly trust him with his own. He hath testified his love at so dear a rate, that we should not question it. To save us is his proper office and work. His work in heaven is to prepare a glorious receptacle for us; and there he is interceding for our salvation. Is his love, his promise, his oath, his seal, as nothing to us? It is faith in Christ by which we must live and die if we live and die in a well-grounded peace.

And this faith will produce that holiness, without which none shall see God; for he hateth all the workers of iniquity. He that believeth in Jesus Christ, must be sanctified by his Spirit, before he can comfortably die, or have the assurance of his own salvation. We must have the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, and not in fleshly wisdom, we have had our conversation in this world; that is, that we really lived not to the flesh, but unto God, and that our main business in the world was to serve and please him with all the powers which he gave us; and that we did not principally live to the world, but sought him and heaven in the first place.

Take heed of quenching the Spirit of Grace. Whatever good we do in health or sickness, it must be by his gracious operation. There is no

effectual light or divine knowledge, no holy love and delight in God, no spiritual life in any one of our thoughts, but what is wrought by the illuminating, sanctifying, quickening Spirit of God. Therefore tenderly cherish and preserve this heavenly guest, if you would have joy in health or sickness! For it must be the joy of the Holy Ghost.

Make it your chief care to dwell continually in the sense of God's love; and be daily employed in studying the greatness of it, the nature of God, and the mercies of the Gospel. Let praise and thanksgiving be your daily exercise and employment.

A great part of our preparation for death consists in having our daily conversation, as in heaven, while we are on earth; by faith, hope, and love, exercised in heavenly contemplation.

Let me then advise and intreat you to do all that you do in the world with heaven still in your view. Hear, and read, and pray, and resist temptations, as if heaven were still in your sight.

Set often before your eyes the certainty, the nearness, and the greatness of heavenly glory. Think how many millions of holy souls are there in joy, while we are here in fears and cares.

Think of those excellent servants of God, who have passed thither through a world of trials, and were lately compassed with such infirmities as ours, and passed through death as we must do. Remember that we go not in an untrodden path, but are the followers of all the spirits of the just. Think how much better it is with them than with us; how they are freed from all our sins and sufferings, our doubts and fears. Think

what it is for a perfected holy soul to see the glorified Redeemer, and all the holy company of Saints and Angels; yea, to see the glory of God himself, and to have the knowledge of all his glorious works; to be eternally employed in loving and praising him in the most transcendent joy and pleasure of the soul! Let these thoughts be your daily work and pleasure, and the conversation of your mind with God above.

The next direction to prepare for death is, that you mortify the flesh in time of health; and see that nothing in this world be so important and necessary for you, as to lead you to suffer the pleasures of sense and imagination to rule and govern you.

If you are in love with any thing here, you will be more loth to leave it. And if you live too much by sight and sense, you will grow so familiar with things sensible, and so averse to things unseen, that you will scarce be able to see any further with the mind, than you can see with your eyes; and scarce any thing will seem certain to you, or properly affect you, which you see not.

But if you keep your affections loosed from the world, and mortify the flesh with its inordinate desires, and become indifferent to the things of sense, there will be little to entangle and hinder the willingness of your departing soul.

Two extremes you must carefully avoid. Be not presumptuous and blinded by self-love, to think without proof that all is well with you; nor on the other hand, encourage a timorous, scrupulous disposition.

Lastly. Settle your worldly estate and affairs as one should do that is ready to depart. Make

your will that none may contend about your estate when you are dead. If you have wronged any, make them restitution. If you have fallen out with any, be quickly reconciled, and forgive them. And if you have the means, remember in your wills the Church, and institutions of piety and benevolence.

Mistake not sickness and death as if there were more harm in them than there really is. Sickness is a dispensation of God, on which you may as confidently expect his blessing, as on his word and sacraments. Labour, therefore, to reap the benefit of it, by suffering it to convince you more effectually of the vanity and vexation of the world. And remember what a mercy it is that man, who is so loth to die, should end his days in such pain and weakness, as to make him the more willing to be dissolved. Sickness alone, without faith and love, will draw no man's heart to heaven, or save him; yet such a help against the sinful love of life and fear of death, is no small mercy. Be sensible of the benefit of sickness, and experience will reconcile you to the providence of God, and prevent all repining.

Beg of God, for the sake of your Redeemer, such assistance of his Spirit as your low and weak condition needeth, and such as is suitable to a dying man. God hath great help and grace for great necessities.

Renew your repentance and confession of sin, and warn all about you to learn by your example to set their hopes and hearts on heaven, and to make it the work of all their lives to prepare for such a change. Then confidently deliver up your soul into the hand of your Father and

your Redeemer, and give over all distrustful caring for yourself.

Let holy affections be exercised in suitable expressions. If your disease allow you strength to do this, magnify God's goodness, and speak good of his name, and word, and ways. Make others see that there is a reality in the comforts of faith and hope; and that the death of the righteous is so desirable as to make their lives desirable also. Your tongue was given you to praise the Lord: it hath but a little while more to speak: Let its last word be to his glory. Tell men what you have found God and your Redeemer to be to your soul; and speak of the glory of his kingdom, which you expect, that the hopes and desires of others may be excited.

Let your last words be addressed to God himself in prayer and praises, beginning the work on earth which you must perfect in heaven. Imitate your dying Lord, saying "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit:" and say with his first martyr, "Lord Jesus receive my spirit."

AMEN! AMEN!

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*A Prayer for a happy Death.*

(From the Offices of the Church.)

O God whose days are without end, and whose mercies cannot be numbered; make me, I beseech thee, deeply sensible of the shortness and uncertainty of human life. In the midst of life, I am in death; and can seek for succour only of thee, O Lord,

who, for my sins, art justly displeas'd, O grant me unfeign'd repentance for all the errors of my life past, and a steadfast faith in thy Son Jesus, that my sins may be done away by thy mercy, and my pardon sealed in heaven, before I go hence, and be no more seen. Let thy holy Spirit lead me through this vale of misery in righteousness and holiness all the days of my life; that when I shall have served thee in my generation, I may be gathered unto my Fathers, having the testimony of a good conscience; in the communion of the Catholic Church; in the confidence of a certain faith; in the comfort of a reasonable, religious, and holy hope; in favour with thee, my God, and in perfect charity with the world. Fit and prepare me, O heavenly Father, against the hour of death; that I may then commend my soul into thy hands, as into the hands of a faithful Creator and most merciful Saviour. And do thou wash it in the blood of that immaculate Lamb that was slain for the sins of the world, that whatsoever defilements it may have contracted, being purified and done away, it may without spot be presented unto thee. Grant, O Almighty God, with whom do live the spirits of those who depart hence in the Lord, and with whom the souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, are in joy and felicity, that, with all those who are departed in the true faith of thy holy name, I may have my perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in thy eternal and everlasting glory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

## AN EXHORTATION,

WITH

SOME FORMS,

IN ORDER TO ENFORCE AND TO ASSIST IN THE PRACTICE  
OF THE DUTY OF

EJACULATORY PRAYER;

THAT IS,

OF OFFERING UP SHORT PRAYERS TO GOD ON ALL OC-  
CASSIONS WITH HEARTY DEVOTION  
AND WARMTH OF SPIRIT.

RECOMMENDATORY ADDRESS,

BY THE REV. WILLIAM JONES, OF NAYLAND.

TO THE PUBLISHERS.

SIRS,

THIS little Book, plain as it is, being singular in its way, and having been the instrument of much good, I wished to see it reprinted several years ago, and on such authority as would have been sufficient to recommend the use of it; but as I did not succeed, I am glad you have determin'd to give a new edition of it.

A reader may suppose the whole design of it to be only that of supplying the words and the language of occasional prayer. It will, indeed,