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EXTRACTS

FROM

THE WORKS

OF

JOHN PRESTON, D.D.

CHAPLAIN IN ORDINARY TO HIS MAJESTY KING CHARLES I.

*Master of Emmanuel College in Cambridge, and some time Preacher
of Lincoln's Inn.*

THE
NEW COVENANT;
OR THE
SAINTS' PORTION.

GENESIS XVII. 1.

I am God All-sufficient ; walk before me, and be thou perfect : and I will make my covenant between me and thee, and I will multiply thee exceedingly.*

THESE words of God to Abraham contain a precept of sincerity, or perfect walking with God, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect;" and also the motive thereunto, God's *all-sufficiency*, "I am God All-sufficient." As if he should say, If there were any defect in me, if thou didst need or couldst desire any thing that were not to be had in me, and thou mightest have it elsewhere, perhaps thy heart might be imperfect in walking towards me; thou mightest then step out from me to take in advantages elsewhere; but seeing *I am All-sufficient*, since I have enough in me to fulfil all thy desires, since I

* In our present translation, the words are, *I am the Almighty God.*

am every way an adequate object, so that all thy soul can wish for thou mayest have in me,—why then shouldst thou not consecrate thyself to me alone? Why then shouldst thou be uneven in thy ways, serving me sometimes, and sometimes the creature? For there is nothing in the creature but thou mayest find it in me. “I am All-sufficient,” therefore “walk before me and be perfect.”

Yet these words contain somewhat more; “I will make my covenant between me and thee, and I will multiply thee exceedingly.” Here you see the ground of all our sincerity and perfect walking with God, which is the covenant that is between God and us. These words do the most briefly of any that I find in the Scriptures, express that covenant on both sides. Thus saith the Lord unto Abraham, on the one hand, “I will be thy God;” on the other, “Thou shalt be mine.” Here is the sum of the covenant which in other places of Scripture is set forth more at large. Now the Lord here shews what a kind of God he will be to him, “I will be all-sufficient” to thee; which consists in two things, if you compare this with Gen. xv. 1, “I will be thy buckler to preserve thee from all evil;” and again, “I will be thy exceeding great reward:” that is, I will not only be a shield, but will be a sun to thee; I will both preserve thee from all evil, and I will fill thee with all good things. This is the covenant on God’s part. And that which is required on Abraham’s part is, that he be the Lord’s, as the Lord is his; for so you see in the words following. The question only is, in what manner Abraham shall be the Lord’s; how that shall be declared. Saith he, It is not an empty relation, but thou must shew that thou art mine by walking before me. And yet it must not be any kind of walking before the Lord, but it must be a *perfect* walking before him; “Walk before me and be perfect.”

There are three points that we will gather out of the words. I. That the cause of all departure from God, of all unevenness in our ways towards God is from hence,

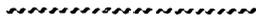
that we do not think God to be all-sufficient. II. That God is all-sufficient. III. That whosoever hath interest in God's all-sufficiency, must be a perfect man.

I. As the cause of our sincerity and perfectness ariseth hence, that we apprehend God to be all-sufficient, (for this proposition evidently ariseth from the words, and here lies the force of the argument, "I am all-sufficient," therefore "walk before me and be perfect;") so, my beloved, it is evident that the cause of every man's keeping off from God, the cause of his unevenness after he is come to him, is from hence, that men think not God to be all-sufficient. For if a man had enough in the Lord, he would never go out from him; but because he wants something, he desires something that is not in him, or he fears something that he thinks he cannot keep from him: hence it comes to pass that he steps out from God, he goeth out of the ways of his commandments.

II. The second point is, that God is all-sufficient. And to prove that he is so, I will propound to you but these two reasons: 1. Consider that all the comforts, all the excellency, all the beauty that is to be found in the creature, is but borrowed and derived. God is the Original; he is the first, the universal Cause of all. Hence we gather this, that there is an *all-sufficiency* in him, and in him only. So that no creature hath any sufficiency at all in itself; for the creature adds nothing at all to his sufficiency, but all-sufficiency is comprehended in him: for if they be all derived and borrowed things, then they are in the creature but as far as it pleaseth him to communicate the same to them. 2. He is *all-sufficient*, because he only can be the Author of good and evil. There is no sufficiency at all in that which can do neither good nor evil. Now it is the property of the Lord to do both, as we see Jer. x. 5, a place worthy our consideration, "The idols stand up as a palm-tree, but they speak not; they are borne, because they cannot go: fear them not, because they can do neither good nor evil." This is the argument whereby the Lord proveth them to be idols, because they

can do neither evil nor good. As if he should say, if they could do either evil or good, they were gods, and not idols. The same we may apply to any creature, considered in itself, without the influence and concurrence of God. If it were able to do either good or evil, you might worship it as God; for God only can do good and evil of himself: he only can make every man's life comfortable or uncomfortable; it is his prerogative royal, it belongs to him alone. There is no creature in heaven or earth that is able to be the author of the least good, or the least hurt. As there is no evil* in the city, and the Lord hath not done it, neither is there any good.

But, you will say to me, "We find it otherwise in experience; we find that the creatures are able to do us good, and to do us hurt." You have an answer for that John xix. 11. When Pilate said to our Saviour, "Have I not power to crucify thee, or to loose thee?" He answered, "No: thou hast none at all of thyself. Indeed, thou hast a power, but it is given thee from above." And so it is with all the creatures we have to do with. Even men do us not (without God's commission,†) the least good, nor the least hurt. It is said of Pull and Tiglath-pileser, kings of Assyria, that the Lord stirred them up, and they carried his people away captive. If God had not stirred up their spirits, they had not done the least thing. Now, if a man be able to do nothing but as far as God sets him on work,‡ then much less can other things, as riches and the like; they can do no more than men can do: for what serve they for, but to set men



* Evil here means affliction, trouble, or calamity, the punishment or chastisement of sin, private or public.

† Say, rather, "without his appointment or permission."

‡ This expression is too strong, and would destroy man's free-agency and accountableness for his conduct. It would even make God the author of all the sin committed upon earth; and is expressly contrary to God's declaration, Jer. vii. 31, and many other passages. See 2 Kings xvii 13, &c

to work. So, honour and credit, which men so much esteem, can do no more than men can do; for they set men on work to do good, as reproach sets them on work to do hurt. Now, if there be no man, nor creature in heaven or earth, that can do good or hurt, why should we be servants to men? Why should we be subject to carnal delights, to carnal fears? Surely it is hence,—we over-value the creature; we think it is able to do something; we think that there is some sufficiency in it, and not *all-sufficiency* in God. If any creature were able to do good or hurt without the Lord, if they had any part or portion with him in being authors of our good, certainly they should have a portion of our service: for there is reason and equity in it that we should seek unto that which doth us good, and serve it; and likewise if it could do us hurt. But now, seeing the Lord challengeth all to himself, saying, “I am all-sufficient,” there is no creature able to add to me more or less; seeing not the most powerful among men, no creature, is able alone to do us either good or hurt, why should we so much esteem and over-value it.

There are but two things that we need: one is, our everlasting happiness; the other is, the things of this life. For the first, the creature is able to do nothing, it is wholly excluded, for it is inferior to us. Add to this, there is a curse upon the creature, there is an emptiness in it. Besides, *it is under the sun*, and therefore it cannot help to the happiness that is above the sun. It is temporal, whereas we must have an eternal happiness, for our souls are eternal. So then, for the chief good of man, the creature is nothing at all; it helpeth but in particulars. Credit doth but help against ignominy; learning against ignorance; health is but a remedy against sickness; riches are but an help against poverty: and so you may say of all the creatures in the world. But the Lord is universally good, he gives all things; and therefore “godliness is profitable for all things:” He gives us all

things to enjoy: that is, he fills the soul of man every way.

Again, for the second thing we need; that is, the things that belong to this life. I confess, the creature helps us somewhat herein, but it doth it only as an instrument. Now we thank not the hand, but the mind within that moves the hand to do a good turn; much less do we thank a dead, inanimate instrument. Let us look upon every creature and every man as God's instrument. When any man doth you a kindness, or doth you good, say, as the Scripture phrase is, "The Lord hath given me favour in his sight." And so, when he doth us hurt, say, "Such a man is but a mere instrument, whereby the Lord has poured out some part of his displeasure upon me." And thus let your eye be upon the Lord altogether. But now, let us consider wherein God's all-sufficieny towards us consists; and that is in two things. 1. In keeping us from all evil. 2. In filling us with all good. 1. God is a buckler, to keep us from all evil; he is a buckler that compasseth us round about. That speech was delivered upon this occasion: When Abraham had gone to war against those kings that came out against Sodom, the Lord delivered him, and afterwards told him, Abraham, as I have dealt with thee at this time, so fear not when thou fallest into the like distress; for *I am thy buckler*; I will defend thee from all evil, as I have done from this. Now, he is such a buckler that no creature can pierce through; he is such a buckler as covers all over. He is "a wall of brass;" and not so only, but is said to be "a wall of fire" about his children. That is, he is not only a wall that keeps them safe, but a wall of fire to consume all them that come against them: for a fire, you know, doth not only defend those that are within the compass of it, but it burns those that come near it. Such a one is God to his children; and that is one thing wherein his all-sufficieny consists. 2. In filling us with all good; which is expressed in Ps. lxxxiv.

“The Lord will be a sun and a shield;” he will be a *shield* to keep off evil, and a *sun* to fill them with all comfort. “I am (saith he,) thy exceeding great reward.” As if he should say, Abraham, whatsoever is in me, all that I have, all my attributes are thine, for thy use; my power, my wisdom, my goodness, whatsoever is mine in the world, I will give it for thy portion; I and all that I have, are thine. And might he not well say, he was an “exceeding great reward?” Who can understand the height, and breadth, and length, and depth of this, “I am thy exceeding great reward?” That is, thou shalt have all kind of comforts in me, and thou shalt have them in the highest and greatest measure. On the other hand, there is no sufficiency at all in the creature; it can do you, of itself, neither good nor hurt, as we said before. All the good and hurt that the creature can be supposed to do stands in one of these two things; 1. Either in making us happy, or miserable; or else, 2. In affording us subsidiary helps, such as we have need of. But in neither of them the creature, of itself, is able to do any thing.

To what we have said before of the creatures’ insufficiency, we will here add, that the creature is corporeal, the mind is spiritual; now a spirit can receive no happiness from a corporal being. Therefore, in Heb. xii. 23, we are said to go to the “spirits of perfect men,” as a suitable converse for a spirit. Again, that the creature is temporary, and not able to run the course with an immortal soul to its journey’s end, but leaves it in the middle way, and therefore is not able to make it happy. Besides, the creature is finite, and therefore is not able to fill the soul; God is infinite, and therefore is able to do it. That no creature can do it, we see by continual experience. Take any comfort that you find in the creature, and when you have enjoyed it, still you want somewhat in it that it has not; but when you come to the Lord, and enjoy him, when your hearts are filled, still there is somewhat beyond in him; there is no stop, no

restraint : and therefore he only can make the soul happy. Now the ground why God is only able to make the soul happy, is, because the soul is made for him ; and therefore there is nothing else answerable to it. There is that constitution of the mind that it cannot be filled with any thing besides God. The Lord might have so constituted the soul of man that the creature might have satisfied it ; but he hath not done so : for he hath made it for himself, and therefore nothing can fill it but himself. So much for this, that in the matter of happiness the creature is able to do nothing.

But you will say to me, “This is a thing of which we make no doubt ; but what do you say for ordinary uses, and for the vicissitudes of this life ; is not the creature in these able to do good and hurt ?” As I said to you before, the creature is not able, considered without the influence of the first Mover, to do you the least good or hurt ; as the words are, Jer. x. 5, speaking of idols, “that can do neither good nor hurt, and therefore fear them not.” As if he should say, If they could do you either good or hurt, you might fear them. And it is certain, if any creature were able to do you any good or hurt, you might fear it ; for God alters no law of nature. That which is in itself to be feared we may fear ; that which is to be regarded we may regard it. In nature and reason, a man would have an eye to the creature, if it were able to hurt him ; and if the creature could add the least drop of happiness, certainly you might have an eye upon it ; but it is wholly from the Lord. Therefore, saith he, “Let your hearts be only fixed upon me, let your eye be only towards me ; let your affections be taken up about nothing but me ; spend all the strength of your souls in obeying me, and keeping my commandments ; for there is none in the world that is able to do you good or hurt but myself.”

Now, to make it appear plain to you that God only can help or hurt us, I will propound only these two things.

1. That all the creatures are absolutely at his disposing.
2. That when he hath disposed of and distributed them

to us, they cannot actually comfort or hurt us without a special hand of his. I. I say, the creature is fully at his disposing; it is, as I said before, but God's instrument. All the creatures in this world are but as so many servants, which are in the Lord's house, prepared to wait upon his children, to convey such comforts to them as he hath appointed them; so that there is not one creature in heaven or earth stirs itself to do you the least good but when the Lord commands it, and saith, Go, comfort such a man; go, refresh him, do him good; it stirs not without a warrant, and without a special command from him.* The bread and meat which you eat nourish you not, except he say, Go, and nourish such a man; the fire warms you not without his bidding; and so of all the creatures else. Again, when he doth command them, they do it, and do it fully. Well, then, seeing all the goodness that we partecipate of, both by good and evil men, is from the Lord, either from his mercy or from his providence, we should learn to sanctify the Lord, both in our hearts and in our speeches; not by saying, I have gotten such and such things; but as Jacob said, "The Lord of his goodness hath given me all this;" not Laban, not my own labour. If in any enterprize you have success, say not, I have done it; but say, as Abraham's servant said, "The Lord hath prospered my journey." That is, the Lord doth all in all; it is he that commands all; it is he that disposeth all.

Now, that the creature is thus guided and disposed by God, that it is able to do nothing without him, we will not instance in the unreasonable creatures, which you all believe to be at his command,—but in those that seem to be at the greatest liberty; that is, the wills and understandings of men. But in this, that the Lord guides these, take his own testimony, Prov. xxix. 26, "Every man seeks the face of the ruler, but his judgment is from

* See the preceding notes.

the Lord ;” that is, men are deceived in this ; they think the ruler, as of himself, can do something ; because he seems to have much power to do good and hurt, and therefore they “ seek his face ;” but, he is not able to do any thing but what the Lord permits ; what he prescribes to him to do, what he saith he shall do, just so far he goes, and no farther ; for, the whole judgment that a man hath, is from the Lord. That is, all the good and evil that he doth, that mind of his from whence it proceedeth, is guided and fashioned by the Lord, upon every particular occasion.

2. When the Lord hath sent such a creature to thee, and thou hast it before thee, it is not able to comfort nor hurt thee without him. Put the ease, if the creature be full of comfort, it is not able to yield that milk of comfort that is in it, except the Lord bring it forth, except the Lord apply it in particular to thee. And the same I may say of any hurtful creature : be it never so pregnant with evil ; yet it is not able to exercise it, except the Lord bring it forth, except the Lord use it for such a purpose. As an ax, though it be never so sharp, yet if the workman do not use it to cut such a tree, to lop such a branch, it is not able to do it.

Now to apply. If the Lord be all-sufficient, we should learn how to guide our affections. Labour to see that fulness that is in God, and that emptiness that is in the creature. If the Lord be thus all-sufficient, then let your hearts be satisfied with him alone, let them be filled with him, let them be so bottomed upon him, and so strengthened by him, that you need not go out from him to fetch in any comfort from any creature whatsoever. We have but a short time to live in this world ; the strength of our mind is the most precious thing ; we should then labour to improve the thoughts and affections of our minds to the glory of God ; we should be careful that the strength of our spirit be not bestowed upon things that are unworthy of it. If the Lord be all-sufficient, why should you not bestow it altogether upon him ? Why should you spend it

upon the creature? Why should your mind be occupied about that? Why should you be subject to carnal griefs, fears, and desires? Surely, all these should be taken up about the Lord; for he looks for it at our hands: I am all-sufficient, (says he) therefore let all these be bestowed upon me.

The next use we are to make of this, that God is all-sufficient, is, to be content with him alone for our portion. This is of use both to those that are strangers to the life of God, and likewise to those that are within the covenant. 1. This is of use to those that are strangers to the covenant, to bring them in; for the Lord propounds that upon reasonable conditions. It is true, he requires of you absolute obedience, that you serve him altogether; but then withal he propounds to you an absolute and full ability, "I am all-sufficient." And as he requires you to leave all for his sake, so he promiseth that he will be to you in stead of all things. All your desires shall be satisfied, there is nothing that you need, nothing that you want, but it shall be supplied. 2. It will likewise be useful to those that are within the covenant of grace. For the believer will readily allow, that if he hath God for his portion, it is enough; and being persuaded that he is enough, will be content with him alone. When the sun shines to you, though there be never a star, is it not day? So, though you have the Lord alone, and nothing but him for your portion, shall not he be sufficient to make you happy? Is he not all-sufficient, to fill you with comforts of all kinds? What then though you have nothing but him? Again, had you all these stars to shine to you, if the sun be set, it is but night notwithstanding. So you are but in a state of misery, if you take not the Lord alone for your portion. Take all the creatures, and you find by experience, that when they are enjoyed, you see an end of their perfection; you quickly find a bottom in them. The heart hasteth from this thing, to somewhat else; you now suck all the honey out of this flower; and when you have done so, you go to another, and to another,

and no where doth the soul find rest. But come to spiritual things; the more you use them, the more you find the beauty and excellency that is in them.

But, you will say, "There are many necessities, many uses, that I have of other things." Therefore I will go yet further. Dost thou consider the Lord, what he is? Go through all his attributes, consider his almighty power, consider his great wisdom, consider his goodness, truth, and kindness; all these are thine. My beloved, God is not known in the world; we consider not aright what he saith, when he saith, "I will be thy portion, I will be thy God." Now to have the Lord himself, is more than if he should give thee all the kingdoms of the earth. Consider this. The power of God is thine, to work all thy works for thee; to make a passage for thee, when thou art in a strait; to bring thy enterprises to pass; to deliver thee when thou art in any affliction, out of which the creature is not able to deliver thee. Think what it is to have an interest in God's almighty power, and think this is one part of thy portion. The Lord himself is thine, and all his power is thine. Consider likewise his wisdom: if thou need counsel in any difficult case, if thou wouldst be instructed in things that are obscure, the wisdom of God is thine; thou hast an interest in it; it is thy portion, thou shalt have the use of it, as far as he sees it meet for thee. And so the justice of God is thine; to deliver thee when thou art oppressed; to defend thee in thine innocency, and to vindicate thee from the injuries of men. So thou mayest go through the rest of his attributes, and say within thine heart, All these are mine. Now, what a portion is it to have the Lord? If thou hadst nothing but him, thou hadst enough.

If the Lord be all-sufficient, then learn hence, thirdly, to have your eye only upon him, when you have any enterprise to do. If there be any cross, that you would have prevented; if there be any blessing, that you would obtain; if there be any affliction, out of which you would have deliverance, let your eye be to him alone, rest on

him alone ; for he is all-sufficient, he is able to bring it to pass. Therefore I say, whatsoever thy case be, look to him only, and thou needest no other help. Say thus with thyself, The greatest means without God's help, are not able to bring this enterprise to pass, to work such a work for me ; and the weakest with him is able to do it. You find Asa said, " Lord, it is all one with thee to save with many or with few," 2 Chron. xiv. 11. And the Lord made it good to him ; for when he had but a few, and a great multitude came against him, you see he was saved with those few. And, afterwards, when Asa had a great multitude, he was not delivered, that he might learn to know the truth of that which he had spoken before. And therefore in every business, say this with thyself, " All my business now is with God in heaven, and not with men, nor the creatures ; and therefore if I want comfort, if I cannot have it from men, nor from the creature, yet I know where to fetch it : if I want wisdom, counsel, and advice, or if I want help, I know whither to go ; if the cistern fail, I can go to the fountain ; I can go to him that alone is able to be my helper in all my needs, to be my counsellor in all my doubts, and to comfort me in all my distresses." Thus would I press this thing upon you, to settle your eyes upon God alone.

Now consider whether you are able to comfort yourselves thus out of God's all-sufficiency. We do, for the most part, as Hagar did ; when the bottle was spent, she fell a crying, she was undone, she and her child should die, and there was no more hope, till the Lord opened her eyes to see a fountain near her. The fountain was near her, but she saw it not ; when she saw it she was well enough. Is it not so with us all ? Because the bottle is dried up, because such a means is taken away, we think presently there is no more hope, although the fountain is near. The Lord himself is the fountain, and he is near ; it needs only that he open our eyes to see.

Again, if God be all-sufficient, let us be exhorted to make a covenant with him. If you will enter into

covenant with *him*, he will be all-sufficient to *you*. Now for your farther encouragement to enter into covenant with God, that you may thereby experience his all-sufficiency, I shall shew you wherein it consists. First, God is all-sufficient, to justify, and to forgive us our sins. Secondly, he is all-sufficient, to sanctify us, and to heal our infirmities. Thirdly, he is all-sufficient, to provide for us whatsoever we need; so that no good thing shall be wanting to us. These three parts of the covenant we find set down in divers places; but most clearly in Ezek. xxxvi. "I will pour clean water upon you, you shall be clean, yea, from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you." There is the first part of the covenant, that he will cleanse us from our sins; from the guilt and punishment of them. Again, "A new heart will I give you, also a new spirit will I put into you, and I will take away your stony hearts out of your bodies, and I will give you a heart of flesh." There is the second part of the covenant, consisting of sanctification. And the third is, "You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and I will call for corn, and I will increase it, and I will lay no more famine upon you, and I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that you bear no more the reproach of famine among the heathen." Here are the particulars set down; some are named for the rest: I will call for corn and wine; that is, for whatsoever you want. In opening these three parts of the covenant, I shall shew you, that God is sufficient in all.

First, he is all-sufficient, to take away all our sins. It may be, you will say, "It is an easy thing to believe this; there is no difficulty at all in it." But surely, whatsoever we say, we find in experience it is exceeding hard. Who is able so fully to believe the forgiveness of his sins, as he ought, when he is put to it? At the day of death, at the time of extremity, at that time when the conscience stirs up all its strength, when all a man's sins are presented unto him in their colours, who is able then to

believe it? Therefore we had need to find out the all-sufficiency of God in this. For the greatness of his power is shewed in nothing more than in the forgiving of sins. If you say, "Who doubts that the Lord is able to forgive?" I say, My beloved, if you did not doubt of it, what is the reason, seeing you can believe a smaller sin to be forgiven, that you question God's mercy, when great sins are committed? Certainly in doubting of God's mercy, men doubt likewise of his power, whether he be able to forgive: for as there is a power in his wrath, so likewise there is a power in his mercy, as we see Rom. ix. 22, 23; and as God shews the greatness of his power in executing wrath upon evil men, so he shews the exceeding greatness of his power, and declares the glorious riches of his mercy towards those that turn unto him, in forgiving their iniquity, transgression, and sin; all kinds and degrees of sin, whatsoever they be that they have committed against him. When a man considers his sins, and looks upon them in the height, in the breadth, and depth of them, when he sees a heap of sins piled up together, reaching up to the heavens, and down to the bottom of hell; then to believe, that the mercy of God is higher than these sins, and that the depth of his mercy is deeper than they; this is "to comprehend the length, and breadth, and depth of mercy in him," Ephes. iii. 10. This is exceeding hard to us; but yet this the Lord is able to do; his mercy is able to swallow them up; as you find, James ii. 13, "Mercy rejoiceth against judgment." As if he should say, There is a certain contention between the sins that we commit, and the mercy of God. But though our sins oppose his mercy, yet his mercy is greater, and, at length, overcomes them, and rejoiceth against them, as a man rejoiceth against an adversary that he hath subdued. Therefore herein we must labour to see God's all-sufficiency, that although our sins be exceeding great, yet the largeness of his mercy is able to swallow them up.

The second part of the covenant is his all-sufficiency in healing our sins, or in sanctifying us; when a man looks

upon the ways of righteousness, and then upon the strength of his lusts, he is ready to say with himself, "How shall I be able to lead a holy life?" This is the answer to it, "God is all-sufficient." He that is able to bid light shine out of darkness, is able to kindle a light in thy dark heart. Though thy heart be never so averse, he is able to change it, and therefore say not, "I shall never be able to do it;" for he is able to take away all that reluctancy. For God doth in the work of grace, as he doth in the work of nature: he doth not as we do; for when we would have an arrow go to the mark, when we throw a stone upward, we are not able to change the nature of it, but we put it on by force. But God carries every thing to their end, by giving them a nature suitable to that end. An archer makes an impression upon an arrow, but it is a violent impression; God carries every thing to that end, to which he hath appointed it; but with this difference, he makes not a violent impression, but a natural impression. He causeth the creature to go on of itself, to this or that purpose, to this or that end. And so he doth in the work of grace; he doth not carry a man on to the ways of righteousness, leaving him in the state of nature, taking him as he is, but he changeth a man's heart, so that he is carried willingly to the ways of God, as the creature is carried by a natural instinct to its own place, or to the thing it desires. This the Lord out of his all-sufficiency is able to do.

But you will be ready to object, "If the Lord be thus all-sufficient, if he be able thus to kindle light in the dark heart, to change a man's crooked and perverse spirit, to implant such habits into it, why am I thus? Why am I no more able to overcome my sins? Why do I come short of the performance of such purposes and desires? Why do I find so many things in me contrary to the rules of sanctification, and to this all-sufficient power of God?" To this I answer: It may be it is because thou observest not those rules by which God communicates this all-sufficiency, and power of his. What though the Lord be

willing to communicate it, yet there are some rules to be observed, which himself hath given. That is, Thou must diligently attend upon his ordinances ; thou must be careful to abstain from the occasions he bids thee abstain from : if thou fail in either of these, he hath made thee no promise to help thee with his all-sufficiency. Sampson had great strength, as long as the Lord was with him. You know, the Lord told him, so long as he nourished his hair, (which was a symbol of God's presence,) so long he would be with him ; but if he had not that, he would withdraw his presence ; and so it is in this case : the Lord hath appointed us to keep his ordinances, and so long he will be with us ; but if we neglect the means of grace, or adventure upon the occasions of sin, the Lord is then discharged of his promise, as we may so say ; the Lord then withdraws his power from us, as he did from Sampson. If you will needs touch that tree, if you will needs go into such a company, if you will needs gaze upon such objects : or, if again, you will neglect prayer, and hearing, and sanctifying the sabbath, if you will neglect to observe the rules that he hath appointed ; in all these cases, the Lord withdraws his all-sufficiency. And therefore lay the fault where it is ; that is, upon yourselves. God hath made a promise unto those whose hearts are perfect with him ; but it may be, thy heart is imperfect ; it may be, there hath been hypocrisy in thy heart, thou hast never been willing to part with all, to serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind all thy days. When once thy heart is brought to sincerity, doubt not that he will perform what thou lookest for on his part. For it belongs to his part to give thee power and strength to do that which thou desirest to do. So much for the second part of the covenant.

The third part of the covenant, is to provide for us all good things belonging to this present life. Herein the Lord is all-sufficient to all those that are in covenant with him. I need not say much to make this good unto you. All things are his, whatsoever a man needs ; riches are

his; they are his creatures; they come and go at his command; honour is his; "I will honour those that honour me." He takes it to himself to bestow it as he pleaseth. "Health and life are his; "the issues of life and death belong to him." Friendship is his; for "he puts our acquaintance far from us," and draws them near to us. Go through all the variety of things that your heart can desire, and they are all his; he governs and disposes of them as he pleaseth; and therefore, certainly he is able to provide all things for you that your heart can desire; so that no good thing shall be wanting to you.

Labour then to see God in his greatness, in all his attributes, in his unchangeableness; to see him in his eternity, in his power, in his providence. See what use the Psalmist makes of the attributes of God: "I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days! thy years endure from generation to generation; thou hast before times laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands; they shall perish, but thou shalt endure, even they all shall wax old as a garment." When a man sees the vanity of the creatures, he looks upon them all as things that will wax old as a garment. A garment that is new at the first, with long wearing will be spent, and at length be fit for nothing, but to be cast away; so, saith he, shall the whole body of the creatures be. Now when we consider this, that it is a man's own ease, and every creature's, let a man help himself with this, that God remains for ever; and therefore, if a man can dwell with him, that will help him out of that weakness, mutability, and changeableness that is in the creature. "Lord, thou art our habitation from generation to generation," saith the Psalmist, *Psa.* xc. 1. As if he should say, When a man dwells with God, he hath a safe house; a castle, that when generations come and go, when there is a change of all things, yet there is no change in him. So, when you find these defects in the creature, go home to him, and labour to see his immutability and eternity. And so likewise, when

you see your own inability to do any thing, when you see that weakness in the creature, that it is not able to bring any enterprise to pass, then look upon his providence and almighty power, in that he doth all things, in guiding the creature.

The serious setting ourselves to consider the providence of God, will discover to us his all-sufficiency, more than any thing besides. Are not all creatures made by him? You will grant that, that every one, even the smallest, is from him; certainly then, there is some end of it; for he made nothing but for some end; and, if there be an end of it, he must guide it, and lead it to that end; otherwise, he would leave the building imperfect, he would but begin a work, and leave it in the middle; otherwise the creature would be lost and perish, and that through a default of his. But there cannot be any default, any want of goodness in him, the great Builder of all things, and therefore it must needs be, that he guides every creature under the sun. He guides and directs even the smallest to their ends. And this is all that is meant by Providence. It is nothing else, but to guide, govern, and direct all creatures to their several ends. Besides, how is it that you see things fitted one to another as they are? Is it not the providence of God? When you see the wheels of a watch fitted one to another, you say this is done by art, not by accident; even so, it is in nature; you see a fitting of one thing to another in the body, in the creatures, in every thing, in all the senses; and the setting of one thing to another shews, that there is an art that doth it, which is the providence of God. Besides, we see all things go their course. Those things that come by accident fall out uncertainly, now one way, and then another; but we see all the works of nature go in a certain constant course. And lastly, if there be no providence in a family, it will soon be dissolved. So it is in the great family of the world; there must be a government, or it cannot stand; and if there be a government, it cannot be by man; and if not by man, it must be by one that is God.

But it is objected, “ We see many things are casual, and *that time and chance befalls every thing.*” It is true, there are chances that fall out in all these things, that we call casual or accidental, when something comes between a cause and the effect, and hinders. When a man is strong, and some accident comes between and hinders him from obtaining the battle ; when a man hath wisdom, and some accident comes between, and hinders him from obtaining favour. This is that which we properly call *chance*. Now it is true, there is such a chance in the nature of the thing ; but yet consider this ; though this chance be contrary to the particular causes, yet it hath a cause, it riseth from the universal cause ; so that it is called chance, because it thwarts the particular cause ; but it doth not differ from the intention of the universal. Somewhat there is that is the author of all causes, that is the first of all causes ; and therefore it is impossible that any thing should be totally by accident. Whencesoever you find this, it is so far from being casual, so far from coming by chance, if you look into it exactly, that then the providence of God is most seen. Those things that are done by particular causes, according to their intention, we usually ascribe it to them ; but when there is an intercurrent action comes, that we call chance, that belongs to the universal cause, and is to be ascribed to him ; and hence it is, that the Lord usually in the administering of contingent things, turns things by accidental causes ; because his own hand is most seen in it, and he gets the greatest glory by it. When then you see such an inability in the creature, to bring its enterprises to pass, labour to see God’s almighty providence, and to be persuaded of it ; to think with yourself there is not the least thing without his providence.

All the question is now, how far we practise this : let every man examine his own heart. First, if a man believe that all-sufficiency that is in God, why doth he terminate his affections in the creature ? If there be nothing in the creature but emptiness, why do you love the crea-

ture? Why do you fear it as you do? If there be nothing in the creature, but all be in him, we should see through the creature, we should look beyond it. Shishack was but the vial, through which God's wrath was poured upon Israel, 2 Chron. xii. So Cyrus was but the vial, through which God's goodness was poured upon Israel, Isai. xlv. If you did look upon every man, upon every friend, and every enemy, upon every creature, as an instrument of good or hurt to you, as an empty vial in itself, through which God pours either his goodness or his wrath, it would cause you not to stick upon the creature, not to wrangle with men, or be angry with them, seeing they are but the vials. It would cause you again not to be proud of the friendship of men, not to be secure in them, not to trust in them, not to think yourselves safe in them, seeing they are but vials, through which God pours his mercy upon you. "Use this world then as though you used it not." You would use all the things in the world, all the men in the world, as if you did not use them, if you did see an emptiness in them, and a fulness and all-sufficiency in God.

Moreover, if God be all-sufficient, why do we stick so much upon particular means, as to say, If such means are not used, I shall be undone? If he be all-sufficient, it is no matter what the means are, he is able to bring it to pass. It is usual with men to say, If such a thing fail me, I am undone. What are these but particulars? This sticking upon particulars is a sign we think him not all-sufficient. If there be not a spark of light, but thou walkest in darkness, and see'st nothing to help thee, if God be all-sufficient, trust in him. Let him that hath no light, trust in the Lord. When we lose any particular means, it is but the scattering of a beam, it is but the breaking of a bucket, when the sun and the fountain is the same. Why should we be troubled at it? When one means is broken, cannot God find out another? When he said to Paul, all the souls with him should be safe, all were not able to swim to shore, and the ship was

not able to bring them to shore ; but yet, some by broken boards, some by one means, and some by another, all got safe : so the Lord brings all things to pass in a strange manner, sometimes one way, sometimes another ; he breaks in pieces many times the ship, that, we think, should bring us to shore, but casts us on such boards as we did not expect.

And so likewise, if God be all-sufficient, if he be thus exceeding great, consider, whether thou seest thine own vileness, thy ignorance, thy emptiness. When Agur looked upon God, and saw his greatness, Prov. xxx. he cried out, that he “ had not the understanding of a man in him.” Canst thou see thy emptiness, and the vanity of thy own knowledge ? Canst thou learn not to murmur against God in any of his ways ? Canst thou learn to bring under thy thoughts to the ways of God’s providence ? Canst thou be content to see the Lord going all the ways that he doth, setting up evil men, and putting down good men, causing the churches to wither, and the enemies to prosper ? Canst thou see all this, and yet “ sanctify him in thine heart ?” Art thou able to say, that “ he is holy in all his ways,” and in this to see the greatness of God, and thy own folly and weakness ? Canst thou say, that “ thou art but dust and ashes,” and say it in good earnest ? Then I will believe that thou hast seen God in his greatness ; I will believe, that thou hast seen him in his all-sufficiency.

Moreover, if God be all-sufficient, why are we then so ready to knock at other doors ? Why are we so ready to go to the creature, to seek help, and comfort, and counsel from it, and to knock so little at his door by prayer and seeking to him ? For, if thou believedst him to be all-sufficient, thou wouldst be abundant in prayer, thou wouldst take little time to look to others, thy chief business would be to look to him, not only in praying to him, but in serving him, and pleasing him. We knock at his door, as well by the duties of obedience, as by prayer and seeking to him. If thou think him to be all-sufficient, why dost thou not do this ?

Again: Lastly, if thou think God to be all-sufficient, when thou hast any service or duty to do, either belonging to God or man, why dost thou not resolve upon the doing of it, without looking to the consequence, whatsoever it be? For if he be all-sufficient, then all our care should be to do our duty, and to leave the success to him. A servant that thinks his master is able and willing to provide for him sufficiently at the end of the day or year, or the end of his service, will be careful to do his work, without making provision for himself. And so, if thou believe God to be all-sufficient, thou wilt seek no more, but to find out what thy duty is, how to keep a good conscience in such a business, in such a strait, in such a difficulty; but when thy wit is over-running thy duty, and thou lookest to the consequence, (if I do this and this, this will befall me,) that is a sign thou thinkest not God to be all-sufficient, thou thinkest thy master cannot provide for thee; but thou thinkest, I shall be poor when I have done this service, and therefore I will provide for myself. Not so did Daniel. He resolved to do his duty, and not to go a step out of the path. Well; he shall be cast into the lions' den; yet he keeps his resolution firm. It was enough for him to do his duty; he left the consequence to God, for he knew he was all-sufficient. So, I say, consider only what thy duty is upon every occasion, and never look to the consequence, either to the loss of preferments, of riches, or favour. For God is all-sufficient; he will order all things well.

Labour then to be persuaded of this truth, and apply it upon every occasion. When any command is presented, when any thing is to be done, run to this principle; that shall help thee to do every duty, that shall preserve thee from every sin. For example: God hath commanded us to deny ourselves in our profit, in our credit, and our pleasures; and many times it happens that we are to perform this duty in particular cases; consider seriously then, that God is all-sufficient; it will make thee do thy duty thoroughly. What though thou be a loser in thy credit; God is able to make it up. What though thou be a loser

in thy profit, as Amaziah was? It not he able to give thee fourscore talents, said the prophet to him? What though thou be a loser in thy pleasures, that thou lose or want "the pleasures of sin for a season;" is he not able to make it up with "peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost?" And again; we are commanded to *take up our daily cross*, and not to take sinful courses to avoid crosses and afflictions; and surely, the way to perform this duty, is to be persuaded of God's all-sufficiency. Let a man think then that God is able to carry him through; that he is able to support him in the time of sufferings; that it is he that keeps the keys of the prison door; that opens and shuts when he pleaseth; that it is he that makes whole, and makes sick. "The issues of life and death belong to him." "Every man's judgment," though "he seek the face of the ruler, yet it is from him." Then let a man consider, that it is not the creature that inflicts any cross or affliction, but it is God that doth it by the creature, and that will enable him to bear any cross, to pass through all variety of conditions, and not to turn from a strait way, but to go through the storm when he meets with it.

III. But then observe the third main point, which was, that *whosoever hath interest in God's all-sufficiency, must be a perfect man*: that is, to take the word in the lowest sense, he must be sincere, he must have integrity of heart. *I am all-sufficient*, saith God, therefore be thou perfect, otherwise thou hast no interest in this all-sufficiency of mine. The point is clear, I shall not need to confirm it by any other places of Scripture, but rather shew you what this perfection and sincerity of heart is. The best way to this is to open to you those Scriptures, by which it is presented to us.

And first, you shall find it often expressed by purity; "Blessed are the pure in heart," and "God is good to Israel, even to them that are of a pure heart." Now what is it to be pure? That heart is pure which is holy, which will mingle with no sin. It is true, sin may cleave and adhere to a man, as dross doth to the silver; but

though sin be there, yet the heart still casts it out of itself, it resists and rejects it, and cleanseth itself from it. Even believers have a fountain of original corruption in them, and from this fountain sins rise continually; but though the scum arise, still the heart purifies itself, and casts it out; this is the property of a pure heart. With the impure it is quite contrary; the scum riseth as in the other, but it is mingled and confounded with all that is in the heart; there is not such a cleansing disposition in it, but there is a mixing of the precious and vile things together.

Secondly, He, whose heart is *perfect before God*, is said to have a *single eye*. Now that is a *single eye*, that looks but upon one object, and that is a single heart that looks but upon one thing. Likewise that is a *double eye*, and a *double heart*, that looks upon two objects, and is divided between two; that stands and looks upon God, and upon the world, and knows not well which to choose; sometimes he is following the one, sometimes the other. The heart of an unsound man, of one that is not perfect, is not pitched upon God alone; but he hath an eye upon God, and an eye upon credit; he hath an eye upon God, and an eye upon wealth, upon his pleasures, or whatsoever it is. And in that regard a man is said to have "a heart and a heart;" not as commonly it is taken, to make a shew of one thing, and have another within; but it is *a heart and a heart*, when there are two objects upon which the heart is set, so that it is divided between two, and, as it were, cloven asunder. Now then, he is a perfect man that hath a fixed resolution to cleave to God alone, that hath his eye upon him, and nothing besides. This is a single heart, when a man resolves as Joshua did, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

A third expression there is in the Scripture, "Thou shalt serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart:" so that he who has integrity of heart, he is a perfect man; that is, 1. he is a perfect man with God, that hath a whole heart; that is, such a heart, whereof every part and faculty is sanc-

tified; there is no part of it, but it is seasoned with grace; there is no wheel in all the soul, but it is turned the right way; there is not any thing within him of which he can say, the bent of it is another way. 2. That hath *an eye to all the commandments*, there is no duty but he gives up his heart to it: and again, there is no sin but his heart is averse from it, and he resists it to the uttermost. You see this expression, James i. 26, "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, this man's religion is vain." Take but this one instance, that this is the judgment of the Holy Ghost. Should a man have an eye to every commandment, and should he but fail in this one thing, not bridling his tongue, all the rest of his religion is but vain. Why? Because he hath not an eye to the whole law; and if a man fail in this, he is not a perfect man. And 3. He is perfect, that moreover hath regard to all the ordinances of God. For, if a man will not use all God's ordinances conscionably, and in their season; if he do not pray, and receive the sacrament, and use the communion of saints, and fasting, in their season; and again, if he do not abstain from all occasions of sin, he is not a perfect man.

In order to know whether you are thus perfect, consider that property of a *perfect heart* expressed Phil. iii. 12, 14, "Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect, but I follow after, if I may apprehend that, for which I am also apprehended by Jesus Christ. I press to the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus; let therefore as many as are perfect, be thus minded." The meaning is this; this is my course, saith the apostle: I have not yet attained to perfection; but this I do, I aim at the utmost, even at "the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ:" I aim even at the top of perfection, and *I follow hard to it*: and, saith he, not only I, but "as many as are perfect, let them be thus minded;" where, by the *perfect*, he means, you see, not one that hath already a perfect holiness, but one that is sound hearted. So you find

here these two properties of a man, whose heart is *perfect* with God. First, He aims at the highest degree of holiness; he looks at the very mark itself; he looks at the top, at the standard, at the utmost exact line of holiness, and he labours to square himself to it; and though he cannot reach it, yet it is his endeavour; he propounds not to himself a shorter journey's end than he should do, but his aim is even at the very top of perfection, at a perfect conformity to the image of Christ; for that is it the apostle here speaks of, that *we may be conformable to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ*. This was his aim. Whereas, on the other side, another doth not so; but he sets a certain compass, a certain limit to himself; there he fixeth his staff; he doth not intend to go any further; he doth not intend to *grow up to full holiness*; he doth not intend to be "holy, as the Lord is holy, in all manner of conversation." Secondly, *He follows hard*; he doth not only make the mark his aim, but he follows hard after it; he doth not loiter in the way; his constant and ordinary work is, every day to make his heart perfect; where he finds any crookedness, to set it straight again; where he finds any defect, to supply it; he still amends his heart, still brings it to a good temper; that is his work from day to day, to set it right and straight before God in all things.

He serves the Lord with all his might. A servant, when he slubbers over his work, it is an argument that he doth it not with his whole heart, but as with eyeservice; for when he doth it heartily, he doth it painfully, he doth it thoroughly, exactly, and with all his strength. When a man doth any thing truly, and in good earnest, he doth it always exceeding diligently. Therefore that expression, which you find so often in the Scriptures, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, with all thy heart, and with all thy strength," is not an expression of the degrees of love. No, that is not the sole scope of that place, but it is an expression of the sincerity of a man's love; as if he should say,

herein is the sincerity of a man's love; this is an argument that a man loves God truly, he loves him with all his heart, and with all his might. It is so in all things; when you do any thing for itself, you will do it with all your might.

When a man doth a thing remissly, and perfunctorily, it argues always a divided intention; it is an argument that the whole mind is not set on it; whence that common saying, "He that will be excellent in every thing, is so in nothing." But whensoever a man minds one thing, he will do it with all his might, because all the faculties, thoughts, and affections of the soul, are united, and drawn together into one point, they are still running in one channel. And therefore a man that hath a sincere heart, that chooseth God alone, that saith thus with himself; "I have but one Master to serve; I have but one to fear; I have God alone to look to; my business is with him in heaven; I think him to be *all-sufficient*, and *an exceeding great reward*," and will serve him with all diligence. If there be any work of his to be done, he will do it with all his might. That is the disposition of a man's mind, when once he is able to say as David saith, Psalm xxvii. 4, "One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek, to see the beauty of the Lord, to live in his temple." One thing have I desired, and that will I seek with all diligence. When a man desires but one thing, his mind will be exceeding intent upon it; and therefore you shall find this always to be in those whose hearts are upright with God, that they give themselves up to his service; they give themselves up to do it with all diligence. A man that saith, I hope my heart is upright with God, and yet is exceeding busy with other things, doth the work of God negligently. He doth but dissemble, when he saith that he walks before him perfectly; for it cannot be. A man whose heart is upright, hath this disposition in him, that his speeches, his thoughts, and his actions, are still busied about things that belong to the kingdom of God; holiness is the element he lives in; he would still be doing something

that tends that way; by his good will he would be doing nothing else. Thus he serves the Lord with all his might, and that is an argument he hath a sincere heart.

Thus having shewn you that the cause of our departure from God is, the doubting of his all-sufficiency; and, in the second place, that he is all-sufficient; and again, thirdly, that whoever hath an interest in God's all-sufficiency must be a perfect man; I proceed to shew you, I. What this covenant is that God makes. II. With whom it is made. And III. How we shall know whether we are in his covenant, or not.

I. What this covenant is. You must know that there is a double covenant; 1. A covenant of works; and 2. A covenant of grace. The covenant of works runs in these terms, "Do this, and thou shalt live, and I will be thy God." This is the covenant that was made with Adam in paradise. The covenant of grace runs in these terms, "Thou shalt believe, and take my Son, and accept of the gift of righteousness, and I will be thy God." Between these two covenants you shall find a threefold difference, 2 Cor. iii.*

1. The first covenant was a *ministration of the letter*;



* In the passage of Scripture here referred to the apostle is not contrasting the covenant of justice, or law of innocence, (termed not very properly the covenant of works,) made with man before the fall, and the covenant of grace made with man after the fall, but he is contrasting the two last dispensations of the covenant of grace, the *Mosaic* and the *Christian*, and shewing, in a variety of particulars, the great superiority of the latter to the former. And when, in the epistle to the Galatians, chap. iii. 10, he asserts that, "as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse," he does not speak of the law given to our first parents before the fall, but wholly of the law of Moses, moral and ceremonial, signifying that as many as adhered to it, and confided in it for justification, rejecting the gospel, were under condemnation and wrath, being all manifest violators of it, the language of it being, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law, (the law of Moses,) to do them."

that is, in the first covenant there was no more heard or seen, but the naked commandment; there went with it no aptness, no disposition to keep it; they heard what the law was, they saw what God required, but there was no more; and those that were declarers of it were but the *ministers of the letter, and not of the Spirit*. 2. This covenant brings only a servile fear, and enmity; for when a man looks upon the author of this covenant, and hears no more but the law, and what it requires, he looks upon God as a hard Master; again, he looks upon his law as a heavy yoke, as an insupportable bondage, and therefore he hates it, and wishes there were no such law; he runs from it as a bond-slave runs from his master, as far as it is in his power. This is that which is said, Gal. iv. 24, “Hagar gendereth to bondage;” that is, the covenant of works begets bondmen and slaves, not sons and freemen. 3. *It is a ministration of death*; that is, it propounds a curse to all those that do not keep it, and it shews no means to avoid it; and therefore a man is affected to it, and to God the author of it, as one is to an enemy that seeks his destruction. This ariseth not from hence, that the law of God is a cruel law, (for the law is good;) but it ariseth from the weakness of the flesh: as for example, if you would take a potter’s vessel, and dash it against a firm wall, the reason why the wall is the destruction of the vessel, is not any infirmity or weakness in the wall; but it is the weakness and brittleness of the vessel. And so in this case, the reason why this law, or covenant of works, is a ministration of death and enmity, is not because there is any imperfection in the law, but it is from the weakness of the flesh that is not able to keep the law.

Now, on the other side, the covenant of grace is, 1. *A ministration of the Spirit, and not of the letter*. 2. *A ministration of love, not of enmity; of freedom, not of bondage*. 3. *A ministration of life and justification, and not a ministration of death and condemnation*. When a man hath looked upon the covenant of works, and sees

death in it ; sees a strict law that he is not able to keep ; then comes the covenant of grace, and shews to him a righteousness that himself never wrought, to satisfy this law ; shews him a way of obtaining pardon for the sins he hath committed against the law, by the death and satisfaction of another. When he sees this, he sees withal the merey of God giving this to him ; and when he sees this, his opinion, his disposition, and affection is altered. He looks not on God now as upon a hard master, but as a God exceeding full of merey and compassion ; whence this follows, that his heart melts towards the Lord, and he comes and serves him with cheerfulness. He looks not now upon the law of God as an enemy, or as bondage, but a wholesome and profitable rule of direction, that he is willing to keep for his own comfort.

Now, when the heart of a man is thus softened, then the Spirit of God is sent into his heart, and writes the law of God in his inward parts. And look, what there is in the outward law, as it is written and laid before you, there shall be a disposition put into the heart that shall answer it in all things ; there shall be a writing within answerable to the writing without ; that, even as you see in sealing, when you have put the seal upon the wax, and taken it away again, you find in the wax the same impression, stamp answering to stamp, character to character, print to print. So it is in the hearts of the faithful, after they are once softened ; the Spirit of God *writes the law in their hearts*, so that there is a law within answerable to the law without ; an inward aptness, answering every particular of the law ; an inward disposition, whereby a man is inclined to keep the law in all points. And it is not only put into the mind, as habits are, but it is so ingrafted as a natural disposition is ; it is so rooted in the heart, so rivetted in, as when letters are engraved in marble. Now you must observe, that it is Christ that thus writes the law of God in the heart of man, which he doth ordinarily, by means of the

minister, (who is, as it were, the pen,) through the power of the Holy Ghost, (which is, as it were, the ink :) for the means are not left to themselves, but the Lord must concur with them immediately. The ministers are but *co-workers with him*; he holds their hands, as it were, when they write the epistle in any man's heart; it is he that guides the pen, it is he that puts ink into it, and therefore the epistle is his.

You now see the difference between the covenant of grace and the covenant of works. Now this covenant of grace is two-fold; it is either the Old Testament, or the New. They both agree in substance, but they differ in the manner of the administration, in the following points:

1. The New Testament, or the new covenant, is larger than the old; it extends to the Gentiles, whereas the first was confined to the Jews.
2. The Old was expressed in types, shadows, and figures: as for example, they had the blood of bulls and goats, they had the washings of the body in clean water, they had offerings of incense, and the like; by which types other things are meant; as, namely, the death of Christ, and the satisfaction he gave to his Father by his death, the inward sanctification of the Spirit, and the works and prayers of the saints, sweet as incense; whereas now in the time of the gospel, these things are taught us plainly; so that the Old and New Testament differ, as the image and substance; the one was expressed but in types and shadows, the other hath the substance itself.
3. The Old Testament, or covenant, in itself is but weak and unprofitable; "For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope makes perfect," by which we draw near to God; that is, this was able to do nothing further than it led to that which was effectual; therefore it waxed old, and vanished away; but the second proved effectual to take away sin, and to sanctify us, and therefore it is an everlasting covenant.
4. They differ in the confirmation: the New Testament was confirmed by an oath, and by the blood of the testator, Christ; whereas the other was confirmed by the blood of goats, &c.; and accordingly

the New Testament hath new seals put to it, *baptism, and the Lord's Supper*, when the Old had only *circumcision, and the passover*. 5. In the New Testament there is a more clear knowledge of things than in the Old, as we see, Heb. viii. 10, 11, "After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every one his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest:" that is, they shall know much more; and that which they do know, they shall know in another manner: they shall know it more distinctly, more particularly. Moreover, as the knowledge is greater, so the promises are better. The main of the promises made in the Old Testament, (though the promise of salvation was not excluded,) were, that they should have the land of Canaan, and outward prosperity; the New Testament meddles little with these things; but with promises of salvation, remission of sins, and sanctification by the Spirit. And again, there is a larger effusion of the Spirit under the New than there was under the Old Testament; the Spirit is now poured on us in a greater measure. Then it was distilled by drops; now the Lord hath dispensed it in a greater abundance to the sons of men. In the time of the gospel there is a greater measure of grace, and it follows upon the other; "*Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ*"; that is, because there was more truth, and more knowledge, there went likewise more grace with it. There is a greater revelation, so likewise there goes more grace. That is a sure rule, that all saving knowledge taught by God, carries grace proportionably with it. 6. The last difference is in the Mediator; Moses, a man like us, was the mediator of the Old Testament; that is, it was he that declared it, it was he that executed it; but we have a "High-Priest that hath obtained a more excellent office, inasmuch as he is the Mediator of a better testament." Christ is the

Mediator of the new covenant ; it is he that declares the covenant ; and it is he that hath reconciled the disagreeing parties ; he hath gone between them, as it were, and hath undertaken for both sides : he hath undertaken on God's part, these and these things shall be done ; and he hath undertaken on our part to give satisfaction by his death, and likewise to make us obedient to his Father.

You have heard what the covenant is in general. I shall now shew you what are the particular branches or parts of it ; and they are three, answerable to the three offices of Christ. Christ you know is a priest, a king, and a prophet : it is he that makes good all the parts of the covenant, and he doth it according to all his three offices ; 1. As a priest he gives us remission of sins ; 2. As a prophet he gives us knowledge ; and 3. As a king he governs and defends us. Of the priestly office I shall say no more here : of the other two somewhat more largely.

As a prophet, Christ teacheth us knowledge. You "shall no more teach every man his brother," but "all shall be taught of me," saith the Lord. It is another kind of teaching, when the Lord teacheth us knowledge, than that we can have from men. He is such a prophet as *baptizeth with the Holy Ghost* ; such a prophet as makes men's hearts burn within them when he speaks to them ; such a prophet as said to Matthew, "Follow me," and he did it ; such a prophet as saith to his ministers, "Go teach all nations, and I will be with you," and I will make you "able ministers, not of the letter, but of the spirit." This is the prophet that the Lord hath raised up ; the prophet that he promised he would *raise like Moses*, that should teach men after another fashion than all the prophets before were ever able to do. And that is the second part of the covenant.

We may know many things, but it is a hard thing to know as we ought to know. Thou mayest know sin, and know it most exactly, but if this do not work upon thy

heart; if the sin lie not exceeding heavy upon thee; if it breed not in thee godly sorrow for it; if it doth not amaze thee, as it were, with the filthiness and vileness of it; it is because thou dost not yet know it as thou oughtest to know. And how shall a man do then? Go to Christ; he is the Prophet, he teacheth a man to see things so, that his heart, his will, and affections are moved with it. You are to consider the covenant when you go to the Lord, and remember this is a part of the covenant, to teach men; and God hath bound himself by an oath to perform it. God hath sent his Son Jesus Christ to teach thee all things belonging to salvation; and so to teach thee, that thou shalt be in a right manner affected with it. And so likewise if thou know God, thou seest him in his attributes; thou hearest him often described, and art able to describe him to others; but for all this, thou findest not thy heart affected towards him; thou seest not that excellency and beauty that is in him, so that thy heart is enamoured with him; thou canst not say thou lovest him “with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength:” what wilt thou do in this case? Go to Christ the Prophet, and beseech him that he would teach thee to know the Lord. This is his promise; if thou pray to him, and he do not do it, urge him with this; it is part of his covenant, that he hath confirmed by oath, and must do it. And be assured of this, if we seek, and be earnest with him, he will teach us to know the Lord; and to know him so, that we shall love him with all our soul, and with all our strength. The like may I say of any thing else. Thus much for the second part of the covenant.

As to the third part of it, or that which Christ will perform to us, as he is a king, it consists in these three things: 1. To rule us. If thou find thyself subject to unruly affections, which thou canst not master, it is a part of his kingly office to set up his own government in thy heart, to “put his law into thy mind,” and to write it in thy inward parts, that so thou mayest be indeed

subject to the kingdom of Christ. When a man sees nothing but the outward letter of the law, he will never yield obedience; but Christ comes as a king, and puts an inward disposition into the mind, that shall answer the letter without, and so he makes a man subject to his government. For example; this is the law without, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength;" to answer which you shall see, Deut. xxx. 6, "I will circumcise thy heart, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength:" that is, I will put this affection, or this grace of love, within thy heart; there shall not be a law without only, but there shall be a grace within, a habit of love, answerable to the commandment without. And when this government is set up, and the law is put into our mind, then he makes us kings. For when men have so much strength within themselves that they can rule themselves, and walk in the way of righteousness, they are then made kings; and such kings the Lord makes all those that come to him. 2. To keep his people in peace. This the Lord doth likewise as their king. His kingdom is spiritual; and therefore the main work of it is to give us inward peace and joy. You may have troubles in the world; it is the ordinary portion of the children of God. We are therefore not so much to expect outward peace; but God promiseth inward peace and joy: when you want it, ask for it; it is a part of God's covenant to give it. You may go to God, and beseech him to fill your hearts with this "peace that passeth all understanding," and with this "joy which is unspeakable." Go, and beseech him to enrich your hearts with those riches that belong to salvation; and he will do it. 3. To give us victory over our enemies. This is the third part of Christ's kingly office; and that which was promised to Abraham, when he renewed his covenant upon the offering of his son, "Thou shalt possess the gates of thine enemies." This is the great promise that God hath made to us,

“that, being delivered from the hands of all our enemies, we might serve him in righteousness and holiness all the days of our life,” Luke i. 74. You may challenge this covenant at his hands. When you are to wrestle with satan, or any temptation, say, “Lord, hast thou not said, that thou wilt deliver me out of the hands of all mine enemies? Is it not a part of thy covenant?” But that is not all neither; there is a promise, (and that is part of the covenant likewise,) that we shall overcome our outward enemies, so far as it is good for us, so far as God sees it meet; and therefore a man may go and challenge it at God’s hands thus, “Lord, if it be good, if it be fit for me to have it, thou hast promised it, I shall have victory over them also.” So you see what the covenant is. But there is one main branch of this covenant, that is general to all the three; that is, the giving of the Spirit. This pouring out of the Spirit upon us, is that which comprehends the life of all the other three; that which enables us to do all the rest; that which makes us kings, and priests, and prophets; even as Christ himself was anointed with the Spirit without measure, that he might be a prophet, a king, and a priest.

II. Our next business is to shew you with whom this covenant is made, and that is with all those who are perfect in the manner above described. For it was not made with Abraham only, but with him and his seed after him. Therefore it is with the perfect, with the faithful race; for “they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham,” Gal. iii. 7 “And they which are of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham,” ver. 9. My beloved, it is a thing that is not sufficiently considered by us, how great a mercy it is, that God should be willing to enter into covenant; that he should be willing to make himself a debtor to us. He is in heaven, and we are on earth; he the glorious God, we dust and ashes; he the Creator, and we but creatures; and yet he is willing to enter into a covenant with

us. This should teach us to magnify the mercy of God, and to be ready to say, as David did, What am I, or what is my father's house, that I should be raised hitherto; that I should enter into covenant with the great God; that he should come to a compact and agreement with me; that he should bind himself to become a debtor to me? It is not a small thing to enter into covenant with God, to be in covenant with the King of kings. When there was a covenant between Jehoshaphat and Ahab, Jehoshaphat said, "There is a league between us; therefore my horses are as thy horses, and my people as thy people." And so it is between God and us; when there is a covenant between us, then his strength is our strength, and his armies are our armies, we have an interest in all. This great benefit you have; therefore you have cause, whoever is within the covenant, to bless the Lord, to magnify him for his great goodness, that he would enter into covenant with you.

But here consider what is the condition of this covenant of grace on man's part. That is only faith. And if you ask why faith is the only condition of this covenant? I answer, 1. Because faith brings with it sanctification, and holiness of life. It draws with it all other graces, after this manner: he that believes God loves him; he that loves him must needs be full of good works. Besides, he that believes him, when God shall say to him, "I am thy exceeding great reward, see that thou keep close to me, have an eye upon me, and walk with me from day to day," will be ready to do it. When God called Abraham from his father's house, and from his kindred, he was ready to leave them; when God would have him offer up his only son, he was ready to do it; whatsoever God bid him do, he would do it; he preferred God before his own ease, before his own profit, before his only son whom he loved. Let any man believe as Abraham did, and of necessity his faith will produce good works. Let a man believe truly, and truth of belief will bring forth truth of holiness. Hear what St.

James saith, Jam. ii. "Abraham was justified by faith;" it is true; but Abraham's faith had works joined with it; for it was not a dead, a counterfeit faith, but a true faith; and being a true faith, Abraham had works as well as faith. So then faith is the condition of the covenant, because it is the ground of perfection and upright walking with God. 2. Because nothing else can answer the covenant but faith. The covenant is not a commandment, but a promise. "I will give thee:" it runs all upon promises, "I will give thee a seed, and in that seed thou shalt be blessed." "I will give thee this good land," and so on. So that the covenant of grace stands on God's part all in promises. Now you know it is faith that answers the promise; for the promise is to be believed. If the covenant had stood in precepts and commandments, then it must have been answered by works and obedience; but since the covenant consists of promises, it must needs be by believing, and not by works.

Perhaps it may be asked here, but how is this covenant confirmed? For when a man hears that God will vouchsafe so much favour unto mankind, he might be ready to object, Alas! what are the sons of men, that the great God of heaven and earth should enter into such a covenant with us; that he should make us such promises; that he should make us heirs of the world; that he should bless us so as to make us his sons, so as to make us prophets, kings, and priests? I confess it is a covenant that needs confirmation; therefore the Lord hath confirmed it; first, by his promise; saith he, You have my sure Word for it; if that be not enough, I will confirm it by an oath. And because he had no greater to swear by, he saith, "By myself have I sworn," that I will make it good. And, lest this should not be sufficient, he confirms it by the blood of Christ himself; by the death of the testator; and if this be not enough, he hath added unto it sacramental seals, and hath confirmed it likewise

by them. He hath given unto us the seals of baptism and the Lord's-Supper, as he gave unto them of old *the seal of circumcision*, and of the passover.

III. The last thing I proposed to shew you was this, how a man should know whether he be within the covenant, or not. The Scripture saith, Abraham believed God, and therefore God reckoned him as a man that was righteous, and accepted him to be a partaker of the covenant. And so, if thou believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, it is certain thou art within the covenant of grace; thou art by that faith put into it; for that is the only condition thereof, as was before observed. Now, whosoever truly believeth in Christ is ingrafted into him; and whosoever is in Christ, hath received the Spirit of Christ; and if a man have not received the Spirit of Christ, he is not in him. Therefore, that you may know whether you have the Spirit, I will commend two places of Scripture to you. One is, Rom. viii. 15, "You have not received the spirit of bondage again unto fear, but the Spirit of adoption, whereby you cry, Abba Father; the same Spirit beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the sons of God:" the other, 1 John v. 8, "There are three that bear record on earth, the Spirit, the water, and the blood, and these three agree in one."

I. The spirit of bondage of necessity must go before; so that if you never had the spirit of bondage, certainly you never had the Spirit of adoption. For the apostle speaks of it here, as the common condition to all Christians, they do not receive the spirit of bondage again; you had it once, but now you have the Spirit of adoption: I say, every man must have this spirit of bondage; because no man can come to Christ, except the law be a schoolmaster to bring him to Christ. Now the law is not a schoolmaster; it teacheth no man, except the spirit of bondage work fear, and put an edge upon it. You may hear the law, and the threatenings and curses applied to you ten thousand times over, and yet no fear

be bred in you, except the spirit of bondage join with it, and make it effectual. Though the spirit of bondage is not just alike in all; it is sometimes in a greater degree, sometimes less, but all have it more or less; sometimes its influence is not so much discerned. But God intends to bestow upon some men a great measure of grace, and therefore he gives them a greater measure of the spirit of bondage. Because God means to teach them more to prize Christ, and to baptize them with the baptism of the Holy Ghost, therefore he baptizeth them with a greater measure of the spirit of bondage; they shall drink deeper of that spirit, because his intention is, they shall drink deeper of the Spirit of adoption.

The things which go with it are these three; the testimony of the *blood*, of the *water*, and of our *own spirits*. First, there is the testimony of the blood. When the spirit of bondage makes a man fear, it empties a man of all righteousness, as a man empties a cask, that there is nothing left in it; it pulls away all other props and stays from him; it leaves a man in this ease, that he sees nothing in the world to save him, but the blood of Christ. When a man sees this, he takes fast hold on that, and will not let it go for any thing; and though it be told him, you shall have many troubles and crosses; you must part with all that you have; he cares not though it costs him his life; if he may have this blood to wash away his sins, it is enough; this he lays fast hold on. And when a man doth this, at that very hour he is entered into covenant; he is translated from death to life. When a man can say, "I know I have taken and applied the blood of Christ; I rest upon it; I believe that my sins are forgiven; I grasp it; I receive it;" this is the testimony of the blood. But the Lord comes not by blood only, but by water also; that is, by sanctification; he sends the Spirit of sanctification, that cleanseth and washeth his servants; that washeth away, not only the outward filthiness, but the evil nature. He washeth every man in the church from

top to toe. There is not one place in the soul, not one place in the conversation, but it is rinsed in this water. And then, when a man comes to find this, that he hath been able to purify himself, and by the work of Christ's Spirit joining with him, to cleanse his conscience from dead works; this is the second testimony. Now follows the testimony of our own spirits, which gathers conclusions from both these, and saith thus: "Seeing I have received the blood, and seeing I am able to purify myself, I conclude I am partaker of the covenant." Though a man could argue thus truly, "Whosoever believes shall be saved, but I believe," this is the testimony of the blood only: but when a man can say, "I purify myself; I desire nothing in the world so much; I do it in good earnest;" this is the testimony of the water to the sign and testimony of the blood; which shews that it is true, that it is a lively hope. But some men say, this testimony of a man's own spirit may deceive him. I answer, it cannot; because though it be called the testimony of our own spirit, yet it is a spirit enlightened; it is a spirit sanctified with the Spirit of Christ.

But above all these is the testimony of God's Spirit. When a man hath put to his seal that God is true, then the Lord seals him again with the Spirit of promise; that is, the Lord sends the Spirit into his heart, and assures him that he hath received him to mercy. You will say, "What is the witness of the Spirit?" It is a thing that we cannot express. It is a certain Divine expression of light; a certain inexpressible assurance that we are the sons of God; a certain secret manifestation that God hath received us, and put away our sins;" I say, it is such a thing that no man knows, but they that have it. Beloved, this is the testimony of the Spirit. I confess, it is a wonderful thing, and if there were not some Christians that did feel it and know it, you might believe there were no such thing; and that it were but a fancy or enthusiasm: but it is certain, there are a generation of men that know what this witness of the Lord is.

Indeed, you must remember this, to distinguish it from all delusions, this Spirit comes with the water and the blood; and therefore, if any man have flashes of light and joy, that witness he is in the covenant, and for all this hath not the things that go before it, he may well take it for a delusion. So likewise if he have not the consequence of it, which is, the Spirit of prayer. So I will conclude all: He that hath the witness of the Spirit, is able to cry, "Abba Father." If you have an assurance of a good state, and yet are not able to pray, you are deceived; for that is the property of the Spirit, it makes a man cry to God, and call him Father. You will say, "Is that such a matter? Every man can pray." Beloved, the Spirit of prayer is another thing than the world imagines it to be. He that hath this Spirit is mighty in prayer; he is able to wrestle with God, as Jacob did. By the Spirit of adoption he "hath power with God;" he is able to prevail with the Lord; and why? Because he can speak to him as to a Father; he can "continue in prayer, and watch thereunto with all perseverance. He can speak to him as one that he is well acquainted with; he can cry, "Abba Father;" that is, he can pray with fervency and confidence; and there is no man in the world that is able to do it besides.

EXTRACTS

FROM

THE WORKS

OF

RICHARD SIBS, D.D.

*Master of Katherine-Hall in Cambridge, and some time Preacher of
Gray's Inn.*



TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

SOME ACCOUNT OF HIS LIFE

THE LIFE
OF
DR. RICHARD SIBS.

RICHARD SIBS was born upon the borders of Suffolk, near Sudbury, and being trained up at school, when he was grown ready for the university, was sent to Cambridge, in 1595, and was admitted into St. John's College; where he so profited in learning, and approved himself by his blameless conversation, that he was promoted from one degree to another in the College; being chosen first Scholar, and then Fellow of that house. He also took all the degrees of the university, with general approbation and applause. It pleased God to convert him by the ministry of Mr. Paul Baines, whilst he was lecturer at St. Andrew's, in Cambridge. And when Mr. Sibs had been Master of Arts some while, he entered into the ministry, and shortly after was chosen lecturer himself at Trinity church, in Cambridge. To whose ministry, besides the townsmen, many scholars resorted, so that he became a worthy instrument of begetting sons and daughters unto God; as also of edifying and building up of others.

About the year 1625, or 1626, he was chosen Master of Katherine Hall in Cambridge, in the government whereof he continued till his dying day; and like a faithful governor, he was always very careful to procure and advance the good of that little house. For he procured good means and maintenance by his interest in many worthy persons, for the enlargement of the college; and was a means of establishing learned and religious Fellows there; insomuch that in his time it proved a very famous society for piety and learning, both as to Fellows and Scholars.

But before this, about the year 1618, he was chosen Preacher at Gray's Inn; where his ministry found such general approbation and acceptance, that besides the learned lawyers of the house, many noble personages, and many of the gentry and citizens resorted to hear him, and many had reason to bless God for the benefit which they received by him.

His learning was mixed with much humility, whereby he was always ready to undervalue his own labours; though others judged them to breathe spirit and life, to be strong of heaven, speaking with authority and power to men's consciences. His care in the course of his ministry was to lay a good foundation in the heads and hearts of his hearers. And though he was a wise master-builder, and that in one of the most eminent auditories for learning and piety, that was in the land; yet, according to the grace which was given to him, (which was indeed like that of Elisha, in regard of the other prophets, the elder brother's privilege, a double portion) he was still taking all occasions to preach on the fundamentals to them, and amongst the rest, on the incarnation of the Son of God. And preaching at several times,

and by occasion of so many several texts of Scripture concerning this subject, there is scarce any one of those incomparable benefits which accrue to us thereby, nor any of those holy impressions, which the meditation thereof ought to work in our hearts, which was not by him sweetly unfolded.

Indeed he was thoroughly studied in the Holy Scriptures, which made him a man of God, “perfect, throughly furnished unto every good work;” and as became a faithful steward of the manifold grace of God, he endeavoured to teach others the whole counsel of God, and to store them with the knowledge of God’s will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

He was a man that enjoyed much communion with God, “walking in all the laws of God blameless;” and, like John the Baptist, was “a burning and shining light,” wasting and spending himself to enlighten others. He was upon all occasions very charitable, drawing forth not only his purse in relieving, but his very bowels in commiserating the wants and necessities of the poor members of Christ. He used sometimes in the summer-time to go abroad to the houses of some worthy personages, where he was an instrument of much good; not only by his private labours, but by his prudent counsel and advice, that upon every occasion he was ready to minister unto them. And thus having done his work on earth, he went to receive his wages in heaven, peaceably and comfortably resigning up his spirit unto God, in the year 1635, and in the 58th year of his age.

THE

FOUNTAIN OPENED;

OR,

THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS

REVEALED.

I TIMOTHY III. 16.

And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up to glory.

THERE are two things that God values more than all the world besides; the church, and the truth: the church, that is, *the pillar and ground of truth*, as it is in the foregoing verse: the truth of religion, that is, the seed of the church. Now, the blessed apostle St. Paul, being to furnish his scholar Timothy for the ministerial office, doth it from two grounds especially; 1. From the dignity of the church, which he was to instruct and converse in; and, 2. From the excellency of the mysteries of the gospel, that saving truth. Hereupon he doth seriously exhort Timothy to take heed how he conversed in the church of God, in teaching the truth of God.

The church of God is the house of God, a company of people that God cares for more than for all mankind besides; for whom the world stands; for whom all things are; "It is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth." And for the truth of God, that must be taught in this church, that is so excellent a thing, that we see the blessed apostle here useth lofty expressions concerning it. As the matter is high and great, so the apostle hath expressions suitable. A full heart breeds full expressions. As no man went beyond St. Paul in the deep sense of his own unworthiness, and of his state by nature; so there was no man reached higher in large and rich thoughts and expressions of the excellency of Christ, and the good things we have by him: as we see here, in setting forth the excellency of the ministerial calling. Being to deal with God's truth towards God's people, he sets forth evangelical truth gloriously; "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up to glory."

In these words there is a preface, and then a particular explication; there is the fountain, and the streams issuing from it; the root and the branches; there is, as it were, a porch to this great house. Great buildings have fair entrances; so this glorious description of the mysteries of the gospel hath this fair porch and entry to it: *Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness.* Then the fabric itself is parcelled out in these six particulars: 1. *God was manifest in the flesh,* 2. *Justified in the spirit,* 3. *Seen of angels,* 4. *Preached unto the Gentiles,* 5. *Believed on in the world,* 6. *Received up to glory.*

First, for the preface, whereby the apostle makes way to raise up the spirit of Timothy (and in him us,) unto a reverent and holy attending to the blessed mysteries that follow: *Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness.* In this preface there is observable, 1. The thing itself, *godliness.* 2. The description of it, it is a

mystery. 3. That it is a *great mystery.* 4. That it is so *without* all *controversy.* There are none that ever felt the power of *godliness*, but they have confessed it to be a *great mystery.*

To observe somewhat from each of these, I shall begin with **GODLINESS.** Godliness is either the principles of the Christian religion, or the inward disposition of the soul towards them: the inward holy affection of the soul; the word implieth both. For godliness is not only the naked principles of religion, but likewise the Christian affection; the inward bent of the soul, suitable to Divine principles; a godly disposition, carrying us to godly truths. To prove that godliness includes the truths themselves, I need go no further than the connexion: in the last words of the former verse, *the church is called the pillar and ground of truth*;* and then it follows, *Without controversy, great is the mystery* (he doth not say of *truth*, but) *of godliness*; instead of *truth* he saith *godliness.* The same word implies the truths themselves, and the disposition of the soul towards them; to shew that both must always go together. Wheresoever Christian truth is known, as it should be, there is a supernatural light. It is not only a godly truth in itself, but it is embraced with godly affections. These blessed truths of the gospel require and breed a godly disposition; the end of them is godliness; they frame the soul to it.



* Bengelius and many others adopt a different reading of this passage, thus: "That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God. The mystery of godliness is the pillar and ground of truth, and confessedly a great thing:" which reading is approved by Witsius, Whitby, Doddridge, Wesley, and many other eminent commentators. According to this interpretation, by the *mystery of godliness* we are to understand that wonderful and sublime doctrine which is revealed in the gospel, and immediately specified in six articles, which sum up the whole economy of Christ upon earth.

Hence we may fetch a rule of discerning when we are godly, or what makes a true Christian. When a man nakedly believes the grounds of Divine truth, the articles of the faith, doth that make him a true Christian? No; but when these truths breed and work godliness. For, religion is a *truth according to godliness*, not according to *speculation* only, and *notion*. Wheresoever these fundamental truths are embraced, there is godliness with them. A man cannot embrace religion in truth, but he must be godly. A man knows no more of Christ and Divine things, than he values, esteems, and affects them, and brings the whole inward man into a frame to be like them. If these things work not godliness, a man hath but a human knowledge of Divine things; if they carry not the soul to trust in God, to hope in God, to fear God, to love him, and to obey him; that man is not a true Christian.

Religious, evangelical truth, is wisdom; and wisdom is a knowledge of things directing to practice. A man is a wise man when he knows so as to practise what he knows. The gospel is a Divine wisdom, teaching practice as well as knowledge. Therefore, he that is godly believeth aright, and practiseth aright. He that believes ill can never live well; for he hath no foundation. And he that lives ill, though he believe well, shall be damned. Therefore a Christian hath godly principles out of the gospel, and a godly carriage suitable to those principles. And indeed there is a force in the principles of godliness, (from God's love in Christ,) to stir up to godliness. The soul that apprehends God's truth aright cannot but be godly. Can a man know God's love in Christ incarnate, and Christ's suffering for us, and his sitting at the right hand of God for us, the infinite love of God in Christ, and not be carried in affection back to God again, in love, joy, and true affiance? It cannot be. Therefore, it is not a cold, naked apprehension, but a spiritual knowledge, when the soul is stirred up to a suitable disposition and carriage, that makes godliness.

Now this godliness is a MYSTERY. 1. The word signifies a hidden thing; it comes from the Greek word *Mύω*, which means to shut or stop the mouth from divulging. The heathen had their mysteries among them in their temples, which they were prohibited from discovering. Therefore there was an image before the temple, with his finger before his mouth, shewing that they must be silent in the discovery of hidden mysteries. But the gospel is called a mystery, not so much that it is secret, but that it was so before it was revealed. 2. That is called a mystery in the Scripture, the reasons of which are hid. So the calling of the Jews is called a mystery, though the thing be revealed; yet, that God should be so wondrously merciful to them, that is the mystery.* When we cannot search into the depth of a thing, though the thing itself be discovered, that is a mystery. 3. A mystery in Scripture is taken for a truth hid under some outward symbol. Marriage is a mystery, because it conveys the hidden spiritual marriage between Christ and his church. The sacraments are mysteries; because in the one, under bread and wine, there are conveyed to us the benefits of Christ's body broken, and his blood shed; and in the other, under water, a visible outward thing, there is signified an inward cleansing.

In a word, the whole Christian religion is nothing but a continued mystery, a chaining together of mystery



* A doctrine or truth which could not be discovered without supernatural revelation; or which had been long concealed, and when revealed was difficult to be believed through the prejudices of men, is frequently termed *a mystery* in the Scriptures: thus, that the gospel should be preached to the Gentiles, and that they should be saved by faith in it, without obedience to the law of Moses, is called a mystery, Rom. xi. 25, xvi. 25, Eph. iii. 4—6, Col. i. 26, 27: and that not so much because, “the reasons of it are hid,” as Dr. Sibbald observes, as because it has been, in a great measure, concealed from former ages of the church, and when revealed to and by the apostles, was not received by the Jews, through their deep prejudices.

upon mystery. And the particular branches are called mysteries; as the union between Christ and the church is so called. But the whole gospel is here meant; as Christ saith, Mark iv. "The mystery of the kingdom of God;" that is, the description of the gospel. For what is the gospel? The mystery of God's kingdom, of Christ's kingdom; a mystery, discovering how Christ reigns in his church; and a mystery of bringing us to that heavenly kingdom. So then, the whole evangelical truth is a mystery, and that for these reasons:

First, It is a mystery, because it was hid from all men, till God brought it out of his own bosom; first, to Adam in paradise, after the fall, afterward to the Jews, and, in Christ's time, more fully to Jews and Gentiles. It was hid in the breast of God; it was not a thing framed by angels or men. After man was fallen into that cursed state, this design of saving man by Christ came not into the head of any creature. The thought of satisfying justice by infinite mercy; of sending Christ to die, that justice might be no loser, could arise in no other breast but God's. Christ bought it out of the bosom of his Father; "No man hath seen God at any time; Christ, the only begotten Son, in the bosom of the Father," he discovers the Father, and his meaning to mankind. Who ever could have thought of such a depth of mercy unto fallen man, when God promised the *blessed seed*, Gen. iii. if God himself had not discovered it? Therefore, this reconciling of justice and mercy is a mystery of heavenly wisdom. Again: it is a mystery, because, when it was revealed, it was revealed but to few. It was revealed at first only to the Jews, it was wrapped in ceremonies and types, and in general promises, to them; it was quite hid from most part of the world. Again: when Christ came, and it was discovered to the Gentiles, yet it is a mystery even in the church, to carnal men that hear the gospel, and do not understand it; that have the veil over their hearts: it is "hid to them that perish," though it be

never so open of itself to those that believe. In the fourth place, it is a mystery, because though we see some part of it, yet we see not the whole gospel; we see not all, nor wholly; "We see but in part, and know but in part:" so it is a mystery in regard of the full accomplishment. Yea, and in the next place, it is a mystery in regard of what we do not now, but shall hereafter know. How do we know Divine truths now? In the mirror of the word and sacraments. We know not Christ by sight; that manner of knowledge is reserved for heaven. Here, we know only, as it were, in a kind of mystery; we see Divine things wrapped up in the mirror of the word and the mysteries of the sacraments. Indeed, this, comparatively to the Jewish church, is to *see the face of God in Christ*; a clear sight: but, compared to what we shall have, it is to see in a glass, or mirror. If we look back, it is a clear sight; if we look forward, it is a sight as it were in a mystery. Even that little we do know, we do not know it as we shall know it in heaven.

But is the doctrine of the gospel itself only a mystery? No: all the graces are mysteries, every grace. There is a mystery in faith. Is it not a mystery, that the earthly soul of man should be carried above itself, to believe supernatural truths, and to depend upon what it sees not? That a man should be as a rock, to stand immovable in the midst of a storm, is a mystery. That the soul should be turned universally another way; that the judgment and affections should be turned backward; that he that was proud before, should now be humble; that he that was ambitious before, should now despise the world; that he who was given to his lusts and vanities before, should now be serious and heavenly-minded; is a mystery indeed. It was a riddle to Nicodemus, (as wise as he was,) when our blessed Saviour spake to him of the new birth, that a man should be wholly changed, and new-moulded; that a man should be the same and not the same; the same man for soul and body, yet not the

same in regard of a supernatural life put into him, carrying him another way, leading him in another manner, by other rules, as much different from other men, as a man differs from a beast. A strange mystery, that raiseth a man above other men, as much as another man is above other creatures. For a man to be content with his condition, in all changes and varieties; to have a mind immovable when he is cast and tossed up and down in the world, is a mystery: therefore St. Paul saith, Philip. iv. 12, "I have entered into religion," as it were, "I have consecrated myself," the word is wondrously significant: "I have learned this mystery, to be content. I can want, and I can abound, I can do all through Christ that strengtheneth me." Therefore the apostle in the text teaches, that not only Divine truths are a mystery, "Great is the mystery of godliness;" but he insists on particular graces; "preached to the Gentiles, believed on in the world:" these are mysteries.

In Christ all is mystery; two natures, God and man, in one person; mortal and immortal; greatness and baseness; infiniteness and finiteness, in one person. The church itself is a mystical thing. For under baseness, under the scorn of the world, what is hid? A glorious people. What is the church? A company of men that are in the world, without glory, without comeliness and beauty; yet, notwithstanding, they have life in the root. "Our life is hid with Christ in God," Col. iii. 3. The church hath a life, but it is a hidden life; a life under death. They seem to the world to die, but they are alive. This is excellently followed by St. Paul, "As dying, and yet we live; as poor, yet making many rich," 2 Cor. vi. 10. A strange kind of people; poor and rich; living and dying; glorious and base; yet this is the state of the church in this world. They are an excellent people, but they are veiled under infirmities of their own, and the disgraces and persecutions of the world. So we see both the doctrine itself, and the graces of the gospel,

and the Head of the church, and the church itself, are nothing but mysteries.

Is it so, that religion is a mystery? Then first of all, do not wonder that it is not known in the world; and that it is not only not known, but persecuted, and hated. Alas! it is a hidden thing; men know not the excellency of it. As great men's sons, in a foreign country, find not entertainment answerable to their worth; so these Divine truths find little acceptance in the world, because they are mysteries; not only mysteries in the tenet, but in the practice; therefore the practice finds such opposition in the world: "Father, forgive them," saith our blessed Saviour, "they know not what they do." The world knows not what they do when they persecute religion and religious persons. The church is a mystical thing, and religion is a mystery; it is hid from them. Again, if it be a mystery, then it should teach us to carry ourselves suitably to it. Even the heathens carried themselves reverently in their mysteries. Let us carry ourselves reverently toward the truth of God; towards all truths, though they be never so contrary to our reason; though they are mysteries altogether above nature. There are some seeds of the law in nature, but there are no seeds of the gospel in nature; therefore we should come to it with a great deal of reverence. St. Paul teacheth us an excellent lesson, Rom. xi. 33. When he entered into a depth that he could not fathom, doth he cavil at it? No: he cries, "Oh, the depth! oh, the depth!" So in all the truths of God, when we cannot comprehend them, let us with silence reverence them, and say with him, "Oh, the depth!" Divine things are mysteries, the sacraments are mysteries; let us carry ourselves towards them with reverence.

Those that come with common affections, and a common carriage to holy things, profane them. We profane the sacrament, if we take the bread and wine as a common feast. As St. Paul saith, "You discern not the Lord's body," 1 Cor. xi. 29. We profane mysteries,

when we discern not. Beasts and beast-like men discern not the relation of things; that these outward elements have reference to great matters, to the *body and blood of Christ*. They do not discern them from common bread and wine, though they be used to raise up our souls to the *bread of life*. So likewise, when we come to the Word of God, and *look not to our feet*, but come to the church, as if we went to some common place, without prayer, without preparation, this is to come profanely. When we come to converse with God, we must not come with common affections; we must carry ourselves holily in holy business, or else we offer to God *strange fire*. It is a shame for us in religious duties, not to labour to bring suitable dispositions. It is a matter of that consequence, that life and death depend upon it. You know what St. Paul saith, 1 Cor. xi. 30, "For this very cause, some are sick and weak, and some sleep," some die: why? for coming with common affections, for "not discerning the Lord's body," for not examining ourselves, for not having answerable dispositions to the greatness of the mysteries we go about.

Again, are these things *mysteries, great mysteries*? Let us bless God, that hath revealed them, for the glorious gospel. Oh, how doth St. Paul, in every epistle, stir up people to be thankful for these mysteries? What cause have the Gentiles, that were *in the shadow of death* before, to be thankful to God? What kind of nation were we in Julius Cæsar's time? As barbarous as the West Indians: the Canibals were as good as we. We that were so before, not only to be civilized by the gospel, but to have the means of salvation discovered, what cause have we to be enlarged in thankfulness? And shall we shew our thankfulness in provoking his majesty? There is nothing in the world that is a ground of such thankfulness as the glorious gospel; that brings such glorious things as it doth. Are there not thousands that *sit in darkness*? The Romish church, is it not under the *mystery of iniquity*? And that we should have the

glorious mysteries of the gospel revealed to us ; that the veil should be taken off, and *we should see the face of God in Christ* ; what a matter of thankfulness is it to all that ever felt comfort by it ?

Again, it is a mystery : therefore it should teach us likewise, not to think to search into it merely by strength of wit, and study of books, and all human helps that can be : it must be unveiled by God himself, by his Spirit. If we set upon this mystery only with wits and parts of our own, then what our wits cannot pierce into, we shall judge not to be true ; as if our wits were the measure of Divine truth : with us, so much as we conceive, is true ; and so much as we cannot conceive, is not true. What a pride is this in worms of the earth, that will make their own apprehensions the measure of Divine truth ? We must not struggle with the difficulties of religion with our natural parts.

It is a mystery : now therefore it must have a double veil taken off ; a veil from the thing, and the veil from our eyes. It is a mystery, in regard of the things themselves, and in regard of us. It is not sufficient that the things be lightsome that are revealed by the gospel, but there must be that taken from our hearts that hinders our sight. The sun is a most glorious creature, but what is that to a blind man that hath scales on his eyes ? So Divine truth is glorious, it is light in itself, but there are scales on the eyes of the soul ; there is a veil over the heart, as St. Paul saith of the Jews ; therefore they could not see the scope of Moses, directing all to Christ. Naturally, there is a veil over men's hearts, and that is the reason, that though they have never such excellent parts, and the things be light in themselves, yet they cannot see. Therefore the veil must be taken both from the things and from our hearts, that light being shed into lightsome hearts, both may close together.

Again, being a mystery, it cannot be raised out of the principles of nature ; it cannot be raised from reason. But, perhaps some may ask, " Hath reason no use in the

gospel?" Yes, sanctified reason hath, to draw sanctified conclusions from sanctified principles. Thus far reason is of use in these mysteries, to shew that they are not opposite to reason. They are above reason, but they are not contrary to it; even as the light of the sun is above the light of the candle, but it is not contrary to it. The same thing may be both the object of faith and of reason. The immortality of the soul is a matter of faith; and it is well proved by the light of reason. And it is a delightful thing to the soul, in things that reason can conceive of, to have a double light; for the more light the more comfort. Reason should stoop to faith in things that are altogether above its reach; the conception of Christ in the womb of a virgin, the joining of two natures in one, the Trinity of Persons in one Divine nature, and such like. Here it is the greatest reason to submit reason to faith; to yield to God, that hath revealed these mysteries. Is not here the greatest reason in the world to believe him who is truth itself? Therefore, this is one use of reason in the mystery of godliness, to stop the mouths of gainsayers; to shew that it is no unreasonable thing to believe what God hath revealed.

Again, seeing it is a mystery, let no man despair. It is not the pregnancy of the scholar here that carries the point, it is the excellency of the teacher. If God's Spirit be the teacher, it is no matter how dull the scholar is. Pride in great parts is a greater hinderance than simplicity in meaner parts. Therefore Christ glorifies God that he had "revealed these things to the simple," and concealed them from the proud. Let no one despair; for the "statutes of God give understanding to the simple," Psal. xix. 7. God is such an excellent teacher, that where he finds no wit, he can cause it. He hath a privilege above other teachers; he doth not only teach the thing, but he gives understanding to apprehend it. It is a mystery; therefore take heed of slighting Divine truths. The empty shallow heads of the world make great matters of trifles, and stand amazed at baubles and vanities, and

think it a grace to slight Divine things. This great mystery of godliness they despise. That which the angels themselves stand amazed at, and are students in, that the wits of the world slight and despise, or dally withal, as if it were a matter not worth thinking of. But I leave such to reformation, or to God's just judgment, that hath given them up to such extremity of madness and folly. Let us labour to set a high price on the mysteries of godliness.

Let us now consider how we shall come to know this mystery as we ought, and to carry ourselves answerable to it. I. We must desire God to open our eyes; that as the light hath shined, so we may discern it. Though the mystery be now revealed by preaching, books, and other helps; yet to see this mystery, and make a right use of it, there is required a spiritual light to join with this outward light. And hence comes a necessity of depending upon God's Spirit. There must be an using of all helps and means, or else we tempt God. We must read and hear; and, above all, we must pray. This was David's manner, as you see Psal. exix. 18, "Open mine eyes, O Lord, that I may see wonders in thy law." As if he had said, There are wonders in thy law, but my eyes must be opened to see them. He had sight before, but he desires still a further and clearer sight. As the poor man in the gospel, when he was asked, "What wouldst thou have?" cried after Christ, "Lord, that my eyes may be opened." So should every one of us (considering it is such a ravishing mystery,) cry after God and Christ, "Lord, that my eyes might be opened, that I may see the wonders in thy law;" that I may see the wonders in thy gospel, "the unsearchable riches of Christ." Now the Spirit doth not only teach the truths of the gospel, but the application of those truths, that they are ours: this truth of the gospel is mine, the sacrament seals it to *me*. The preaching of the Word takes away the vail from the things, and the Spirit takes away the vail from our souls. It is the office of the Spirit to take the vail off the heart, and to enlighten our understandings, and likewise to be a Spirit

of application to us in particular. Therefore, saith the apostle, "He hath given us the Spirit, to know the things that are given us of God," in particular. So the Spirit doth not only bring a blessed light to the Scriptures, and shew us the meaning in general, but it is a Spirit of application, to bring home those gracious promises to every one in particular; to tell us the things that are given *us* of God; not only the things that are given to the church, but to *us* in particular. For the Spirit of God will tell us what is in the breast of God, his secret good-will to the church. He loves the church, and he loves *thee*, saith the Spirit. Therefore he is called an *earnest* and a *seal* in our hearts, because he discovers not only the truth at large, but he discovers the truth of God's affection in all the privileges of the gospel, that they belong to us. What a blessed discovery is this; that not only reveals Divine truths to us, but reveals them so to us that we have our share and interest in them?

2. Again, if we would understand these mysteries, let us labour for humble spirits; for the Spirit works that disposition in the first place: "The humble, God will teach," Psal. xxv. 9. The humble, that will depend upon his teaching. We must be content "to become fools, that we may be wise." We must deny our own understandings, and be content to have no more understanding in Divine things than we can carry out of God's Book, than we can be taught by God's Word and ordinances. This humility we must bring, if we would understand this mystery.

3. We must bring withal a serious desire to know, with a purpose to be moulded to what we know, to be delivered to the obedience of what we know; for then God will discover it to us. "Wisdom is easy to him that *will* understand." Together then with prayer and humility, let us but bring a purpose and desire to be taught, and we shall find Divine wisdom easy. None ever miscarry in the church but those that have false hearts; that have not humble and sincere hearts, willing to be taught. If

they have that, then God, that hath given this resolution, that they will use the means, and will be taught, will suit it with teachers. God usually suits men with teachers fit for their dispositions.

4. Take heed of passion and prejudice; of carnal affections, that stir up passion, for they will make the soul that it cannot see mysteries that are plain in themselves. As we are strong in any passion, so we judge; and the heart, when it is given up to passion, transforms the truth to its own self. When the taste is vitiated, it tastes things not as they are in themselves, but as itself is; even so the corrupt heart transforms this sacred mystery to its own self, and oftentimes forceth Scripture to defend its own sin. When the heart is deeply engaged in any passion or affection, it will believe what it lists; it will force itself to believe what it loves. Let us labour therefore to come with purged hearts to receive these mysteries. They will lodge only in clean hearts. Let us labour to see God and Christ with a clear eye, free from passion, covetousness, and vain-glory.

Thus much concerning godliness, as it is *a mystery*. The next thing observable is, that it is A GREAT MYSTERY.

1. Here I might be endless; for it is not only great, as a mystery, that is, as there is much of it concealed; but it is a great and excellent mystery, if we regard whence it came; that is, from the bosom of God, from the wisdom of God. If we regard all that had any hand in it, as God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; the angels attending upon the church; the apostles, the pen-men; preachers and ministers, the publishers of it;—it is a great mystery. 2. If we regard the end of it, which is, to bring together God and man; man that was fallen, to bring him back again to God; to bring him from the depth of misery to the height of all happiness; it is a great mystery in this respect. 3. Again, it is a great mystery, on account of the manifold wisdom that God discovered in the publishing of it; which was by certain

degrees. First, in types; afterwards he came to truths. First, in promises; and then performances. First, the Jews were the church of God; and then came in the Gentiles. Thus the manner of conveying it from time to time, from the beginning of the world, displayed manifold and deep wisdom; it was a great mystery. 4. Again, it is a great mystery, for the work thereof; which is, it transforms those that know it into the likeness of Christ; it gives spiritual sight to the blind, ears to the deaf, and spiritual life to the dead. Whatsoever Christ did in the days of his flesh to the outward man, that he doth by his Spirit to the inward man. Even by the publication of this mystery, wonders are wrought daily. 5. It is a great mystery, if compared to all other mysteries. Creation was a great mystery; for all things to be made out of nothing; order out of confusion: for God to make man a glorious creature of the dust of the earth! But what is this in comparison of God's being made man? It was a great and wondrous thing for Israel to be delivered out of Egypt and Babylon; but what are those to the deliverance from hell and damnation by the gospel? What are the mysteries of nature, the miracles of nature, such as the loadstone, to these supernatural mysteries? There are mysteries in the providence of God in governing the world; mysteries of satan; mysteries of iniquity. But what are all mysteries, either of nature or hell, to this *great mystery of godliness?*

Observe, the apostle says, it is so *without controversy; ομολογουμενως; confessedly*; under the broad seal of publick confession, as the word signifies. It is a confessed truth, that the mystery of godliness is great. As if the apostle had said, I need not give you greater confirmation; it is, without question, a great mystery. But here see that you take the apostle's meaning right; for it is certain that carnal minds and profane wits of the age do controvert this great mystery. St. Paul therefore means that it is without controversy, upon these two accounts: 1. That in itself it is not to be doubted of. It is a great grounded

truth, as clear as if the gospel were written with a sun-beam. There is nothing clearer, and more out of controversy, than sacred evangelical truths. 2. That as they are clear in themselves, so they are apprehended of all God's people. All that are the children of the church, that have their eyes open, without all doubt and controversy, embrace it. Things are not so clear in the gospel that all that are sinful and rebellious may see, whether they will or not; but to those that are disposed, and have sanctified souls, they are without controversy.

So much for the preface, *Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness.* Now we come to the particulars of this great mystery,

God manifest in the flesh.

This, and the other branches that follow, are all spoken of Christ. Indeed, the mystery of godliness is nothing but Christ, and that which Christ did. So that from the general we may observe this, that Christ is the scope of the Scripture. Christ is the pearl of that ring; Christ is the centre wherein all those lines end. Take away Christ, and what remains? Therefore, in the whole Scriptures, let us see that we have an eye to Christ; for all is nothing but Christ. The mystery of religion is, "Christ manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached to the gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." All is but Christ. The reason why the Jews understand not the Scriptures better, is, because they seek not Christ there. Take away Christ, and you take away all out of the Scriptures; they are but empty things without him. Therefore, when we read them, let us think of somewhat that may lead us to Christ, as all the Scriptures lead (one way or other,) to him.

But to proceed; the apostle begins with this, "God manifest in the flesh:" that is, God the Son, the second Person in the holy Trinity, was manifest in the flesh; that is, in human nature. So God the Son put on the human nature; and not only so, but with it also our infirmities,

weakness and miseries ; and, which is more, he took our flesh when it was tainted with treason ; our base nature after it was fallen. Now in that God, the second Person, appeared in our nature,—in our weak, tainted, and disgraced nature, after the fall,—from hence comes, first of all, the enriching of our nature with all graces in Christ. In Christ there is abundance of riches ; our nature in him is highly enriched. Hence comes again the ennobling of our nature. In that God appeared in our nature, it is much ennobled. When our nature is engrafted into a higher stock, a mean graft into so glorious a stock as Christ, it is a high dignity. That our flesh is now married to the second Person, it is a wondrous advancement of our nature, even above the angelical : “ He took not the nature of angels.” It was a great exaltation to our nature that God should take it into the unity of his Person. In the third place, the enabling of our nature to the work of salvation that was wrought in it, came from hence ; God was *in the flesh*. From whence was the human nature enabled to suffer ? Whence was it upheld in suffering, that it did not sink under the wrath of God ? God was *in the flesh* ; God upheld our nature. So that the riches, dignity, and ability of our nature, to be saving and meritorious, all came from this, that God was in our nature. Hence it comes, likewise, that whatsoever Christ did in our nature, God did it ; for God appeared in our nature. He took not upon him the person of any man, but the nature. And, therefore, our Flesh and the second Person being but one Person, all that was done was done by the Person that was God, (though not as God.) Hence comes also the union between Christ and us. We are *sons of God*, because he was *the Son of man, God in our flesh*. There are three unions : 1. The union of natures, *God became man* : 2. The union of grace, *We are one with Christ* : and, 3. The union of glory. The first is for the second, and the second for the third : *God became man, that man might be one with God ; God was manifest in the flesh, that we might be united to him ;*

and being brought again to God the Father, we might come to a glorious union. Hence likewise comes the efficacy of what Christ did. That the dying of one man should be sufficient for the whole world, it was, because *God was in the flesh*. Well then may the apostle call this, *God manifest in the flesh*, a mystery, and place it in the first rank. For God to be included in the womb of a virgin,—for happiness itself to become a curse,—for Him that hath the riches of all in Him, to become poor for our sakes,—for Him that ever enjoyed his Father's presence, to want the beams of it for a time, that he might satisfy his Father's justice, and undergo his wrath for our sins ;—here is matter of wonder indeed.

This teacheth us what to do, when we find any trouble arise in our consciences for sins and unworthiness. We should then cast ourselves upon God, that became flesh for us, and died for us ; let us stay ourselves there. I am unworthy, a lump of sin ; there is nothing in me that is good ! Oh ! but I have all in Christ ; he hath abundance for me ; his fulness is for me ! “ The fulness of the Godhead dwells in him bodily.” Therefore, in all doubts in regard of sin and unworthiness, let us labour for faith ; (for faith is a grace that carries us out of ourselves, and plants and fixes us in Christ ;) let us consider ourselves as in him, and consider whatsoever is in him as being for us. Again, oppose Christ to the wrath of God, and the temptations of satan, for all will fall before this *God manifest in the flesh*. He is God, therefore he can subdue all ; he is man, and therefore he will love us. “ I know whom I have believed ; ” him that is merciful, because he is man, and hath taken my nature ; and him that can subdue all enemies, because he is God, *God in the flesh* : a fit foundation for faith to rely upon. Let us have recourse to this, therefore, in all temptations whatsoever. We cannot glorify God and Christ more than to go out of ourselves, and fix our comfort here. By this incarnation of Christ, we have communion with the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ; this brings us into fellowship with the blessed Trinity ; and it

teacheth us what thoughts we should have of God, even to have loving thoughts of him. Whence is it that we can call God Father? From this, *God was manifest in the flesh*. Hence I can call God Father; can boldly go to him, and conceive of him as gracious and lovely. And whence is it that our persons are become lovely to God? From this, God hath taken our nature upon him; therefore our nature is become lovely to him, and his is sweet and fatherly to us.

Let not Satan, therefore, abuse our imaginations, if we have a mind to turn to God. For, indeed, there is no comfort to them that go on in their sins; "they treasure up wrath against the day of wrath;" they are in danger of damnation every minute of their lives; there is but a step between them and hell. But for such as intend to turn to God, God meets them half way. We see the prodigal did but entertain a purpose to come to his father, and his father meets him. *God in our flesh* hath made God peaceable to us. If we go to Christ, and lay hold on him for the forgiveness of our sins, God in him is become a loving, gracious Father to us. Oh! what boldness have we now to go to *God in our flesh*! To think of God absolutely, he *is a consuming fire*, every way terrible. But to think of God in our nature, we may securely go to him; "He is bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh." We may securely go to God, our brother, to him that is of one nature with us, and now having our nature in heaven. Think of God born of a virgin, of God lying in the cradle, sucking the breast; think of God going up and down teaching and doing all good; think of God sweating for thee, hanging on the cross, shedding his blood, lying in the grave, raising himself again, and now in heaven, "sitting at the right hand of the Father," our Intercessor; conceive of God in this flesh of ours, lovely to us; and now our nature must needs be lovely to him. The nature of God must needs be lovely to us, since he hath joined our poor beggarly flesh to the unity of the second Person. Let us think of

God manifest in the flesh. To think of God alone, it swallows up our thoughts; but to think of God in Christ, it is a comfortable consideration. "None can ever see God, and live;" that is, God nakedly, or absolutely. Oh! but *God manifest in our flesh*, we may see; and it shall be our happiness in heaven to see him there; to see God "in our flesh face to face." We cannot too often meditate on these things; it is the life and soul of a Christian; it is the marrow of the gospel; it is the wonder of wonders: we need not wonder at any thing, after this. It is no wonder that our bodies should rise again; that mortal man should become immortal in heaven; since the immortal God hath taken man's nature and died in it. All the articles of our faith, and all miracles, yield to this grand thing, *God manifest in the flesh*. Believe this, and believe all other.

Justified in the Spirit.

These words are added to answer an objection that may rise from the former. He was *God manifest in the flesh*; he veiled himself, he could not have suffered else. When he took upon him to be the Mediator, he must do it in abased flesh. If Christ (being God,) had not abased himself, he could never have been put to death; satan and his instruments would never have meddled with him. But God, being veiled in the flesh, being clouded with our flesh and infirmities, he was taken, and by wicked hands crucified and slain. He appeared to be nothing but a poor, debased, dejected man, and as such was persecuted, slandered, and slain in the world. He was thought to be a sinner. But it was no matter what he appeared, when he was veiled with our flesh, he was *justified in the Spirit*. To be justified here, implies two things: 1. A clearing from false imputations; and, 2. A declaring him to be what he was. When a man is cleared from that which is laid to his charge, he is justified; or he is declared to be that he is. "Wisdom is justified of her children;" that is, cleared from the imputations that

are laid upon religion, and declared to be an excellent thing of all her' children. So Christ was justified: he was cleared, not to be as they took him; and declared himself to be the Son of God, the true Messias, and Saviour of the world.

He was justified in the Spirit: that is, in his Godhead. The Godhead shewed itself in his life and death, in his resurrection and in his ascension. Though he was *God in the flesh*, yet he remained God still, and was justified to be so in the Spirit, in his Divine power. God hath the name of the Spirit, from his purity, power, and vigour. So God is a Spirit; that is, pure, opposite to gross things, earth and flesh; and God is powerful and strong. "The horses of the Egyptians are flesh, and not spirit;" that is, they are weak; a spirit is strong. So much spirit as we have, so much strength. So, by the purity and strength of the Divine nature, Christ discovered himself to be true God, as well as true man: and this was in the time of his abasement. In the greatest extremity of his abasement, there was somewhat that came from Christ to justify him that he was the Son of God, the true Messias. There is no part of his abasement but some beams of his Godhead did break forth in it.

Christ was made flesh; but he took upon him the flesh of a virgin; could that be otherwise than by the Spirit, to be born of a virgin, she remaining a virgin? When he was born he was laid in a manger. Indeed, there was God in the low estate of the flesh. Yea, but the *wise men worshipped him*, and the star directed them: there he was *justified in the Spirit*. He was tossed when he was asleep in the ship, but he commanded the winds and the waves. He wanted money to pay tribute, as he was abased; but to fetch it out of a fish, there he was justified. The one was an argument of his poverty and meanness; but the other was an argument that he was another manner of person than the world took him for; that he had all the creatures at his command. He was

apprehended as a malefactor ; but he struck them all down with his word, " Whom seek ye ? "

Let us come to the greatest abasement : when he was on the cross, he hung between two thieves ; yea, but he converted one of them. When the thief had so much discouragement to see his Saviour hang on the cross, yet he shewed such power in that abasement, that the very thief could see him to be a King, and was converted by his Spirit. He hung upon the cross ; but at the same time there was such an eclipse that the whole world was darkened, the earth trembled, the rocks brake, the centurion justified him ; " Doubtless this was the Son of God. " Nay, at the lowest degree of abasement of all, when he struggled with the wrath of God, and was beset with devils, he triumphed. When he was visibly overcome, he then invisibly overcame. He was an invisible Conqueror, when he was visibly subdued. Did he not on the cross satisfy the wrath of God, and by enduring the wrath of God, free us from it and from satan, God's goaler, and reconcile us by his blood ? The chief works of all were wrought in his chief abasement. At length he died, and was buried : but he that died rose again gloriously ; therefore he " was mightily declared to be the Son of God, by raising himself from the dead. " That was the greatest abasement, when he lay in the grave ; and especially then he was *justified* by his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension into glory. So, if we go from Christ's birth, to his lowest degree of abasement, there was alway some manifestation of his justification by the Spirit.

Now, Christ was justified in a double regard : 1. In regard of God, he was justified and cleared from our sins that he took upon him. " He bore our sins upon the tree, " and bore them away, that they should never appear again to our discomfort. He was made a " curse for us. " But how came Christ to be cleared of our sins that lay upon him ? As by the Spirit, by his Divine nature, he raised himself from the dead ; so he was justified from

that which God laid upon him. He was our Surety. Now, the Spirit raising him from the dead shewed that the debt was fully discharged, because our Surety was out of prison. All things are first in Christ, and then in us: he was acquitted and justified from our sins, and then we. 2 He was justified by the Spirit from all imputations of men; from the mis-conceits that the world had of him. They thought him to be a mere man, or a sinful man. Not so; he was more than a mere man: nay, he was more than a holy man; he was God-man. Whence were his miraeles? Were they not from his Divine power? He overcame the devil in his temptations. Who can overcome the devil, but he that is the Son of God? He cast out the devils, and dispossessed them with his word. All the enemies of Christ that ever were, at length he conquered, and so “declared himself mightily to be the Son of God.” He healed the outward man and the inward man by his Divine power. He caused the spiritual as well as the bodily eyes to see; the dead to live, and the lame to walk. Whatsoever he did in the body, he did in the soul likewise. In those excellent miracles he was justified, and “declared to be the Son of God,” especially in his resurrection and ascension, and daily converting of souls by his ministry; all being done by his Spirit, which is his vear in the world, ruling his ehureh, and subduing his enemies; so that he was every way “justified in the Spirit” to be God, to be the true Messias, prophesied of, and promised to the ehureh. Therefore he was justified in his truth, that all the promises were true of him; and in his faithfulness, that he was faithful in performing the promises he made; he was justified in his goodness and mercy, and all those attributes: thus he was *justified in the Spirit*.*



* The principal meaning of this clause seems to be as follows. Our Lord appeared on earth in all the infirmity and frailty of mortal flesh, poor, despised, persecuted; yet he professed and maintained a high claim; indeed the highest possible, that of being the Messias. John iv

Seen of Angels.

He was seen, it is true ; but he was seen with admiration and wonder. It implies the consequence of sight : sight stirs up affection, it stirs up the whole soul ; therefore it is put for all the rest. They saw him with wonder. For, was it not a wonder that God should stoop so low as to be shut up in a virgin's womb ? That Christ should humble himself so low as to be *God in our flesh* ? Was not here exceeding wondrous love and mercy to mankind, to wretched man, having passed by the glorious angels that were fallen ? And exceeding wisdom in God in satisfying his justice, that he might shew mercy ? It was matter of admiration to the angels to see the great God stoop so low, to be clothed in such a poor nature as man's. This doubtless is the meaning of the Holy Ghost ; they saw it with admiration. And because Christ was their head, as the second Person, and they were creatures to attend upon him, therefore they so wondered at him as that they attended upon Christ in all the passages of his humiliation and exaltation ; in his life, in his death, in his resurrection and ascension. They saw him so as that they were witnesses of him to men ; they gave testimony of

26 ; the Son of God, John x. 36 ; and God, John viii. 58, and x. 30. Now, how could he justify this claim ? He was *justified*, the apostle says, *in the Spirit* ; that is, *in* or *by* the Holy Ghost. 1. The Holy Ghost had moved holy men of old to utter many predictions concerning him, (2 Pet. i. 21.) These were all exactly fulfilled in him. 2. He himself had the Spirit without measure in his gifts and graces, as his doctrine, life, and miracles shewed, Matt. xii. 28. 3. He baptized his disciples with the Holy Spirit, Matt. iii. 11, John xvi. 7 ; Luke xxiv. 49, Acts ii. 33. 4. This Spirit convinced the world, that is, multitudes of men, (especially unbelieving Jews,) of sin, because they had not believed in him ; and of his, Christ's, righteousness, that he was not, as they had said, an impostor, or sinner, but the righteous and holy One of God ; that is, the expected Messiah and Son of God ; inasmuch as he had not only risen from the dead and ascended into heaven, but had communicated the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost to his followers, according to his promise.

him ; so that it is a full word, in the intention of the Holy Ghost. Indeed, not only the angels, but all gave witness of him, from the highest heavens to hell itself,—all witnessed Christ to be the true Messiah. In his baptism there was the Trinity ; the Father, in a “ voice from heaven,” the Holy Ghost “ in the shape of a dove.” He had the witness of angels, of men of all ranks, Jews and gentiles, men and women ; yea, the devils themselves oftentimes confessed him in the gospel. He was witnessed of all ranks ; they saw him, and gave evidence of him that he was the true Messiah. He was *seen of angels*. And they did not only see these things, but they wondered at the love, and mercy, and wisdom of God, in the head and members of the church, as we see in divers places ; so, 1 Pet. i. 12, “ We preach the gospel, which things the angels desire to look into :” the very angels desire to pry and look with admiration into the wondrous things of the gospel. So, in Ephes. iii. 10, “ To the intent that unto principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.” There is somewhat done by Christ, by his incarnation, resurrection, and government of his church, that the very angels look into with wonder. They wonder at his wisdom in restoring mankind ; and there is such a world of wonders in the government of the church, such *manifold wisdom*, that the very angels themselves look upon this with admiration and great delight.

Now as Christ was seen and attended on by angels, so is the church of Christ. As the angels guarded and attended him, so they guard and attend all that are his. For “ are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them, who shall be heirs of salvation ?” Heb. i. 14. And they will not only be our attendants for a while, and then leave us, but they will continue to be so for ever. For, so long as the church hath any relation to Christ, so long the angels shall respect the church. But the church hath relation to Christ for ever ; therefore the blessed angels shall have respect to Christ and the church

for ever. You should observe that the angels have a double office ; a superior office, and an inferior ; and as the superior office is to attend upon God, to serve God and Christ, to minister to our Head ; so the inferior is to attend his church, and to conflict with the evil angels that are about us continually. It is good for us to know our prerogatives, our privileges, and our strength ; not to make us proud, but to stir us up to thankfulness, and to a holy carriage answerable. It is a point not much thought on by the best of us all ; we forget it, and betray our own comfort. Satan abuseth us, to make us forget the dignity and strength that we have : and hereby we dishonour God, and wrong ourselves ; and we likewise wrong the holy angels for want of a due consideration of these things. Well, then, let us think of this so as to make a due use of it. It is necessary oftentimes to think what a degree God hath raised us to, in Jesus Christ ; that we have this glorious attendance about us, wherever we are. A Christian is a more excellent creature than he thinks of ; he is continually attended by angels. Indeed we do not see them, as they were seen in former times, before Christ's incarnation ; because now, since Christ is come, the government of Christ is spiritual, and we are not supported with those glorious manifestations ; but they are about us in an invisible manner. We have Elisha's guard about us continually, though we see them not. Christ's angels are our angels ; they are angels even of children, of little ones. Nay, let a man be never so poor, even as Lazarus, he shall have the attendance of angels, in life and death. This should comfort us when all the world besides forsake us, and set themselves in array against us, that we have, as it were, the life-guards of heaven appointed of God to attend us, and that " more are they that are for us, than they that are against us." It should likewise move us to a reverent carriage at all times and in all places ; and moreover beget in us a thankful heart, that God hath vouchsafed so to honour such vile unworthy worms.

Preached to the Gentiles.

Christ our blessed Saviour, being the King of his church, it was not sufficient that he was manifest in the flesh, and justified in the Spirit; that is, declared by his Divine power, to be God; but he must have his nobles to acknowledge this too. Kings in their inaugurations, not only make good their own title, but they would have others acknowledge it; therefore it is said Christ was seen of angels, those noble and glorious creatures. But not only the greatest of the kingdom, but likewise the meaner subjects must know their king; there must be a proclamation to them, to know who is to rule over them. Therefore, Christ being a general king, there must be a general publication of him all the world over; he must be "preached to the Gentiles."

To unfold the point a little, I will shew, 1. What it is to preach. 2. What it is to preach Christ. And 3. What it is to preach Christ to the Gentiles.

1 To *preach*, is to open the mystery of Christ; to open whatsoever is in Christ; to break open the box, that the savour may be perceived of all; in a word, to open Christ's natures, and person, what it is. To open the offices of Christ; first he was a prophet to teach, wherefore he came into the world. Then he was a priest, offering the sacrifice of himself; and then, after he had offered his sacrifice, he was a King; he was more publickly, and more gloriously known to be a King to rule. After he had gained a people by his priesthood and offering, then he was to be a King to govern them.

2. To preach Christ, is to lay open these things: and not only that, but likewise the states wherein he executed his office. First, the state of humiliation: Christ was first abased, and then glorified. The flesh he took upon him was first sanctified, and then abased; and then he made it glorious flesh. He could not work our salvation, but in a state of abasement; he could not apply it to us, but in a state of glory. So then, to preach Christ, is to open the merits

of Christ, what he hath wrought to his Father for us ; to open his efficacy, as the spiritual Head of the church ; what wonders he works in his children, by altering and raising of them, by fitting and preparing them for heaven ; likewise to open all the promises in Christ, which are but Christ parcelled out. “ All the promises in Christ are yea and amen.” They are made for Christ’s sake, and performed for Christ’s sake ; they are all but Christ, severed into so many particular gracious blessings. To preach Christ, is to lay open all these things, which are the inheritance of God’s people. But it is not sufficient in preaching Christ, to lay open all these in the view of others ; but in the opening of them there must be application of them to the use of God’s people, that they may see their interest in them ; and there must be an alluring of them. The preachers are the friends of the Bridegroom, that are to procure the marriage between Christ and his church. Therefore, they are not only to lay open the riches of the husband, but likewise to entreat for a marriage, and to use all the gifts and parts that God hath given them, to bring Christ and his church together.

And because people by nature are in a contrary state to Christ ; to preach Christ, is to begin with the law, to discover to people their state by nature. A man can never preach the gospel, that makes not way for it, by shewing and convincing people what they are out of Christ. That he must be had, or else they die eternally. Now when people are convinced of this, then they get out of themselves to Christ. This therefore must be done, because it is that which makes way for the preaching of Christ ; for, “ a full stomach despiseth an honey-comb.” Who cares for balm, that is not sick ? Who cares for Christ, that sees not the necessity of him ? Therefore we see John the Baptist came before Christ, to make way for him ; to level the mountains ; to cast down whatsoever exalted itself in man. He that is to preach, must discern what mountains there are between men’s hearts and Christ ; and he must labour to lay flat all the pride

of men in the dust. After this, the gospel is to be promulgated in this sweet manner; "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service: and be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." The law comes with *cursed, cursed*; but now in the gospel, Christ is preached with sweet alluring; "We as ambassadors, as if God by us did beseech you, pray you in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God." This is the manner of the dispensation in the gospel, even to beg of people that they would be good to their own souls. Christ, as it were, becomes a beggar himself; and the great God of heaven and earth begs our love, that we would so care for our own souls that we would be reconciled to him. It was fitter indeed we should beg of him; it was fit we should seek to be reconciled to him. But God so stoops in the dispensation of the gospel, that he becomes a suitor to us to be good to our own souls. As if he had offended us, he desires us to be reconciled. The wrong is done on our part, yet he so far transcends the doubtings of man's nature, that he would have nothing to cause man's heart to misgive, no doubts nor scruples to arise; he himself becomes a beseecher of reconciliation, as if he were the party that had offended.

Now this preaching is that whereby God dispenseth salvation and grace ordinarily; and he in wisdom sees it the fittest way to dispense his grace to men by men, in order to try our obedience to the truth itself. He would have men regard the things spoken, not for the person that speaks them, but for the excellency of the things. If some glorious creatures, as the angels, should preach to us, we should regard the excellency of the preachers more than the truth itself; we should believe the truth for the messengers' sake. And again, God would knit man to man by bands of love; now there is a relation between pastor and people, by this ordinance of God. Moreover; the preaching of men is more suitable to our

condition. We could not bear to hear God speak, or any more excellent creature. And God magnifies his power the more, in blessing these weak means. Likewise it is more proportionable to our weakness, to have men, that speak out of experience from themselves, to preach the gospel, that they have felt the comfort of themselves; it works the more upon us. Therefore those that first preached the gospel were such as had first felt the sweetness of it themselves.

But some are ready to say, "Cannot I as well read privately at home?" Yes; but the use of private exercises, with contempt of the publick, have a curse upon them, instead of a blessing. It is with such men as with those that gathered manna, when they should not; it stank. Hath God set up an ordinance for nothing? For us to despise? Is not he wiser, to know what is good for us better than we do ourselves? God accompanies his ordinance with the presence of his blessed Spirit. The truth read at home hath an efficacy; but the truth unfolded hath more. As we say of milk warmed, it is fitter for nourishment; and the rain from heaven hath a fatness with it, and a special influence, more than other standing waters. So that life, operation, and blessing, do not accompany other means, that accompany preaching; that being the ordinary means, where they may be had. Others perhaps may object, "Preaching is only for the laying the foundation of a church; it is not for a church when it is built: then, other helps; as prayer and the like, without this, may suffice." But I say, those that have such conceits make themselves wiser than the Spirit of God. We learn from St. Paul, that "Christ, when he ascended on high, led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men, some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the edifying and building up of the church," Ephes. iv 8, 11, 12. So that this ordinance is necessary for building up still; and for the knitting of the members of Christ together still: therefore that is a vain excuse.

Oh! but they cry, "What needs so much preaching? Less would suffice." Thus some people come to despise this heavenly manna; but those that are acquainted with their own infirmities, think it a happiness to have plenty. For, we are dull, we are forgetful, we are unmindful; though we know, we do not remember; and though we remember, yet we do not lay things to heart and practise them. We are naturally weak, and therefore we need all spiritual supports and helps that may be. The more we hear and know, the fitter we are for doing and suffering. Our souls are fitter for communion with God, for all affairs both of life and death. Therefore we cannot have too much care this way. Others object, that they know it well enough; and therefore they need not be taught. Let such know, that the Word of God preached, is not altogether to teach us, but (the Spirit going with it) to work grace, necessary to "strengthen us in the inward man." And those that say they know it enough, deceive themselves; they know it not. Religion is a mystery; and can it be learned at the first? There is no mystery but what requires many years to learn; and is religion, and the depths of it, learned so soon? Not ordinarily. There is a mystery in every grace, (in repentance, in faith, in patience,) that no man knows but those that have those graces. Let us therefore set a price upon God's ordinance. There must be this dispensation: Christ must be preached. Preaching is the chariot that carries Christ up and down the world. The ordinance of preaching is a gift of all gifts. God esteems it so, Christ esteems it so, and so should we esteem it. So then there must be much preaching, and this preaching must be of Christ.

But, "What (say some) must nothing be preached but Christ?" I answer, Nothing but Christ, or that which tends to Christ. If we preach threatenings, it is to cast men down, that we may raise them up; as, if a physician purge, it is that he may give cordials. Whatsoever is done in preaching to humble men, it is to raise them up again in Christ; all make way for Christ. When

men are dejected by the law, we must not leave them there, but raise them up again. Whatever we preach, it may be reduced to Christ, that men may walk worthy of Christ. When men have been taught Christ, they must be taught to “walk worthy of Christ, and of their calling;” that they may carry themselves fruitfully, holily, and constantly, every way suitable for so glorious a profession. The foundation of all duties must be from Christ; and the reasons and motives of a Christian’s conversation, the prevailing reasons of an holy life, must be fetched from Christ, and from the state that Christ hath advanced us unto. So then Christ alone must be preached. But to whom? *To the Gentiles.*

3. To preach Christ to the Gentiles is to publish to them the glad tidings of salvation through Christ: to declare to them all that is contained in the preaching of Christ: to declare him “a light to lighten the Gentiles, as well as the glory of his people Israel.” It is not to be imagined in what misery the poor Gentiles were before the coming of Christ, except some few proselytes that joined themselves to the Jewish church; for the Gentiles worshipped devils. What were all their gods but devils? They were under the kingdom of satan, when the gospel came to be preached among them. They were translated out of the kingdom of satan into the blessed and glorious kingdom of Christ. Yet we see here, notwithstanding they were such kind of people, the mystery of the gospel is preached to them, even to the Gentiles: a mystery of mercy and grace! But this is not enough; upon proclamation of Christ, there must be homage of all those that he is proclaimed king to; therefore it follows,

Believed on in the world.

This point follows the other foregoing by a necessary order. For, preaching goes before faith; faith is the fruit of preaching. Christ is first *preached to the Gentiles*, and then *believed on in the world*. That is, the world must submit, and give homage to Christ, as the Saviour

of the world, as the mediator between God and men. The points considerable here are these: 1. That there must be a dispensation of salvation wrought by Christ, unto others. It is not sufficient, that salvation was wrought by "Christ manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit;" but this salvation must be published and dispensed to others. Therefore he saith, "Preached to the Gentiles." 2. That this publication and preaching must be of Christ: Christ must be published to the Gentiles; that is, to all. The church is enlarged since the coming of Christ. And, 3. The fruit of this preaching, Christ being thus dispensed to the Gentiles, the world believes.

There must be a dispensation of Christ. The equity of this may be seen even from things among men. It is not sufficient that physic be provided; but there must be an application of it. It was not sufficient, that there was a *brazen serpent*; but, the *brazen serpent* must be *lifted up*, that the people might see it. It is not sufficient that there is a standard; but the standard must be set up. It is not sufficient that there be a foundation; but there must be a building upon the foundation. Therefore there must be a dispensation of the mysteries of Christ. Here let us observe, that there are several degrees of the dispensation of salvation. There is, 1. The ordaining of salvation; that was before all worlds. 2. The promise of salvation; that was when Adam fell. 3. The procuring of salvation promised; that was by Christ, when he came in the flesh. 4. The promulgation and enlarging of salvation to all people; this was after Christ was come in the flesh. 5. The perfect consummation of salvation; that is in heaven. Now the execution of the promise, and the enlargement of it to all nations, was reserved to Christ's coming in the flesh. I do but touch this, to shew that God hath had a special care of this latter age of the world. Some account the first age of the world to be a golden age; but, indeed, we may invert the order; we live in the golden age, the last ages, when Christ was *manifested*. What is the

glory of times and places? The *manifestation of Christ*. The more Christ is laid open with his unsearchable riches, the more God glorifies those times and places. And that is the golden age wherein the gospel is preached.

Let us labour then to value this inestimable benefit. Where the gospel is not preached, there the places are salt-pits, despicable places. Whatsoever they are else, they are under the kingdom of satan. It is the glory of a nation, to have the truth among them. The glory of Israel was gone, when the ark was taken: the religion and truth we enjoy is our ark; our glory is gone, if we part with that. Therefore, whatsoever God takes from us, let us desire that he would still continue the gospel of truth; that he would still vouchsafe to dwell among us, and not leave us. What were all things in the world besides, if we had not the blessed truth of God? We must leave all ere long. Therefore let us labour to have the eyes of our understanding enlightened, to conceive aright of the difference of things, and to value ourselves by this, that Christ is manifested to us; and that we have an interest in Christ, more than by any portion in the world besides. For, then Christ will delight to be with us still, when we esteem, and prize, and value him.

Observe, after *preached to the Gentiles*, the apostle joins, *Believed on in the world*; to shew that faith comes by hearing. Indeed, preaching is the ordinance of God, sanctified for the begetting of faith, for the opening of the understanding, for the drawing of the will and affections to Christ. Faith is the marriage of the soul to Christ. Now in marriage, there must not be a mistake and error in the person; therefore, that the person to whom we are to be married by faith, may be known to us, there is an ordinance of preaching set up, to lay open our own necessity, what we are without him, and to open the riches of our husband; whatsoever is glorious in Christ. "How shall they call upon him, in whom they have not believed; and how shall they believe without a preacher?" We cannot have the spirit of prayer, without

faith ; nor faith, without preaching. And the wise man saith, “ He that turns his ear from hearing the law,” (under what pretence soever,) “ his prayer shall be abominable.”

In the ministry of the gospel there is not only an unfolding of the excellent things of Christ, but there is grace given by the Spirit to believe. And herein this publication differs from all others. Men may publish what they would have, but they cannot give hearts to believe it. But in the blessed publishing of Divine truth, there is the Spirit of God accompanying it, to work what it publisheth. It opens the riches of Christ, and offers Christ, and Christ is given to the heart with it. It publisheth what is to be believed and known, and together with it, there goes a power to do all. Therefore it is called the *ministry of the Spirit* ; because what is published in the preaching of the Word, to those that belong to God, is accompanied by the Spirit to convey it to the soul. Therefore he saith here, first preached, and then believed. We see here, that as Christ must be unfolded in preaching, so he must be *believed on*. We must rest upon no other thing, either in ourselves, or out of ourselves, but Christ only. And a whole Christ must be received. For believing is nothing but a receiving of Christ as a Lord and as a Saviour ; as a priest, to redeem us by his blood ; as a prophet, to teach us ; and as a king, to govern us.

But what manner of faith do we see in most men ; that snatch out of Christ what they list, to serve their own turn ? As he died for their sins, so they are glad of him ; but as he is a Lord and King, to rule and govern them, so they will have none of him ; but, “ turn the grace of God into wantonness.” But, as we must rest and rely on Christ only, so we must receive him, and believe on him wholly. Faith looks upon Christ, as the main object of it, as it justifieth ; but the same faith looks upon the whole Word of God, as truth revealed. It believes all Divine truths ; all the threatenings and precepts of God. Faith chooseth not its object, to believe what it lists ; but

it carries the soul to all revealed truths. But, when we speak of justifying faith ; then Christ, with the promises, and the mercy of God in Christ, is the first thing that the soul looks unto. Christ is the first object of faith, before any benefit or gift that we have from him. We must receive Christ, before we have any grace or strength from him. And a sanctified soul looks first to Christ, to the love of Christ, to the person of Christ, and then to his goods and riches. As a woman that is married regards first the person of her husband, and then looks to the enjoyment of his goods and inheritance ; so faith looks to the person first. It knits us to Christ, to be in love with, and to embrace him ; and then it looks to all the good things we have by him : for he never comes alone ; there is a world of good things in him ; all that tends to grace and glory. Therefore, we that are ministers of the gospel, should especially look to unfold the riches of Christ ; and those that are God's people, should especially desire to have Christ unfolded, and the riches of God's love in Christ. The soul that ever found the sting of sin, accounts nothing so sweet, as those things that concern its Husband and Saviour. A carnal man loves to hear moral points, but the soul that understands itself, that ever felt in any degree the wrath of God, of all points desires to hear of Christ, and him crucified. Therefore, we may judge by our ears of what temper our souls are ; for " the ear tastes speeches, as the mouth doth meats."

Now I shall shew how this is a mystery ; that Christ should be believed on in the world. " Great is the mystery of godliness," Christ " believed on in the world." To join these together, the world, and believing, is almost as great a mystery, as to join God and man together. To bring an unbelieving, rebellious heart and believing together, is a great mystery, in divers considerations. First, if we consider what the world was ; an enemy to Christ ; and being so, slaves to satan, idolaters, in love with their own inventions, which men naturally dote on. Here was the wonder of God's love, that he should vouch-

safe it to such wretches ; that the world, that is, all sorts of the world, from the highest to the lowest, should at length be brought to stoop to the cross of Christ. It was a mystery, that the world should believe ; if we consider the inward malicious disposition of the world. Being in the strong man's possession, for these men to believe the gospel, surely it must needs be a great mystery. Again, if we consider the parties that carried the gospel, whereby the world was subdued ; a company of unlearned men, none of the deepest for knowledge ; (only they had the Holy Ghost, to teach and instruct them, which the world took no notice of,) men of mean condition, of mean esteem, and few in number. And these men came not with weapons, or outward defence, but merely with the Word, and with sufferings. Their weapons were nothing but patience and preaching ; offering the Word of Christ to infidels, and suffering their indignities. The world was not overcome by fighting, but by suffering. So the lambs overcame the lions, the doves overcame the birds of prey, the sheep overcame the wolves. So meanness overcame greatness, ignorance overcame learning, simplicity overcame pride, baseness overcame glory. Again, if we consider the truth they taught ; being contrary to the nature of man, contrary to his affections. What a kind of doctrine was this, to win such entertainment in the world as it did ? Such as made men deny themselves, deny their wits, their wills, their goods, their lives. Therefore, in this respect, it was a great mystery, that Christ should be "believed on in the world." Again, if we consider another circumstance, it adds to the mystery ; that is, the suddenness of the conquest. In a short time after Christ, one man, St. Paul, spread the gospel almost all the world over. He conquered almost all the world. He spread the savour of the gospel like lightning, suddenly and strongly ; because there was an almighty power and Spirit accompanying the glorious gospel. And thereupon it came to be thus effectual with the world.

The next thing I will touch shall be, that faith is put

here for all graces. In these six clauses of this *great mystery of godliness*, there is only this one that is within us. "God manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached to the Gentiles, received up into glory;" these are all without us: but this one, "believed on in the world," only is within us, and it is set down instead of all. For it draws all other graces after it; it enlivens and quickens the soul; it is the spring of spiritual life in us; it is the first grace of all. There are some degrees of the Spirit, perhaps, before it, but all graces have their quickening from faith; it infuseth supernatural vigour into all the parts and powers of the soul; and into all graces whatsoever. Where Christ is "believed on in the world," all follows; love, patience, fortitude, and all other graces come from faith. Faith fetcheth spiritual life from Christ; it insures to us all whatsoever is good, it knits us to the spring of life, Christ; it is the grace of union. Even as satan, by unbelief, did infuse all his poison at the first; (for, by making our first parents stagger at the Word of God, came sin,) so by faith all obedience comes; all have their rising and beginning from faith. Let us labour by all means, therefore, to water this root. When we would have trees flourish, we pour water on the roots of them. Now the radical grace in a Christian's soul, is this believing; this relying upon Christ; a convincing persuasion, that God and Christ are mine. This is the radical grace of all others. Let us therefore water and cherish it by all means whatsoever. And to this end, let us desire to hear much of Christ, of his privileges, and promises; for the more of Christ we know, the more we shall believe.

Faith of necessity requires knowledge; therefore knowledge is put for all other graces. "This is eternal life, to know thee, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent," John xvii. 3; and because it is an ingredient in all graces, it is a main ingredient in faith. The more we know, the more we shall believe; "They that know thy name, will trust in thee." Is it not so in human affairs? The more

we know a man to be able, and loving, and faithful to his word, the more we shall trust him. Is it not so in Divine things? The more we know of Christ, of his riches and truth, the more experimental knowledge we have of him, the more we shall trust him. Therefore, by the knowledge that is gotten by the means, let us labour for an experimental knowledge, that so we may trust and believe in him more and more. Let us look to the passages of our lives in former times, how gracious God hath been towards us; and let us search into the depth of our own wants and weaknesses, and this will force us to grow in faith more and more. The more we see of our own inability, without Christ, the more we shall cleave to him, and cast ourselves upon him. Those that have the deepest apprehensions of their own wants and weaknesses, usually have the deepest apprehensions of Christ, and grow more and more rooted in him. The searching of our own corruptions every day is a notable means to grow in faith; to consider what we should be, if it were not for God's mercy in Christ; and this will make us flee to the *city of refuge*. A search into our own conscience and ways will force us to live by faith, and to exercise faith every day in Christ Jesus. And this is to feed on Christ daily; to fly to Christ when we are stung with sin and hunger; in the want of grace and strength to fly to him for a supply; and so to keep and increase faith. Christ is all in all to those that hope to be saved by him: Christ is the ground of our life, our comfort and happiness. Therefore we should make to him upon all occasions, and cleave to him in life and death. We cannot press this point of faith too much. Why are Christians called believers? Because believing is all. If we can prove the truth of our faith and belief, we prove all; if we be faulty in that, all is bad: "Whatsoever is without faith, is sin." All men's natural morality and civility are but counterfeits; they are not enlivened by faith in Christ. But I leave this, and come to the last clause,

Received up into glory.

This is the last branch of this divine *mystery of godliness*, but it is none of the least. Christ ascended, if we respect himself. He was received, if we look to his Father. Himself ascended, his Father received him. The apostle begins with, *God manifest in the flesh*; there is the descent: a great mystery! for the great God to descend into the womb of a virgin; to descend to the *lowest parts of the earth!* And then he ends with this, *Received up into glory.* The ascent is from whence the descent was. Christ ascended, and was received as high as the place was whence he came down. God manifest in the flesh, that is the beginning of all; received up to glory, that is the consummation of all. It implies his exaltation, his resurrection, his ascension, his sitting at the right hand of God, and his coming to judge the quick and the dead; but especially it means his glory after his resurrection, his ascension, and sitting at the right hand of God. Glory implies an exemption from that which is opposite, a base condition; some great eminency and excellency, and a manifestation thereof. Though there be excellency, if there be not a manifestation of that excellency, it is not glory. Christ was inwardly glorious while he was on earth. He had true glory, but there was not a manifestation of it, and therefore it is not properly called glory; there was not a victory, and subduing of all that was contrary to his glory: for he was abased, suffered, and died. But after he was manifest in the flesh, and had done the work that he had to do, he was received up to glory; that is, his glory appearing, all abasement vanished; he was victorious over that.

The first degree of Christ's glory was in his resurrection. The clothes that he was bound with were left in the grave, the stone was removed; all things that might hinder his glory, that might abase him in body, in soul or condition, were removed. There was an excellency in all, that was not before, in regard of manifestation.

For his body; it was now an immortal, spiritual body; it could suffer no longer; it was not fed with meat and drink; it was so nimble, that he could move even as he would himself: so there was a glory put upon his body above the sun. There was a glory upon the soul; all that might hinder that, was subdued; for there was no sorrow, no fear, no grief, as there was in his soul before he was glorified: so both in body and soul he was more glorious. And then for his whole condition, that was glorious; he was abased no longer; for now he was taken into the highest place of all, above the heavens. And as his place, so his government is most eminent; for he is "above all principalities and powers," and is gloriously "set down at the right hand of God." All being subject to him, he hath the government of all. No person can be glorious, but either in body, or soul, or condition; Christ was glorious in all. For he was received up into the place of glory, to heaven, to the assembly of glory, to the presence of his Father, and the blessed saints and angels; and there is no question but there was a glorious welcome. If the angels came so cheerfully to proclaim his incarnation when he was born, and sang, "Glory be to God on high, on earth peace, good will towards men;" what kind of triumph, do you think, was made by all the blessed company in heaven, when he was received thither, after his abasement?

And that this is a mystery, will easily appear. For was it a great mystery, that God should take our nature upon him? Surely then it must needs be a mystery, that God would be glorified in our nature. Was our nature advanced in his incarnation? Much more was it glorified in his exaltation. Here was the mystery of the exaltation of our nature: God was as much abased as he could be, being born, and dying for us; our human nature was as much advanced as it could be, when God raised it up to heaven. God could be no more abased, remaining God; and man's nature can be no more advanced, remaining the true nature of man.

In this glorious condition into which Christ is received, he fulfils all his offices in a most comfortable manner. He is a glorious prophet, to send his Spirit to teach, and to open the heart ; he is a glorious priest, to appear before God, in the holy of holies, in heaven for us, for ever ; and he is a king there for ever, and from thence he rules his church, and subdues his enemies. So that, though he fulfilled those blessed offices in his state of humiliation on earth, as it became him in that state to suffer for us ; yet it was necessary that he should enter into glory, to manifest that he was a King, Priest, and Prophet. For he was not manifested who he was indeed, till he was received up into glory. Till he ascended, we had not the Spirit, the Holy Ghost, sent from above, to apply, and to help us to make use of Christ, and all his benefits and riches ; as it is said, John vii. 39, “ The Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.” So that, in regard of the manifestation of Christ’s offices, and of the application of all the good we have by it, it is by Christ received up into glory. To come to some application.

First we must lay this for a foundation of what follows, that Christ ascended as a publick person. He must not be considered as a particular person, but as the second Adam. As he took the nature of man in his incarnation ; so he ascended into heaven in it, as a publick person. As the first Adam was, so was Christ ; and as in other things, so in his ascension to glory. In the second place, we must know that there is a wondrous nearness between Christ and us now. For, before we can think of any comfort by the glory of Christ, we must be one with him by faith ; for “ he is the Saviour of his body ;” therefore we must be his members ; and being so, we are one with Christ. There is no relation in the world that is able to express the nearness between Christ and us ; and therefore, when we speak of Christ ascended into glory, we must needs think of ourselves, and of our glory and

advancement. He was taken up to glory in our nature, not only for himself, but for all his. As the husband of the church, he is gone before to take possession of heaven for his spouse. As a husband takes up land in another country for his spouse, though she be not there; so Christ hath taken up heaven for us: "I go before, to prepare a place for you." And likewise he is in heaven as a glorious head, ministering virtue, comfort, and strength to us. All our power and strength comes from Christ now, as our head in heaven. And then we must consider Christ not only as an efficient cause, but as a pattern, how we shall be glorified; for all is first in him, and then in us. He was first abased, and so must we: and then he was glorified, and so shall we: we must be conformable to his abasement, and then to his glory. "He is the first fruits of them that slept;" he being the first fruits, we succeed. These things being premised as grounds, I come to make some use of this comfortable point.

When we have to deal with God the Father, whom we have offended with our sins, let us fetch comfort, amidst all our sins and infirmities, from hence; Christ is ascended into heaven, to appear before his Father as a Mediator for us, and therefore God turns away his wrath from us. We have a friend, a favourite in the court of heaven, the Son of God himself, at his Father's right hand, makes intercession for us. And there is no danger of his death; for "he is a priest for ever at the right hand of God." His very presenting himself in heaven speaks for us. As if he should say, "These persons that ask in my name, are such as I was born for, such as I died for, such as I was sent into the world to work the great work of redemption for." He wrought our redemption in his abased estate; but he applies it as he is exalted: for that end he appears in heaven for us, and pleads for us. For even as there is a speech attributed to Abel's blood, it crying, "Vengeance, vengeance;" so Christ appearing in heaven for us, his blood cries, "Mercy, mercy: these are those

I shed my blood for: Mercy, Lord." The very appearing of him that shed his blood, cries for mercy at the throne of mercy; which is therefore a throne of mercy because he is there. He shed his blood to satisfy justice, to make way for mercy. Therefore, when we have to deal with God, think of Christ, now glorious in heaven, appearing for us. God can deny him nothing, nor deny us any thing that we ask in his name: we have his promise for it.

This is a ground likewise of contentment in all conditions, whatsoever our wants be. What though we want comforts on earth, when we have heaven provided for us? Shall not any condition content a man in this world, that hath such a glorious condition to enter into? We should not so much as look up to heaven without comfort. We should say, "Yonder is my Saviour, yonder is a house provided for me:" we should think and look upon heaven as our own place, whither Christ is gone before, and keeps a room for us. Likewise, when we think of the troubles of this world, of the enemies we have here, think of Christ taken up to glory, and think of Christ's order; "first, he suffered, and then he entered into glory:" so we must be content to suffer first, and then be glorious. Christ entered into glory in this order, and shall we think to come to heaven in another order than Christ did? If we are in Christ, all that we suffer in this world are sufferings of conformity, to make us suitable to our Head, and to fit us for glory. And our greatest abasements, what are they to the abasement of Christ? None was ever so low, and there is none so high. As he was the lowest in abasement, so he is the highest in glory. When he was at the lowest, in the grave, not only dead, but under the kingdom of death; then he rose gloriously, and ascended. So our lowest abasements are fore-runners of our highest advancement and glory.

And let this stir us up also to stand for Christ and the church, and not to be ashamed of religion: "He was

not ashamed to be called our brother ;” no, not after his resurrection : “ Go tell my brethren, I ascend unto my Father and your Father.” He was not ashamed of it when he began to be in the state of glory. He is not ashamed of our nature now, having taken it up into heaven : he is not ashamed to own us here, and will not be ashamed at the day of judgment, to set us at his right hand. And shall we, for fear of men, for any earthly respect, be ashamed of our glorious head ? Do we believe that we have a head that is glorious in heaven, “ sitting at the right hand of God,” that ere long will come to “ judge the quick and the dead ;” and shall we be ashamed for a scorn, for a word, for a frown ? Where is the Spirit of glory, the Spirit that should be in Christians that hope to be glorious ? “ He that is ashamed of me here,” saith Christ, “ I will be ashamed of him at that day.” How can we think that Christ will own us, when we will not own his religion here ? When we are ashamed to stand for him, shall we think to stand at his right hand ? All base spirits, that are afraid of disgrace, of displeasure, of loss, of any thing but of him they should be afraid of ; let them know there is no comfort for them in Christ’s exaltation : for if they had any communion with Christ, he would infuse another manner of spirit into them. Let us therefore stand for Christ ; we have a glorious head, a glorious hope, a glorious inheritance. And let us go on with encouragement in good duties, with a spirit of faith. For, wherefore is Christ in heaven, but to rule his church by his Spirit ; “ to lead captivity captive, and to give gifts to men ?” Let us therefore go on with confidence that Christ in heaven will give us his Spirit to subdue our corruptions. He is in heaven, to rule his church ; and what is his kingdom, but the subduing of our spirits by his Spirit, to be more humble, and more holy and gracious every way ? Let us not think that our corruptions will be too hard for us, but go on in a spirit of faith that Christ, who died for us as a priest,

will rule us as a king. Let us not despair; though we carry corruption about us, we shall overcome all. He will "lead captivity captive," and overcome all in us, as he did in his own person. He that overcame for us, will overcome in us, if there be a spirit of faith to depend upon him.

Again, the mystery of Christ's glory tends to godliness, to stir us up to heavenly-mindedness. The apostle divinely enforces this, Coloss. iii. 1, "If ye be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above." From our communion with Christ, rising and ascending into heaven, and sitting there in glory, he enforceth heavenly-mindedness; that our thoughts should be where our glory is, where our head and husband is; and certainly there is nothing in the world more strong to enforce an heavenly mind than this. Christ, our head and husband, is taken up into glory; there is our inheritance, there are a great many of our brethren, there is our country, there is our happiness. We are for heaven, and not for this world. This life is but a passage to that glory that Christ hath taken possession of for us; and therefore, why should we have our minds grovelling here upon earth? Certainly, if we have an interest in Christ, who is in "glory at the right hand of God," it is impossible but our souls will be raised to heaven in our affections, before we are there in our bodies. All that are Christians are in heaven in their spirits and conversation before-hand. Our dull earthly souls, being touched by his Spirit, ascend up. The iron, when it is touched with the loadstone, follows it, ascends up to it. If our hearts were as heavy as iron, if we have communion with Christ, and have our hearts once touched by his Spirit, this meditation, that Christ our head is in glory, and that our happiness is there, will purge and refine us from our earthliness, and draw up our iron, heavy, cold hearts to heaven, whither Christ is ascended. And it is not only meditation of these things, that will cause us to be heavenly-minded, but Christ, as a head of

influence in heaven, conveys spiritual life to draw us up. "When I am ascended, I will draw all men after me." There is a virtue from Christ that doth it; there is an influence issuing from Christ our head to make us heavenly-minded indeed.

To conclude all, as the soul of man is first sinful, and then sanctified; first humble, and then raised; so our meditations of Christ must be in this order: first, think of Christ as abased and crucified, (for the first comfort that the soul hath is in Christ "manifested in the flesh," before it come to be "received up into glory.") Let us have recourse to Christ in the womb of the virgin; to Christ born, and lying in the manger; going up and down doing good; hungering and thirsting, suffering in the garden, sweating water and blood, nailed on the cross, crying to his Father, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" finishing all upon the cross, lying three days in the grave; and all for us, to expiate our sin; to satisfy for our disobedience; and then think of him exalted at the right hand of God. Oh! here will be comfortable thoughts for a wounded soul, pierced with the sense of sin, assaulted by satan: to think thus of Christ, abased for our sins; and then to think of him taken up into glory. I say, in this order we shall have comfortable thoughts of Christ. But to think of his glory in the first place, would dazzle our eyes. It would terrify us, being sinners, to think first of his glory, being now ascended; but when we think of him as descended first, we can bear the sight, and it will afford much consolation. Who is this that is taken up into glory? Is it not he that was "manifest in our flesh" before? This will be comfortable. Therefore, let us first begin with Christ's abasement, and then we shall have comfortable thoughts of his exaltation,

These points are the main grounds of religion; having an influence on our lives and conversations above all others. Other points have their life and vigour from

these grand mysteries, which are the food of the soul. Therefore, let us often feed our thoughts with these things of Christ's abasement and glory; considering him in both, as a publick person, the second Adam, and our Surety; and then labour to have virtue from him, fitting us in body and soul for such a condition. The very meditation of these things will put a glory upon our souls; and the believing them will transform us from glory to glory.

THE
NATIVITY OF CHRIST,
CELEBRATED BY ANGELS.

LUKE II. 13, 14.

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will towards men.

THE words are few and pregnant; very precious, having much excellency in a little quantity. The heavens never opened but to great purpose. When God opens his mouth, it is for some special end; and when the angels appeared, it was upon some extraordinary occasion. This was the most glorious appearance that ever was, setting aside that which was at Christ's baptism; when all the Trinity appeared; when the heavens opened, and the Father spake, and the Holy Ghost descended in the likeness of a dove, upon the head of Christ. But there was never such an appearance of angels as at this time; and there was great cause. For there was never such a ground for it, whether we regard the matter itself, the incarnation of Christ,—such a thing as never was from the beginning of the world, nor ever shall be in this world; for God took man's nature on him, the Creator became a creature: or whether we regard the benefit

that comes to us thereby; for Christ by this means brings God and man together since the fall.

Christ is the accomplishment of all the prophecies, of all the promises; they were made in him and for him; therefore he was the expectation of the gentiles. Before he was born, he was revealed by degrees: first, generally, that he should be "the Seed of the woman;" then more particularly to Abraham, that he should be his seed; then he is limited to one tribe, Judah, that he should come of that; then to one family, the house of David; and then more particularly it was foretold, "a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son;" then the place is pointed out, Bethlehem; at last, when he came, John the Baptist pointed him out with the finger, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world." Even as after midnight the sun grows up by little and little, till his beams strike forth in the morning, and after appear in glory; so it was with the "Sun of Righteousness;" as he came nearer, so he discovered himself more gloriously by degrees, till he was born indeed; and then you see a multitude of angels celebrate his nativity

Now, as before his birth he was revealed by degrees, so, after his incarnation, he was revealed to all sorts; to the old, in Simeon; to women, in Anna, a prophetess; to wise men, and to simple shepherds; to all ranks of men. And to whomsoever the incarnation of Christ was revealed, they all entertained it with joy. The angels sang and praised God; Simeon was content then to die; Zacharias breaks forth, "Blessed be the God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people;" and the shepherds went away rejoicing. And although Christ lay in the manger, yet there were some circumstances that shewed the greatness of his person: the wise men came and adored him, and an host of angels praised him.

In the former part of these words we may consider, 1. The apparition of angels. 2. To whom they appeared, poor shepherds. And, 3. The end of their appearing; to celebrate Christ's birth. Now in that the angels appeared to poor simple shepherds, rather than to great

and honourable men, we may learn, that God will confound the pride of men, that set so much by that which God so little respects. And in that the angels appeared to them in the midst of their business, "as they were keeping watch over their flock by night," we may observe, that God's people, (as Moses, and others,) have had the sweetest intercourse with God in their affairs. We many times meet with comfort in our callings, that otherwise we should never have. And in that they appeared to them in the night, we may learn, that God discovers himself in the night of affliction. Our sweetest and strongest comforts are in our greatest miseries. God's children find light in darkness; nay, God brings light out of darkness itself.

Now, this glorious apparition to the poor shepherds, as it served to confirm their faith then, so in them it serves to confirm ours now; for if one or two witnesses confirm a thing, what shall a multitude do? If one or two men confirm a truth, much more an host of heavenly angels. Therefore it is base infidelity to call this in question, that is confirmed by a multitude of angels. Again, such an apparition must needs be an unspeakable comfort to these poor men in their low condition. From whence we may observe by the way, that as for one Christian to confirm and comfort another in the ways of religion is the work of an angel, so for one man to discourage another is the work of a devil. I shall add no more here concerning the apparition, nor the persons to whom it was made, but proceed to the end of the angels' appearing, which was to celebrate the birth of Christ. And here we will consider, first, the celebration itself: "There was a multitude of the heavenly host praising God." The word translated *praising*, signifies also *singing*. It implies praise expressed in singing. The angels were joyful at the birth of Christ their Lord. Joy is no way better expressed than in praising God; and it is a pity that such a sweet affection as joy should run in any other stream. God hath planted this affection in the creature, and it is fit he should reap the fruit of his own garden.

We will next consider the matter of their celebration and gratulation, which was this: "Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, good will towards men." First, the angels begin with the chief end of all, the glory of God; it is God's end, it was the angels' end, and it should be ours too. "Glory to God on high." Then they wish the chief good of all; that whereby we are fitted for this end, peace. God cannot be glorified on earth, unless there be peace wrought: for man else conceives God as an enemy. By this peace we are fitted to glorify God. If we find reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ, then the sense of God's love in the work of reconciliation will inflame our hearts to glorify God; therefore, next to the glory of God, they wish "peace on earth." Then, thirdly, here is the ground of all happiness, from whence this peace comes, from God's good will, from his good pleasure, "good will towards men." So, if we go back again, the good will and pleasure of God is the cause and ground of peace in Christ; and peace in Christ puts us into a condition, and stirs us up to glorify God. To begin with the first,

Glory to God in the highest.

The angels, those blessed spirits, begin with that which is the end of all. God's end, in all things, is his own glory: he hath none above himself, whose glory to aim at. And the angels wish, *Glory to God in the highest heavens*. That is the place where his majesty most appears: and indeed he is more glorified there than any where in the world. Many there are who do not glorify God at all here on earth. Many there are whose whole life is nothing but a dishonouring of God. The best, in some sense, cannot perfectly glorify God till they are in heaven: and yet, in some sort, we may glorify God more on earth than in heaven. It may seem a paradox, but it is true. Here upon earth we glorify God in the midst of enemies. He hath no enemies in heaven; there all are of one spirit. Here upon earth we live not only among

devils, but men led with the spirit of the devil, where God is dishonoured; and if here we take God's side, and stand for God's cause, we, in some sort, honour God more here than we are capable to do in heaven, where there is no opposition.

God is always glorious; but, alas! few have eyes to see it. But I take glory here for the excellency and eminency of the goodness and greatness of God, discovered and taken notice of. In the former part of the chapter, *light* is called the "glory of the Lord." Light is a glorious creature; nothing expresseth glory so much as that; it carries its evidence in itself; it discovers all other things, and itself too. So excellency and eminency will discover itself to those that have eyes to see it; and being manifested and taken notice of, is glory.

In that the angels begin with the glory of God, I might speak of this doctrine, that "the glory of God, the setting forth of the excellencies and eminencies of the Lord should be the end of our lives, the one thing we should aim at." The angels here begin with it, and we begin with it in the Lord's Prayer, "Hallowed be thy name!" But this being a general point, I will pass it by, and come to the particular, in which it will more comfortably appear; as this glory shines in Christ, in the incarnation of Christ, there is matter of glorifying God, both to angels and men.

I take the incarnation of Christ as a foundation of all the other good we have by Christ. *Glory to God on high*, now Christ is born; why? Only that he is born? No; but by reason of this incarnation, there is a union of the two natures, God and man; so that by the incarnation now Christ is man, and a holy man; the human nature in Christ is pure and holy, being sanctified by the Spirit and united to God. Now Christ being not only man, but pure man, and God-man, hence it is that he comes to be qualified for all that he did and suffered after; it was from hence that they had their worth. Well, then, the incarnation of Christ, together with the benefits thereof,

such as redemption, adoption, and whatever else we gain thereby, is that wherein God will shew his glory most. The glory and excellency of God doth most shine in his love and mercy in Christ. Every excellency of God hath its proper place or theatre, where it is seen: as his power in the creation; his wisdom in his providence; his justice in hell; his majesty in heaven; but his bowels of tender mercy do most of all appear in his church, among his people; to whom he shews the excellency of his goodness in the incarnation of Christ, and the benefits we have by it.

Many are the attributes and excellencies of God that shine in Christ; as, his truth: "All the promises of God are yea and amen in Christ;" in him there is an accomplishment of all the promises. His wisdom, in that he could reconcile justice and mercy, by joining two natures together; that he could join two attributes seeming contrary, justice and mercy. To reconcile man, by reconciling justice and mercy; and by such an excellent way as that God should become man; to reconcile justice and mercy by such a Person as should satisfy justice, and give way to mercy, that is, by Christ; this was great wisdom. He became our Surety, who is God as well as man. If no creature can satisfy God, God can. The second Person in the Trinity took our nature, and died for us. God must be satisfied; and when no creature in heaven or earth can do it, his own Son must. Here was the glory of his justice. But the main of all is, his mercy and goodness, which set him on work to contrive this great work of redemption, by the incarnation and death of Christ; his infinitely rich, glorious, abundant mercy,—that is the main thing wherein God is glorious now in Christ.

There are no words large enough to set out the goodness and mercy of God in Jesus Christ. Therefore I will only speak of this attribute because this has the pre-eminence among all the others. For after the fall, man being miserable and sinful, what attribute can exalt itself

but mercy to misery, and grace to sinful man, in pardoning his sin? Considering in what state man stood after he had transgressed, there was no other attribute could exalt itself but grace and mercy, to triumph over misery and sin. Therefore, Glory to God in the highest heavens, especially for his free grace and mercy in Christ.

Now then reflect. Doth the grace, and love, and mercy of God, appear, and shew themselves in Jesus Christ? I beseech you, then, let us remember it, especially in the greatest extremities, for it answereth all objections, the greatest and strongest that can be made. The sinner will object, "My sins are great, of long continuance and of a deep dye." Look then upon God in Christ, and consider his end in the incarnation of Christ; it was that his mercy should be exalted, and triumph over all men's unworthiness. The greater thy sins are, the greater will be the glory of his mercy in forgiving thee; and that is it God seeks for now, to be glorious in his mercy. Again, thy heart tells thee, that if there be any mercy shewed to such a wretch as thou art, it must be no ordinary mercy. It is true, God's mercy is no ordinary thing; of all attributes, he will triumph in that. The glory of his mercy is, that he seeks to have of men, by the redemption wrought by Christ, above all things whatsoever. What! wouldst thou have infinite mercy? Thou hast it in Christ. Perhaps thy sins have abounded. God's grace abounds much more. It may be thy sins are as mountains. God's grace is as the ocean to cover those mountains. "But is it possible for God to forgive such a wretched sinner as I, who have been a blasphemer, an adulterer, a Sabbath-breaker, a covetous, unjust person, who have every way broken all the laws of God?" It were not with men: But, saith God, "My thoughts are not as your thoughts:" my thoughts are as far above your's as the heavens are above the earth. Therefore bound not the infinite mercy of God with thy narrow thoughts, but let it have its scope; especially in plunges and assaults, and in times of distress, such as the best of us may be brought unto, comfort yourselves with this

consideration, that God sets himself to be glorious in his love and mercy to poor, miserable, wretched man, in Jesus Christ.

You have heard now of the joy of the angels, of their manner of celebrating the birth of Christ: and if the angels should now leave heaven, and come down upon earth and take upon them bodies, how would they celebrate the incarnation of Christ?* You see here they sung, "Glory to God on high;" and this would be the course wherein they would carry themselves to glorify God answerable to their song. So should we do, if we will be like the blessed angels. We see how to celebrate the nativity of Christ; we need not go to fetch joy from hell. If the devil should be incarnate, and come to live among men, he would celebrate the incarnation of Christ no otherwise than men do, in many places. Then, if we would not have our portion with devils, let us not imitate them. What! hath God been so rich in love to us as to take our miserable nature upon him? Here is matter of joy: and shall we be beholden to the devil for joy, when we should rejoice for Christ? I desire repentance and reformation of what hath been amiss in this kind. And if there be any that have been guilty, let them take it to heart, and truly repent and amend their ways. Consider the monstrous ingratitude, the preposterous behaviour of those who celebrate the nativity of Christ in this brutish, devilish manner. What! because Christ was born, shall we therefore give liberty to all looseness, as if Christ came to bring Christians to licentiousness? Shall we, instead of repenting, run further and further into guilt? Is that the reasoning of the Scriptures? No; they say, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand;" for Christ and the fruits of the gospel are at hand. "The grace of God hath appeared in Christ;" what! to teach us to be



* These Sermons were preached at the Feast of Christ's Nativity.

more disordered than at other times? Oh, no! to live soberly, justly, and godly in this present world.

I shall next shew you, 1. How we may know whether we glorify God for Christ, or not. 2. What are the hinderances that keep us from it. And, 3. The means how we may come to glorify God. And first, in order to know whether we glorify God. Do we exalt God in our souls above all creatures? Do we lift him up in his own place, and let him be in our souls, as he is in himself, in the most holy? Then we agree with the blessed angels in giving him glory. God is glorious, especially in his mercy and goodness; let him be so in our hearts, above all our unworthiness and sin: for God hath not glory from us till we give him the highest place in our love, and joy, and delight. And this especially appears in opposition to other things, when we will not offend God for any creature. Therefore, let us ask our own thoughts often, what that is that our delight, and joy, and love is spent on and runs after? Is it the sweet love of God in Christ, the excellent state we have in Christ? It is an excellent sign. Let us examine what is highest in our souls: "The loving-kindness of the Lord is better than life itself," saith the Psalmist. Then we give God glory, when, for his sake, we set light by life itself. When we are ready to part with all; with father and mother, and houses and lands, and all, for Christ; then with the angels we say, "Glory be to God on high!"

Then again we give glory to God for Christ, when we take all the favours we have from God in Christ; when we see Christ in every thing. "All things are ours because we are Christ's." It is by Christ that we are heirs, that we have any comfortable interest in the favour of God; therefore, when we accept all in Christ, and give God in Christ the glory of all, we give glory to God. Again, we give glory to God when we all join together and stir up one another, and labour to promote the knowledge of God in Christ all the ways we can; when every one in our place and calling, magistrates and mi-

nisters, and every one in our families, labour that Christ may rule there, that God in Christ may be known. Where there is a zeal for God's glory, and a disposition to glorify God, there will be a stirring up one of another, angels stirring up men, and men angels, and a wishing that God may have glory in heaven and earth. Again, we glorify God in Christ, when we see such mercy in Christ as doth so transform us, that, from an inward change, we have always a blessed disposition to glorify God. This is the difference between the glass of the gospel, and the glass of the law, and of the creatures. In the law, we see the beams of the justice of God, and the beams of his power and goodness in the creation; but this doth not change and transform us to be good and gracious. But when we see the glory of God, of his goodness and infinite mercy shining in the face of Jesus Christ, it changeth the soul to be like unto Christ. Therefore, if we find that the knowledge of God in Christ hath changed our dispositions, it is a sign then we give glory to God indeed.

To glorify God being so excellent a duty, let us consider, secondly, what are the main hinderances that we give not God more glory. And first, one main hinderance is a veil of ignorance spread over our hearts, which hinders us from seeing the glorious light of God shining in Jesus Christ; and thereupon, instead of that blessed disposition that should be in the soul, there comes an admiration of, and a delight in, base things. This ignorance is partly from the natural darkness of our own hearts, and sometimes from the policy of Satan, who casts dust in our eyes, and labours that we may not see the glory of God in the gospel. It is then no wonder, if where the gospel is not preached, the devil hath a kind of reign, and God is not honoured at all; because the devil is the prince of darkness, and rules in darkness.

Another great hindrance is, unbelief. This, like ignorance, is another veil overspreading the heart. And though the veil of ignorance be removed, and a man come

to hear of the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, and see so clearly the scheme of redemption, that he is able to discourse well upon it ; yet, not seeing it in a proper and spiritual light he believes it not with a proper and effectual faith ; so that there still remains a veil of unbelief upon his heart. And one or other of these two veils (or it may be both of them,) is the cause why we see not the light of God shining in the gospel, and why we do not glorify him. There are wondrous things in the gospel ; but if we want either light or sight to see them, what doth it avail ? If the light shine round about us, and the "god of this world hath blinded our eyes," how can we glorify God ? It cannot be, if we want a heavenly, spiritual light, suitable to the things : for a natural man, by the light that he hath, cannot judge sufficiently of them. The main hindrances then of glorifying God are, the veil of ignorance and unbelief.

Another great hindrance of glorifying God is, when men lift up their sins above the mercy of God in Jesus Christ. This is to take away God and Christ altogether. For if the mercy and bountiful goodness of God were not greater than our sins, it were not the mercy and bounty of a God. But there are but few of these that miscarry ; God usually shines upon them at the last. There are three ranks of men ; some are profane, dead, loose Christians, that never were under the law, that never understood the corruptions of nature, nor themselves. Some again are brought from that to understand themselves a little too much ; that are under the law, and feel the flashes of God's wrath. And some, in the third place, are brought from hence to be under grace. That is the only happy condition, to be under the grace of God in Christ. Some men of the first rank never come to the second ; they never understand what sin is, and what the wrath of God is ; they will give their conscience no leisure to tell them what their condition is ; but if they come not to the second step, there is very small hope of their coming to the third. But there is hope of the

second that they will come to the third rank. Now, as those of the third rank glorify God, by submitting their sins to his mercy in Christ Jesus, so the second hinder God of much glory, and themselves of much comfort; though, as I said, few of them miscarry at last.

Now, in the third place, as a means to attain to this duty of glorifying God, let us beg of him the Spirit of revelation, to discover to us the things that make for our peace in their own proper light, for they are spiritually discerned. Therefore the apostle desires of God the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to discover these things to us; not only that they are truths, but that they are truths to us. For unless we know these things belong to *us* in particular, we cannot glorify God as we should. Oh! but when there is a spirit of appropriation to make these our own, that God in Christ loves us, "Who loved me, and gave himself for me," Gal. ii. 20, then the soul cannot but break forth with the angels here, "Glory to God on high." Therefore, beg the Spirit to reveal to thee thy part, that God is thy Saviour, and that thy sins are forgiven: beg of God to take away the veils of ignorance and unbelief, and openly to reveal his fatherly bowels and tender mercy to thee in Christ. It is the end of our lives, and should be the pitch of our desires, to glorify God. Therefore, I say, let us desire God to reveal himself so far to us, to be our Father in Christ, that we may glorify him. Surely it is a forcible plea; God will do that which is suitable to his end; "He hath made all things for his own glory;" especially the work of redemption in Christ, is for the glory of his rich mercy, and we should desire a sense of his mercy and love for this end, that we may be fitter to glorify God. This is one excellent way to help us to glorify God: for we cannot glorify him till we know we are at peace with him. And this was the end of the angels in wishing peace upon earth; that God being reconciled, and peace being established in men's consciences, they might glorify God. The reason of this will be more clearly seen, in consider-

ing the second part of the angels' song ; to which let us proceed.

Peace on Earth.

The same holy affection in the angels that moved them to wish God to have his due of glory from the creature, moves them to wish peace to men likewise ; because, as I have just now observed, we cannot glorify God till we have the knowledge of our peace with him in Christ. “ But why cannot we glorify God without this knowledge ? ” The reason is, peace comes from righteousness. Christ is first the King of Righteousness, and then King of Peace. Now, unless the soul be assured of righteousness in Christ, it can have no peace. We cannot heartily wish for the manifestation of the glory of him that we think is our enemy ; the heart of man will never do it. Therefore God must first speak peace to the soul, and then we are fit to glorify God. Now, what is peace ? Peace, in general, is a harmony and agreement of different things. Now the best thing that man can attain unto is, to have a peace with his Creator. You may know what this peace is by the apostle, Eph. i. 10. The word, *Ἀνακεφαλίωσασθαι*, there used, is very significant. It means to recapitulate, or gather all to a head in Christ. Out of Christ, there is a division, a separation and a scattering, a breach that is five-fold.

1. There is a scattering and a division from God, the Fountain of good, with whom we had communion in our first creation. His delight was then in his creature ; but we lost that blessed communion, and our sins have separated between God and us. 2. There is a separation between the good angels and us ; for they, being good subjects, take part with their prince, and therefore join against rebels. Hence it is, that, upon the sight of angels, the very hearts of men have been sometimes stricken, considering that there are no good terms between us and the angels till we come to Christ again. 3. There is a division and scattering between man and man. Since

the fall, there is a spirit of division among men, till the gospel again bring peace; especially there is no sound peace between men in the state of nature, and others that are God's children. 4. There is a division and separation between man and the other creatures. They are ready to be in arms against any man that is in the state of nature. If God do but give them leave, they presently make an end of sinful men. 5. Men have no peace with themselves. They speak peace to themselves; but, alas! God speaks none to them. They make a covenant with death and hell; but death and hell make no covenant with them. So it is a forced peace; it is a dead sleep. They consider not themselves, and the war they are in with God, with the angels, with other men, with other creatures, and with themselves. They suppose all is peace; whereas it is but a truce, that they take up for a time. When God opens their conscience, there is a hell in their hearts, that when let loose, makes them to suffer a hell upon earth; they enter into the pains of hell before their time. "So there is no peace to the wicked" at all; but, since the fall, there is a separation between God and man, between angels and man, between man and man, between man and the creatures, between man and himself.

Now, Christ at his coming brings all into one again; he brings God and man together again, by offering himself a sacrifice, by making full satisfaction to the justice of God; and sin, which is the cause of his displeasure, being taken away, God being gracious and merciful, his mercy runs again on us. Sin only separates between God and us, and that Christ takes away; therefore he is called by St. Paul, "Christ our Peace;" and by Isaiah, "The Prince of Peace." He was qualified to be our peace, as being a friend to both parties; having married our nature on purpose that he might, in our nature, bring God and us together. If then we be at peace with God, all other peace will follow. For good subjects will be at peace with rebels, when rebels are brought in subjection to their king, and all join in one obedience; therefore, by

this means, the angels are brought to be at peace with us. And as for men, there is a spirit of union between them. The same spirit that knits us to God by faith, knits us to one another by love. And we have peace with the creatures ; for when God is made peaceable to us, he makes all other things peaceable. The heathen could say, *Tranquillus Deus, tranquillat omnia* ; when God is at peace, he makes all so. Again, being at peace with God, there is peace in our hearts. When we are assured by the Spirit of God that he is our Father, and he seals it to our conscience by his Spirit, peace flows into our hearts like a river. So that now God and we are brought to one ; angels and we, and all other things and we are reconciled.

Now, this blessed peace, in all the branches of it, is founded in Christ ; Christ is the cause and the foundation of it : for though these words were spoken at the incarnation of Christ, yet we are to refer them to the whole work of his mediatorship in the state of his abasement and his state of exaltation ; our peace is wholly founded upon him. He was born, and became man, and became sin ; that is, a sacrifice for sin for us ; he became a curse for us, to establish a peace, and to satisfy God's anger ; and then he rose again, to shew that he had fully satisfied God's anger, and that peace was fully established. Therefore the Holy Ghost was sent after the resurrection of Christ, as a testimony that God was appeased ; and now Christ is in heaven, he is ever there as a priest, to make intercession for us. So that Christ is our peace, from his incarnation to his death, from thence to his resurrection and ascension, and intercession. All peace with God, with angels, and with creatures, is established in Christ.

This should teach us, that whatsoever intercourse we have with God the Father, we should take Christ with us. We must not offer sacrifice without the high-priest. Let us offer nothing to God without Christ. There is no intercourse between God and us, till we be reconciled in Christ, in whom we must offer all our sacrifices. There-

fore, let us not own an absolute God in our devotions ; but let us think of God reconeiled in Christ, and at peace with us, and a Father in covenant in Christ, and then our persons, and prayers, and all shall be accepted. Christ is the true Mercy-seat ; in looking to whom, God frees us from the curse of the law. Jerusalem was the glory of the world, and the temple was the glory of Jerusalem ; but the mercy-seat was the glory of the temple, because that pointed to Christ, in whom we have intereourse with God the Father.

But why doth he say, Peace on earth ? 1. Because peace was wrought upon earth by Christ, in the days of his flesh, when he offered himself a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour to his Father. And, 2. Because here on earth we must be partakers of it. We oftentimes defer to make our peace with God from time to time, and think there will be peace made in another world. Oh ! beloved, our peace must be made on earth. “ We must live godly and righteously, and soberly in this present world ;” we must “ enter into the kingdom of heaven here.” Further entrance must be ministered here, by “ growing in grace daily.” If heaven be not entered into here, it shall never be entered afterwards ; for the church is the seminary of the heavenly paradise. All that are taken to heaven, to be set there for ever, are set in the church, and grow up there awhile under the means of salvation. Therefore, labour to have this peace on earth, or else you can never glorify God on earth ; and if we glorify him not on earth, we shall never do it in heaven.

I would now give a few directions to maintain this peace continually. To walk with God, and to keep our daily peace with God, requires a great deal of watchfulness over our thoughts, (for he is a Spirit,) and over our words and actions. Watchfulness is the preserver of peace. Where there is a great distance between two that are at peace, it is not kept without acknowledgment of that distance, and without watchfulness. It is not here as it is in a peace that is between two kings that are

co-ordinate one with another ; but it is a peace between the King of heaven and rebels, that are taken to be subjects ; therefore we must walk in humble terms. “Walk humbly with thy God.” We must watch over our carriage, that we do not “grieve the Spirit of God.” For then, if the first peace be not quite taken away, yet God interdicts our comfort. If we do not watch against sin, we cannot enjoy daily peace ; but God will suffer our knowledge to lash our conscience, and to make us more miserable than a carnal man, that never had a sight of his goodness. Oh ! the misery of a man that once had peace, and is fallen again into ill terms with God ! Of all men, such a man hath most horror, till he hath made his peace with God again.

And because it is a difficult thing to maintain terms of peace with God, in regard of our indisposition, we should renew our covenant and purposes every day. And if we have fallen into any sin, let us make use of our great Peace-maker, Christ, who is in heaven to make peace between God and us. Let us desire God, for his sake, to be reconciled unto us ; for God is in Christ reconciling us unto himself. Let us desire him to testify it to us by his Holy Spirit. Again, take that direction of the apostle, When we find any trouble in the world, not to trouble ourselves over-much. Cast your care upon God. Let your requests be made known to God with thanksgiving. Pray for future favours, and thank him for past. Then “the peace of God, that passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” Perhaps we shall not have what we pray for ; but if we have not that, we shall have the peace of God, that passeth all understanding. Again, if we would maintain this peace, let us be always doing somewhat that is good, and pleasing to God. “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think of these things ;” and then “the God

of peace shall be with you." The thoughts must be exercised that way, and there must be a practice of what we think of; and this will be a means to maintain this peace with God.

Now, to stir us up the more to search the grounds of our peace; let us consider the fearful state of a man that hath not made his peace with God. However Christ hath died, that will not serve the turn, unless a man take him by faith. If Christ be food, and he be not eaten, if he be a foundation, and we do not build on him, what benefit is it to us? Therefore, those that have not been brought by the Spirit of God to communion with Christ, alas! they are under the wrath of God; and however God doth use them, as princes do traitors in the tower, giving them the liberty of the prison, yet the sentence of death is not revoked. All the delights of a prisoner do not content him; he knows he is on ill terms with his prince: so, till we have made our peace with God, alas! we have not sued out our pardon; all our delights are but as those of a prisoner in the tower. Therefore, ask thy soul, Hast thou sued out thy pardon? Is there reconciliation wrought between God and thee?

If we do not make our peace with God, what a case are we in? God himself ere long will appear our enemy; Christ, who we think will save us, will be our Judge, and a terrible Judge: "If his wrath be kindled, who shall abide it?" As for the Holy Ghost, how can they look for comfort from him? They have grieved Him: therefore he will grieve their conscience. The Holy Ghost, as he is the God of all comfort and consolation, so he is the ground of all terror to wicked men, when he hath knocked at their hearts, by the ministry of his Word, to open and to let him in, but they would not. The angels are ready executioners of God's vengeance upon any occasion; and other creatures wait but for a command from God, to execute his wrath upon sinners. The heavens are ready to rain upon them as in the flood; the earth is ready to swallow them, as it did Korah; the beasts that carry

them, and all the creatures they use, wait but for a command from God to destroy them; their meat to choak them; the air to infect them; the water to drown them; while they are at variance with God. As for the devils, they will be ready to be tormentors of the wicked. They that tempt to sin now will torment for it hereafter. And for the damned spirits, they are all in that cursed condition with themselves; therefore, "where shall the ungodly appear?" Ere long, whence shall they hope for comfort? Neither from God, nor angels, nor devils, nor wicked men, nor good men,—none of them all will yield them comfort. They are all ready to serve the Lord of Hosts against his enemies.

Indeed, God shews his patience here; but when God's wrath comes, at the day of judgment,—when God hath forsaken sinful men,—when God, the Judge of all, hath said, "Depart, ye cursed,"—no creature shall minister to them the least comfort; the sun shall shine upon them no more; the earth shall bear them no longer; and as we see Dives had not a drop of water to comfort him in those flames, no more shall any miserable wretch that comes into that place of torment. Therefore, if we be not at peace with the Lord of Hosts, every creature is ready to be in arms against us.

Let us not therefore delude ourselves, but get into Christ, get into the ark in time; that when any publick calamity shall come, we may be safe in Christ. If we are at peace with God, by faith in Christ, every thing will minister comfort to us; we cannot think of God but as our Father; of Christ but as our Redeemer and Reconciler, that hath brought God and us together: the Holy Ghost takes upon him the term of a Comforter for such; angels are ministering spirits. As for the church itself, God's people, they have a common stock of prayers for us; every one that saith, *Our Father*, thinks of us; and for all other things, they are at peace with us. As Job saith, "The stones in the street," nay, the stone in a man's body, the terrible pangs that come from that

disease, they have a blessing upon them : in the greatest extremities, a soul that is at peace with God, however God does not deliver him from the trouble, yet he delivers and supports him in the trouble ; and as the troubles increase, so his comforts increase ; and the very troubles themselves are at peace with him : all work for the best “ to them that love God.” And in the greatest confusions and tumults of states, “ the righteous is afraid of no ill tidings,” Psal. cxii. ; because his heart is fixed upon God’s love in Christ ; while the wicked, when war and desolation, and signs of God’s anger appear from heaven, “ shake as the trees of the forest.”

When death comes, then is the upshot of all. Oh ! the miseries of a man in the evil day, that hath not made his peace with God ! While to the godly the sting of death is taken away. He that hath made his peace with God, can say, with old Simeon, “ Lord, now let thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.” He is willing to yield his soul to God, because he is at peace with him. Their graves are their beds, and their souls rest with him. They die in peace, and commend their souls to God, “ as to a faithful Creator ;” as St. Paul saith, “ I have fought the good fight, I have kept the faith ; henceforth is reserved for me a crown of righteousness ; and not for me only, but for all those that love his appearing.” Oh ! the comfort of him in the hour of death, that hath made his peace with God ! “ Blessed are those that die in the Lord,” in the peace of the Lord ; “ they rest from their labours.”

And after death, what comfort are those in that have made their peace with God in Christ ? The godly have comfortable thoughts of those blessed times to come. They cannot think of death and judgment without much comfort. “ Lift up your heads, for your redemption draws near.” Therefore, let us not conceive slightly of this peace. It is not a freedom from petty ills, and an advancement to a little good ; but it is a freedom from ills that are above nature ; from the wrath of God, before

which no creature can stand; no, not the angels themselves; from hell and damnation; from the curse of God, and from the kingdom of Satan. It is a freedom from that condition that all the powers of the world shall tremble at, and an advancement to the greatest good. It is a freedom from bondage, and an advancement to sonship. Therefore, let us have high thoughts of this peace, as the angels had, when they sang, "Glory to God on high, on earth peace,"

Good-will towards men.

This is the spring and root of all. The angels begin with, "Glory to God," and then they come to "peace among men." Now, there is no peace but issues from grace; grace is God's free good will and pleasure; therefore the angels say, "Good will towards men." We may learn hence, 1. That God hath now a gracious good-will towards men. 2. That this good-will is the foundation of all good. 3. That this is founded upon Christ.

1. God now shews good pleasure towards men. I speak of this but as it makes way for the other. Only by the way I shall observe, that the love that God bears towards man, as it is a propension in him to do good, is *love*: as it is free, it is his *good pleasure*, or *grace*; as it is to persons in misery, it is *mercy*. The foundation of all is love; but the terms differ according to circumstances. *Good pleasure* and *grace* imply freedom in the party loving; and *mercy* implies misery in the party loved. Now this free good will and grace is towards men. He saith not, towards angels. It is more towards men than even to good angels, (in some sort;) for man is taken to be the spouse of Christ, good angels are not so. Neither is it good will to evil angels, for their state is determined; there is no altering of their condition.

2. This good will of God to restore lapsed man, by the sending his Son, is the ground of all good to man, and hath no ground but itself. God's grace and love to the creature is altogether independent, in regard to the creature;

God fetcheth not reasons of his love from that, but from his own bowels. What is the foundation of the covenant of grace? Christ. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son." There is nothing freer than a gift; Christ is a gift; he came freely from God, who gave "him to death for us all." And whatsoever good thing we have in Christ, it comes freely too. He that gave Christ freely, "shall he not also with him freely give us all things?" The very grace to keep the covenant, repentance and faith, they are the free gift of God. "I will take away your stony heart, and give you new hearts, and cause you to walk in my statutes." God doth his part and ours too, to shew not only that the covenant of grace is a covenant of wondrous love, to give us grace here, and glory hereafter; but that the foundation is of grace, and that the performance on our part is of grace likewise. Nay, it is of grace that he would enter into covenant at all. He humbled himself wondrously in vouchsafing to enter into covenant; it was humiliation on God's part, and exaltation to us; therefore, as it is in Zechariah, we may cry, "Grace! grace!" There is nothing but grace and free love in the whole carriage of our salvation. But if whatsoever good comes to man, be merely from God's good will, let us empty ourselves, and give him the glory of all. It is easily spoken and heard, but not so easily done; for man naturally is proud; and for flesh and blood to be brought to go out of itself, to give the glory of all goodness and happiness to God's free grace, is hard to proud nature. But we must beg grace of God to work our hearts to this, more and more to empty ourselves of ourselves, and to give God the glory of all. But,

3. This free love and grace of God is only in Christ; therefore the angels pronounce at the birth of Christ, "Good will to men." What we have by grace, we have only by Christ; (because he hath given satisfaction to God's justice, that so grace may be conveyed, and derived unto us, without any prejudice to any other attribute in

God;) and the embracing power and grace in us is faith. I say, whatsoever we have from God's free love, we have it in Christ. The free love of God is grounded in Christ. God cannot look upon us but in him; therefore all is Christ. We are called in Christ, justified in Christ, sanctified by the Spirit of Christ, glorified by Christ: "We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ." The whole Trinity have a wondrous complacency in looking upon mankind: God loves us, as redeemed by Christ; Christ loves us, as given by the Father to him to redeem; the Holy Ghost hath a special regard to us, as seeing the love of the Father in giving us, and of the Son in redeeming us. And surely it should be our chief delight too, to see how God hath given us to Christ to save; how Christ hath redeemed us; and how the Holy Ghost witnesseth this love to our souls, and applies it to us.

The first use we shall make of what hath been said, shall be to observe, that all that are not in Christ, lie open to the vengeance and wrath of God. Again, if all God's good will and pleasure be in Christ, as our High-priest, without whom we can offer no sacrifice, then we should look to God in Christ; love God in Christ; perform service to God in Christ; pray to God in Christ; give thanks to God in Christ; desire God in Christ to make all things acceptable for Christ's sake, because it is in Christ that God hath any good will and pleasure to us.

But how shall we know whether God's good will be to us in Christ, or not? How shall I know that I am in the state of grace? The Holy Ghost must ascertain this. For as the work of salvation was so great, that only God could satisfy God; so the doubts of man's heart, and the guilt of his conscience, when it is upon him, and the fear of God's wrath, upon such guilt, is such, that God must assure him that he is reconciled to him; God the Son must reconcile God the Father; and God the Holy Ghost must seal and ascertain this to the soul. The soul will never be quiet, before it see and know in particular,

God reconciled in Christ; the Spirit, that is God, that is above conscience, must seal it to the soul. Being above conscience, he can quiet our conscience.

Now this Spirit that worketh this in us, and assures us of God's good pleasure, alters and changes our dispositions, that we shall have a good pleasure in God; (for there is a mutual good pleasure: God hath a pleasure in us as his, and we have a good pleasure in God, wrought by the Spirit;) the Spirit not only witnesseth, but worketh this sweet and gracious disposition to God; God delights in us, and we in God. God delights in the church above all things; the church is his spouse, his body, his friends, his children; and those that have the Spirit of God delight in them too. "My delight is in the sons of men," saith Christ; which he shewed by taking the nature of man upon him. So all that have the Spirit of Christ delight in the church and people of God.

God delights in obedience more than sacrifice; God's people, that he delights in, yield their bodies and souls a sacrifice to God; God accepts them in Christ, and he is acceptable to them in Christ Jesus; and they seek out what pleaseth him, and is acceptable to him. As the sons of Isaac sought out what might please their old father, so God's children seek out what duties God relisheth best. Thanksgiving is a sacrifice, with which God is well pleased. Is it so? Then they will seek out that, that they may please him. God, by his Spirit, will work in them a disposition to please him in all things; therefore the people of God are said to be a free people, zealous of good works. The Spirit infusing the love of God in Christ to them, sets their wills at liberty to devise to please God in all things. Therefore, if we have tasted God's good will towards us, we have a good pleasure to him again. Whatsoever is God's pleasure shall be our pleasure; what pleaseth him shall please us. If it please him to exercise me with crosses and afflictions, what pleaseth God shall please me; for when he hath once

loved me freely in Christ, every thing that comes from him, tastes of that free love and mercy; all "the ways of God are mercy and truth." His way of correction is a way of love; therefore, if it please him, it shall please me; my will shall be his.

But if we do not find ourselves yet to be the people of God's delight, what shall we do? Attend upon the means of salvation, the gospel of peace, and wait the good time, and do not stand disputing. Disputing and cavilling hinders many; therefore leave disputing, and fall to obeying. God hath a gracious purpose to save all that repent of their sins, and believe in Christ. This is gospel. "I will leave secret things, for they belong to God; revealed things only belong to me." I will desire of God his Spirit, to repent of my sins, and to cast myself into the arms of his mercy in Christ, and then let God do as he pleaseth. If I perish, I will perish in the arms of Christ. If thou doubtst whether God love thee or not, cast thyself upon the love of God in Christ, and then it is out of question. Whosoever hath grace to cast himself upon the free love of God, he fulfils the covenant of grace. Stand not disputing and wrangling, but desire grace to obey, and then all questions concerning thy eternal estate are resolved; all is clear.

There is not a man, however bad, but would have pardoning mercy; he is content to have God to pardon his sin; but he will not take the whole mercy and love of God in Christ; curing, healing mercy. Men will have one mercy, but not another; but we shall never be saved without entire mercy; healing as well as pardoning. God doth not only pardon the sins of those whom he loves, but he heals their nature, and makes it like unto Christ's, holy and pure. And those that have not the Spirit, who desire not altering, changing and healing grace, as well as pardoning grace, are hypocrites. Let us remember this especially, because most men are deceived in this. They think, "Oh! God is merciful, and his love

is free in Christ; and though I am unworthy, yet God will have mercy upon me!" But hast thou a secret desire to partake of God's whole merey, to make thee good, as well as to make thee his son, and entitle thee to heaven? To have thy nature altered? To see the deformity of sin, and the beauty of grace? Hadst thou rather have the image of God upon thee, than any favour in the world beside? Hadst thou rather be freed from the bondage of sin, than have any other deliverance? If it be thus, there is good hope concerning thee; if otherwise, thy ease is dangerous; and thou art but an hypoerite, deceiving thy own soul.

To conclude all: the love of God is a love that reacheth to the filling of nature, with all the happiness it is capable of. In this world, in all misery, one beam of God's loving-kindness will scatter all clouds whatsoever. What raised the spirit of Daniel in the lion's den? Of the three young men in the midst of the furnaee? Of St. Paul in the dungeon? The beams of God's love in Christ brake into the prison, into the furnaee, into the dungeon. A few beams of that will enlarge the heart more than any affliction in the world can east it down. That is excellent which Moses saith, Deut. xxxii. 16, where, after recounting the many blessings of Joseph, he closes all with the chief and spring of all the rest, "The good pleasure of him that dwelt in the bush." You know that God appeared in the bush, when it was flaming. The flaming bush shewed the state of Israel, in the midst of the furnaee of perseeution. The bush, though burning, was not consumed. Why? Because the good will of God was in the bush. So let us be in any perseeution, or like Moses's bush, all on fire, yet the fire shall not consume nor hurt us. Why? The good pleasure of him that dwelt in the bush is with us. "I will be with thee in the fire, and in the water," saith God; not to keep thee out, but I will be with thee in it. So that in the greatest persecutions that can be, the

“good will of him that dwelt in the bush will be with us ;” so that we shall not be consumed, though we be in the fire ; though we be afflicted, we shall not despair. Why ? The good pleasure of God dwells in the bush, in the church. In the midst of afflictions and persecutions, he is with us. Who can be miserable, that hath the presence of God, the favour and good will of God ?

A DISCOVERY
OF THE
NEAR UNION AND COMMUNION
BETWIXT
CHRIST AND THE CHURCH,
AND CONSEQUENTLY
BETWIXT HIM AND EVERY BELIEVING SOUL;
DELIVERED IN
DIVERS SERMONS
ON THE
FIFTH AND SIXTH CHAPTERS OF THE CANTICLES.



CANT. V. 1, &c.

I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have eaten my honey-comb with my honey: I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends, drink, yea drink abundantly, O beloved!

OTHER books of Solomon lie more obvious and open to common understanding; but as none entered into the holy of holies, but the high-priest; so none can enter into the mystery of this song of songs, but such as have

communion with Christ. Songs, and especially marriage-songs, serve to express men's own joys, and the praises of others. So this book contains the mutual joys and mutual praises betwixt Christ and his church. And as Christ and his church are the greatest persons that partake of human nature, so whatsoever is excellent in the whole world, is borrowed to set out the excellencies of these two great lovers. It is called Solomon's Song, who, next unto Christ, was the greatest son of wisdom that ever the church bred : but in this argument there is no danger for the deepest wit to over-reach ; for the knowledge of the love of Christ to his church is above all knowledge. The angels themselves may admire it, though they cannot comprehend it. It may well therefore be called the Song of Solomon ; the most excellent song of a man of the deepest apprehension, and of the highest matters, the intercourse betwixt Christ, the highest Lord of lords, and his best beloved spouse.

There are divers things in this song, at which a corrupt heart, (unto which all things are defiled,) may take offence ; but *to the pure all things are pure*. Such a sinful abuse of this heavenly book, is far from the intention of the Holy Ghost in it, which is, by stooping low to us, to raise us higher unto him ; that by taking advantage of the sweetest passage of our life, (marriage,) and the most delightful affection, (love,) in the sweetest manner of expression, (a song,) he might carry up the soul to things of a heavenly nature. As amongst other ways of mortification, there are two remarkable ones ; 1. By embittering all earthly things unto us, whereby the affections are deadened to them. And 2, By shewing more excellent objects ; that the soul issuing more largely and strongly into them, may die unto other things.: so the Holy Spirit hath chosen this way in this song, by elevating our love, to take it off from other things, that so it might run in its right channel. Some think this song contains a story of the church in several ages. But howsoever that be,

it hinders not, but that most passages of it agree to the spiritual state of the church in every age.

In this song there is,

1. A strong desire of the church of nearer communion with Christ ; and then,

2. Some declining in affection.

3. After this we have her recovery of love ; after which,

4. The church falls again into a declining of affection, whereupon follows a further strangeness of Christ to her ; which continues until,

5. The church perceiving Christ's constant affection unto her, notwithstanding her unkind dealing, recovers and cleaves faster to Christ than ever before. Chap. iii.

These passages agree to the experience of all Christians. And this observation must carry strength through this whole song, that there is the same regard of the whole church, and of every particular member, in respect of the chief privileges and graces that accompany salvation. And as the whole church is the spouse of Christ, so is every particular Christian. And as the whole church desires still nearer communion with Christ, so doth every particular member.

Before I come to treat of the words here chosen, I shall observe to you, that this chapter is not so well divided from the former, as it might have been ; for it were better, that the last verse of the former chapter were added to the beginning of this. And therefore by reason of the connexion of the one with the other, I will first speak somewhat of that verse, to make way for that which follows. "Awake, O North wind, and come thou South, blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits," Cant. iv. 16. The words contain, 1. A turning of Christ's speech to the winds to blow upon his garden. With the end why ; "That the spices thereof may flow out." 2. We have an invitation of Christ by the church to come into his garden ; with the end, "To

eat his pleasant fruits." It may be a question, whether this command be the words of Christ, or the desire of his spouse. But it is certain the words are spoken by Christ, because he calls it, "My garden;" and the church afterwards invites him to eat of *his* "pleasant fruit," not *her's*: and yet the words may be likewise an answer to a former secret desire of the church. The order is this: the church being sensible of some deadness of spirit, secretly desires some further quickening. Christ then answers those desires, by commanding the winds to blow upon her. For, ordinarily Christ first stirs up desires, and then answers the desires of his own Spirit.

For the first point named, we see here, that Christ sends forth his Spirit, with command to all means, under the name of North and South wind, to further the fruitfulness of his church. The wind is nature's fan. What the winds are to the garden, that the Spirit of Christ, in the use of the means, is to the soul. From Christ's commanding the winds, we may in general observe, that all creatures stand in obedience to Christ, as ready at a word, whensoever he speaks to them. They are all, as it were, asleep until he awakes them. He can call for the wind out of his treasures when he pleases; he holds them in his fist. Which may comfort all those that are Christ's, that they are under one that hath all creatures at his beck to do them service, and at his check to do them no harm. This drew the disciples in admiration to say, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the seas obey him!" And cannot the same power still the winds and waves of the churches and states, and cause a sudden calm, if (as the disciples) we awake him with our prayers. Again: in that Christ speaks to winds, contrary one to another, both in regard of the coasts from whence they blow, and in their quality; yet both of which are necessary for the garden; we see, that the courses that Christ takes, and the means that he useth with his church, may seem contrary, but by a wise ordering, all agree in the wholesome issue. A prosperous

and an afflicted condition are contrary; a mild and a sharp course seem to cross one another; yet they sweetly agree in this, that as the church needeth both, so Christ uses both for the church's good. The North is a nipping wind, and the South a cherishing wind; therefore the South wind is the welcomer after the North wind hath blown. But howsoever, all things are ours, "Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come," 1 Cor. iii. 21. "All things work together for good to us, being in Christ." Hence it is, that the manifold wisdom of Christ maketh use of such variety of conditions; and hence it is, that the Spirit of Christ is mild in some men's ministries, and sharp in others. Nay, both mild and sharp in the very same minister, as the state of the souls, they have to deal withal, requires.

Sometimes again, the people of God need purging, and sometimes refreshing. Whereupon the Spirit of God carries itself suitably to both conditions. And the Spirit in the godly themselves draws good out of every condition. Sure they are, that all winds blow them good; and were it not for their good, no winds should blow upon them. But as these times of ours, by long peace and plenty, grow cold, heavy, and secure, we need all kinds of winds to blow upon us, and all little enough. Time was when we were more quick and lively; but now the heat of our spirits is abated. We must therefore take heed of it, and quicken those things that are ready to die; or else instead of the North and South wind, God will send an East wind that shall dry up all. Again, if Christ can bind up, or let loose all kinds of winds at his pleasure, we should remember, that if means be wanting or fruitless, "It is he that says to the clouds, drop not; and to the winds, blow not." Therefore we must acknowledge him in the want or plenty of means. The Spirit of Christ in the use of means is a free agent; sometimes it blows strongly, sometimes more mildly, sometimes not all. No creature

hath these winds in a bag at command ; and therefore it is wisdom to yield to the gales of the Spirit.

For the clear understanding of what we are to speak of, let us observe, 1. Why the Spirit of God in the use of the means is compared to wind. And then, 2. Why the church is compared to a garden. The Spirit of God is compared to wind, in respect, 1. That as “the wind bloweth where it listeth ;” so the Spirit of God blows freely. 2. That as the wind (especially the north wind) hath a cleansing force ; so the Spirit of God purgeth our hearts from dead works to serve the living God. 3. That as the wind disperseth and scattereth clouds, and makes a serenity in the air ; so doth the Spirit disperse such clouds as corruption and satan raise up in the soul, that we may clearly see the face of God in Jesus Christ. 4. That as the wind hath a cooling and a tempering quality, and tempers the distemper of nature, (as in some hot countries there are yearly winds, which blow in summer, tempering the heat) ; so the Spirit of God allayeth the heats of fiery temptations, and bringeth the soul into a good temper. 5. That as the wind being subtile, searcheth into every corner ; so the Spirit is of a searching nature, and discerneth betwixt the joints and the marrow, betwixt the flesh and the spirit ; searching those hidden corruptions, that nature could never have found out. 6. That as the wind again bears down all before it, beats down houses and trees, like the cedars in Lebanon, turns them up by the roots, and lays all flat ; so the Spirit is mighty in operation ; there is no standing before it. It brings down mountains, and every high thing that exalts itself, and lays them level. Nay, the Roman and those other mighty empires could not stand before it.

Observe here the order of things one under another. To the prospering of a flower or plant in a garden, not only soil is needful, but air and wind also, and the influence of heaven ; and God commanding, as here, “the winds to blow upon his garden.” So in spiritual things,

There is a chain of causes and effects : prayer comes from faith, Rom. x. 14. Faith from the hearing of the word ; hearing from a preacher, by whom God by his Spirit blows upon the heart ; and a preacher from God's sending. And if the God of nature should but take away one link of nature's chain, the whole frame would be disturbed.

Well ! That which Christ commands here, is, for the winds to blow upon his garden. And we need this blowing, our spirits will be becalmed else ; and satan will be surc by himself, and such as are his bellows, to blow up the seeds of sinful lusts in us. For there are two spirits in the church ; the one always blowing against the other. Therefore the best had need to be stirred up ; otherwise, with Moses, their hands will fall down. Now we need blowing : 1. In regard of our natural inability. 2. In regard of our dullness and heaviness cleaving to nature occasionally. 3. In regard of contrary winds from without. For satan hath his bellows filled with his spirit, that hinder the work of grace all they can ; so that we need not only Christ's blowing, but also his stopping other contrary winds that they blow not, Rev. vii. 1. 4. In regard of the condition of the new covenant ; wherein all beginning, growth and ending is from grace, and nothing but grace. 5. Because old grace, without a fresh supply, will not hold against new crosses and temptations. Therefore, when Christ draws, let us run after him ; when he blows, let us open unto him. It may be the last blast that ever we shall have from him. And let us set upon duties with this encouragement, that Christ will blow upon us ; not only to prevent us, but also to maintain his own graces in us. But Oh ! where is this stirring up of ourselves, and one another upon these grounds ?

2. We are to observe, Why the church is compared to a garden. Christ uses all manner of terms to express himself and the state of the church, to shew us, that wheresoever we are, we may have occasion of heavenly thoughts. His church is his temple, when we are in the

temple ; it is a field when we are there ; but more particularly the church is resembled to a garden : 1. Because a garden is taken out of the common waste ground, to be appropriated to a more particular use. So the church of Christ is taken out of the wilderness of this waste world to a particular use. It is in respect of the rest, as Goshen to Egypt, wherein light was, when all else was in darkness. And indeed wherein doth the church differ from other grounds, but that Christ hath taken it in ? It is the same soil as other grounds are, but he dresseth and fits it to bear spices and herbs. 2. In a garden nothing comes up naturally of itself, but as it is sown or planted. So nothing is good in the heart, but as it is planted by the heavenly husbandman. We need not sow the wilderness, for weeds prosper naturally. The earth is a mother to weeds, but a step-mother to herbs. So evil passions grow naturally, but nothing grows in the church, but as it is set by the hand of Christ. 3. Further, in a garden there is variety of flowers and spices ; so in a Christian there is somewhat of every grace. As some cannot hear of a curious flower, but they will have it in their garden ; so a Christian cannot hear of any grace, but he labours to obtain it ; he labours for graces for all occasions. He hath for prosperity, temperance and sobriety ; for adversity, patience and hope ; for those that are above him, he hath respect and obedience ; and for those under him, suitable usage in all conditions of Christianity : for the Spirit of God in him is a seminary of all spiritual good things. 4. Again, of all other places, we most delight in our gardens, and take care thereof by fencing, weeding, watering, and planting. So Christ's chief care and delight is for his church. He walks in the midst of the " seven golden candlesticks ;" and if he defend and protect states, it is that they may be a harbour to his church. 5. Lastly, a garden stands always in need of weeding and dressing ; continual labour must be bestowed upon it ; so in the church and hearts of Christians, Christ hath always somewhat to do, we should else soon be

over-grown and turn wild: in all which, and the like respects, Christ calleth upon the winds to blow upon his garden.

Now to make use of this. If the church be a severed portion, "We should walk as men of a severed condition from the world;" not as men of the world, but as Christians; to make good that we are so, by feeling the graces of God's Spirit in some comfortable measure, that so Christ may delight to dwell with us; and by being subject to his pruning and dressing. For, it is so far from being an ill sign, that Christ is at cost with us, in following us with affliction, that it is rather a sure sign of his love. For the care of this blessed husbandman is to prune us so as to make us fruitful. Likewise, let us learn hence, not to despise any nation or person; seeing God can take out of the waste wilderness whom he will, and make the desert an Eden. Again, let us bless God for ourselves, that our lot hath fallen in such a pleasant place, to be planted in the church, the place of God's delight. And this also should move us to be fruitful; for though men will endure a fruitless tree in the wilderness, yet who will endure it in their garden? Dignity should mind us of duty. It is strange to be fruitless and barren in this place that we live in; being watered with the dew of heaven, under the sweet influence of the means. How fearfully is this fruitless estate threatened by the Holy Ghost? Heb. vi. 8. It is said to be near unto cursing and burning. And John Baptist declares, "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire," Matt. iii. 10. Lastly, In that the church is called Christ's garden, this may strengthen our faith in God's care and protection. The church may seem to lie open to all incursions, but it hath an invisible hedge about it, a wall without it, and a well within it. God himself is a wall of fire about it, and his Spirit a well of living waters running through it, to refresh and comfort it. As it was said of Canaan, so it may be said of the church, the eye of the Lord is upon

it all the year long, and he waters it continually. From which especial care of God over it, this is a good plea for us to God, I am thine, save me; I am a plant of thine own setting, nothing is in me, but what is thine, therefore cherish what is thine. So for the whole church, the plea is good; the church is thine; fence it, water it, defend it; keep the wild boar out of it. Therefore the enemies thereof shall one day know what it is to make a breach upon God's vineyard. In the mean time let us labour to keep our hearts as a garden, that nothing that defileth may enter.

Let us next consider the end of this blowing upon the garden; which is, you see, "That the spices thereof may flow out." Good things lie dead and bound up in us, unless the Spirit let them out. We ebb and flow, open and shut, as the Spirit blows upon us. Without blowing, no flowing. We may observe from hence, that we need not only grace to put life into us at the first, but likewise grace to quicken and draw forth that grace that we have. This is the difference between man's blowing and the Spirit's. Man, when he blows, (if grace be not there before,) spends all his labour upon a dead coal, which he cannot make take fire. But the Spirit first kindles a holy fire, and then increases the flame. Christ had, in the use of means, wrought on the church before, and now further promoteth his own work. We must first take in, and then send out. First, be cisterns to contain, and then, conduits to convey. The wind first blows, and then the spices of the church flow out. We are first sweet in ourselves, and then sweet to others.

We see further from hence, that it is not enough to be good in ourselves, but our goodness must flow out; that is, stream forth for the good of others. We must labour to be (as was said of John,) burning and shining Christians: for Christ is not like a box of ointment shut up; but like that box of ointment that Mary poured out, which perfumed the whole house. For the Spirit is herein like wind, it carries the sweet savour of grace to

others. A Christian, so soon as he finds any rooting in God, is of a spreading disposition, and makes the place he lives in the better for him. The whole body is better for every good member; and, as we see in Onesimus, the meanest persons, when they become to be good, are useful and profitable. Then we have what we have to purpose, when others have occasion to bless God for us, for conveying comfort to them by us. And for our furtherance herein, the winds are called upon to awake, and blow upon Christ's garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.

Hence we see also, that God delights to add encouragement to encouragement, to maintain new settlers out in religion. He doth not only give them a stock of grace at the beginning, but also helps them to trade. He is not only Alpha, but Omega unto them; the beginning and the ending. He not only plants graces, but also waters and cherishes them. Where the Spirit of Christ is, it is an encouraging Spirit. For it not only infuseth grace, but also stirs it up, that we may be ready prepared for every good work. The Spirit must bring all into exercise, else grace will lie asleep. We need a present Spirit to do every good. Not only the will, but the deed is from the Spirit. This should excite us to go to Christ, that he may stir up his own graces in us, that they may flow out. Let us labour then in ourselves to be full of goodness, that so we may be fitted to do good to all. As God is good, and does good to all, so must we strive to be as like him as may be. In which case for others' sake, we must pray that God would make the winds to blow out fully upon us, that our spices may flow out for their good. Thus far of Christ's command to the "north and south wind to awake and blow upon his garden, that the spices thereof may flow out."

In the next place we have Christ invited by the church to come into his garden; with the end thereof, to eat his pleasant fruits. "Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits." These words shew the church's further desire of Christ's presence, to delight

in the graces of his own Spirit in her. She invites him to come and take delight in the graces of his own Spirit. And she calls him beloved, because all her love is spent on Christ, who gave himself to a cursed death for her. Our love should run no other way, therefore the church calls Christ her beloved. Christ was there before, but she desires a further presence of him. Whence we may observe; that, wheresoever grace is truly begun, there is still a further desire of Christ's presence, and approaching daily more and more to the soul. The church never thinks Christ near enough, until she be in heaven. The bride always crieth, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." Now these degrees of Christ's approaches to the soul until his second coming, are, that he may manifest himself more and more in defending, comforting, and enriching his church with grace. Every further manifestation of his presence is a further coming. "But why is the church thus earnest?" First, because grace helps to see our need of Christ, and so helps us to prize him the more; which high esteem breeds an earnest desire after him, and a desire of further likeness to him. And, Secondly, because the church well knows, that when Christ comes to the soul, he comes not alone, but with his Spirit; and his Spirit with abundance of peace and comfort. This she knows, what need she hath of his presence, that without him there is no comfortable living. For wheresoever he is, he makes the soul a kind of heaven, and all conditions of life comfortable. Hence we may see, that those that do not desire the presence of Christ in his ordinances, are (it is to be feared,) such as the wind of the Holy Ghost never blew upon. The Spirit in the spouse is always saying to Christ, "Come." It is from the Spirit that we desire more of the Spirit; and from the presence of Christ, that we desire a further presence and communion with him.

Now let us consider the end and reason why Christ is desired by the church to come into his garden, and that is, "to eat his pleasant fruits;" or, in other words, to

give him contentment. And is it not fit that Christ should eat the fruit of his own vine, have comfort of his own garden, taste his own fruits? The only delight Christ hath in the world, is in his garden. And that he may take the more delight in it, he makes it fruitful; and those fruits are precious fruits, as growing from plants set by his own hand, relishing of his own Spirit, and so fitted for his taste. Now the church, knowing the fruits of grace in her heart, desireth that Christ would delight in his own graces, and kindly accept of what she presented him with. We see from hence, that a gracious heart is privy to its own grace and sincerity; and so far as it is privy, is bold with Christ in a sweet and reverent manner. So much sincerity, so much confidence. If our heart condemn us not of insincerity, we may in a reverent manner speak boldly to Christ. It is not fit there should be strangeness betwixt Christ and his spouse; neither indeed will there be, when she is on the growing hand. But mark the order: first, Christ blows, and then the church says, "Come." Christ begins in love, then love draws love: Christ draws the church, and she runs after him. *The fire of love melts more than the fire of affliction.* Again, we may see here in the church a carefulness to please Christ. As it is the duty, so it is the disposition of the church of Christ to please her husband. Thus far of the church's invitation of Christ into his garden: now follows his gracious answer in the first verse of this fifth chapter, "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse, I have gathered my myrrh with my spice: I have eaten my honey-comb with my honey: I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved!" These words contain in them an answer to the desire of the church, in the latter part of the verse formerly handled: and then, ver. 2, is set forth, the secure state of the church at this time; "I sleep, but my heart waketh." In setting down whereof, the Holy Ghost here by Solomon shews likewise the loving intercourse betwixt Christ and the

church. Christ, upon the secure state of the church, desires her, "to open unto him," ver. 2. Which desire of Christ is put off with poor and slender excuses, ver. 3, "I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?" The consequence of these excuses is, that Christ goes away from the church, ver. 6, "I opened to my beloved, but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone." Whereupon she is restless, and inquires after Christ from the watchmen, who misuse, "wound her, and take away her veil from her," ver. 7. However, the church for all this gives not over searching after Christ, but asks the daughters of Jerusalem what was become of her beloved, ver. 8, and withal in a few words, but full of large expression, she relates her case unto them, that she was "sick of love;" and so chargeth them to tell her beloved, if they find him. Whereupon a question is moved by them, ver. 9, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" She takes occasion hence (being full of love, which is glad of all occasions,) to speak of him, to burst forth into his praises, from ver. 10, to the end of this chapter.

The church here in her encomiums of Christ, sets him forth, 1. In general; beyond comparison above all others, to be "the chiefest among ten thousand," ver. 10. And 2. In particular; describing him as lovely in every part and feature. The issue whereof was, that the daughters of Jerusalem became likewise enamoured with him, chap. vi. 1. And thereupon also inquire after him: "Whither is thy beloved gone? Whither is thy beloved turned aside? Tell us, that we may seek him with thee." Upon this demand the church answers, "My beloved is gone down into the garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies," chap. vi. 2. And then makes a triumphant close, ver. 3, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine: he feeds among the lilies." All which will better appear in the particulars themselves.

The first thing then which offereth itself to our consideration is, Christ's answer to the church's invitation: "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse, I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honey-comb with my honey; I have drank my wine with my milk: eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved!" In this verse we have, I. Christ's answer to the church's petition: "I am come into my garden." II. A description of the church: "My sister, my spouse." III. Christ's acceptation of what he had gotten there; "I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honey-comb with my honey." IV. An invitation of all Christ's friends to an abundant feast: "Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved!"

I. In that Christ makes such an answer unto the church's invitation, "I am come into my garden," we see that Christ comes into his garden. It is much that he who hath heaven to delight in, will delight to dwell among the sons of sinful men; but this he doth for us, and so takes notice of the church's petition, "Let my beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruit:" the right speech of the church that gives all to Christ; who, when she hath made such a petition, hears it. God first of all makes his church lovely, planteth good things therein, and then stirs up in her good desires; both fitness to pray for an inward disposition and holy desires: after which, Christ, hearing the voice of his own Spirit in her, and regarding his own preparations, answers them graciously. Whence we may observe, that God stirs up holy desires in us, and then answers the desires of his Holy Spirit in us. Let this, therefore, be a singular comfort to us, that as in all wants, so in that of friends, when we have none to go to, yet we have God, to whom we may freely pour out our hearts; there being no place in the world that can restrain us from his presence, or his Spirit from us. Again; if God be thus ready to prepare our hearts, and his ear to hearken thereunto, let us stir up our hearts to make use of our privileges.

What a prerogative is it for a favourite to have the ear of his prince? Him we account happy. Surely he is much more happy that hath God's ear; that hath God to be his Father in the covenant of grace; that hath him reconciled, and can upon all occasions pour out his heart before him, who is merciful and faithful, wise and most able to help us. Why are we discouraged therefore? and why are we cast down? when we have such a gracious God to go to in all our extremities. He that can pray, can never be uncomfortable. This should also stir us up to keep our peace with God, that so we may always have access unto him, and communion with him. What a sad case is it to lose other comforts, and to be in such a state, that we cannot go to God with any boldness? It is the greatest loss of all when we have lost the spirit of prayer. For if we lose other things, we may recover them by prayer. But when we have lost this boldness to go to God, and are afraid to look him in the face, (as malefactors the judge,) this is a woful state indeed.

Now there are divers cases wherein the soul is not in a state fit for prayer. As that first, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not regard my prayer." If a man purposeth to live in any sin against God, he will not regard his prayer. Therefore we must come with a resolute purpose to break off all sinful courses, and to give up ourselves to the guidance of God's Spirit. And this will be a forcible reason to move us thereunto, because so long as we live in any known sin, God neither regards us nor our prayers. *The very sacrifice of the wicked is abominable.* Another case is, when we will not forgive others. We know it is directly set down in the Lord's prayer, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us," Matt. vi. 12; and there is further added, ver. 15, "If you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you." If our hearts tell us, we have no disposition to be at peace and agreement, then we do but take God's

name in vain, when we ask him to forgive our sins. Shall I look for mercy, that have no merciful heart myself? Can I hope to find that from God, that others cannot find from me? Neither is it sufficient to avoid grudging and malice against others; but we must look that they have not cause to grudge against us. "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift," Matt. v. 23. So that if we do not seek reconciliation with men, unto whom we have done wrong, God will not be reconciled to us, nor accept any service from us. But here may be asked, "How shall I know whether God regards my prayers or not?" 1. When he grants the thing prayed for, or enlargeth our hearts to pray still. It is a greater gift than the thing itself we beg, to have a spirit of prayer with a heart enlarged. For as long as the heart is enlarged in prayer, it is a sign that God hath a special regard of us, and will grant our petition in the best and fittest time. 2. When he answers us in a better and higher kind: as Paul, when he prayed for the taking away of the thorn in the flesh, had promises of sufficient grace. And, 3. When he gives us inward peace, though he give not the thing we desired: so though he answers not our prayers in particular; yet he vouchsafes inward peace unto us: "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, guards our hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God," assuring us that it shall go well with us. And thus in not hearing our prayers, yet we have our heart's desire, when God's will is made known. And is not this sufficient for a Christian, either to have the thing, or to have inward peace, with assurance that it shall go better with him, than if he had it; with a spirit enlarged to pray, till he have the thing prayed for? For if any of these be given, God respects our prayers.

Again, in that Christ is thus ready to come into his garden upon the church's invitation, we may further

observe, that Christ is ready to vouchsafe his gracious presence to his children, that call earnestly upon him. But some may say, "How shall we know that Christ is present with us?" We may know it in the word and sacraments, and in the communion of saints; for these are the conveyances whereby he manifests himself. As we need not take the sun from heaven to know whether it be day; which may be known by the light, heat, and fruitfulness of the creature: and as in the spring, we need not look to the heaven to see whether the sun be come near us or not; for looking on the earth, we may see all green, fresh, lively, and vigorous: so it is with the presence of Christ; we may know he is present, by that light which is in the soul. And there is, together with light, a heat above nature; the affections are kindled to love the best things, and to join in them. And, together with heat, there is strength and vigour to carry us to spiritual duties, framing us to a holy communion with God and one another. And there is every way cheerfulness and enlargement of spirit; as it is with the creature when the sun approacheth. For these causes the church desires Christ, that she may have more light, life, heat, vigour, strength, and that she may be more cheerful and fruitful in duties. The soul, when it is once made spiritual, doth still desire a further and further presence of Christ, to be made better and better.

What a comfort is this to Christians, that they have the presence of Christ so far as shall make them happy? Nothing but heaven (or rather Christ in heaven) itself, will content the children of God. In the mean time, his presence in the congregation makes their souls, as it were, heaven. If the king's presence, who carries the court with him, makes all places where he is a court; so Christ carries a kind of heaven with him wheresoever he is. His presence hath with it life, light, comfort, strength, and all. For one beam of his countenance will scatter all the clouds of grief whatsoever. It is no matter where we be, so Christ be with us. If we are

with the three children in a fiery furnace, it is no matter if a fourth be there also. If Christ be with us, nothing shall hurt us. In a dungeon, if Christ's presence be there by his Spirit, all is comfortable. It changeth the nature of all things, sweeteneth every thing.

II. Let us next consider, the description of the church, "My sister, my spouse." In these sweet compellations there is both affinity and consanguinity; 1. His sister, by blood; 2. His spouse, by marriage; all the bonds that may tie us to Christ, and Christ to us. 1. We may observe from hence, that Christ is our brother, and the church and every member thereof is his sister. "I go," saith Christ, "to my Father, and to your Father, to my God, and to your God." "Go," saith he, "and tell my brethren." This was after his resurrection. His advancement did not change his disposition. Go, tell my brethren that left me so unkindly; go tell Peter that was most unkind of all, and most cast down with the sense of it. He became our brother by incarnation. For, all our union is from the first union of two natures in one person. Christ became "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh," to make us spiritually bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh. Therefore, let *us labour to be like to him*, who for that purpose became like to us, "Immanuel, God with us," that we might be like him, and "partake of the Divine nature." Christ was not ashamed to call us brethren, nor abhorred the virgin's womb. He took our base nature; and not only our nature, but our curse. He was not ashamed of us, and shall we be ashamed to own him? Against this cowardice our Saviour pronounceth this thunderbolt: "He that is ashamed of me before men, him will I be ashamed of before my Father, and the holy angels," Mark viii. 38. This should be a motive to have good Christians in high estimation, and to take heed how we wrong them; for their brother will take their part. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" saith the Head in heaven, when his members were trodden upon on earth. It is more to

wrong a Christian than the world imagines; for Christ takes it as done to himself. Absalom was a man wicked and unnatural, yet he could not endure the wrong done to his sister Tamar. And hath Christ no affections, think you, now he is in heaven, to her that is so near him as the church is? Howsoever he suffer men to tyrannize over her for awhile, yet it will appear, ere long, that he will take the church's part, for he is our brother.

The church is the daughter of a king, begotten of God; the sister and spouse of a king, because she is the sister and spouse of Christ, and the mother of all that are spiritual kings. The church of Christ is every way royal. Therefore we are kings, because we are Christians. Hence the Holy Ghost doth add here to sister, *spouse*; indeed, taking the advantage of such relations as are most comfortable to set out the excellent relation that is between Christ and his church. Riches, beauty, marriage, nobility, and the like, are scarce worthy of their names; these are but empty things, though our base nature make great matters of them; yet the reality and substance of all these are in heavenly things. True riches are the heavenly graces; true nobility is to be born of God, to be the sister and spouse of Christ. True pleasures are those of the Spirit, which endure for ever, and will stand when all outward comforts vanish. That mystical union is set down with such variety of expressions, to shew, that whatsoever is scattered in the creature severally, is in him entirely. He is both a friend and a brother, a head and a husband to us, therefore he takes the names of all.

We may observe further from hence, that the church is the spouse of Christ. It springs out of him, as Eve out of Adam. The spouse of Christ was taken out of his side, when it was pierced; the church rose out of his blood and death; for he redeemed it, by satisfying Divine justice. We were in such a condition, that Christ must redeem us, before he could wed us. First, he must be

incarnate in our nature, before he could be a fit husband. And then, because we were in bondage and captivity, we must be redeemed before he could marry us. "He purchased his church with his own blood." Christ hath a right to us, for he bought us dearly. Let us then oft think of this nearness between Christ and us, (if we have once given our names to him,) and not be discouraged for any sin or unworthiness in us. Who sues a woman for a debt when she is married? Therefore answer all accusations thus: Go to Christ; if you have any thing to say to me, go to my husband. What a comfort is this to a distressed conscience? If sin cannot dismay us, which is the cause of all evil, what other ill can dismay us? He that exhorts us to bear with the infirmities one of another, will not he bear with his church, (performing the duty of an husband,) in all her infirmities? The desire of Christ is to make her better, and not to cast her away for that which is amiss. And for outward ills, they are but to refine and make us more conformable to Christ our husband, to fit us for heaven, the same way that he went. *They have a blessing in them all*, for he takes away all that is hurtful; he pities and keeps us as the apple of his eye. Therefore, let us often think of this, since he hath vouchsafed to take us so near to himself.

Again, if Christ be so near us, let us labour for chaste affections; not cleaving to base things. Our affections are never rightly bestowed, but when they are set upon Christ; and upon other things as they stand with the love of Christ. For the prime love, when it is rightly bestowed, orders and regulates all other loves whatsoever. No man knows how to use earthly things but a Christian, that hath first pitched his love on Christ; and then seeing all things in him, and in all of them a beam of that love of his, intending happiness to him, he knows how to use every thing in order. Therefore let us keep our communion with Christ, and esteem nothing more than his love, because he esteems nothing more than ours.

III. The next branch is, Christ's acceptance, "I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have gathered my honey-comb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk." So that, together with Christ's presence, here is a gracious acceptance of the provision of the church, with a delight in it, and withal a bringing of more with him. The church had a double desire: 1. That Christ would come to accept of what she had for him of his own grace, which he had wrought in her soul: and, 2. She was also persuaded that he would not come empty, and only to accept of what was there; but also would bring abundance of grace and comfort with him. Therefore she desires acceptance and increase; both which desires he answers. He comes to his garden, shews his acceptance, and withal he brings more. "I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honey-comb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk;" that is, I have taken contentment in thy graces. From whence we observe, that God accepts of the graces of his children, and delights in them. But if so be that God accepts the performances and graces, especially the prayers, of his children; let it be an argument to encourage us to be much in all holy duties. It would deaden the heart to perform service where it would not be accepted. But when all that is good is accepted, and what is amiss is pardoned; when a broken desire, a cup of cold water shall not be unrespected; nay, unrewarded, what can we desire more? It is infidelity, which is dishonourable to God, and uncomfortable to ourselves, that makes us so barren and cold in duties.

Only let our care be to approve our hearts unto Christ. When our hearts are right, we cannot but think comfortably of Christ. Those that have offended some great persons, are afraid when they hear from them, because they think they are displeasing to them; so a soul that is under the guilt of any sin, is so far from thinking that God accepts of it, that it looks to hear nothing from him but some message of anger and displeasure. But one

that preserves acquaintance, due distance and respect to a great person, hears from him with comfort. Before he breaks open a letter, he supposes it comes from a friend, one that loves him; so, as we would desire to hear nothing but good news from heaven, and acceptance of all that we do, let us be careful to preserve ourselves in a good state.

But this is not all. God not only accepts and delights in the graces of his children, but Christ likewise comes with an enlargement of what he finds. It is not only true of his last coming to judge the quick and the dead, "I come, and my reward is with me;" but also of his intermediate comings. When he comes to the soul, he comes not only to accept what is there, but still with his reward with him, to recompense all that is good with the increase thereof. Let us then be stirred up to have communion with Christ by this motive, that thus we may have an increase of grace. Let us labour to be such as Christ may delight in; for our graces are honey and spices to him; and where he tastes sweetness, he will bring more with him. To him that overcometh, he promiseth the hidden manna. They had manna before; but he means they shall have more abundant communion with himself, who is the hidden manna. The graces of the Spirit of Christ delight him, as honey and wine do us, because in the covenant of grace he filleth us by the Spirit of grace, to have comfort in us, as we have in him. For, except there be a mutual joy in one another, there is not communion. Therefore Christ furnisheth his church with so much grace as is necessary for a state of absence here, that may fit her for communion with him for ever in heaven.

IV We come now to the invitation of all Christ's friends to partake of an abundant feast. "Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved!" Wherein we find Christ, out of the largeness of his affections, multiplieth new titles, beloved and friends. Friendship is the sweetness, intimateness, and strength of love. In

our friends, our love dwells and rests itself. Conjugal friendship is the sweetest friendship. All the kinds and degrees of friendship meet in Christ toward his spouse. It is the friendship of a husband, of a brother; and if there be any relation in the world wherein friendship is, all is too little to express the love of Christ. In friendship, there is mutual consent, an union of judgment and affections; there is a mutual sympathy in the good and ill one of another, as if there were one soul in two bodies. And there is likewise liberty, which is the life of friendship. There is a free intercourse between friends, a free opening of secrets. So here Christ openeth his secrets to us, and we to him. We lay open all our cares and desires before him; and Christ's Spirit reveals the secrets of Christ's heart to us concerning our salvation. In friendship also there is comfort one in another. Christ's delight was to be with the sons of men, and ours is to be with him. And in friendship there is a mutual honour and respect one of another. But here is some difference in this friendship; for though Christ calls us friends, and therein in some sort brings himself down to us, yet we must remember that this is a friendship of unequals. Christ's honouring of us is, his putting honour upon us; our honouring him is the giving him the honour due to his name. This friendship must be maintained by due respect on our parts. As he is our friend, so he is our king, and knows how to correct us if we forget our distance. And as Christ's friendship is sweet, so it is constant in all conditions. If other friends fail us, this Friend will never fail us. If we are not ashamed of him, he will not be ashamed of us. How comfortable would our life be, if we could draw out the comfort this title of friend affordeth? It is a comfortable, a fruitful, and an eternal friendship.

Mark, now, how Christ draws his friends on: "Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink abundantly." There is no danger of taking too much. Where the spring is infinite, we can never draw the wells dry. We can never suck

the breasts of his consolation too much; and the more strong and cheerful we are, the better service we shall perform, and the more it will be accepted. If any be hindered by conceit of unworthiness, if affected deeply with it, let them consider what kind of men were compelled to the banquet; the blind, the lame. See a lively picture of God's mercy in the example of the prodigal; he fears sharp chiding, and the father provides a rich banquet; he goeth to his father, but the father runs to meet him. Did Christ ever turn back any that came unto him, if they came out of a true sense of their wants? Nay, but he saith, "Whosoever cometh to me, I will by no means cast him out."

But let us inquire particularly, what it was that Christ took delight in, and invites others to delight in. We find it was myrrh and spice, honey and honey-comb, wine and milk: which shew, 1. The sweetness. 2. The variety. 3. The use of grace and spiritual comfort. Myrrh and spices, 1. Refresh the spirits; and, 2. Preserve from putrefaction, which are therefore used in embalming. If the soul be not embalmed with grace, it is a noisome carrion soul; and as it is in itself, so whatsoever cometh from it is abominable. Again, milk and honey nourish and strengthen, and wine increaseth spirits, and allayeth sorrow and care. "Give wine to him that is ready to die." The sense of the love of Christ is sweeter than wine, it banisheth fears, and sorrow and care.

From this mutual delight between Christ and his spouse, we may observe next, that there is a mutual feasting betwixt Christ and his church. The church bringeth what she hath of his Spirit, and Christ comes with more plenty. There is not the meanest Christian in whom there is not somewhat to welcome Christ withal; but Christ sends his provision before, and comes (as we say,) at his own cost: he sends a spirit of faith, a spirit of love, a spirit of obedience. Some are content to invite others, but are loath to go to others; they would have wherewith to entertain Christ, but are unwilling to be

beholden to Christ. And some are content to have benefit by Christ, as his righteousness to cover them, but they desire not grace to entertain Christ. But a heart truly gracious, desireth both to delight in Christ, and that Christ may delight in it: it desireth grace together with merey, holiness with happiness. Christ could not delight in his love to us, if we by his grace had not a love planted in our hearts to him.

But to speak more largely of this feast. We see it pleaseth Christ to veil heavenly matters with comparisons fetched from earthly things, that so he may enter into our souls the better by our senses. So here Christ maketh us a feast, a marriage-feast with the king's son, of all feasts the most magnificent. •1. This is a feast, in regard of the choice rarities we have in Christ. The comforts we have from Christ are the best comforts; the peace, the best peace; the privileges, the highest privileges. "His flesh," crucified for us, to satisfy Divine justice, "is meat indeed; his blood," shed for us, "is drink indeed;" these feed our souls, and that to eternal life. The love of God the Father in giving Christ to death, and Christ's love in giving himself, together with full contentment to Divine justice, is the gift that the soul especially feeds on. If he giveth himself, will he not give all things with himself. 2. As in a feast there is variety, so Christ maketh a feast of variety of choice things for his spouse. "Christ is made to us of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanetification, and redemption;" that we should not be too much east down with thoughts of our own folly, guilt, unholiness and misery. There is that in Christ which answereth to all our wants, and an all-sufficiency for all degrees of happiness. All the graces and comforts we have, and the promises whereby they are made over unto us, are but Christ applied in several ways, as the need of every Christian shall require. Christ himself is the ocean, issuing into several streams, to refresh the city of God. We can be in no condition but we have a promise to feed on; and "all promises are yea and amen;" made to us

in Christ, and performed to us for Christ. 3. Therefore, as we have in Christ a feast for variety, so for sufficiency of all good. No man goeth hungry from a feast. In Christ there is not only abundance, but redundance; as in clouds to drop down showers, as in the sun to send forth beams. As Christ is full of grace and truth, so he fully dischargeth all his offices. There is an overflowing of all that is good for our good. He that could multiply bread for the body, he can multiply grace for our soul. If he giveth life, he giveth it in abundance: if he giveth water of life, he giveth rivers, not small streams: if he giveth peace and joy, he giveth it in abundance: his scope is to fill up our joy to the full. As he is able, so “is he willing to do for us far more abundantly than we are able to think or speak.” In a feast, there is variety of friendly company; so here friends are stirred up to refresh themselves with us. We have the blessed Trinity, the angels, and all our fellow members in Christ to come with us.

But here is the mystery, the founder and master of the feast is Christ himself, and he is both guest and banquet and all. All graces and comforts are the fruits of his Spirit, and he alone that infused the soul can satisfy the soul. He that is above the conscience, can only quiet the conscience. He is that Wisdom that sends forth maidens, Prov. ix. 3, his ministers, to invite to his feast. It is he that cheereth up his guests, as here. Those that invited others, brought ointment, and poured it out upon them, to shew their welcome, (as may appear by our Saviour’s speech to the pharisee that invited him.) So we have from Christ both the oil of grace and gladness. “He creates the fruits of the lips to be peace;” speaking that peace and joy to the heart that others do to the ear. The vessels wherein Christ conveyeth his dainties are, the ministry of the Word and sacraments. By these we come to enjoy Christ, his comforts and graces; and by this feast of grace we come at length to the feast of glory; where we shall be satisfied with the image of God, and enjoy

fulness of pleasure for evermore. Upon the whole, we cannot please Christ better than by a cheerful taking part of his rich provision : and a Christian aims to “rejoice always in the Lord,” and that from enjoying our privileges in him. We are not bidden to mourn always, but to “rejoice always.” Indeed, we have causes of mourning, but it is that the seed of joy should be sown in mourning ; and we can never be in so forlorn a condition wherein, if we understand Christ and ourselves, we have not cause of joy. We should labour then to bring with us a taste for these dainties, and an appetite to them. The soul hath a taste of its own ; and as all creatures that have life have a taste to relish and distinguish that which is good for them, from that which is offensive ; so, wheresoever spiritual life is, there is likewise a taste suitable to spiritual things. And if there were not a taste in the soul, we could never delight in God, and his rich goodness in Christ.

A further observation we shall make upon this gracious invitation of Christ to his friends to partake of his graces and dainties, is, that as he therein comes stored with further grace and comfort for his people, and stirs up both the church, and all that bear good will to it, to delight in the graces and comforts of his church ; so we ought to rejoice in the comforts and graces of others, and of ourselves. A Christian should not only examine his heart for the evil that is in him, to be humbled, but what good there is, that he may be thankful. And since Christ accepts the very first-fruits, and delights in them, we should know what he delights in, that we may go boldly to him, considering that it is not of ourselves, but of Christ, whatsoever is good. Therefore we ought to know our own graces. And here we have need to have Christ’s Spirit to help us to know what good is in us. And Christ, when he will have us comfortable indeed, will discover to us what cause we have to rejoice, and shew us what is the work of his own Spirit. And we should not only rejoice on our own accounts, that we have found favour in the

sight of God, and are made partakers of his grace, but also in the happy condition of every good Christian. There is joy in heaven at the conversion of one sinner : even so all true-hearted Christians should joy in the graces one of another. Want of joy shews want of grace. There is not a surer character of a satanical disposition than to look on the graces of God's children with a malignant eye. All that have grace in them are of Christ's and of the angels disposition : they joy at the conversion and growth of any Christians. Such are styled here, *Friends*, and *beloved* ; and indeed none but friends and beloved can love as Christ loves, and delight as Christ delights.

From discoursing on this loving intercourse between Christ and his church, we shall proceed to consider the church in a different situation ; which she expresses thus, ver. 2, " I sleep, but my heart waketh." We find here a great change in the spiritual condition of the church. After she had recovered herself out of a former desertion, expressed in the beginning of the third chapter, she now fallcth into a deeper desertion from the remainder of corruption getting strength. She now falleth asleep : then she was awake in the night, and sought her Beloved : here is no present awaking, no seeking ; there no misusage by the watchmen, as here : there she findeth him more speedily ; here she falls sick with love before Christ discovereth himself.

Before we come to the words, observe in general, that the state of the church and every Christian is subject to many spiritual alterations. Like as we see in Abraham, sometimes strong in faith, sometimes fearful : in David, sometimes standing, sometimes falling ; sometimes recovering himself, and standing faster ; sometimes triumphing, " The Lord is the light of my countenance, whom shall I fear ?" Sometimes again crying out, " I shall one day fall by the hands of Saul." There is no creature subject to so many changes as man. From a state of innocency he fell into a state of corruption ; from that

he by grace is restored to a state of grace; and from grace to glory. But it should be our care to watch, lest corruption gather head, and ill humours break out, and to strive for an even frame of soul here, till we come thither, where our condition shall be as now Christ's is, and as heaven is, altogether unchangeable.

To come to the words: They contain, 1. A confession, "I sleep;" and, 2. A correction; "but my heart waketh." The church hath a double aspect; one to the ill, her sleeping; the other to her good, her heart, in some degree, awaked. We see here, that after a feast the church falleth asleep. But we must not here conceive this sleep to be that dead sleep that all men are in by nature; nor to be that judicial sleep, that spirit of slumber, which is a further degree of that natural sleep to which God giveth up some as a seal of their desperate condition; but here is meant that sleep that ariseth out of the remainder of corruption unsubdued, and prevailing over the better part. By comparing the state of the church here, with the state of it in the third chapter, we find that where a careful watch is not kept over the soul, there, after a recovery, will follow a more dangerous distemper. It is best therefore to deal thoroughly with our hearts, else we shall dishonour our own beginnings. Unless we stand upon our guard, the flesh will get the upper hand. The best are no farther safe, than they are watchful. What great need have we then to shun this sleepy temper, which for the present so locks up "the everlasting gates" of our soul, "that the King of Glory *cannot* enter in;" and to strive for this blessed heart-waking disposition, which may help us at all times to see our dangers, and by God's blessing recover us out of them; as here the church doth at length, though first beaten by the "watchmen," and in a world of perplexities, ere she can recover her former communion with Christ. We find by experience what a woful thing it is for the soul, which hath once tasted how gracious the Lord is, to be without a sense of God's love. When it

looks upon sin as the cause of this separation; this is as death unto it. Therefore the church's experience must be our warning, how we grieve the Spirit, and so fall into this spiritual sleep. We may observe farther, in these words, the ingenuousness of the church in laying open her own state. And it is the disposition of God's people to be ingenuous in this respect. And there is good reason: for this ingenuous dealing, (besides that it is giving glory to God,) easeth the soul. Whilst the arrow's head stieks in the wound, it will not heal. Sin unconfessed is like a broken piece of iron in the body; it must be gotten out, else it will by festering, cause more danger. It is like poison in the stomaeh, if it be not presently cast up, it will infect the whole body. Is it not better then to take shame to ourselves now, than to be ashamed hereafter before angels, devils, and men? The cause of God's severe dealing with us, is, that we should deal severely with ourselves. The best trial of religion in us, is, by those actions whereby we reflect on ourselves, by judging and condemning of ourselves; for this argueth a spirit without guile. Sin and shifting came into the world together.

Mark further, another sign of a gracious soul is, To be abased for lesser defects, sleepiness and indisposition to good. One would think drowsiness were no such great matter: O! but the church had such sweet acquaintanec with Christ, that every little indisposition that hindered any degree of communion was grievous to her. Many confess great falls, but how few are humbled for dulness of spirit, want of love, of zeal, and cheerfulness in duty? This, accompanied with striving against it, argues a good spirit. A carnal man is not more humbled for gross sin, than a Christian for defects in good actions, when it is not with him as it hath been, and as he would. The reason is, where there is a clear light, there motes are discernible: and spiritual life is sensible of any obstruction. This goeth in the world for unnecessary nicety. The world straineth not at those gnats. But those upon whose

hearts the Sun of Righteousness hath shined, have both a clear sight and a tender heart.

You see here, that a Christian hath two principles in him, that which is good, and that which is evil, whence issueth the weakness of his actions and affections. They are all mixed, as are the principles from which they come forth. We may observe further, that a Christian man may know how it is with himself, though he be mixed of flesh and spirit; he hath a distinguishing knowledge and judgment, whereby he knows both the good and evil in himself. In a dungeon where there is nothing but darkness, both on the eye that should see, and on that which should be seen, he can see nothing; but where there is a supernatural principle, there the light of the Spirit searcheth the dark corners of the heart. A man that hath the Spirit knoweth both; he knoweth himself and his own heart. The Spirit hath a light of its own, even as reason hath. Shall a man that is merely natural reflect upon his state, and know what he knows, what he thinks, what he doth? And may not the soul that is raised to an higher state know as much? Undoubtedly it may. Besides, we have the Spirit of God, which is light, and self-evidencing. It shews unto us, where it is, and what it is. The Spirit of God is a discerning Spirit, it discovereth what is flesh and what is spirit.

I sleep. It is one use of our body to help us in spiritual expressions. So here the church fetcheth a comparison from the body to express the state of the soul. *I sleep.* And indeed bodily and spiritual sleep resemble each other, in the causes, in the effects, and in the dangerous issue. With regard to their causes: as natural sleep ariseth oft from weariness and want of spirits; so there is a spiritual sleep arising from discouragements, and too much expense of the strength of the soul upon other matters, upon impertinencies that concern it not. Again, as some are brought to sleep by music; so many by flattering enticements and insinuations of others are cast into a spiritual sleep. Again, sleep often ariseth

from want of exercise; so when there is a cessation from spiritual exercise, there followeth a spiritual sleep. Exercise keeps waking. Again, sometimes sleep is caused by some kind of poison, especially the poison of asps, which kills in sleeping: and do not sinful delights do the like to the soul? Insensible evils are the most dangerous.

With regard to their effects, the bodily and spiritual sleep are also alike. Men will draw the curtains and shut out light, when they mean to compose themselves to rest: so when men favour themselves in some ways not allowable, they are afraid to be disquieted by the light. Light discovereth, awaketh, and stirs up to working. And men, when they are loath to do what they know, are loath to know what they should do. "They that sleep, sleep in the night." Much of the anger that men bear against the Word laid open to them, is because it will not suffer them to sleep quietly in their sins. There cannot be a worse sign than when men will not endure wholesome words. In sleep, men dream of false good, and forget true danger. Many dream of meat, and when they awake, their soul is empty. Vain hopes are the dreams of waking men, as vain dreams are of sleeping and carnal men, whose life is but a dream. In sleep there is no exercise of senses or motion; as then men are not sensible of good or ill. Motion followeth sensibility. What good we are not sensible of, we move not unto. Hence sleep is akin to death, for the time depriving us of the use of all our senses. It is all one to have no senses, and not to use them. We may say of men in this sleepy temper, as the Scripture speaks of idols, "They have mouths, but they speak not; they have eyes and see not; ears and hear not; noses have they, but they smell not; they have hands, but they handle not; feet have they, but they walk not," *Psa. cxv. 5, 6, 7*

They are likewise alike in danger. In sleep the most precious thing men carry about them, is taken away without resistance; and they are ready to let loose what they

held fast before, were it never so rich a jewel. And it is so in spiritual sleepiness. Men suffer the profession of the truth to be wrung from them without much withstanding; and with letting fall their watch, let fall likewise their grace, and are in danger to be robbed of all. There is no danger but a man in sleep is fair for, and exposed unto. Sisra was slain asleep, and Ishbosheth at noon-day. There is no temptation, no sin, no judgment, but a secure, drowsy soul, is open for. And therefore watchfulness is so often enforced by the Spirit of God in the Scriptures.

Having thus treated of the confession of the church, I proceed now to say something of the correction, expressed in these words, "But my heart waketh." The word heart, you know, includes the whole soul. For the heart is put for the understanding; as we say, an understanding heart. To lay things up in our hearts; there it is memory; and to cleave in heart is to cleave in will. To rejoice in heart, means in the affection. So that all the powers of the soul, the whole inward man, (as Paul calleth it) is understood by the heart. But what is that good the church confesseth, when she saith, "My heart waketh?" First, though she be in a sleepy state, yet she hath her judgment sound. And again, though she be asleep she hath a working in the will, choosing the better part which she will cleave to. The child of God, though asleep, hath a general purpose to please God in all things, and no settled purpose to sleep thus. Answerable to his judgment therefore he chooseth the better part and side; he owns God and his cause, even in evil times, cleaving in resolution of heart to the best ways, though with weakness. His conscience likewise is awake in some degree. So the conscience of God's children is never so sleepy, but it is awake in some measure; there is so much life in it, as upon speech or conversation, there will be an opening of it, and a yielding at length to the strength of spiritual reason. And answerable to these inward powers is the outward obedience of God's

children, in their sleepy estate. They go on in a course of obedience, though coldly, and not so as to give others a good example, or yield themselves comfort.

But how shall we keep our souls awake? Think that ere long we shall be drawn to an exact account before a strict judge: and shall our eyes then be sleeping and careless? These and such like considerations we should propound to ourselves, that so we might have waking souls. Moreover it conduceth much to the awakening of the soul to keep faith awake. It is not the greatness alone, but the presence of great things that moves us. Now it is the nature of faith to present things powerfully to the soul; for it sets things before us in the Word of Jehovah, that made all things of nothing, and is Lord of his Word, to give a being to whatsoever he hath spoken. Faith is an awakening grace, keep that awake, and it will keep all other graces awake. When a man believes, that all these things shall be on fire ere long; that heaven and earth shall fall in pieces; that we shall be shortly called to give an account of the things done in the body; when faith apprehends, and sets this before the eye of the soul, it affects the same marvellously. Therefore let faith set before us some present thoughts according to its temper; sometimes terrible things to awaken it out of its dulness; sometimes glorious things, promises and mercies, to awaken it out of its sadness. When we are in a prosperous estate, let faith make present all the sins and temptations that usually accompany such an estate; if in adversity, think of what sins may beset us there; this will awaken such graces in us, as are suitable to such an estate, for the preventing of such sins and temptations, and so keep our hearts in exercise to godliness. Withal, labour for abundance of the Spirit of God: for what makes men sleepy and drowsy? The want of spirits, whereby the strength sinks and falls. Christians should know, that there is a necessity, if they will keep themselves waking, to keep themselves spiritual. Pray for the Spirit above all things; it is the life of our life, the

soul of our soul. What is the body without the soul, or the soul without the Spirit of God? Even a dead lump. And let us keep ourselves in such good ways, that we may expect the presence of the Spirit to be with us, which will keep us awake.

Again, we must keep ourselves in as much light as may be; for all sleepiness comes with darkness. Let us keep our souls in perpetual light. When any doubt or dark thought ariseth, upon yielding thereunto there comes a sleepy temper. Sleepiness in the affections ariseth from darkness of judgment. The more we labour to increase our knowledge, and the more the spiritual beams of it shine in at our windows, the more shall we be able to keep awake. Another means to keep the soul awake is to labour to preserve it in the fear of God. Fear is an awakening affection, yea one of the most awakening. For, naturally, we are more moved with dangers, than stirred with hopes; therefore that affection that is most conversant about danger, is the most rousing and awakening affection. It is one character of a Christian, who, when he hath lost almost all grace, (according to his feeling) yet the fear of God is always left with him. God makes that awe the bond of the new covenant: "I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." One Christian is better than another, by how much he fears more than another. Of all Christians, mark, those are most gracious, spiritual, and heavenly, that are the most awful, and careful of their speeches, courses, and demeanours; tender, even of offending God in little things. Always as a man grows in grace, he grows in awfulness, and in jealousy of his own corruptions. Therefore let us preserve, by all means, this awful affection, the fear of God. Let us examine the state of our own souls, which will preserve us in a waking state. It is a notable means to keep us awake when we keep our hearts in fear of such sins, as either by our calling, custom, company, or the time we live in, or by our own disposition, we are most prone to.

In the last place, it is a thing of no small consequence, that we keep company with waking and faithful Christians, such as neither sleep themselves, nor willingly suffer any to sleep that are near them. It is a report and a true one of the sweating-sickness, that they that were kept awake, by those that were with them, escaped; but the sickness was deadly if they were suffered to sleep. It is one of the best fruits of our spiritual good acquaintance to keep one another awake. It is an displeasing work on both sides. But we shall one day cry out against all them, that have pleased themselves and us, in rocking us asleep, and thank those that have pulled us with fear out of the fire, though against our wills.

The church having so freely and ingenuously confessed what she could against herself, proceeds yet further to acquaint us with the particulars of her disposition, ver. 2, "It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh." Wherein we find, (which is a good sign,) that she was not in a dead sleep, but that she heard and discerned the voice of her beloved; and more than that, that she remembered all his sweet words and allurements, whereby he pressed her to open unto him, saying, "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled;" which is set out, with a further moving argument of those inconveniences which Christ had suffered in his waiting for entertainment in her heart: "For my head is filled with the dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." All which aggravates her offence, and his patience towards miserable sinners; that he should wait so long for admission into our wretched souls, that he may govern them by his Spirit.

From the church's hearing and discerning the voice of her beloved, we may observe that a Christian soul doth know the voice of Christ, even in a sleepy state: but much more when in a lively frame. God's believers are Christ's sheep: now "my sheep (saith Christ) hear my voice." It is the ear-mark (as it were) of a Christian, one of the characters of the new man, "to taste words

by the ear," (as Job saith :) he hath a spiritual taste, & discerning relish in his ear ; for he hath the Spirit of God, and therefore relisheth what is suitable to the Spirit. Now the voice of Christ without in the ministry, and the Spirit of Christ within in the heart, are suitable each to other. Another point we may gather from hence, is, that, take a Christian at the lowest, his heart yearns after Christ ; acknowledging him to be his beloved. There is a conjugal chastity in the soul of a true Christian, holding firm to the covenant and marriage between Christ and it ; he keeps that inviolable. Though he may be drowsy, yet there remains a conjugal, spouse-like affection.

We come now to make some observations on Christ's carriage towards the church in order to gain admittance. And 1. He knocketh ; 2. He bespeaks her with sweet and friendly compellations ; and 3. He lays before her his great patience and the inconveniency he suffered in waiting long for admittance. From whence we may observe in general, that Christ still desires further and further communion with his church. Even as the true soul, that is touched with the Spirit, desires nearer and nearer communion with Christ : so he seeks nearer and nearer communion with his spouse by all sanctified means. Christ hath never enough of the soul. Again, we may see from hence, that Christ takes not the advantage of the sins of his church, to leave her altogether. Though the church be sleepy, Christ continues knocking. The church of Laodicea was a lukewarm, proud, hypocritical church ; yet, " behold (saith Christ) I stand at the door and knock." And here he doth not stand knocking, but he withal suffereth indignities, the dew to fall upon him. Christ therefore refuseth not weak sinners : he that commands that we should " receive him that is weak in the faith," will he reject him that is weak and sleepy ? No. What father will neglect his child for some failings and weaknesses ? Nature will move him to respect him as a child.

How merciful is Christ both by his office, and by his nature? He took our nature upon him, that he might be a merciful Redeemer. And then as God, also he is Love. Whatsoever God shews himself to his church, he doth it in love. If he be angry in correcting, it is out of love. If merciful, it is out of love. If he be powerful in defending his church, and revenging himself on our enemies, all is love. "God is love," (saith John) that is, He shews himself only in expressions of love to his church. So Christ, as God, is all love to the church. Likewise Christ, as man, was man for this end, to be all love and mercy. Take him in his office, as Jesus to be a Saviour, he carrieth salvation in his wings.

Let us more particularly consider the means that Christ useth in order to gain admittance. And here how excellently is the expression of Christ's mercy, love, and patience set out in the first thing? *He knocketh.* The expression is taken from the fashion of men, in this kind; God condescending to speak to us in our own way. He knocks that we should open and let him come into our hearts, into our more intimate affections. But how doth he knock? Every kind of way. Sometimes there is a calling for entrance by voice; and when a voice may serve, there needs no further knocking. Sometimes both by voice and knocking. If the voice will not serve, knocking comes after. So it is here, Christ doth knock and speak; useth the voice of his Word, and knocks by his works; and both together sometimes. But whether by works of mercy or of judgment, he labours to raise the sleepy soul. Christ usually begins to call with mercy. All the creatures and blessings of God carry in them (as it were) a voice of God to the soul, that it would entertain his love. There goes a voice of love with every blessing. And the love, the mercy and goodness of God in the creature, is better than the creature itself. As we say of gifts, the love of the giver is better than the gift itself. So the love of God, in all his benefits, is better than the thing itself. Every creature and benefit speaks

as it were thus to us; we serve thee, that thou mayest serve him, that made thee and us. There is a speech (as it were) in every favour. If favours cannot prevail, then come corrections, which are the voice of God also: "Hear the rod and him that smiteth." "But hath the rod a voice?" Yes; for what do corrections speak, but amendment of the fault we are corrected for? So we must hear the rod, all corrections; they are as knockings, that we should open to God and Christ. And because corrections of themselves will not amend us, God, to this kind of knocking, adds a voice; he teacheth and corrects together. "Happy is that man that thou correctest, and teachest out of thy law," saith the Psalmist. Correction without teaching is to little purpose; therefore God adds instruction to correction. He opens the conscience so, that it tells us, it is for this that we are corrected. Both blessings and corrections are from God, *they will not away*, (especially corrections) till they have an answer; for they are sent of God, who will be sure to have an answer, either in our conversion, or confusion, when he begins once.

Many other ways God useth to knock at our hearts. The examples of those that are good call upon us. The examples of God's justice upon others are speeches to us. He knocks at our door then. He intends our correction, when he visits another; so that if we amend by that, he needs not take us in hand. But besides all this, there is a more near knocking that Christ useth to the church: his ministerial knocking. In the days of his flesh he was a preacher and prophet himself, and now he is ascended into heaven, he hath given gifts to men, and men to the church, by whom he speaks to the end of the world; they are Christ's mouth. As we said of the penmen of the Holy Scriptures, they were but the hand to write, Christ was the head to indite: so in preaching and unfolding the Word, they are but Christ's mouth and his voice, as it is said of John; and as it is said of Noah's time, "The Spirit of Christ preached in the days of

Noah to the souls in prison.” And now he is in heaven, he speaks by them. And Christ is either received or rejected in his ministers. “He that heareth you, heareth me; he that despiseth you, despiseth me.” Christ speaks by his ministers, and they use all kinds of means that Christ may be entertained. They move all stones, as it were, sometimes threatenings; sometimes intreaties; sometimes they come as sons of thunder, sometimes with the still voice of promises. And because one man is not so fit as another for all varieties of conditions and spirits; therefore God gives variety of gifts to his ministers, that they may knock at the heart of every man by their several gifts. John the Baptist, by a more thundering way of preaching, to make way for Christ to come, threateneth judgment: but Christ comes with, “Blessed are the poor in spirit; blessed are they that hunger and thirst for righteousness.” All kinds of means have been used in the ministry from the beginning of the world. And as the church heard and knew the voice of her beloved; so every Christian takes notice of the means that God useth for his salvation. A Christian is sensible of all the blessed helps thereto. To a dead heart, indeed, it is all one, whether they have means or no means; but a Christian soul takes notice of all the means; says of all, “It is the voice of my beloved!” It hears Christ, sees Christ in all.

But because of itself this ministry is a dead letter, therefore he joins that, which knocks at the heart together with the Word; even the Spirit, which is the life and soul of the Word; and when the inward word or voice of the Spirit, and the outward word or ministry go together, then Christ doth effectually knock, and stir up the heart. Now this Spirit with sweet inspirations moves the heart, lightens the understanding, quickens the dull affections, and stirs them up to duty; as it is, Isa. xxx. 21. “And thine ears shall hear a voice behind thee, saying, this is the way, walk in it.” The Spirit moves us sweetly agreeable to our own nature; it offers not violence to us:

but so as in Hosea. xi. 4, "I drew them by the cords of a man;" that is, by reasons and motives befitting the nature of a man. And besides his Spirit, God hath planted in us a conscience to call upon us, to be his vicar, a God in us to do his office, to call upon us, to direct us, check, and condemn us. And whilst Christ thus knocketh, all the three persons may be said to do it. - For there is the Father and the Spirit with Christ, who doth all by his Spirit, and from whom he hath commission. Therefore God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost knock at the heart. "Open to me, my love, my dove, my undefiled;" but Christ especially by his Spirit, because it is his office. Therefore let us take notice of this voice of Christ in the Word, and not think as Samuel thought, that Eli spake when God spake; let us think that God speaks to us in the ministry, that Christ comes to woo us, and win us thereby. And we ministers are the friends of the bridegroom, who are to hear what Christ saith to the church; and we must pray to him, that he would teach us what to teach others. We are to procure the contract, and to perfect it till the nuptials are in heaven; that is our work. And you that are hearers, if you do not regard Christ's voice in the ministry; know there is a voice you cannot shake off, that peremptory voice at the day of judgment, "Go, ye cursed into hell-fire."

But our adversaries say, "How shall we know that the Word is the Word of God? For this heretic saith thus, and this interprets it thus." This is the common objection of the great rabbies amongst them. We answer, God's "shccp hear his voice;" when his Word is unfolded, his Spirit goes together with it, breeding a relish of the Word in the hearts of the people, whereby they are able to taste and relish it; and that hath a supernatural power and majesty in it, which carries its own evidence. How shall we know light to be light? It carries evidence in itself that it is light. How know we that the fire is hot? Because it carries evidence in itself that it is so. So if you ask, how we know the Word of God

to be the Word of God? I say, it carries in itself inbred arguments and characters, so that the soul can say, this Word can be none other but the Word of God; it hath such a majesty and power to cast down, and raise up, and to comfort, and to direct, that it carries with it its own evidence. Thus we answer them; which they can answer no way but by cavils. God's sheep hear the voice of Christ. He speaks, and the church understands him, "and a stranger's voice they will not hear," John x. 5. And indeed, this is the only sure way of understanding the Word to be of God, from an inbred principle of the majesty in the Word, and a powerful work thereof on the soul itself; and an assent so grounded, is that which makes a sound Christian.

To make some use of this consideration of Christ's various and frequent knocking at our hearts. First, think well of Christ. Time will come, that the devil will set upon us with sharp temptations, fiery darts, temptations to despair, and present Christ amiss, as if he were not willing to receive us: but seeing he knocks at our hearts, useth mercies and judgments, the ministry of his Spirit, and conscience, and all; will he not entertain us, when we come to him, that seeks this entertainment at our hands? Certainly he will. And we need not wonder at this his willingness to receive us, when we first know that God became man, and Life itself came to die, and to be a curse for us. He hath done the greater, and will he not do the less? Such considerations as these being mixed with the Spirit, are effectual for the conversion of poor souls. Is there such love in God to become man, and to be a suitor to woo me for my love? Surely thinks the soul then, he desires my salvation and conversion. And to what kind of persons doth he come? None can object unworthiness: I am poor; *he comes to the poor*: I am laden and wretched; he says, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and laden." I have nothing: he says, "Come and buy honey, milk, and wine, though you have nothing." You can object nothing, but it is taken

away by the Holy Ghost, wisely preventing all the objections of a sinful soul. This is the beginning of conversion; and when we are converted, these thoughts with admiration of Christ's condescending, are effectual to give Christ further entrance into the soul.

Oh! but take heed that these make not any secure. For if we give not entrance to Christ, all this will be a further aggravation of our damnation. How will this justify the sentence upon those hereafter, that now bid Christ depart from them? What do profane persons in the church, but bid Christ depart from them? Especially in the motions of his Spirit? They entertain Christ in the outward room, they know a little of him in the brain; but in the heart, the secret room, he must not come. Is it not equal, that he should say to such, "Depart ye cursed, I know you not?" You would not give entrance to me, I will not now entertain you. Where God magnifies his mercy in this way, inviting by judgments, mercies, ministry, and Spirit, if they be despised, he will magnify his judgment hereafter. Let us then consider, the greater means the greater judgments, if we be not won by them. Therefore, let us labour to hold Christ. Let him have the best room in our souls. Let us give up the keys to him, and desire him to rule our understandings, to know nothing but him, and what may stand with his truth. Let us desire that he would rule in our wills and affections, sway all that is in us; for that is his meaning, when he says, "Open to me;" so that I may rule, as in mine own house, as the husband rules in his family, and a king in his kingdom. He will have all yielded up to him. The reason why men are so loath to open to Christ is, because he requires all. But what shall we lose by giving all to him? Do we entertain Christ to our loss? Doth he come empty? No; he comes with all grace. His goodness is a communicative, diffusive goodness. He comes to spread his treasures, to enrich the heart with all grace and strength to bear all afflictions, to encounter all dangers, to bring peace of con-

science, and joy in the Holy Ghost. He comes indeed to make our hearts, as it were, a heaven. Do but consider this, he comes not for his own ends, but to empty his goodness into our hearts. And if we wait we lose nothing thereby, but are gainers by it. The longer we wait, he comes with more abundant grace and comfort in the end, and shews himself more rich and bountiful.

Consider we next the sweet and friendly compellations that Christ uses to his church, in order to gain admittance: "Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled." Here Christ first addresses the church as his sister. We observed before, that the church of God is Christ's sister and spouse; we are knit to him both by consanguinity and by affinity. The nearest affinity is marriage, and the nearest consanguinity is sister. So that there are all bonds to knit us to Christ. Whatsoever is strong in any bond, he knits us to him by it. Is there any love in a husband, a brother, a mother, a friend? Is there any love scattered in any relation? Gather it all into one; and all that love, and a thousand times more, is in Christ; therefore he styles himself in all those sweet relations, to shew that he hath the love of all: Will a sister shut out a brother, when the brother comes to visit her, and do her all good? That comes and saith, Open to me, my sister? If the sister should shut out the brother, were it not most unnatural? And is it not monstrous in grace? Remember that Christ hath the same affections, to account us brothers and sisters now in heaven, as he had when he was upon the earth: for after his resurrection (saith he to his disciples,) "I go to my God and your God, to my Father, and to your Father;" he calls himself our brother, having one common Father in heaven, and one Spirit, and one inheritance.

He next calls her, "My love;" that is, my beloved, whom I love with the strongest bowels of affection. Christ's love is so great to his church and children, and so continual to it, that his church and people, and every Christian soul, is the seat of his love. He loves all his

creatures ; they have all some beams of his goodness, (which he must needs love,) therefore he loves them as creatures ; and as they are more or less capable of a higher degree of goodness ; but for his church and children, they are his love indeed. But what is the ground of such love ? He loves us because he sees his own graces in us. He loves what is his in us. Before we are actually his, he loves us with a love of good will, to desire all good to us ; but when we have any thing of his Spirit, that our natures are altered, he loves us with a love of friendship ; with the love of an head, husband, friend. He loves his own image. If we consider also what he hath done and suffered for her, we may well say, the church is his love. He called us when we resisted ; and then also he justified us, and clothed us with his own righteousness, and after feeds us with his own body. As the soul is the most excellent thing in the world, so he has provided for it the most excellent dainties and ornaments. But we shall never see fully what his love is, till we be all in one place, till we meet him in the mansions of bliss and glory, whither he is gone before to prepare a place for us. It were an infinite argument to follow to shew the love of Christ, which is beyond all knowledge ; It is too large for us to know all the dimensions of it, which we should ever think, speak, and meditate of ; because the soul is then in the most fit temper to serve, love, and glorify God, when it is most apprehensive of his great love. The love of Christ to us-ward is a *free* love, a *pre-venting* love. He loved us before we could love him ; he loved us when we resisted him, and were his enemies. Likewise it is a most *tender* love, as you have it, Isai. xlix. 15, “ Can a mother forget her sucking child ? If she could, yet will I not forget thee : thou art written on the palms of my hands.” He hath us in his heart, in his eye, in his hand, in a mother’s heart, and beyond it ; he hath a tender eye and a powerful hand to maintain his church.

There is no love comparable to this love of Christ, which is above the love of women, of father, or mother ;

therefore he gave himself (the best thing in heaven or in earth,) to shew his love. When he was God equal with his Father, he loved his church, and gave himself for it. How could he discover his love better than to take our nature? How could he come nearer to us than by being incarnate, so to be bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh? Love draws things nearer wheresoever it is. It drew the Son of God out of heaven to the womb of the Virgin, there to be incarnate, and after that, not only to be a man, but a miserable man, because we could not be his spouse unless he purchased us by his death. How sweet was the love of Christ to heal us, not by scaring, or lancing, but by making a plaster of his own blood, which he poured out for those that shed it in malice and hatred? What a wondrous love is it, that he should pour forth tears for those that shed his blood? That he praycd for those that persecuted him? And what wondrous love is it now that he sympathizeth with us in heaven, accounting the least harm that is done to the least member he hath, as done to himself? "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" And that he should take us into one body with himself. And he doth not content himself with any thing that he can do for us here; but his desire is, that we may be onc with him more and more, and be for ever with him in the heavens. We may especially know his love by this, that it draws us upwards, and makes us heavenly-minded; it makes us desire further and further communion with him. There is an attractive force in Christ's love; whercsoevcr it is, it draws the heart and affections after it.

Let us then often warm our hearts with the consideration hereof, because all our love is from this love of his. Oh! the wonderful love of God, that both such transcendent majesty and such infinite love should dwell together! We say, majesty and love never dwell together, because love is an abasing of the soul to all services. But herein it is false; for here majesty and love dwell together in the heart of one Christ; which majesty hath stooped as low as his almighty power could give leave. Nay, it was an

almighty power that he could stoop so low, and yet be God, keeping his majesty still. For God to become man, to hide his majesty for a while, not to be known to be God, and to hide it so far as to die for us. What an almighty power was this, that could go so low, and yet preserve himself God still? Yet this we see in our blessed Saviour. The greatest majesty met with the greatest abasement that ever was, and all out of love to our poor souls. There was no abasement that ever was so low as that of Christ for us, to want for a time even the comfort of the presence of his Father. For him to live so long out of heaven, and oft-times without comfort, that he might be a sacrifice for our sins, what a condescending was this! It is said, Psal. exiii. 6, that God "stoops to behold the things that are in heaven and in the earth." It is indeed a wondrous condescending that God will look upon things below; but that he should become man, and suffer as he did here, this is humility to astonishment. We think humility is not a grace becoming the majesty of God: it is not indeed; but there is some resemblance of that grace in Christ, that he should veil himself with flesh, and all out of love to us. The consideration of these things is wondrously effectual, as to strengthen faith, so to kindle love.

Next follows, "My dove." When Christ was baptized, the Holy Ghost appeared in the shape of a dove, to discover that Christ should have the disposition of a dove, and be nice and gentle; as likewise to shew what his office should be. For even as the dove in Noah's ark was sent out, and came again to the ark with an olive-branch, to shew that the waters were abated; so Christ was to come with an olive-leaf of peace and reconciliation in his mouth, to shew that God's wrath was appeased. Now the Spirit that framed him to be like a dove, frames the church to be like a dove; "as the ointment that was poured on Aaron's head ran down upon the skirts of his garments."

The church is compared to a dove, 1. Because it hath

the like disposition as is found in a dove. There is some good in all creatures; there is none but hath a beam of God's majesty, of some attribute; but some more than others. There is an image of virtue even in the inferior creatures. Wherefore the Scriptures send us to them for many virtues, as the sluggard to the ant. And indeed we may see the true perfection of the first creation more in the creatures than in ourselves; for there is no such degeneration in any creature as there is man. The first property of a dove I shall mention is meekness. And the church is meek, both to God and man, not given to murmuring and revenge. Hereby we shew ourselves to have the Spirit of Christ. And this grace disposeth us to a nearer communion with God than other graces. It is a grace that God most delights in, and would have his spouse to be adorned with. Moses, we read, was a mighty man in prayer; and a special means to fit him thereunto was, he was the meekest man on earth. Therefore in that grace we must especially be like this meek creature, which hath no way to revenge itself. Again, the dove is a simple creature, without guile. There is a simplicity that is sinful, when there is no mixture of wisdom in it; and there is a simplicity wherewith God is simple. There is nothing contrary in him; there is no mixture of any thing opposite. So there is a good simplicity in us when there is no mixture of fraud, no duplicity in the soul. In this we are to be like doves. Again, this creature is a faithful creature; that is mainly here aimed at; it is faithful to the mate. So the Christian, by the Spirit of God, is made faithful to Christ; keeps the judgment chaste; is not tainted with errors and sins; keeps his affections chaste likewise, sets nothing in his heart above Christ; "Whom hath he in heaven but him, and what is there on earth he desires besides him? Again, this creature is of a neat disposition; it will not lodge where it shall be troubled with stench; and it likewise feeds on pure grain. So the Christian soul in this respect is like a dove, that will not

feed upon sinful pleasures, but upon Christ and spiritual things. A natural man feedeth upon dust, earth, and earthly things; but a Christian will not feed on that which is base and carthly, but upon heavenly and spiritual things.

Again, 2. The church is compared to a dove on account of its mournful, suffering condition. The dove is molested by all the birds of prey, it being the common prey of all ravenous birds. So the poor church of God is persecuted and molested. But, what defence hath God's church? Why, none but flight: even as the dove hath nothing but flight; it hath no talons to wound. So we are to fly to God as to our mountain, fly to the ark that God may take us in. The church of God hath no other refuge but to be housed in God and Christ, her ark. A mourning state is likewise generally the lot of the church; as Hezekiah saith of himself, Isai. xxxviii. "He mourned as a dove, and chattered like a crane." She, like the turtle, mourns in all afflictions, desertions, and molestations of wicked men; she mourns to God, who hears the bemoanings of his own Spirit in her, and woe to all other birds, the birds of prey, when the turtles mourn because of their cruelty; it is a presage of ruin to them, when they force the turtle to sorrow and mourning. So much for the title of dove.

The last compellation is, "My undefiled." The church is undefiled, especially in that it is the spouse of Christ, and clothed with the robes of his righteousness. For there is an exchange as soon as ever we are united to Christ; our sins are laid upon him, and his righteousness is made ours. Christ and his church are not to be considered as two, when we speak of this undefiledness, but as one. And the church having Christ with all that is Christ's, they have the field and the pearl in the field together; and Christ giving himself to the church, he gives his righteousness,* which is the church's. The

* That is, an interest in his obedience unto death, the meritorious cause of our justification and whole salvation.

conscience knows its own imperfection : so it is defiled, and accuseth of sin. Yet as it looks to Christ, it sees itself pure, and purged from all sin. Here is the victory of faith in the deepest sense of sin, pollution, and defilement in ourselves, at the same time, to see an absolute and perfect righteousness in Jesus Christ. Herein is the triumph of faith, whereby it answers God. And Christ, who sees our imperfections, (but it is to purge and cleanse them away, not to condemn us for them,) at the same time sees us in his own love, clothed with his righteousness, as one with himself, endowed with whatsoever he hath ; his satisfaction and obedience being ours as verily as any thing in the world is. Thus he looks on us, and thus faith looks upon him too, and together with the sight and sense of sin, it apprehends righteousness, perfect righteousness, and so is undefiled. This is the main point in religion, and the comfort of Christians to be lost in themselves, as it were, and to be only "found in Christ, not having their own righteousness, but the righteousness of God in him." This is a mystery which none knows but a believing soul. None see corruption more, none see themselves freed more ; they have an inward sight to see corruption, and an inward faith to see God reconciled. And surely there can be no greater honour to Christ than this, in the sense of sin, of wants, imperfections, stains, and blemishes, to wrap ourselves in the righteousness of Christ, with boldness to go clothed in the garments of this our elder Brother to the throne of grace. This is an honour to Christ, to attribute so much to his righteousness, that being clothed therewith, we can boldly break through the fire of God's justice, and all those terrible attributes, when we see them all, as it were, satisfied fully in Christ. For Christ with his righteousness, could go through the justice of God, having satisfied it to the full for us. And we, being clothed with this his righteousness and satisfaction, may go through too.

But besides this, there is another quality in the church,

in respect to which she is called "undefiled;" that is, in purity of disposition, tending to perfection. For we are chosen unto perfection, and to be holy in his sight, and perfectly holy, undefiled, and pure. What did God aim at in choosing us? Did he aim at these imperfect beginnings to rest there? No; we were chosen to perfection. For as in this natural life, with regard to the body, God purposed that we should not only have all the limbs of men, but grow from infancy to perfection; so, no question, he intends for the soul that we should not only have the linaments of Christianity, a sanctified judgment, with affections in part renewed; but he hath chosen us to entire perfection. And indeed it is the character of a judicious, believing Christian soul, that he can value the righteousness of Christ out of himself, labouring, living and dying, to appear in that, and yet comfort himself during this conflict between the flesh and the Spirit, that in time this inherent grace shall be brought to perfection. And Christ's desire is, that the work of grace should be perfected in us. The end of redemption is, that he might purge his church here, and make it a glorious spouse in heaven. He looks upon us as we shall be ere long; and therefore we are said "to be dead to sin," while we are dying to it. As a man when he is condemned, and going to his execution, is a dead man; so there is a sentence passed upon sin and corruption; it shall be abolished and die. Therefore it is dead in sentence, and dying in execution. So we are said "to sit in heavenly places with Christ;" because he means to bring us thither. Thus faith looks upon Christ, and Christ looks thus upon us. This should comfort us in weakness, that God regards us not in our present imperfections, but as he means to make us ere long.

What should we do then, if Christ doth make his church thus, "his love, his dove, his undefiled," but lay open our souls to his love, and reflect love to him again? This perpetual intercourse between Christ and his spouse, is her main happiness here, and her eternal happiness in

heaven. In looking on him, who hath done so much for us, he shines on us, and we look back again upon him. A Christian should say, My Love was crucified, my Love died, my Love is in heaven; and for the things on earth, I love them as they have a beam of him in them, as they lead me to him; but he is my Love; there my love is pitched, even upon him. This is the ground of these scripture phrases, "Our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." And "set your affections on things above." Why? Christ our love is there. The soul is more where it loves, than where its residence is. It dies, as it were, to other things, and lives in the thing it loves; therefore our thoughts and affections, our joy and delight, should be drawn up to Christ; for indeed his love hath such a magnetic force, that where it is, it will draw up the heavy iron, the gross soul, and make it heavenly; for there is a binding, a drawing force in this excellent affection of love.

Again: since he accounts us undefiled, because he means to make us so, and now looks on us as we shall be, in all our infirmities, let us comfort ourselves thus; "It shall not be always thus with me; this flesh of mine shall decay as Saul's house, and the spirit at last shall conquer in all this. I am not chosen to this beginning, to this conflicting course of life; I am chosen to triumph, to perfection of grace. This is my comfort, I shall get the better at last." Let us still rejoice, in that we are chosen to sanctification, which is a little begun, being an earnest of other blessings. Let us not rest in the pledge, or in the earnest, but labour for a further pledge of more strength and grace. For those that have the Spirit of Christ, will strive to be as unspotted and as heavenly as they can, to fit themselves for that heavenly condition as much as may be; and because they cannot be in heaven now, yet they will converse there as much as they can; and because they cannot be with such company altogether, they will be as much as may be,

labouring as they are able, to be that which they shall be hereafter. Imperfection contents them not; and therefore they pray still in the Lord's prayer, "Thy kingdom come." Nothing contents them but perfection.

We come now to speak of the inconveniencies that Christ suffered, which he lays before the church in order to move her to open to him: "My head is filled with dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." Wherein he shews what he suffered; which sufferings are of two sorts: 1. In himself: 2. In his ministers. In himself, and in his own blessed person what did he endure, while he went up and down doing good? But more especially towards his latter end, his head was not only filled with the dew, but his body with drops of blood. Drops of blood came from him, because of the anguish of his spirit, and the sense of God's wrath for our sins. Yea, upon the cross, what did he endure when under a sense of God's anger for our sins? He cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" And then, 2. What does he suffer in his ministers? How was he used in the apostles that were after him, and in the ministers of the church ever since? What indignities endured they in the primitive church, that were the publishers of the gospel? Those sweet preachers, for inviting men to open to Christ, were killed: so cruel is the heart of carnal men, that it offereth violence to them that love them most. What greater love, than the love of the soul? Yet this is the satanical temper of men's hearts, they hate those men most that deal this way most truly and lovingly with them. It is not that the gospel is such an hard message. It is the word of reconciliation, and the word of life; but the heart hates it, because it would draw men from their present condition; and therefore, "Condemnation is come into the world, in that men hate the light, because their works are evil," John iii. 19. Is there any thing truly and cordially hated but grace? And are any persons heartily and cordially hated in the world so much as the publishers of grace, and the

professors of it? No. But why? Because they, most of all, upbraid, and meddle with the corruptions of men that are dearer to them than their own souls. Now what patience is there in Christ to suffer himself, in his messengers and in his children, to be thus used? And in that he bears so many injuries, so many affronts from us before we turn to him, we should learn to imitate Christ; never to give over as long as God continues life with any advantage and opportunity to do good to any soul, but wait, if God at any time will give them grace. And in that our Saviour Christ here would thus set forth his love, and his patience in his love, in bearing with us, it should win our hearts with all readiness and thankfulness to receive him, when he comes to work in our souls. Let us not therefore be careless of our own souls, but let it move our hearts to melt towards him.

Let us now consider the excuses the church made for not opening immediately to her Beloved, as they are set down, *vér. 3*, “I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?” Notwithstanding all Christ’s persuasion, yet we find the church draws back, and seems to have reason so to do. “I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on again” to let thee in? “I have washed my feet, (a phrase taken from the custom of those hot countries,) how shall I defile them” to rise and open the door to thee? There is a spiritual meaning herein; as if she had said, I have some ease by this sleepy profession, some freedom from evil tongues, and some exemption from some troubles I was in before. I was then too indiscreet; wilt thou call me again to those troubles that I have wisely avoided? No; “I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?” I am content to be as I am without further troubling myself. Thus the church puts off Christ. That which is observable is this; that it is not an easy matter to bring the soul and Christ together into near fellowship. We see here how the church draws back; for nature moves

either not to yield at all to duty, or to be cold and unsettled therein. Nature knows that a near communion with Christ cannot stand with favouring any corruption, and therefore will do something, but not enough; it will yield to something, but not to that which it should do, to that communion and fellowship that we ought to have with Christ. To instance in some particulars.

A Christian's life should be nothing but a communion with Christ, a walking in the Spirit. He should adorn his profession by a lively performance of all duty, and be exemplary to others; and should be in such a frame, that he should *walk continually* "in the comforts of the Holy Ghost," undismayed and undaunted, "and abound in the fruits of the Spirit," and do all the good he can wheresoever he comes. He should "keep himself unspotted from the world," go against the stream, and be continually in such a temper, that it should be the joy of his heart to be dissolved and to be with Christ. But will nature endure this, think you? No, it will not. You shall see this more particularly in the next observation.

One way, whereby our nature hinders this communion with Christ, and the shining of a believer in a Christian course, is by false pretences, reasons, and excuses. The flesh never wants excuses and pretences to shift and shuffle off duties; there was never yet any careless, sinful course, but it had the flesh to justify it with one reason or other; there was never yet any man came to hell, but had some pretence for coming thither. And therefore it is good to understand the shifts of nature, and the pretences which it hath. As it is good to know the truth of God, and of Christ revealed in his Word, so it is to know the falseness and deceitfulness of our own hearts. Every one hath his several pretexts, as his state and condition is. We think we should be losers, if we should give ourselves to that degree of goodness which others do; whereas God doth curse those blessings which men get with neglect of duty to him. Whenever any one enters upon a Christian course, how many objections

will be immediately brought? "Thou shalt lose the favour of such an one." Never care for that favour thou canst not keep with God's. The favour of man is a snare, take heed of that favour that snares thee. Thou lovest their favour and company; but thou gainest the favour of Christ, and the company of angels. "Yea, but the world will rail on me, and reproach me with my old sins." Care not: God will do thee good for that; as David said, when Shimei cursed him. "Yea, but I shall lose my pleasure." Oh! but carnal pleasures end in death. They are at best but pleasures of sin for a season; and thou shalt not lose by the change; for "the ways of wisdom are pleasantness:" however outwardly it seems, yet there is a paradise within. "But if I be thus precise, the times are so bad, I shall be alone." Complain not of the times when thou makest them worse. Thou shouldst make the times better. The worse the times are, the better be thou; for this is thy glory, to be good in an evil generation. What brings destruction on God's people, but their joining with the wicked? When they joined with the children of men, then came the flood. Those likewise that are worldly have excuses also: "But I must attend to my calling; *He that provides not for his family, is worse than an infidel.*" As if God had set up any calling to hinder the calling of Christianity. As if that were not the greatest calling, and the best part that will abide with us for ever. As if it were not the part of a Christian to redeem time from his calling for the duties of Christianity. "I have no time, say you, what will you have me to do?" Why, what time had David? He meditated in the law of God day and night; and yet he had the affairs of a kingdom on his hands.

Thus every one, as their state and condition is, have several pretences and excuses. Those that are young say, "We have time enough for these things;" whereas, (besides the uncertainty of life,) the custom of sin, the engaging our hearts deeper and deeper into the world,

makes it a more difficult thing to be a Christian. It more and more darkens our understanding, and estrangeth our affections from good things. Time is a special mercy ; but when thou hast not time only, but the means, good company, and good motions, consider thou mayest never have such a gale again ; thy heart may be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Again, who would want the comforts of religion even for the present ? As Austin saith, " I have wanted thy sweetness too long." What folly is it to want the sweetness and comfort of religion, so long as we may have it ? Others pretend the uncomfotableness of religion ; whereas indeed there is no sound comfort without having our hearts in a perfect communion with Christ. There is no pleasure like the pleasure of serving God. As the fire hath light and heat always in it ; so there is no holy action that we perform thoroughly, but, as it hath an increase of strength, so of comfort and joy annexed to it. There is a present reward annexed to all things that are spiritually good ; they carry with them present peace and joy.

These and a thousand like discouragements men frame to themselves. " My health will not serve ; I shall endanger my life." There is *a lion in the way*, saith the sluggard, who, with his excuses, " thinks himself wiser than the wisest in the city." There is none so wise as the sluggard. For belly policy teacheth him a great many excuses, which he thinks will go for wisdom ; because by them he thinks to sleep in a whole skin. Yet he is but a sluggard for all that ; and though he plead, Yet a little while, poverty (not only outward, but spiritual poverty,) and barrenness of soul, will come upon him as an armed man.

But what course should we take that we may attain a relish of heavenly things, so as not to loath religious exercises, or put them off with excuses ? First, Resolve not to consult with flesh and blood ; for it always counsels us for ease, as Peter counselled Christ. We have a

nature in us like unto Peter's ; it still says, " Spare, pity thyself." If men were in a city environed round with enemies, would they consult with them what they should do for the defence of the city? Were it not a mad part? And is it not a greater madness when Christians consult with flesh and blood what they should do in duties of obedience? We should take heed therefore of consulting with our enemy ; of listening to the counsel of flesh and blood ; especially when the matter comes to suffering ; for on that, of all other things, flesh and blood draw back. Every one hath a Peter in himself, that saith, " Spare thyself:" thou art indiscreet to venture thyself upon this and that hazard. But where the judgment is convinced of the goodness of the cause, go on, whatsoever the suffering be. It is not necessary that we should live in riches, honours, pleasures ; but it is necessary that we should live good Christians. Therefore when flesh and blood object, consult not with them: First, because they are enemies, and therefore to be suspected: Secondly, because it is said, " Flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven." There is no following of Christ, considering our flesh is so full of cavils and 'excuses, unless we practise that heavenly lesson, *to deny ourselves*, our whole selves, our wit and reason, our will and affections in the matters of God. Say nay to all the sluggishness of the flesh. Silence all presently, as soon as ever they discourage thee from holy ways. Consider whence they come ; (which is enough,) from God's and our enemy, and the worst enemy we have, that lieth in our own bosom.

Withal, in spiritual courses, let us arm ourselves with resolution. First, conclude it is so, or not so. Let our judgments be convinced ; and get resolution from soundness of conviction, that such things are good, and that they are best for us ; and best for us at this time ; the sooner the better ; that there is an absolute necessity to have them, and that they are everlastingly good. And further, let us be able by sound reasons to justify the ways of

God, and to answer cavils, to give an account of what we do to ourselves and to others. To have reasons ready from Scripture is an excellent thing; when we are able to justify whatsoever we do by the Word, against all the quarrels of our own hearts and others. When we are led to do things only by the example of others, then we are often put to it on the sudden by temptations. Let us therefore labour to do things upon good grounds, and be able to justify all the ways of religion, by reasons unanswerable, that may silence corrupt nature, and stop the mouth of the devil himself. And let us be, not only inured to the yoke of religion, but likewise to endure difficulties, opposition, and hardship; as the apostle urges on Timothy, "To endure hardship and afflictions." If the thing be good and warrantable, disregard the speeches of the world. What are the speeches of a company of men in the state of nature, that we should regard them so, as not to endure hardship in such things, of the goodness whereof we are convinced? But in these days men take up a delicate profession of religion. Men will be religious, but they will suffer nothing. They will part with nothing, be at no loss, suffer no cross, be at no pains with religion. This delicate profession (if any thing among us,) threateneth the removing of the gospel we enjoy. How will they suffer afflictions for the gospel, (if such times come,) that will not part with a corrupt fashion, a superfluity now? Here is a profession of religion indeed, that will not endure so much as a check. This extreme tenderness in the matters of God and salvation, is the cause why many eternally perish.

Again, remember to do all things to God, and not to man; and then, whatsoever discouragement there is from men, we should not be discouraged. We hear men continually complain of others that are unthankful, and why should we do any thing for them? Why? Do it to God. Let us do justice and shew mercy, and God will accept it, though men do not. It is best to have God's

reward. In this world it is good to meet with unthankful persons, because else we should meet with our reward here. It is good to do somewhat for God's sake, and for religion; to say, let people be as thankful as they will, I did it not altogether to you, but to God. If a man regard the discouragement of the world, he shall never do that which is good; people in the world are so unthankful to those that wish them best, and that do best to them. If a man do a thing to God, and do it out of duty and conscience, he may hold on, though he have never so many discouragements in the world. Lastly, let us help ourselves to go through all discouragements, whatever they be, with setting the glory to come before our eyes. Let us look unto the recompence of reward, not to the present discouragement. What makes a soldier fight hard for victory? The sweetness of the triumph. Consider the issue which followeth a careful Christian life; a near and perfect walking with God. Upon this ground the apostle exhorts us, "to be abundant in the work of the Lord; knowing that our labour is not in vain in the Lord."

We shall now see the consequence of all those excuses of the church, whereby she puts off Christ, as it is set down, ver. 4, 5, 6, "My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him. I rose to open to my beloved, and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet-smelling myrrh upon the handles of the lock. I rose to open to my beloved, but my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone." There are three things here observable: 1. The consequence of the church's drowsiness; Christ's withdrawing himself. 2. His gracious dealing when he withdrew himself. And, 3. The success of Christ's departure: which is set forth in these instances, 1. The church's bowels were moved in her, which were hard before. 2. She rose up out of her bed, wherein formerly she had composed herself to rest. And, 3. She sought and called after him.

The first doctrinal point which is to be observed out of these verses, is, That Christ doth sometimes leave his children, as he did the church here. But what kind of leaving is it? Christ's withdrawings of himself are either in regard of outward or inward comforts and helps.

1. Christ leaves his church sometimes, by taking away the means of salvation, the ministry, or by taking away outward comforts; which withdrawing, especially if he accompany the taking of them away with some signs of his displeasure, or sense of his anger, doth embitter all losses; when they come from Christ, as a testimony of his anger for our former unkindness.
2. Sometimes his forsaking is more inward; and that is double; either in regard of peace and joy, inward comfort that the soul had wont to feel in the ordinances by the Spirit of Christ; or in regard of strength and assistance, when he leaves men to themselves to fall into some sin. And that Christ thus leaves his church, is true of all, both of the body and of each particular member.

But observe this second point, that the cause rests in ourselves why Christ withdraws comfort from our souls; and if we search our own hearts, we shall find it so. And the usual causes are these,

1. When we are unkind to Christ, and repel the sweet motions of the Spirit. The church used Christ unkindly; therefore he left her.
2. When we improve not the precious means of salvation that we enjoy: a discontinuing of religious exercises. He withdraws himself from our souls, when we neglect the means, and stir not up the graces of God's Spirit.
3. When we are careless of our conversation or company. This will cause a strangeness between Christ and the soul; when we cast ourselves imprudently into company in whom the Spirit is not. Evil company is a great damp; it causeth a Christian to lose his comfort much.
4. When we linger after carnal liberties and ease.
5. When we yield to carnal policy and shifts to go on in a lukewarm course.
6. When we linger after earthly things and comforts. When we prize not the com-

munion that should be between the soul and Christ, as we ought; saying, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? And thy loving kindness is better than the life itself;" it is just with Christ to make himself strange. Where love is not esteemed, it is estranged. And, 7 When we tremble not at God's judgments and threatenings, and at the signs of them. Therefore if we do not enjoy more acquaintance with Christ than we do, and walk more in the comforts of the Holy Ghost; let us lay our hand upon our mouth and justify Christ. It is just with thee to deal thus with me, that have dealt so unkindly with thee. So to justify God, and accuse ourselves, is the best way to recover spiritual comfort.

A third point to be observed is, though Christ leave us, upon our drowsiness and unworthy carriage towards him, yet notwithstanding he leaves some footsteps of his grace upon the soul. He stands at the door and leaves myrrh behind; something in the heart that causeth a hankering after him. So here, howsoever Christ had withdrawn himself from the church, yet he left behind him a Spirit of grace, to affect her heart with sorrow and shame, and to stir up her endeavours to seek after him, "I rose to open to my beloved, and my hands dropped myrrh, and my fingers sweet-smelling myrrh." Observe here, that Christ's grace is the cause of our grace. He first leaves myrrh, and then her fingers drop myrrh. "Out of his fulness we receive grace for grace;" that is, our grace is answerable to the grace of Christ. We have all from him; favour for his favour; because he is beloved, we are beloved; we have the grace of sanctification from him. He was sanctified with the Spirit, therefore we are sanctified; he is the Son of God, therefore we are sons; he is the Heir of heaven, therefore we are heirs; so that of his grace it is we receive all; we have our myrrh from his myrrh. And this should teach us the necessity of dependence upon Christ, for whatsoever we have or would have; and likewise of endeavouring after grace; because we find the church's

fingers dropped myrrh when she opened the door, and stirred up herself to endeavour. When first her bowels were moved, then she hastened to the door, and then her hands dropped myrrh; so that we find experience of the grace of Christ, especially when we stir up ourselves to endeavour. "Arise and be doing, and the Lord shall be with thee," saith David to Solomon; so let us rouse up ourselves to endeavour, and we shall find a gracious presence of Christ, and a blessed assistance of the Spirit. "To him that hath shall be given:" if he exercise and stir up the grace of God in him. Therefore let us stir up the graces of God in us; let us fall upon actions of obedience, second them with prayer; whatsoever we pray for and desire, set upon the practice thereof. We mock God, except we endeavour for that which we desire. Keep not off and say, I am dead and drowsy, therefore I shall be still so. You are deceived. Fall upon obedience and the practising of holy duties, and in the midst thereof you shall find the presence and assistance of God's Spirit that will comfort you.

This fourth point likewise ariseth from the forementioned verses, that the church, by reason of this gracious dealing of Christ, leaving somewhat behind him, is sensible of her former unkindness, and restless till she have recovered her former communion with him. For that expression, "He put his finger in by the hole of the door," implies, that Christ, before he departed, left by his Spirit an impression on the church's heart, which deeply affected her to seek after him. The finger spoken of is nothing but the power of his Spirit, (as the usual Scripture phrase is, "This is God's finger," "God's mighty hand,") without which all ordinances are ineffectual. It follows, "her bowels were moved after him;" which implies a work of the Spirit upon her, whereby her heart was moved to seek after Christ. Behold in this his dealing the mercy of Christ. He will not suffer the church to be in a state of security, but will rather bring her to a state of grief and sorrow. So she

saith of herself, "My bowels were moved in me;" that is, my heart was affected, full of grief for my unkind dealing with Christ. Hereby those affections were stirred up that were before asleep. God hath planted affection in us, and joined them with conscience, as the executioners with the judge. So that when conscience accuseth of any sin, either of omission or commission, affections are ready to be the executioners within us. Thus, to prevent eternal damnation, God hath set up a throne in our own hearts to take revenge by our own affections, godly sorrow, and mourning.

We may observe hence, that even sins of omission bring shame and sorrow; and in the issue, through Christ's sanctifying them, these which they breed, consume the parent; that is, sin brings forth shame and grief, which are a means to cure sin. Would we, therefore, prevent shame and grief? We must take heed then of security, the cause that leads to them; yea, of sins of omission, wherein there is more danger than in sins of commission. Let us think as slightly as we will of sins of omission and carelessness, they are enough to bring men to hell. It is not required only that we do no harm, and keep ourselves from outward evils; but we must do good in a good manner, and have a care to be fruitful and watchful. A dead secure state is so hateful to God, that he will not endure it; it either goes before some great sin, cross, affliction, or judgment.

"My bowels are moved in me," saith the church: and good reason; it was a suitable correction of the sin wherein she offended. For Christ's bowels were turned towards her in love; in which case she neglecting him, it was fit she should find moving bowels in another sense, in shame and mourning. Christ here leaves her to seek after him, that had waited and attended her leisure before. For it follows, "My soul failed when he spake;" that is, her soul failed when she remembered what he had spoke, when he stood at the door, and said, "Open

to me my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled, for my head is wet with the dew, and my locks with the drops of the night." When God's Spirit had wrought upon her, then she remembered what Christ had said. All those sweet allurements were effectual now unto her; especially when she saw that after those allurements Christ had withdrawn himself; (for that is the meaning of these words, "My soul failed when he spake unto me.") He did not speak now; but her soul failed after he spake; for so it should be read; that is, after she remembered his speech to her; for now when she opened he was not there, therefore he could not speak to her. Labour we all of us then to be diligent and careful to hear and attend upon the ordinances of God; for howsoever what we hear is not effectual for the present, but seems as dead seed east into the heart, yet God will give it a body after, as the apostle speaks, at one time or other. That which we hear now, the Holy Ghost will bring to our remembrance when we stand in most need of it.

"My soul failed when he spake," saith the church; that is, she was in a spiritual swoon upon his withdrawing. Whence we may observe, that Christ doth leave his church sometimes; so that their hearts fail them for want of his presence. This fainting of the soul is sometimes upon an apprehension, as if God and Christ were become enemies; sometimes for the absence of Christ's love, though it feel no anger. Even as a husband's not looking lovingly upon his wife as he used to do, is enough to cast her down. Nay, moreover, when a man finds not assistance in holy duties as formerly; when his heart is shut up, and he cannot pray as usual; when he finds he cannot bear afflictions with wonted patience; when he hears not the Word of God with that delight and profit as he was wont; when he feels not that relish in the ordinances of God as he was wont; he concludes, certainly Christ hath withdrawn himself; God hath hid his face; whereupon he is cast down, his spirits fail.

Summer and winter arise from the presence and absence of the sun. So what makes the summer and winter in the soul, but the presence or absence of Christ? What makes some so vigorous beyond others, but the presence of the Spirit? As it is in nature, so it is here; the presence of Christ is the cause of all spiritual life and vigour. When he withdraws his Spirit a little, the soul fails. The child of God cannot be content without the presence of God and of his Spirit enlightening, quickening, strengthening, and blessing him. When he finds not his presence, when Christ his life is absent, he is presently discouraged. When a man's life fails, all fails. When, therefore, a man finds his spiritual taste not as it was before, then he is never quiet till he hath recovered his life again.

Upon the church's swooning at the absence of Christ, she next acquaints us of the method she took for the recovery of his presence: she falls to prayer. Action follows affection. After her bowels are moved she ariseth and openeth; but her beloved being gone, she further manifests the sincerity of her affection, by making after him. "I sought him," but for the present in vain; whereupon she complains, "but I could not find him: I called, but he made no answer." One of the greatest discouragements of all others is, when prayer hath no answer. This is the complaint, but indeed an error, of the church; for Christ did hear the church, though he seemed to turn his back. Now how shall we carry ourselves when our hearts fail of that we seek for; when we pray without success, and find not a present answer?

1. We must hope against hope. The nature of faith is to break through all opposition, to see the sun behind a cloud; nay, to see one thing contrary in another, life in death, a calm in a storm.
2. Stir up your grace; for as nature joining with physic helps it to carry away the malignant humours; so by the remainder of the Spirit that is in us, let us all set our graces on work until we have carried away that which offends the soul, and not sink under the

burden. For this is a special time for the exercising of faith, hope, love, diligence, care, and watchfulness.

The church, after setting down her own exercise in her desertion, sets out the outward ill dealing she met with, and that from those that should have been her greatest comforters. "The watchmen that went about the city found me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me." Thus we see how trouble follows trouble; one depth calls upon another. Inward desertion and outward affliction go many times together. The troubles of the church many times are like Job's messengers; they come fast one upon another; because God means to perfect the work of grace in their hearts, all this is for their good. The sharper the winter is, the better the spring. Learn hence, first, that it is no easy thing to be a Christian. We see here, after the church had betrothed herself to Christ, and entertained him in her garden, she falls into a state of security and sleep, whence Christ labours to rouse her up. Then she useth him unkindly; after which he withdraws himself, even so far that her heart fails her; then (as if it were not enough,) the watchmen that should have looked to her, smite her, wound her, and take away her veil. See here the variety of changes in a Christian, not long in one state. But you will say, "All Christians are not thus tossed up and down, deserted of God, and persecuted of others." I answer, Indeed there is difference. But whence comes that difference? It is a mystery of the sanctuary, which no man in the world can give a reason of; why of Christians, equally beloved of God, some should have a fairer passage to heaven, others more rugged. It is sufficient for us if God will bring us any way to heaven, as the blessed apostle saith, "If by any means I might attain to the resurrection of the dead."

"But who are the watchmen here meant?" They are especially governors of state and church. The expression is taken from the custom of cities that are be-

leagured. They have watchmen to descry the danger they are liable unto. So magistrates are watchmen of the state; ministers are the watchmen for souls, watching over them for good. "But why doth God use watchmen?" Not for any defect of power in him; but, 1. For demonstration of his goodness; for he is the great Watchman, who watcheth over our commonwealths, churches, and persons; he hath an eye that never sleeps; "He that watcheth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps;" he manifesteth his goodness in that he will use a variety of subordinate watchers. And likewise, 2. To shew his power in using many instruments; and his care for us. And in this, that God hath set over us watchers, (ministers especially,) it implies that our souls are in danger. Indeed there is nothing in the world so beset as the soul of a poor Christian. Who hath so many enemies as a Christian? And among them all, the worst is nearest to him, even himself. Therefore there must needs be watchmen to discover the deceits of satan and his instruments, and of our own hearts; to discover the dangers of Jerusalem, and the errors and sins of the times wherein we live.

Come we now to the carriage of the watchmen; they smote the church and wounded her many ways, (though it be not discovered here in particular,) as with their ill life, and sometimes with corrupt doctrine, and other whiles with bitter words, and unjust censures; as we see in the story of the church, especially in the Romish church. But not to speak of them, come we nearer home, and we may see amongst ourselves those that are watchmen, and should give us encouragement, who smite and wound the church, and take away her veil.

They took away the veil; that is, that wherewith the church was covered. You know in the times of the Old Testament a veil was that which covered women; and it was in one respect a token of modesty and subjection; in another an honourable ornament. So then the watch-

men took away that which made the church comely, and laid her open, and as it were naked. Now the church's veil is taken away by false watchmen : 1. As it is a token of subjection, when by their false doctrines they labour to draw people from Christ, and their subjection to him. They that draw the people to themselves, (as in popish churches,) that desire to sit high in their consciences, and so make their church undutiful, take away the veil of subjection, and so force Christ to punish the church. And, 2. As the veil is for honour and comeliness, so the watchmen take it away when they take away the credit and esteem of the church, when they lay open the infirmities and weaknesses of the church. It is strange that the watchmen should do this; yet notwithstanding oftentimes it falls out so, that those who by place are watchmen, are the bitterest enemies of the church. Who were bitterer enemies to her in Christ's time than the scribes, pharisees, and priests? And who in the time of the prophets, than false priests and prophets?

Now what is the reason that those men that should be encouragers are rather dampers of the church's zeal? Sometimes it falls out from a spirit of envy in them at the graces of God's people, which are wanting in themselves. Sometimes from idleness, which makes them hate all such as provoke them to diligence. This should teach us to be in love with Christ's government, and to see the vanity of all things here below, though they be never so excellent in their institution. Such is the poison of man's heart, and the malice of satan, that they turn the edge of the best things against the good of the church, What is more excellent than magistracy, yet many times the point of the sword is directed the wrong way. So ministers are Christ's ambassadors, and should, as Christ would do, strengthen the feeble knees and bind up the broken-hearted; but alas! we see the edge of the ordinance is often turned another way, by the corrupt, proud, unbroken hearts of men, and the malice of satan.

Again, it should teach us, not to think the worse of any for the disgraces of the times. The watchmen here take away the veil of the church, and her forwardness is disgraced by them. Let us take heed therefore that we entertain not rash, hard thoughts of others, upon the entertainment they find in the world, or among those that have a standing in the church; for so we should condemn Christ himself, who was judged of the priests, scribes, and pharisees in his times. And this hath been the lot of the church in all ages; the true members thereof were called heretics and schismatics; the veil was taken off. It is the pride of man's heart, that when it cannot raise itself by its own worth, it will endeavour to raise itself by the ruin of others' credit through lying slanders, as was the devil's practice. So the credit of the church must be first taken away, and then she is wounded. It is a usual proverb, those that kill a dog, first make the world believe he was mad: so they always first traduced the church to the world, and then persecuted her. In this case, it is the innocency of the dove that is to be laboured for, and withal the wisdom of the serpent. And if that will not avail, (as it may not; for Christ was wisdom itself, yet he suffered most,) when wisdom and innocency will not avail to ward off sufferings, then we must labour for patience, knowing that one hair of our heads shall not fall to the ground without the providence of the Almighty. Only let us commend our case, as Christ did, by faith and prayer to God that judgeth, and leave all to him.

After all this ill usage that the church met with from the watchmen, she carries her complaint to other professors less eminent than they. "I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if you see my beloved, that you tell him that I am sick of love." Whence we may learn, that if we find not comfort in one means, we must have recourse to another. If we find not Christ in this ordinance, seek him in that; and perhaps we shall find him where we least thought of him. Sometimes there is

more comfort in the society of poor Christians, than of the watchmen themselves. In this solemn charge here given by the church, we have observable, first, the parities charged, the daughters of Jerusalem; the daughters of the church, which is called Jerusalem, from these resemblances between Jerusalem and the church; as, 1. Jerusalem "was a city compact in itself," (as the Psalmist saith); so is the church, the body of Christ. Jerusalem was chosen from all places of the world, to be the seat of God; so the church is the seat of Christ. He dwells there, in the hearts of his children. In Jerusalem records were kept of the names of all the citizens there: so the names of all the true citizens of the church are written in the book of life in heaven. The daughters of Jerusalem, therefore, are the true members of the church, and nourished in the church.

We have likewise observable, secondly, the charge given to the daughters of Jerusalem, "If you find my beloved, tell him, that I am sick of love:" that is, I charge you, as you love me your sister, as you love Christ, as you tender my case, that am thus used, "tell him that I am sick of love." The point observable here is, that at such times as we find not our spirits enlarged, then is a time to desire the prayers and help of others. Those thrive the best that have most prayers made for them, that have a stock going in every country. There is a wondrous force in the prayers of Christians one for another. See how the great apostle Paul desires the Romans, that they would contend with God by their joint prayers for him. So he desires the Thessalonians to pray for him, "that he might be delivered from unreasonable men." It is usual with him to say, *pray, pray*, and for us too. A true Christian's prayers are of much esteem with God. Despise none in this case; for such are gracious in the court of heaven. Our blessed Saviour himself, when he was in the garden, though his poor disciples were sleepy, yet would have their society and prayers.

“ I am sick of love.” The more excellent the thing is that is loved, the more contentment there is in communion with it ; and where it is hindered, there is disquiet. Answerable to the satisfaction in enjoying, is the grief in parting. The happiness of the church consisting in society with Christ, it is her misery to be deprived of him. There are few in the world sick of this disease ; I would there were more sick of the love of Christ. Talk with a man that is in any heat of affections, you talk with one that is not at home. The soul is more where it loves than where it dwells. Surely where the love of Christ is in any strength, it draws up the soul, so that a man oftentimes in his calling and ordinary employments doth not heed them, but passeth through the world, as a man at random ; he regards not the things of the world ; for Christ is gotten into his heart, and draws all the affections to himself. Where love is strong, it cares not what it suffers for the party loved ; nay, it glories in it. As it is said of the disciples, when they were scourged for preaching the gospel, it was a matter of glory to them. Where the love of Christ is, labour is no labour, suffering is no suffering, trouble is no trouble. Labour we therefore every day, more and more, to have larger and larger affections to Christ. The more a man loves Christ, the more joyful he is, when he thinks of those mutual embracings, when Christ and his soul shall meet in heaven. In the mean time he thankfully frequents the places where Christ is present in the Word and sacraments.

Upon this charge of the church to the daughters of Jerusalem, they reply unto her, wondering at her earnestness : “ What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women ? What is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us ? ” The church is the fairest among mankind in the judgment of Christ, so he calls her, Cant. i. 8, “ O thou fairest among women ; ” and here the fellow-members of the church term her so too. But how comes she to be thus fair ? 1. In regard that she is clothed with Christ’s

robes. We were all ennobled with the image of God at the first ; but after we had sinned, we were bereft of that image ; therefore now all our beauty must be clothing, which is not natural but borrowed. The beauty of the church now comes from the head of the church, Christ ; she shines in the beams of her husband ; (as the woman clothed with the sun, mentioned Rev. xii.) not only in justification, but in sanctification also. 2. She is fair, as from Christ's imputative righteousness, so from his righteousness inherent in her, the graces she hath from him ; for of him we receive grace for grace. There is never a grace, but it is beautiful and fair ; for what is grace, but the beams of Christ, the Sun of Righteousness ? So that all must be fair that comes from the first Fair, all beautiful that comes from the first Beauty. " But she is black." She is so indeed, and she confesseth herself to be so, Cant. i. 5, " I am black but comely ;" she is indeed black in regard of the afflictions and persecutions she meets with in this world. She is black also, through the envy of the world, that looks more at her faults than virtues. Lastly, she is black, in respect of her infirmities, being subject to weakness and passions as other men. The beauty of the church is inward and altogether undiscerned to the carnal eye.

" What is thy beloved, more than another beloved ?" We see, these of the church here were stirred up by the examples of other members of the church to be inquisitive after Christ. Hence observe, there is a wondrous force in the examples of Christians to stir up one another. Let us labour therefore to be exemplary to others, and to express the graces of God ; for thus we shall do more than we are aware. There is a secret influence in a good example, though a man say nothing. There is a way to profit from a good man, though he hold his peace. His course of life speaks loud. We owe this to all, even to them that are without, to do them so much good, as to give them a good example ; and we wrong them when we do not, and hinder their coming on by an evil, or a

dead example. And let this be one motive to stir us up to it, that answerable to the good we do in this kind shall be our comfort in life and death, and our reward after death. For the more spreading our good is, either in word, life, or conversation, the more our consciences shall be settled in the consideration of a life well spent. Our reward shall be answerable to our communication and diffusion of good. Otherwise, it will lie heavy on our consciences, not only in this life, but at the day of judgment, and after, when we shall think not only of the personal ill that we stand guilty of, but exemplary ill also. It should move us also to look to all good examples. Wherefore are good examples, but that we should follow them? We shall not only be answerable for abuse of knowledge, but also of good examples we have had and neglected. Doth God kindle lights for us, and shall we not walk by their light? It is a sin not to attend to and consider the sun, the moon, the stars, the heavens, the works of nature and Providence; much more not to regard the works of grace.

But let us observe here, the church coming to the daughters of Jerusalem, and speaking of Christ, her beloved, that she is "sick of love;" the daughters of Jerusalem are inquisitive to know Christ more and more. Here is the benefit of holy conference. One thing draws on another, and that draws on another, till at length the soul is warmed with the consideration of heavenly things. Sometimes though we know that which we ask of others as well as they do; yet notwithstanding, good speeches will draw us to know it better, by giving occasion to speak more of it, wherewith the Spirit works more effectually and imprints it deeper; so that it shall be a more rooted knowledge than before. For that doth good that is graciously known; and that is graciously known that the Spirit seals upon our souls. Perhaps the knowledge I have is not yet sealed sufficiently, it is not rooted by conference. Though I hear the same things again, yet I may hear them in a fresh manner, and so may have them

-sealed deeper than before. Experience finds these things to be true. Christians should be inquisitive concerning the right path which leads to heaven ; inquisitive of the excellency of Christ. It is good to raise questions of the practice of all necessary points, and to improve the gifts of others that we converse with, to give satisfaction. Perhaps God hath laid up in others satisfaction to our souls, and hath so determined that we shall be perplexed with scruples, till we have recourse to some, whom he hath appointed to be helpful to us in this kind. Many go mourning a great part of their days, because they do not open their state to others. You see here the contrary practice of these professors ; they double the question to the church, “ What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women, what is thy beloved more than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us ? ”

Now comes the church's answer to these professors' questions, setting forth her beloved's beauty : “ My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand.” We will take that which is safe, because we will have sure footing (as near as we can) in this mystical portion of Scripture. A complexion mixed of white and ruddy, is the most beautiful, therefore the church sets out the beauty and spiritual excellency of Christ thereby. But this may be understood of that most excellent mixture that makes such a gracefulness in Christ. In him there is wonderful purity and holiness, and yet a wonderful weakness. There is the great God, and a picce of earth, in one person ; a body pierced, and a glorious shining, body ; humility and glory : justice, wonderful justice, and yet exceeding love and mercy ; justice to his enemies, mercy to his children. Therefore Bernard saith well, “ When I think of Christ, I think at once of God, full of majesty and glory, and at the same time of man, full of meekness, gentleness, and sweetness.” So let us consider Christ as the great God, and withal as a meek man ; the one to establish our souls,

that he is able to do great matters, the other to draw us to him because he loves us. We are afraid to go to God, a consuming fire ; but let us think we go to our brother, to one that loved us more than his own life, and this will endear him to us, and make him lovely in our eyes. Indeed he is spiritually lovely, "the chiefest of ten thousand." The church sets him out by comparison, a standard-bearer of ten thousand. For, as the goodliest men use to carry the ensign, the banner ; so he, the goodliest of all others, is the standard-bearer. What is excellent in the heavens ? The sun ? So Christ is the Sun of Righteousness. The stars ? He is the bright morning star. The light ? "He is the light of the world." Come to all creatures, you have not any excellence among them, but Christ is styled from it : "He is the lion of the tribe of Judah, the lily and the rose, and the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world, the tree of life." There is not a thing necessary to nature, but you have a style from it given to Christ, to shew that he is as necessary as bread and water, and the food of life. When we see light, therefore, think of the true Light ; when the sun, think of the Sun of Righteousness. So remember the bread and water of life in our common food. Therefore the sacraments were ordained, that as we go to the sea by the conduct of rivers, so we might go to the sea of all excellency and goodness, by the conduct of these rivers of goodness to be led by every excellency in the creature to that of our Mediator, Christ, who is "the chiefest among ten thousand."

To come more particularly to speak of his excellencies. Omitting his two natures in one person, God and man, consider his offices, a King, Priest, and Prophet. He being the chief in all these, all good kings before him were types of him ; as also the prophets and priests. He was all in one. Never any before him was king, priest, and prophet, as he was King, Priest, and Prophet in one. Such a king, as is King of kings, and subdueth things unconquerable to all other kings, the world, death,

hell, and sin : such a king as rules over the soul and conscience (the best part of a man) where he established peace : such a king as sets up his kingdom in our hearts, guides our thoughts, desires, actions, and affections : such a king as carries the government on his shoulders, and devolves not the care to another. So that in regard of this office, he is "the chiefest among ten thousand."

Again, as a priest : such an high-priest as offered himself a sacrifice by his eternal Spirit. He, as God, offered up his manhood : such a priest as hath satisfied the wrath of God, and reconciled God to man : such a priest as never dies, but lives for ever to make intercession for us in heaven, by virtue of that sacrifice which he offered in the days of his flesh. He was both priest and sacrifice : such a priest as is touched with our infirmities, so mild is he and gentle : so full of pity and mercy. No priest to this priest ; God only smelt a sweet smell from this sacrifice. And for his prophetic office : he is a prophet beyond all others ; such a one as can instruct the soul. Other men can propound doctrines, but he can open the understanding, and hath the key of the heart, the key of David, which can open the soul. By his Holy Spirit he can make the simple full of knowledge. He is such a prophet as hath his chair in the very heart of a man. This great bishop of our souls, the Angel of the covenant, the Messenger of the Father, is the "chief of ten thousand," whether you consider him as a King, Priest, or Prophet.

Let us then that profess ourselves to be in Christ, to be joined to him that is thus excellent, make him the rule of our choice in other things. In the choice of friends, choose such as are friends to Christ. Take heed of society with idolaters or with profane persons. If we are joined to Christ, then let us join to none but those that we can enjoy with Christ. In marriage let the rule of choice be the love of Christ. And let the measure of our respect to all things be the respect to Christ. Let us measure our love to wife and children, to kindred, friends, and to all creatures whatsoever, so as it may stand with

love to Christ. Obey in the Lord, marry in the Lord, do all things in the Lord, so as may stand with the love and allowance of the Lord. And if Christ be set in the highest place in our heart ; if we crown him there, and make him King of kings and Lord of lords, in a hearty submitting of all the affections of the soul to him ; while the soul continues in that frame, it cannot be drawn to sin, discomfort, and despair. The honours, pleasures, and profits of men, what are these to Christ ? When the soul is rightly possessed of Christ and of his excellency, it disdains that any thing should come in competition with him. Again, this exalting of Christ stands firm against all discouragements ; for it sets Christ against all, who is the " chief of ten thousand." The soul will set Christ against the wrath of God, against Satan and all our spiritual enemies. Christ is the Angel of the covenant. Satan is a lion, a roaring lion ; Christ is the Lion of the tribe of Judah : satan a serpent, a dragon ; but Christ is the true brazen serpent, the very looking upon whom will take away all the stings of satan. Faith overcometh the world ; all things in the world ; on the right hand, pleasures, and profits, and honours ; and on left hand, threatenings, pains, losses, and disgraces, by setting Christ against all.

If we would thus value Christ, we must beg of God a Spirit that we may judge aright of our corruptions. For in what measure we discern the heighth and breadth, and depth of our corrupt nature, in that measure shall we judge of the heighth, and breadth, and depth of the excellency of Christ. The sweetest souls are the most humble souls. Those that love Christ most, are those that have been stung most with the sense of their sins. " Where sin most abounds," in the sense and feeling of it, " grace much more abounds" in the sense and feeling of that. Did ever soul love Christ more than that woman that had so many devils east out of her ? It is our Saviour Christ's own reason, therefore those two go always with the true church : 1. The true knowledge of the corruption of nature : and 2. The true feeling of

it, with hearty sorrow for it. In popery they slight original sin; actual sins are venial sins; and many sins are no sins. And therefore they think so slightly of Christ, that they join saints, works, and satisfactions, with him; because they know not the depth of the malady, how black sin is, what a cursed estate we are in by nature. They have slight, shallow, and weak conceits of sin, therefore they have weak and shallow conceits of Christ, and of his righteousness.

The church had given a general description of Christ before, as the chiefest among ten thousand; she now descends to particulars: "His head is as fine gold, his locks are bushy and black as a raven."

As God and man, his head is as fine gold; that is, his government is a most sweet and golden government. Dan. ii. you have an image of the monarchies, the first whereof had a golden head, which was the Chaldean. The best monarchy is set out by the best metal, gold. So Christ, the head of the church, is a precious head, a head of gold. A head hath an eminency above all other, an influence and motion above all other parts. So this golden head is more eminent than all, governs the whole church, and hath influence on all. "In him we live, and move, and have our being." "His locks are bushy and black as a raven." I think this is but complimentary, to fill up the other, therefore not particularly to be dwelt upon. "His eyes are as doves' eyes by the rivers of waters, washed with milk and fitly set." His eyes are as doves' eyes, cleansed and washed, that they may be the clearer and see better. The dove hath many enemies, especially birds of prey; therefore God hath given that creature a quick sight. Thus the Scripture helps us to conceive of the quickness of Christ's eye. Rev. v. 6, Christ is set forth, as having seven eyes, and seven horns. He hath not only horns of power, as the enemies have horns of violence; but seven eyes: that is, a quick sight to see all the dangers the church is in. Seven is a word of perfection; and in that he is said to have seven eyes; it means, that he hath many eyes, an accurate sight.

He hath an eye of providence over the whole world. All things are naked and open before his eyes ; he can see through us ; he knows our very hearts and reins ; which he must do, because he must be our judge. He that is judge of all, had need to have eyes that will pierce through all. " His cheeks are as beds of spices, and as sweet flowers." Cheeks are the grace of the face ; they are used here to denote the presence of Christ ; not only his glorious presence in heaven, but his spiritual presence in his ordinances here : this is as spices and flowers. Indeed, cheeks, face, and presence present colours to the eyes ; and not smells ; as spices and flowers, which are the object of another sense. But you must note, that Christ is the object of all the senses. He is not only beauty to the eye, but sweetness to the smell and to the taste. Therefore faith hath the name of all the senses, to see, hear, taste, and smell, and doth all, because it carries us to Christ, that is instead of all to us.

In speaking of the particulars that follow, we are to be very wary, for we have not that foundation as we have in other generals. No doubt the Spirit of God did more intend to set out the large affection that the church had to Christ, than to insinuate any great particularity in every one of these : therefore let us only cull out, and take those things that are of more easy explication. " His lips are as lilies dropping down sweet myrrh." That is, his doctrine is as sweet as the lilies, and like myrrh, keeping from putrefaction. The speech of Christ makes the soul sound that embraceth it. This is one excellency of Christ and his truth, that it preserves the soul in a pure state. There is nothing keeps the soul but the Word ; whereas, on the other side, error is of a putrefying nature, corrupting and defiling the soul. What was ever more sweet than the truth of Christ ? When he spake himself, they all hung upon his lips. Grace was in his lips ; all was sweet that came from him ; his words were dyed in the affections of his heart. In the learned language, the same word signifieth speech and

reason ; therefore Christ's speeches were sweet, because his heart was full of love, mercy, and goodness. Beloved, let us hence take a trial of ourselves what our condition is ; whether the words that come from Christ, when he speaks in his ministry to us, be sweet or not. The word to some men, is like the northern air, which parcheth and cutteth. Ahab could not endure the breath of Elijah ; nor Herodias the breath of John the Baptist ; nor the pharisees the breath of Stephen and Paul. So many now cannot endure the breath of Divine Truth when it cuts and pierceth. These words are arrows that stick ; if they stick not savingly, they stick killingly. But if we cannot endure Christ's breath, we are not his spouse, nor have any communion with him.

“ His hands are as gold rings set with beryl.” Hands are the instruments of action. Christ's actions are precious. Whatsoever he doth to the church, may even when he doth use evil men to afflict, he hath a hand there, a golden, a precious hand. In the evil hand of wicked men God doth all things by Christ ; he is as it were God's hand which all things pass through. “ His belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires.” His belly ; that is, his inward parts : in the Hebrew it is used for the inward affections. They are as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires ; that is, they are pure. All Christ's affections are wondrous good ; his love, his desires, his joys, his hatred, all are pure ; like pure water in a crystal, it may be stirred sometimes, but still it is clear, there are no dregs at the bottom. “ His legs are as pillars of marble set on sockets of fine gold :” that is, all his ways are constant and firm even as pillars of marble. Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. In regard of his enemies, Rev. i. he is set out in another manner, as having legs of brass to trample them in pieces ; but in respect of his constant truth and ways of goodness to his church, his legs are as pillars of marble. “ His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.” Lebanon was a goodly forest, lying on the North side of Judea,

wherein were excellent plants of all kinds, especially cedars. Christ's countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars: that is, his presence is stately and majestic; so it is, and will be, when he shews himself for the vindicating of his church. Then the enemies thereof shall know that his presence is as Lebanon, and excellent as the cedars. "His mouth is most sweet." She doubles this commendation: she had said before, "His lips are as lilies dropping sweet myrrh;" here she saith again of his mouth, "it is most sweet," to shew, that the chief lovely thing in Christ comes from his heart, by his words and lips. The most excellent thing we can think of, is the expression of the heart of God in Christ, and of Christ's love to us. "He is altogether lovely:" lovely to God, to us, to the soul; lovely to him that can best judge of loveliness; God cannot but love his own image. He is lovely also, as man; for he was pure and holy; lovely, as Mediator by office; for he was anointed by God to convey the Father's love to us. He must needs be lovely, in whom all others are loved. "This is my beloved Son," (said God,) "in whom I am well pleased;" out of him I am well pleased with none. And indeed he was filled with all graces that might make him lovely. All the treasures of wisdom are in him; he is made a storehouse of all that is good for us. Christ is lovely to God his Father, in whatsoever he did or suffered. God loved him especially, "because he was obedient even unto the death of the cross, therefore God gave him a name above all names, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow both in heaven and earth." The angels look upon him with admiration, they attend him, and account it an honour to wait upon him. He is lovely to all above us, and shall he not be lovely to us?

But you will say, "Was he lovely when he was nailed on the cross, hung between two thieves; when he wore a crown of thorns, was whipped, lay grovelling on the ground; when he sweat water and blood; when he was laid in his grave?" Oh! yes, then he was most lovely

of all to us. By how much the more he was abased for us, this makes him more lovely. When greatness and goodness meet together, how goodly is it! Majesty alone is not lovely, but awful; but joined with such condescending grace is wondrous amiable. How lovely a sight is it to see so great a person to be so meek and gentle? It was so lovely in the eyes of the disciples, that they stood and wondered to see him, who was the eternal Word of the Father, condescend to talk with a poor Samaritan woman. And what loveliness of carriage was in him to Peter, after he had denied and forsworn him, yet to love him as much as ever he did before. In a word, what sweetness, gentleness, bowels of meekness and compassion, did he always discover to all those that were in misery!

Is Christ altogether lovely, so lovely to us, and so beloved of God the Father? Let us then rest upon his righteousness; for God cannot refuse that righteousness, whose subject is altogether lovely. Let us come clothed in the garments of our elder brother, and then we need not doubt of acceptance; for if we put on Christ's righteousness, we put on God's righteousness, and then how can God hate us? No more than he hates his own Son; nay, he loves us, and that with the same love wherewith he loves him; for he loves whole Christ mystical, head and members. Let this strengthen our faith then, that if Christ be so altogether lovely in himself and to the Father, then we may rest ourselves on the acceptance of his mediation that is so beloved a mediator. Again, if Christ be so lovely, here only we have whereupon to spend the marrow of our best affections. Is it not pity we should lose so much of our affections as we do upon other things? Christ is altogether lovely, why should we dote upon other things, and set up idols in our hearts? Is he altogether lovely, and shall not he have altogether our affections? Let us labour to place all our love, joy, and delight upon Christ, "who is altogether lovely." When we suffer a pure stream to run through a

dirty channel, our affections to run after the things of the world, which are worse than ourselves, we lose our affections and ourselves. Let therefore the whole stream of our affections be carried unto Christ. Love him, and whatsoever is his; for he being altogether lovely, all that comes from him is lovely; his promises, his directions, his counsels, his children, his sacraments are all lovely. Whatsoever hath the stamp of Christ upon it, let us love it; we cannot bestow our hearts better. To lose ourselves in the love of Christ, and to forget ourselves and the love of all, yea, to hate all in comparison of him, and to account all dung and dross compared with Christ, is the only way to find ourselves. And indeed we have a better condition in him, than in the world, or in ourselves. Severed from him, our condition is vain, and will become nothing; but what we may have in him is admirable and everlasting. We cannot conceive the happiness which we poor wretches are advanced to in Christ, and what excellent things abide for us from the love of God to us in Christ. Therefore let us labour to kindle in our hearts an affection towards Christ, all that we can, considering that he is thus lovely.

Let us now make a trial, whether Christ be thus lovely to us or not. How do we value him? What place should he have in our hearts? If he be the chief of ten thousand, let us rather offend ten thousand than offend him. Let us say with Asaph, "Whom have I in heaven but thee!" and when the soul can say to Christ or any that is Christ's, (for I speak of him in the latitude of his truths, promises, sacraments, and communion with his children,) "what have I in heaven but thee!" then it is in a happy condition. In the next place, are we ready to suffer for Christ? We see the church here endures any thing for Christ. She was misused of the watchmen, and her veil taken away, yet notwithstanding she loves Christ still. Do we stand ready to suffer for Christ, to be disgraced and censured, and yet are we resolved not

to give over? Nay, do we love Christ the more, and stick to his truth the faster? Certainly where the love of Christ is, there is a spirit of fortitude. You have some that for frowns of greatness, fear of loss, or hope of rising, will warp their conscience and do any thing. Where now is love to Christ? He that loves Christ, loves him the more for his cross. The more we suffer for him, the more dear he will be to us. For he doth present himself in love and comfort most to those that suffer for him; therefore their love is increased.

Again, where love is, there it enlargeth the heart, which being enlarged enlargeth the tongue also. The church hath never enough of commending Christ, and of setting out his praise. Love will alter a man's disposition, as we see in experience. Love will make a man of base nature liberal; him that is slow of speech, eloquent. Let a man love Christ, and though before he could not speak a word in commendation of him, you shall have him speaking and labouring earnestly in the praises of God. Those that cannot speak of Christ, or for Christ, where is their love? Put any worldly man to speak of what he loves, he hath wit and words at will; but put him to a theme of piety, and he is out of his element. But it is not so with those that have felt the love of God in Christ. How full is St. Paul? He cannot speak of Christ, but he is in the height, breadth, length, and depth of the love of God in Christ, and the knowledge of God above all knowledge! Again, the church here is never content till she find Christ. Whatsoever she had, nothing contents her while she wants her beloved: she goes up and down inquisitive after him till she find him. So it is with a Christian, if he have lost (by his own fault,) his former communion with Christ, he will not rest nor be satisfied, but searcheth in the use of this and that means; he runs through all God's ordinances till he find Christ; nothing in the world will content him, neither honour, riches, place, nor friends, till he find that which he once enjoyed, but hath now

lost, the comfort and assurance of God's love in Christ. If a man can sit down contented with other things, and want Christ and the assurance of salvation, it is a sign that man is in an ill condition. The desire of a Christian soul is ever after Christ; it longs oftentimes even to be dissolved, and to be with Christ. The saints in the New Testament are set out by this description, they were such as loved the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. How can it be otherwise? If they love Christ, they love the appearing of Christ, wherein we shall be made lovely as he is lovely.

You see how large the church is in setting out the excellency of her beloved; and then she shuts up all, (being able to say no more,) justifying our cause, "This is my beloved, and this is my friend." Do you wonder that I seek so much after him? Or, wonder you at Christians, when they take such pains to keep their communion with Christ, in a holy walking with God? These are no wonders, if you consider how excellent Christ is, what he hath done for us, and what he keeps for us in another world; that he will preserve us to his heavenly kingdom, till he put us in possession of that glorious condition that he hath purchased. Let the hearts of men dwell upon these things, and you shall see that God's children are rather to be blamed that they are not more careful, watchful, and industrious, than to be taxed that they are so too much.

Now the daughters of Jerusalem hearing the church express her affection for her beloved so ardently, and give so glorious a description of him, they inquire of her farther, "Whither is thy beloved gone, O thou fairest among women? Whither is thy beloved turned aside, that we may seek him with thee?" And indeed if their former question, "What is Christ above all others," be answered satisfactorily, this will follow, Where is he? How shall I seek him? For if we did once know what Christ is, we should be sure, with the daughters of Jerusalem, to ask, Whither is he gone, that we may seek him

with thee? Now because it is the special office of the ministry to unfold the hidden mysteries of Christ, labour we therefore to be alway speaking somewhat about Christ, or tending that way. When we speak of the law, let it drive us to Christ; when of moral duties, to teach us to walk worthy of Christ. Christ, or somewhat tending to Christ, should be our theme and mark to aim at.

Thus far of the question. Now we have the church's answer to the daughters of Jerusalem, "My beloved is gone into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies." The questions were not for a bare satisfaction, but from a desire they, that proposed them, had to seek Christ; therefore the church answered, "My beloved is gone into his garden to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens." The church directly answers the question; for there is no envy in spiritual things. In grace and glory all may share alike. God hath two gardens, one on earth and one in heaven. The church catholic is his garden on earth; and every particular church is a bed of spices; in regard that many Christians are sown there, that Christ's soul delights in it as in sweet spices. "To feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies:" that is, having first planted them, he comes to gather them, and transport them out of the garden here to the garden in heaven. Those that are good plants in the paradise of the church, shall be glorious plants in the paradise of heaven. Christians are compared to lilies for their purity and whiteness, being unspotted, first, in justification; and afterwards in holiness, wherein at length (though they may have gotten some fresh spots,) they shall be wholly unspotted. It is the end (Eph. i. 4,) they are chosen to, "to be holy, without blame before him, in love."

This may comfort us in all wants whatsoever: God will take care of us. Christ useth this argument; God, saith he, "clotheth the lilies of the field;" he cares even for the meanest plants, "and will he not take care for

you, O ye of little faith?" Doth he care for lilies "that are to-day, and to-morrow are cast into the oven," and shall he not care for the lilies of paradise? Undoubtedly he will. Our Saviour Christ's reason is undeniable; he that puts such a beauty upon the poor plants that flourish in the morning and wither before night; he that puts such a beauty upon the grass of the field, will he not put more excellency upon his children? Will he not provide for them, feed them? Undoubtedly he will. Christ is said to gather these lilies; that is, he will gather them together. Christ will not have his lilies scattered; though he leaves them oft alone for awhile, yet he will gather them to congregations and churches. The name of a church in the original is, *ecclesia*, which is nothing but a company gathered out of the world. Do we think that we are lilies by nature? No, we are thorns and briars. God makes us lilies, and then gathers us to other lilies, that one may strengthen another. The Spirit of God in his children is not a spirit of separation of Christians from Christians; but a spirit of separation from the waste wilderness of the world. The Spirit of God severs thorns, and gathers lilies; gathers Christians together in the church, and will gather them for ever into heaven.

Now follows a kind of triumphant acclamation upon all the former passages. When the church had spoken formerly of her ill dealing with Christ, and how he thereupon absented himself from her, she shuts up all with this, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies." She now begins to feel some comfort from Christ, who had estranged himself from her for awhile: O! saith she, notwithstanding all my sufferings, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." Words passionately expressing long looked-for consolation, and the wondrous joy and content, the church now had in Christ, having her heart enflamed with love unto him, upon his manifesting himself to her soul. Affections have eloquence of their own. Fear

hath a proper expression. Love vents itself in broken words and sighs, in a peculiar eloquence suitable to the height of the affection. So that here is more in the words breathed from such an inflamed heart than in ordinary construction can be picked out.

And, first, they express the union of persons which is before all comfort and communion of graces; "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." Christ's person is ours, and our persons are his; for as it is in marriage, if the person of the husband be not the wife's, his goods are not hers, (for these come all to her, because his person is hers,) so it is in this mystical marriage; that which entitles us to communion of graces, is union of persons betwixt Christ and his church. And indeed nothing else will content a Christian; he would not care so much for any ordinance, not for heaven itself, if he had not Christ there.

From this union of persons comes a communion of all other things whatsoever. If Christ himself be mine, then all is mine; what he hath done, what he hath suffered is mine; his privilege to be the Son of God, and heir of heaven, is mine. Why? Because he himself is mine. So it is here with the church: "I am my beloved's," my person is his, to glorify him, and to lay it down when he will; my goods are his, my reputation his; I am content to sacrifice all for him; I am his, all mine is his. So you see there is mutual union and communion. The original hereof is Christ's uniting and communicating himself to his church first. What hath the stream or cistern in it, but what is had from the spring? "We love him, because he loved us first." It was a true speech of Augustine, Whatsoever is good in the world or lovely, it is either God or from God; it is either Christ or from Christ. It is said in nature, love descends; the father and the mother love the child, before the child can love them. Love, indeed, is of a fiery nature; only here is the dissimilitude, fire ascends, love descends; it is stronger descending from the greater

to the less, than ascending from the meaner to the greater. God loves us more than we can love him. Neither is there only a priority of order, (he loves us first, and then we love him;) but also of causality, he is the cause of our love; not by way of motive only, (he loves us, and therefore from an ingenuous spirit we must love him again;) but he gives us his Spirit, circumciseth our hearts to love him; for all the motives or moral persuasions in the world, without the Spirit, cannot make us love. We are taught of God to love one another, our brethren whom we see daily; much more need we be taught to love him whom we never saw: so that his love kindles ours by way of reflection. God works both parts, his own and our parts too; our love to him, our fear of him, our faith in him; he works all, even as he shews his own love to us. If God love us thus, what must we do? Meditate upon his love; let our hearts be warmed with the consideration of it; let us bring them to that fire of his love, and then they will wax hot within us, and beg the Spirit; Lord thou hast promised to give thy Spirit to them that ask it, and to circumcise our hearts to love thee, and to love one another; give thy Holy Spirit as thou hast promised. In fine, these words, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine;" to join them both together, implies a mutual propriety: Christ hath a propriety in me, and I in Christ. Christ is mine, and so as I have none in the world beside: "Whom have I in heaven but Christ? And what is there in earth in comparison of him?" He is mine, and mine in a peculiar manner; and I am his in a peculiar manner.

Again: these words imply mutual love. All is mutual in them; mutual propriety, mutual peculiarity, and mutual love. I love Christ so as I love nothing else; as Christ loves me and every Christian more than any thing else. He loves all, and gives outward benefits to all, but to me he hath given himself. As the husband loves all in the family, his cattle and his servants, but he gives himself to his spouse. So Christ is mine, himself is mine,

and myself am Christ's. He hath my soul, my affections, my body, and all; he hath a propriety in me, and a peculiarity in me; he hath my affection and love to the uttermost, as I have his. And they imply mutual familiarity. Christ is familiar to my soul, and I to Christ. He discovers himself to me in the secret of his love, and I discover myself to him in prayer and meditation, opening my soul to him upon all occasions. God's children have a spirit of prayer, which is a spirit of fellowship, and talks (as it were,) to God in Christ. It is the language of a new-born Christian: he cries to his Father. There is a kind of familiarity between him and his God in Christ, who gives the entrance and access to God.

Then again they imply mutual likeness. He is mine, and I am his; the one is a glass to the other. Christ sees himself in me, I see myself in him. For this is the issue of spiritual love, especially that it breeds resemblance of the party loved in the soul that loveth. I am his, I resemble him; I am his, I carry his picture in my soul. Christ out of love became like me in all things, except wherein I am like the devil; and if he became like me, I will be as like him as possible. Every Christian carries the character of Christ's disposition. You may know Christ in every Christian; for as the king's coin carries the stamp of the king, Cæsar's coin bears Cæsar's superscription; so every Christian soul is God's coin, and he sets his own stamp upon it. Again: these words, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine," imply a mutual care that Christ and the soul have one of the good of another. As Christ hath a care of our good; so a Christian must needs have a care of Christ's good, of his children, religion, and truth. What? will such a soul say, Shall Christ care for my body, soul, and salvation, and stoop to come from heaven to save me, and shall I have no care for him and his glory? He hath left his truth and his church behind him, and shall not I defend his truth, and stand for the poor church to

the utmost of my power? Likewise there is implied a mutual complacency in these words. Christ hath a complacency and resting in the church, and the church hath a sweet resting contentment in Christ; Christ in us, and we in him. A true Christian, when vexed and in trouble, can rely on this, I have yet a loving husband, yet I have Christ.

Let this put us upon a search into ourselves, what we have recourse to when we meet with afflictions. Those that have beastly souls have recourse to carnal contentments, to good fellowship; whereas a soul that hath any acquaintance with God in Christ, so that it may say, Christ is mine, and I am Christ's, will find contentment and rest in him, whatsoever it meets with in the world. "But how comes Christ to be ours?" Christ is ours by his Father's gift: God hath given him for us. Christ is ours by his own gift; he hath given himself for us. And Christ is ours by his Spirit, that witnesseth so much to our spirits; for the Spirit is given for this purpose, to shew us all things that are given us of God, whereof Christ is the chief. Therefore the Spirit of Christ tells us that Christ is ours; and Christ being ours, all that he hath is ours. That you may the more fully feed on this, study the excellencies of Christ in the Scriptures; the riches and honour that he hath, the favour he is in with his Father, with the intercession that he makes in heaven; study his mercy, goodness, offices and power, and then come home to yourselves, saying, "All this is mine, for Christ is mine; the love of God is mine, for God loves him, and therefore he loves me, because we are both one. He loves me with the same love as that with which he loves his Son. Thus we should make use of this, that Christ is ours.

"But how are we Christ's?" 1. We are his by his Father's gift; for God gave him for us, and gives us to him, as it is in the excellent prayer, John xvii. 6, "Father, thine they were, and thou gavest them me." I had not them of myself first, but thine they were; thou

gavest them me to redeem them; I die for them; I sanctify myself for them, that they may be sanctified. 2. We are his by redemption: Christ took our nature, that he might die for us to purchase us. We cost him dear. As that froward woman wrongfully said to Moses, "Thou art a bloody husband unto me:" so Christ may without wrong say to the church, "Thou art a spouse of blood to me. We were indeed to be his spouse; but first he must win us by conquest, in regard of satan, and then satisfy justice. We were in such debt by sin, lying under God's wrath, so that till all debts were paid, we could not, in the way of justice, be given as a spouse to Christ. 3. We are Christ's by marriage also; for when he purchased us, and paid so dear for us; when he died and satisfied Divine justice, he did it with a purpose to espouse us to himself. We have nothing to bring him but debt and misery, yet he took upon him our nature to discharge all, that he might wed us, and take us to himself. 4. We are his by consent: we have passed ourselves over unto him, he hath given himself to us, and we have given ourselves to him back again.

To come to some uses of this, if we are Christ's, as Christ is ours, 1. It is a point of wondrous comfort, God will not suffer his own to want. When we are of Christ's family, and not only of his family but of his body, his spouse, can we think he will suffer us to want that which is needful? 2. It fenceth us against all the accusations of satan. I am Christ's. If satan hath any thing to say, let him go to Christ. So in all temptations, send satan whither he should be sent; that is, to Christ. 3. This is ground of comfort for the time to come, we are Christ's as well as he is ours. What a plea doth this put into our mouths, for all things that are beneficial to us? "Lord, I am thine, save me," (saith the Psalmist.) Why save me? Because I am thine. "I am thine, Lord, teach me and direct me." The husband is to direct the spouse, the head should direct all the senses. All the treasures of wisdom are in Christ, as all the senses are in the head for

the good of the body. All fulness dwells in him; therefore plead with him, I want wisdom, teach me how to behave in troubles, in dangers, in fears. If it be an argument strong enough amongst men, (weak men,) I am thine, I am thy child, I am thy spouse: shall we attribute more merey to ourselves, than to the God of merey and eomfort, who planted these affections in the creature? Shall he make men tender and careful over others, and shall not he himself be careful of his own flock? Do we think that he will neglect his jewels, his spouse, his diadem and erown? He will not.

But you will urge experience; "We see how the church is used even as a forlorn widow, as if she had no husband in the world; as an orphan that hath no father; therefore, how doth this stand good?" The answer is, All that the church or any particular Christian suffers in this world, it is but that there may be a eomformity between the spouse and the husband. The head wore a crown of thorns, and went to heaven through misery and abasement in the world, the lowest that ever was: and it is not meet that the church should go to heaven another way. And what hurt do afflictions do? They only drive the church nearer to Christ. The church hath never sweeter eommunion with Christ than under the greatest crosses; and therefore they many times have proved the ground of the greatest eomforts. Thus we see what springs from this, that Christ is ours, and that we are Christ's. Let us carry this with us even unto death; and if times should come that God should honour us by serving himself of us in our lives,—if Christ will have us spend our blood, consider this,—I am not mine own, in life nor death; and it is my happiness that I am not mine own; for if I were mine own, what should I do with myself? I should lose myself, as Adam did. It is therefore my happiness that I am not mine own, that I am not the world's, that I am not the devil's, that none else hath to do with me, to claim any interest in me,—but I am

Christ's. If I do any thing for others, it is for Christ's sake.

See hence the nature of faith ; for these are the words of faith, as well as of love. Faith hath two branches, it doth give as well as take. Faith receives Christ, and says, Christ is mine ; and the same faith saith, I am Christ's. Indeed, our souls are empty ; so that the main work of faith is to be an empty hand ; *Mendica manus*, (as Luther calls it,) a beggar's hand to receive ; but when it hath received, it gives back again both ourselves and all we can do. Where faith is, there will be a giving of ourselves and our goods, our strength, and all, back again. This discovers a great deal of false faith in the world ; for undoubtedly, if it were true faith, there would be a yielding back again. Again, these words discover the mutual coherence of justification and sanctification, " I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine." Christ is mine ; his righteousness is mine for my justification : and I am Christ's ; there is a return of faith in sanctification. The same Spirit that witnesseth Christ is ours ; sanctifies our disposition, that we can say, I am Christ's. It serves to instruct us therefore in the necessary connexion of these two, justification and sanctification, against the idle slander of Papists, that sinfully traduce that doctrine, as if we severed justification from sanctification. No ; we hold here, that whensoever Christ is ours, there is a Spirit of sanctification in us to yield all to Christ, though this resignation be not presently perfect.

This likewise helps us to understand the covenant of grace, and the seals of the covenant, what they enforce and comprise ; not only what God will do to us, but the duty we are to do to him again, though we do it in his strength. A covenant holds not on one side, but on both ; " Christ is mine, and I am Christ's. I will be their God," but they must have grace " to be my people," and then the covenant is made up. The covenant of grace is so called, because God is so gracious as to enable

us to perform our own part. And so in the seals of the covenant. In baptism, God doth not only bind himself to do thus and thus to us; but binds us also to do again to him. So in the communion we promise to lead a new life; therefore we must not think all is well, when we have received our Maker, though we continue in a fruitless course of life. No; there is a promise in the sacrament, the seal of the covenant of grace, to yield up ourselves to God. We see here the nature of faith in the whole church, is the same that is in every particular, and the same, in every particular, as it is in the whole church. The whole church saith, "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine;" I appropriate him. There is a spirit of appropriation in the whole; and there is so in each particular. Every Christian may say with Paul, "I live by faith in the Son of God, that hath loved me, and given himself for me;" and with Thomas, "My God and my Lord."

It follows, "He feedeth among the lilies." The church here shews where Christ feeds. He both feeds his church among the lilies, and delights himself to be there. The one follows the other; especially it is meant of the church; those that are his. He feeds among the lilies. How? Lilies are such a kind of flowers as require a deal of nourishment, and grow best in rich ground; therefore, when she saith, "He feeds among the lilies," the meaning is, he feeds his church and people in rich pastures; in such grounds as are sweet and fruitful; such are, his holy Word, and the communion of saints; these are especially the pastures wherein he feeds his church. The holy truths of God are the food of the soul, whereby it is cherished and nourished up to life everlasting. This whole book is a kind of pastoral; therefore Christ in many places of this book, takes upon him the carriage (as it were) of a loving shepherd, who labours to find out for his sheep the fruitfullst and sweetest pastures, that they may grow up as calves of the stall.

If you ask why we must grow up and be fed still?

1. Do but ask your own souls, whether there be not a perpetual renewing of corruption. Therefore we have need to feed every day anew upon the promises; upon old promises with new affections. Somewhat breaks out ever and anon, which abaseth the soul of a Christian, that makes him go with a sharp appetite to the blessed truths that feed his soul. 2. Again, we need a great deal of strength, which must be fetched from the blessed Word of God, whereby we are able to withstand all the power of the devil. Therefore, you may see what kind of atheistical creatures those are, and how much they are to be regarded, that turn off all with a compendium in religion, "Tush! if we know that we must believe in Christ, we know enough." As if there were not a necessity of growing still further and further in distinct knowledge. Alas! the soul needs to be fed continually, it will stagger else, and be insufficient to stand against temptation, or to perform duties. You may see further, that there is fulness no where but in God's house; that there, and there only, is that which satisfieth the soul. Not only the promises, but the very rebukes of the Scripture, are sweet. They are rebukes of a friend, and feed the soul; for we have many corruptions which hinder our communion with God; so that a Christian delights to have his corruptions rebuked; for he knows if he leaves them, he shall grow into further communion with Christ, wherein stands his happiness in this world, and the fulness of his happiness in the world to come.

If this be so, let us know then, that when we come to religion, we lose not the sweetness of our lives, but only translate them to a far more excellent condition. Perhaps we fed before upon (as it were) gravel, but now we have holy truths to delight our souls. Believe it, a man never knows what comfort is till he be down-right and sincere in religion. Therefore Austin saith of himself, "Lord, I see my former life was nothing but husks, empty things; now I know where sweetness is; it is in thy Word and truth." Therefore let us not misconceive of religion, as

of a dull thing, wherein we must lose all comfort. No; we have no comfort till we be religious indeed. Christ feeds not his among the thorns and briars. Dost thou think he feeds thee among unsavoury, harsh things? No; "he feeds among the lilies." Let us make use of this for our souls' comfort, to make us in love with the ways of Christ. The like place you have, Isai. xl. 11, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." So he leads them into the pastures, and feeds them plentifully and sweetly; not only with sweet things, but with tender care. As a shepherd, he takes into his bosom the poor lambs that cannot walk themselves; and the sheep that are heavy with young, he cares for them. He gently leads them that are poor, weak Christians, that struggle with many temptations and corruptions. Christ hath a tender care of them, he carries them (as it were) in his bosom and in his arms, and leads them gently; for indeed all Christ's sheep are weak, every one hath somewhat to complain of; therefore he feeds them tenderly and sweetly, or else they might perish. Consider then the necessity of spiritual strength, that we have need to grow up more and more in Christianity. To be feeding still, we have need of strong faith and strong assurance that Christ is ours, and that we are his. Let us often frequent every ordinance of God, and we shall find Christ blessing his own ordinances. So that we shall be able to say, in truth of heart, experimentally and feelingly with the church, "My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies."

EXTRACTS

FROM

T H E W O R K S

OF

THOMAS GOODWIN, D.D.



TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

SOME ACCOUNT OF HIS LIFE.

THE
L I F E
of
THOMAS GOODWIN, D. D.

DR. THOMAS GOODWIN was born at Rolesby, in Norfolk, October 5, 1600, and was first of Christ-College, and then of Katherine-Hall in Cambridge. He was in the university a frequent hearer of Dr. Preston and Dr. Hill, and afterwards himself a celebrated preacher there, and an instrument in turning many to the love and practice of serious religion. In 1628, he was chosen to preach the lecture to the town of Cambridge, at Trinity-Church, and he held it till 1634, when he left the university. In 1639, he went over to Holland, and became pastor of a church in the city of Arnheim. He returned into England at the beginning of the Long Parliament, and became pastor of a church in London, and one of the Assembly of Divines. He took a brief account of the transactions there, in fourteen or fifteen volumes in octavo, that are yet preserved. Oliver Cromwel made him president of Magdalen-College in Oxford, and one of the tryers of ministers. In the common register of the university, he is

said to be *in Scriptis in re Theologica quamplurimis orbi notus*. He was removed from his presidentship quickly after the king's return, in 1660, and afterwards retired to London, where he continued the exercise of his ministry as long as he lived. He was a very considerable scholar, and an eminent divine; and had a very happy faculty in descanting upon Scripture, so as to bring forth surprising remarks, which yet generally tended to illustration. He died February 23, 1679, aged 80 years.

A CHILD OF LIGHT

WALKING IN DARKNESS;

Or, a TREATISE shewing the Causes by which, the Cases wherein, and the Ends for which God leaves his Children to distress of Conscience.

—◆—
ISAIAH L. 10.

Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God.

—◆—
CHAP. I.

That a child of God may walk in darkness. That thereby distress of conscience, and desertion is meant.

We will first inquire what is meant by *walking in darkness* in this place. Now, 1. *Walking in darkness*, as it is taken in 1 John i. 6, for *living in sin*, in the commission of known sins, or omission of known duties, cannot be meant here. For Christ would not have encouraged such to trust in God. *God is light*, and there can be *no fellowship between him and such darkness*. Nay, the Holy Ghost reproves such as *lean on the Lord*, and yet *transgress*. And besides, the text speaks of such, who for their present condition, *fear God*, and are *obedient to him*, which, if they thus walked in darkness, they could not be said to do. Neither, 2. is *walking in darkness* to be meant of *walking in ignorance*, as it is taken John xii. 35. For, one that *hath no light* in that sense, can never truly fear God, nor obey him. “The heart that

wanteth knowledge is not good," says Solomon; and why? Because so to walk in darkness is accompanied with "walking in vanity of mind," Eph. iv. 18. This walking in darkness therefore is meant of *discomfort and sorrow*. We often find in Scripture, *darkness* to be taken in this sense: as, on the contrary, *light*, because it is *so pleasant a thing to behold*, is put for comfort. And that so it is taken here, is evident by that which is opposed in the next verse, "Walk ye in your light, yet ye shall lie down in sorrow." But the question is, of what kind of *sorrow* this is meant? Whether that arising from outward afflictions, or inward distress of mind? Whether by reason of *man's* ordinary *infirmities*, or of a *wounded spirit*? It is not to be restrained to outward afflictions, which arise from things of this world; or from the men of the world; (though to *walk in darkness* is so taken, Isaiah lix. 9. And I will not exclude it here; for to those also in this condition, the best support is *to trust in God*; and it is the safest way to interpret Scripture in the largest sense; but yet that cannot be the principal meaning of it:) for he adds, *and hath no light*, that is, no comfort. Now God's people, when they walk in the greatest outward darkness, may have, yea, often use to have, most light in their spirits; but here is such a state spoken of, *such a darkness as hath no light in it*. Therefore it is principally to be understood of the *want of inward comfort in their spirits*; and so of that darkness which accompanies the want of the sense of God's favour.

The reasons why it is thus to be understood here, are, first, because the remedy here prescribed is *faith*; to *stay himself* upon God, and that upon *his* God; he puts in *his* God emphatically; because that is the point he is troubled about, and concerning which he is in darkness, and of which the prophet would have such an one to be persuaded. And that is it which faith, propounded here as the remedy, doth in the first place look unto. Secondly, The prophet in the foregoing verses had spoken of *justification*, whereby God pardons our sins, and accepts our

persons; and having expressed his assurance of this: "God is near that justifies me, who shall condemn?" because there might be some poor souls, who truly *fearing God*, yet might want this assurance; and upon the hearing of this, might be the more troubled, because not able to express that confidence which he did: therefore he adds, "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, and walketh in darkness? let him trust in the name of the Lord." As if he had said, though you want assurance of this, yet be not discouraged; but exercise faith; go out of yourselves, rely upon Christ.

CHAP. II.

The Particulars of the Distress contained in these two phrases: Walking in darkness; having no light.

THE second thing to be inquired into is, *What is the condition* of such an one who is thus *in darkness*, and *hath no light*? "Light," saith the apostle, Eph. v. 13, "is that whereby things are made manifest;" that is, to the sense of sight, to which light properly belongs. When therefore he says, he hath no *light*, the meaning is, he wants the sensible testimony of God's favour to him; he sees nothing that may give present witness of it to him. God's favour and his own graces, and all the sensible tokens and evidences thereof, which are apprehended by spiritual sight, are become as *absent things*, as if they were not, or never had been. That light which ordinarily discovers these as present, he is clean deprived of. To understand this we must know, that God, to help our *faith*, vouchsafeth *threefold light* to his people, to add *assurance and joy to their faith*; which is to faith, as a back of steel to a bow.

First, the *immediate light of his countenance*, which is a clear evident beam and revelation of God's favour, immediately testifying that we are his; which is called

the *testimony of the Spirit*, which David desired more than all worldly things: "Lord lift up the light of thy countenance upon me." When this is utterly withdrawn, then a man is said to have no light. Such was Jonah's case, "I am cast out of thy sight," says he. And so God dealt with David often, and sometimes a long time together, wherefore he inquires complaining, "How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?" Psalm xiii. 1. Yet, notwithstanding this hiding of God's face, the *real* gracious influences, and effects of his favour may be continued, upholding, strengthening, and carrying on the soul, still to *obey and fear him*. For, when Christ complained, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" (when as great an eclipse, in regard of the light of God's countenance, was upon his spirit, as was upon the earth,) yet he never obeyed God more; was never more strongly supported, than at that time; for then he was *obeying to the death*.

The second *light* which God vouchsafeth his people ordinarily to help their faith, is the *sight* and comfort of *their own graces*, unto which so many promises belong; as, of their love to his people, fear of his name, desire to obey him. So that often when the *sun* is set, yet *star-light* appears; that is, though the immediate presence and evidence of his favour shines not on the soul, yet his graces appear, as tokens of his love. So that the soul knows there is a sun still, that gives light to these stars, though it sees it not. Now a soul that hath true grace may, at some times, want light to see his graces: as they in the storm, Acts xxvii. 20, so he, in temptation may come to *have neither sun-light, nor star-light; no light*, as in the text.

But, Thirdly, though he want the present light of God's countenance, and the sight of present grace, yet he may have a comfortable *remembrance* of what once he had still left; and so long is not utterly in darkness. Therefore further know that the state of one that fears God and obeys him, may be such, that he may have no

comfortable light, or remembrance of what grace formerly he had. Yea, it may be, he calls all into question. Thus David in Psalm xxx. 6, 7, though his heart was a little before *full of joy*, and assurance of God's favour; yet God did but *hide his face*, and all was gone: "I was troubled," says he; he could not see what was but a little past him. And the reason of these two last assertions is as evident as the experience thereof. For *graces in us shine*, but *with a borrowed light*, as the planets do, with a light borrowed from the sun. So that, unless God shine, and give light to thy graces, they will not appear to comfort thee. For *our spirit*, (that is, our graces,) never witnesseth alone; if God's Spirit joineth not in testimony therewith, it is silent. "The Spirit of God witnesseth with our spirit," Rom. viii. 16. Now therefore, when God hath withdrawn his testimony, then the testimony of our hearts, and of our own graces, hath no force in it. For although it is true, that every man, having the power of reflecting upon his own actions, can discern what thoughts are in him, and what affections; yet he may still question whether those affections of sorrow for sin, or fear to commit it, be genuine, spiritual affections. For though the natural "spirit, which is in a man, knows the things of a man; that is, his own thoughts and affections; yet, what is the true goodness of them he *cannot know*, without the supernatural light of the Spirit of God; who, as he is the giver of that grace in us; so "is given of God, that we may know the things which are given us of God," 1 Cor. ii. 8, 12.

Let us now consider the other phrase; and what is intimated when, as it is said, he *walks in darkness*. First, *To walk in darkness*, implies to be *in doubt whither to go*: so John xii. 35, "He that walks in darkness, knows not whither he goes." And thus the soul of one that fears God may be filled with doubts, whether God will be merciful to him or not: and not know what God means to do with him, whether he shall go to heaven or hell. And, Secondly, those *in darkness* are apt to *stumble*

at every thing. So one effect of darkness, mentioned Isaiah lix. 10, is to "stumble at noon-day." So take a soul that is left in darkness, and it will stumble at all it hears out of the word, either in conference, or at sermons; at all it reads, at all promises it meets with. Oh, (thinks he,) that there should be such glorious promises, and not belong to me! Such an one misapplies all God's dealings, and the Scriptures against himself, and *refuseth comfort.* And, Thirdly, *darkness* is exceeding terrible and full of horror. When children are in the dark, they think they see fearful sights. So the soul of one that fears God may be filled with fears and terrors from God's wrath, and of God being an enemy to him.

CHAP. III.

The Causes of this Distress: First, the Spirit; whether he hath any hand therein, and how far.

I PROCEED now to shew, First, the *causes*; Secondly, the *cases* wherein; Thirdly, the *ends* for which God leaves his children in such distresses. The causes of this are three. 1. God's Spirit. 2. A man's own heart. 3. Satan.

First, for God's Spirit: although he hath a hand in some part of this disquietness; yet we must take heed how we put upon him any of those doubts and desperate fears of the wrath of God; for the Spirit is not the direct or positive cause of them. For a more distinct understanding of this, I will shew how far the Holy Ghost proceedeth in it, and puts forth his hand towards creating distress of soul; and what satan's work is, where he strikes in; and then wherein our own hearts contribute to work further and deeper distress.

1. Thus far then the Spirit of God may go: he may suspend his testimony, and the execution of his office of *witnessing adoption.* He may withdraw his comfortable

presence, and *hide himself for a moment*, and conceal his love. Even when satan comes and gives in a false evidence, and our own hearts thereupon likewise condemn us, the Holy Ghost may stand by, as it were, silent, and say nothing to the contrary, but forbear to contradict satan by any loud testimony, as he doth at other times.

2. He may reveal God as angry with a man, for such and such sins, and make him sensible thereof; not barely by concealing his love, but by making impressions of his wrath upon his conscience. Thus Isaiah lvii. 17, 18, God not only says, "I hid me and was wroth," (that is, expressed my wrath by hiding myself,) "but I smote him and was wroth:" and ver 16, it is intimated, "he contended and was wroth," (that is, *fought against him*,) as Isaiah lxiii. 10, and this with his wrath upon his spirit. For it follows, that the *spirit* was ready to fail, and the soul which he had made. It was the *spirit* which God shot at and wounded, and that so deeply that it was ready to fail. Solomon calls this, by way of distinction, *a wounded spirit*, which *who can bear?* And differenceth it from all other afflictions upon the outward man, (which strike the spirit but through the clothing of the body,) for, says he, "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity;" that is, all such outward afflictions, wherein it suffers but by way of sympathy; but when the spirit itself is laid bare and naked, and wounded immediately by God's wrath, (which only can reach it, and wound it,) *who can bear this?*

3. The Holy Ghost may proceed yet farther herein; so far as to shake over him the rod of his eternal wrath, especially when he hath provoked Christ by presumptuous sins, in order to prevent his going on frowardly in the way of his heart; and this, both by presenting to him all those threatenings, which conditionally threaten, even to believers, eternal damnation: such as that, "If ye live after the flesh, ye (even you believers,) shall die:" for

there is truth in all such threatenings. And again, by representing to him all those examples of men, in whom, for their going on in sin, "his soul hath had no pleasure;" and of God's dealings with them: as how he swore against many of the Israelites, for their provocations of him, "that they should never enter into his rest;" and all this with this end, to startle and awaken him; and with this intimation, that for such and such sins, God might in like manner deal with him. These; and the like examples, doth the Spirit of God set before the believing Hebrews, and the believing Corinthians.

CHAP. IV.

How satan and our hearts increase this darkness by false conclusions from the Spirit's work.

THE Spirit of God having proceeded thus far in causing such darkness and terrors of conscience in them that fear him; satan and their *own hearts*, (unto which he may and doth often further leave them,) may take occasion from these dispensations of the Holy Ghost, (which are all holy, righteous, and true,) to draw forth false and fearful conclusions against themselves, and start amazing doubts and fears of their utter want of grace, and lying under the curse of eternal wrath at the present, yea, and of eternal rejection for the future. When this is the case with any, they are cast into a further darkness and bondage, than the Holy Ghost was the cause of, or intended; while they interpret that withdrawing of his light and presence, and hiding himself, to be a casting them off; misconstrue that temporary wrath, chastising, and wounding their spirit for the present, to be no other than the impressions and earnest of God's eternal vengeance; and misconceive the application of all those threatenings of eternal damnation, (made by the Spirit, but under the condition of such and such courses for the future,) to

be absolute against their persons. And because such examples of men cast off are presented to them, to shew them what advantage God might take against them; they mistaking, think they read their own destiny laid before them, and conclude that God will do so with them. The apostle says of sin, "Sin taking occasion by the commandment, (he misunderstanding the scope of it, when a pharisee,) deceived me:" and yet "the commandment is holy, just, and good," Rom. vii. 11, 12. So satan and our hearts, by occasion of these dealings of the Spirit, (which are righteous and true, as himself is, who is the Spirit of truth and leads into truth,) deceive poor men, and lay them in their apprehensions "among the slain whom God remembereth no more," Psalm lxxxviii. 5.

But we must warily sever the work of God's Spirit herein, from that of satan and our own hearts; not attributing such desperate conclusions to the Spirit. Thus that depth of *sorrow* wherewith that humbled Corinthian was well nigh *swallowed up*, 2 Cor. ii. 7, is ascribed unto satan, when, ver. 11, it is made and termed one of *his devices*; which word doth in part refer to the Corinthian's sorrow. Thus David also imputes *that* his questioning, Psalm lxxvii. ver. 7, *whether God would be merciful* to him, unto his own heart: this is *my infirmity*, says he, ver 10; so that the blame herein is to be divided between satan and our own hearts.

CHAP V

How our own hearts are the causes of this darkness: the principles therein, which are the causes of it.

THAT our own hearts should be the causes of such distress and darkness, when the Holy Ghost thus deals with us, is no wonder: 1. Because, as we are *creatures*, there is such a *weakness* and *infirmity* in us, as David

speaks ; by reason of which, if God doth but hide himself and withdraw his presence, (which supporteth us in comfort, as in being,) we are ready presently to fall into those fears. The Psalmist saith of all the *creatures*, “Thou hidest thy face, and they are troubled :” and this by reason of their weakness and dependence upon God : and much more might David say, “Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.”

2. There is not only such a weakness in us as we are *creatures* ; but also an innate darkness in our spirits, as we are *sinful creatures*. Since the fall, our hearts of themselves are nothing but *darkness* ; and therefore no wonder, if when God draws but the curtains, and shuts up the light from us, that our hearts should conceive such horrid fears and doubts. The apostle compareth this native darkness of our hearts unto that *chaos* and lump of *darkness*, which, at the first creation, covered *the face of the deep* ; when he says, that God, “who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ,” 2 Cor. iv. 6. So that no longer than God continues to shine, either with the *light of comfort or of grace*, no longer do the hearts, even of believers, retain light in them. And if at any time he withhold *that light*, then our hearts presently return to their former darkness. And then doth *that* vast womb of darkness conceive, and form all these fears and doubts within itself : considering withal that our hearts are a *great deep* also ; so deep in darkness and deceitfulness, that no plummet can fathom them. “The heart is deceitful above all things, who can know it ?” Jer. xvii. 9. Darkness *covereth not only the face of this deep*, but it is darkness to the bottom, throughout darkness. No wonder then, if when the Spirit ceaseth to *move upon* this *deep* with beams of light, it cast us into such *deeps* and *darkness* as Heman speaks of, Psalm lxxxviii. 6, and frameth in itself such hidcous apprehensions and desperate conclusions of a man’s own state.

3. Especially seeing there is so much strength of corrupt reason in men, ready to invent strong arguments to confirm those sad fears and darkened apprehensions. For, as it is said of the Gentiles, that, when "their foolish hearts were darkened, (that is, left and given over to their own natural darkness,) they became vain in their imaginations," or, (as the original hath it,) in their *reasonings*, Rom. i. 21, and this even in those things which God had clearly revealed in his works: so may it be said even of those who have been most enlightened, that their hearts are apt to become much more vain in their reasonings about, and in the judgings of their own states before God, out of his word and dealings with them, if God once leave them unto darkness. And this that great caveat given to professors by St. James gives to understand, when they are exhorted to take heed, that in *hearing the word* they be not found *deceiving themselves by false reasonings*, Jam. i. 22. So the original, *παραλογιζόμενοι ἑαυτῶς*, expresses it, which is as if we should say, "false reasoning themselves;" as we use to say in a like phrase, "befooling themselves." And this is spoken of judging of their own states; concerning which men are more apt through self-love *to make* (to speak in that phrase of the apostle,) *false syllogisms*, than about any other spiritual truth whatever. And as unsound hearers of the word are thus apt, through misapplying *the word they hear*, to frame and draw from thence (as he insinuates,) multitudes of false reasons to maintain to themselves a good opinion of their state; so, on the contrary, in those who have weak faith, all that carnal reason, (which remains in a great measure unsubdued in them,) is as apt to raise and forge strong objections against the work of faith begun, and as peremptorily to conclude against their present state by the like misapplication of the word; but especially by misinterpreting God's dealings towards them.

The reason of all this is as evident as the experience of it. To instance in general: *reason* is of itself a busy

principle, that will be prying into, and making false glosses upon all God's matters, as well as our own; and trying its skill, in arguing upon all his dealings with us. Thus Jeremy must needs be reasoning with God about his dispensations towards wicked men, chap. xii. 1, 2; and Job, of his dealings with himself, chap. xiii. 3. And *reason* being likewise the supreme principle in us by nature, and our highest difference as we are men; therefore no wonder if, when we are left to ourselves *to walk in darkness*, we *walk as men*, as the apostle speaks, 1 Cor. i. 3; and, to use Solomon's words, "do lean to our own wisdom;" even because it is *our own*, and was brought up with us. Reason is our great Ahitophel, (and as David says of him,) "our guide with whom we have taken so much sweet counsel" in all our worldly affairs. In them indeed we should make use of its advice; but we too often *take it into the sanctuary* with us, "and walk in company with it into the house of God;" that is, we suffer it to meddle in matters that pertain to the sanctuary, and to debate and conclude of our spiritual state, as well as of our temporal. "I thought," says Asaph, Psal. lxxiii. 16, "to know this;" that is, he thought to have comprehended God's mind in those his dispensations, by the discussions of reason: whereas, "after he had gone into the sanctuary," ver. 17, with *faith alone*, and thereby consulted with the word, he confesseth his own best reason to have been *ignorant* of God's meaning, and of those rules he proceedeth by, in those his dispensations, *even as a beast*, (ver. 22,) is of those principles which men walk by, or the intentions they have in their ways. If *reason* then, when it is so utterly unskilful in the premises, will yet be exercising and trying its faculty in reasoning from them, no wonder if the conclusions thence deduced be so wide and wild.

But more particularly: carnal reason is the most desperate enemy to *faith* of all other principles in man. For until *faith* be wrought, it is the supreme principle;

but then faith deposeth it, and afterwards doth often contradict it, yea, excludes it, as unskilful in its matters, from being of its council. And so deep is this enmity against faith, that look what is the most especial business of faith, (which is to alter our state before God, put us into a state of justification, and to assure us of it,) therein it shews a more peculiar enmity against faith, by opposing it in that work more than in any other. This enmity shews itself both *before* and *after* faith is wrought. Before faith is wrought, carnal reason shews its opposition, by using the utmost of its strength to persuade a man of the goodness of his state; thereby to prevent the entrance of faith, and his seeking after it at all. And therefore in the *first working of faith*, the Holy Ghost brings faith in by force of open arms, as a conqueror, "casting down all those strong holds and reasonings;" (as the word is, 2 Cor. x. 4,) which carnal reason had been long building and fortifying, and so erecteth faith a throne upon the ruins of them all. In like manner, *after faith* is wrought, all that carnal reason which is left unsubdued, doth with a greater enmity oppose faith still; only it diverts the war now, mustering up new forces, to persuade a man, by all the objections it can raise, of the badness of his state now, as before of the goodness of it. And because next to *justifying us*, the office of faith is to settle in our hearts *peace with God*, and a persuasion of our being in his favour, as Rom. v. 1, therefore doth carnal reason bend the utmost of its power to persuade upon all occasions, by all the most specious arguments it can suggest, that God is not at peace with us. And if in any condition *carnal reason* hath the advantage of *faith*; it is now, when it is in the "valley of the shadow of death;" when it is under so great an eclipse, and is left to fight it out alone, no wonder if *carnal reason* frame and suggest the strongest objections to the soul, whilst it is in this distemper. Add unto all this, that as there is such strength of corrupt reason, which is thus opposite to faith; so

there are many other principles of corrupt affections in the heart, which join and take part with carnal reason in its opposition : such are *jealousy, suspiciousness, and incredulity*. These edge and sharpen the wit of carnal reason, to argue and wrangle against the work of faith ; and all such objections as reason finds out against it, are pleasing to these corrupt principles ; for they are thereby nourished and strengthened.

Lastly, as there are these corrupt principles of carnal reason, and suspiciousness in us, to raise and foment doubts and fears ; so there may be guilt within us, of our false dealings towards God. As we are *dark* and *weak* creatures, so *guilty* creatures also. And this guilt, like the waves of the sea, or the swellings of Jordan, begins, upon these terrible storms from God, to rise and swell and overflow in our consciences. There is much guile and falseness of heart, which in those distempers, (when our conscience boils within us,) doth like the scum, come up and float aloft. Thus in David, as *his sin*, so his falseness of heart “was ever before him ;” and with an eye to this he spake, Psalm xxxii. “Blessed is that man in whose spirit is no guile, and to whom the Lord imputeth no sin.” Thus he spake when God had charged upon him the guilt of his sin, and discovered to him the guile of his spirit, ver. 4, 5. And this guile doth oftentimes so appear, that our conscience can hardly discern any thing else to be in us. It lies uppermost, and covers our graces from our view ; and like as the chaff, when the wheat is tossed in the fan, comes up to the top ; so in these commotions and windings of spirit, do our corruptions float in our consciences, whilst the graces that are in us lie covered under them out of sight ; and the dark side of our hearts (as of the cloud,) is turned towards us, and the light side from us. And indeed there are in the best of us humours enough, which if they be stirred in our conscience, may alone cast us into these burning fits of

trouble and distress; so that whilst God's Spirit shall withhold from us the light of our own graces, and our own consciences represent to us the corruptions that are in our best performances, our hearts may conclude ourselves hypocrites; as Mr. Bradford, and others of the saints have done.

CHAP. VI.

The third efficient Cause, Satan. His advantage over us in this temptation, by reason of the darkness in us.

THUS far our own hearts, upon the Holy Ghost deserting, become authors unto us of this darkness. But herein believers wrestle not alone with flesh and blood, but also with spiritual wickednesses, the princes of darkness. As when "God makes natural darkness, and it is night, the lions go forth, and roar after their prey;" so these roaring lions, when God hath withdrawn the light of his countenance, and night comes on, and those fogs of jealousies and guilt begin to arise out of a man's own heart, come forth and say, as David's enemies in his distress, "Come let us now take him, for God hath forsaken him;" let us now devour him and swallow him up with sorrow and despair.

Concerning satan's working herein, we will more distinctly treat by way of explication of it: 1. More generally. 2. More particularly. In *general*: First, satan hath a peculiar desire to vex the saints with this sort of temptations, that God is not their God: so that all his other temptations unto sin are but as the laying the train for this great plot of blowing up all. The reasons of this are: 1. Above all graces in us, he is *the greatest enemy to faith*; therefore the apostle was jealous of satan, in nothing more than in this, lest he had been tampering with, and perverting *the faith* of the Thessalonians: "I sent to know of your faith," says he, "lest by some

means the tempter hath tempted you." Faith in God is the greatest enemy unto satan; it quencheth all his darts. As therefore faith is that *work of God* and the master-grace; so despair and doubting is the master-piece of satan. He is envious especially at the *joy of our faith*. And as comfort is the proper work of the Spirit; so is discomfirt and distress the proper work of this evil spirit. 2. Again, as satan is most opposite to the Holy Spirit; so he delights to blaspheme the Spirit's work in our hearts, by persuading us that all is counterfeit. 3. He is called Ἐχθρὸς, *the envious one*; and the main mark of his envy is, That God should be our God, who hath cast off him; and therefore he will endeavour to raise jealousies that he is not our God.

Secondly; as satan hath such a desire, so God may give us up into satan's hand for awhile. His last commission over Job seemeth to extend thus far; for his life only was excepted: "He is in thy hand, only save his life," Job ii. 6. And therefore, after that leave is given, we hear Job (although never brought to question his state, yet) crying out of terrors, and of the sins of his youth; for satan then, as he smote his body with boils, so he buffeted his spirit. Now, though satan hath abilities to inflict this at all times; yet he must further have leave and commission from God before he dares to do it. Thus we find God suffered satan to provoke David to sin; and therefore that provocation to number the people, as it is imputed to satan and his malice, 1 Chron. xxi. 1, so also to God and his anger, in giving leave to satan, 2 Sam. xxiv. 1. And as an *evil spirit from the Lord* troubled Saul's mind, 1 Sam. xvi. 14, so *a messenger of satan was sent to buffet Paul's spirit*, 2 Cor. xii. 7. But herein God doth no way help satan with any further power, than what, as an angel, he furnished him with at his creation; nor with any assistance to enable him the more to assault us, but with permissive power only.

This power is either given at satan's request, (so that

phrase, Luke xxii. 31, "Satan hath requested to winnow you;" as that also, Job ii. 3, "Thou movest me against him," doth imply: and, as it may seem, by singling out and calling forth some one for his combat; as he did him more especially, to whom therefore Christ addressed that premonition; and the word Ἐξηρώατο implies as much. So also Job was singled out for this duel, both by God and satan.) Or else this is done through the ordinance of excommunication and censures of the church duly administered; the proper inward effect, that accompanies that ordinance, (which casts men out of the church,) being inward affliction and distress of conscience by satan, which of all afflictions is the greatest punishment. This we may see in the excommunication of the incestuous Corinthian; whose excommunication is therefore expressed, to be *a delivering him up unto satan in the name of the Lord Jesus*, 1 Cor. v. 5: that is, he was to be cast out by a commission from Christ, which going forth in his name, when they published it on earth he signed it in heaven. Upon which rightly administered doth ensue, first, that as the church doth cut them off from communion with them; so God cuts them off from communion with himself, and withdraws the light of his countenance; and not only so, but *delivereth them up to satan*; that being the consequence of it: (which, therefore, because it implies the former, is put to express the whole proceeding,) which delivery of him unto satan, was not giving him a commission to carry him on to more sin: (though that often be indeed the effect of it, as in Alexander, 1 Tim. i. 19, 20,) but it was to terrify and afflict his conscience, and to stir up in him the guilt of his sin with terrors for it. Thus, when that Corinthian was excommunicated, satan dealt accordingly with him; for in the next epistle, 2 Cor. ii. 7, we find him *well nigh swallowed up of sorrow*; which was satan's doing; for, ver. 11, "We are not ignorant," saith the apostle, "of his devices." And thus satan continued to handle him, even now when he began to be truly humbled,

ver. 7, when though he feared God and obeyed him, yet he walked in darkness till the church received him. Or else, when this ordinance is not administered, then God himself (who works without an ordinance sometimes the same effects as with it,) doth excommunicate men's spirits from his presence, and gives them up to Satan to buffet them.

Satan having thus obtained leave, I need not largely shew how able he is to work darkness in us. His natural power to work upon our spirits, as he is an angel, is exceeding great. All which power, how great soever in him at his first creation, is now become the "power of darkness; and so called, because most powerful that way; namely, to work darkness in us: and though he can "transform himself into an angel of light," by deluding enthusiasts with false joys; yet therein he doth but act a part, it is but forced; but to shew himself an "angel of darkness," by terrifying weak consciences, this is natural now to him. His power lies most in this. Therefore his title further is, the "ruler of darkness;" and also he is called, "that strong man; strong," as "to keep peace," Luke xi. 21, in those he deceives with a false peace; so to make war and commotions in us when he is cast out. We are bidden therefore to stand upon our guard, and to look that "we have on the whole armour of God, that we may be able to stand against his wiles," Eph. vi. 11.

But though Satan hath never so much power, yet the advantage of this his power to work those disquietudes in us, is by reason of that sinful darkness which is in us. We may say, that as, unless he had "power from above," from God; so, unless he had furtherance from beneath, even from those principles of guilt and darkness in us, he could not disquiet us. "Satan cometh, (saith Christ,) but hath nothing in me." A commission he had, and therefore came; but he had nothing of his image, or of the guilt of any of his works, to work upon in Christ, and therefore could effect nothing at all upon his spirit. That

therefore which gives him matter to work thus upon us, is something within us; there being, even in the best, something which belongs to his jurisdiction, which makes their spirits fit subjects for his temptations. Eph. vi. 12, the evil spirits are called the “rulers of the darkness of this world;” and, Coloss. i. 12, 13, their power is called the “power of darkness;” so that darkness is satan’s territories, dominion, and jurisdiction; for it is his work, and his image, without which he could have no power at all with us. But by reason of this remaining darkness, he hath a double advantage over us.

1. An advantage of more near intimate and immediate access to our spirits to close with them, to suggest unto them, and to work upon them; and to tempt, not only as one man tempts another, by the outward senses, but by the inward also. And though it is true, that, as he is an angel, he hath naturally by creation, ability thus to do; yet, as he is now a devil, and an unclean spirit, were we but perfectly holy, as in innocency, he should be debarred all such near communication to us. To this purpose it may be observed, that in his temptation of Adam in innocency, he was not permitted in his first assault, till man had sinned, to come within him to work upon his fancy and affections indiscernibly, but only mediately and externally, by an audible voice in the body of a serpent. Nor should he have near and inward access to our spirits but for that darkness in us, by reason of which he thus comes within us; and as darkness mingleth with darkness, so he with our spirits. So that as the light of grace in us begun, doth fit us for God’s drawing nigh to us; so this darkness remaining exposeth us to satan’s drawing nigh, so near, as to mingle with our spirits, and as it were to become one spirit with us.

2. As hereby he hath this advantage of access to get within us; so this darkness in us is also as fit fuel and as tinder to his fiery temptations, that presently enkindleth and inflameth; so that he can both increase and augment all those effects of the principles of darkness

mentioned; and so add *blackness* to that *darkness* in us. And darkness being his dominion, therefore so much darkness as is in us, so great a party he hath in us to work upon. Hence therefore all the effects that he worketh in unregenerate men, who are nothing but darkness, he may work in regenerate men according to the proportion of the remainder of darkness in them.

CHAP. VII.

How Satan works upon our Reason.

SEEING therefore the exercise of satan's power lies in that darkness which is in us, let us more particularly see how able he is to work upon those several principles of *'carnal reason, guilt of conscience, jealousies and fears.*

First, for *carnal reason*: he chiefly worketh on this in that sort of temptations the strength whereof lies in false reasonings; wherein, if any thing, he hath the advantage. 1. His abilities to forge and invent false reasonings and arguments to overthrow our faith, are (as they must needs be conceived to be) exceeding great. For this knowledge he is called *Δαιμων*, as well as Satan; and for his malice and for his subtilty in out-reaching us, a serpent. When he was young, he outwitted our first parents; "he beguiled Eve through his subtilty," says the apostle, 2 Cor. xi. 3, then when their reason was not depraved; but now he is grown, that "old serpent," Rev. xx. 3, and "we are become children, apt to be tossed to and fro," Eph. iv. 14, he hath had time enough to improve his knowledge. He is a student of five thousand years standing, that hath lost no time; but as he is said to "accuse day and night," Rev. xii. 10, so he is able to study both day and night; and he hath made it his chief, if not whole study, to enable himself to tempt and plead against us. And by this his long experience and observation he hath his *Νοηματα*, 2 Cor. ii. 11,

his set and composed machinations, his Μεθοδεϊας, Eph. vi. 11, his methods of temptations, which are studied and artificially moulded and ordered; even such systems and methods of them as tutors and professors of arts and sciences have, and which they read over and over again to their auditors: the apostle calls them *darts*, ver. 16; and he hath a whole shop and armory of them ready made and forged; which, for the acuteness and subtil sophistry that is in them, are called "depths of Satan," Rev. ii. 24. Which depths are most to be found in this; for he is more especially versed in this great question, Whether a man be a child of God, or not, more than in any other. All other controversies he hath had to deal in, in particular ages, as occasionally they were started; but this hath been the standing controversy of all ages, since God hath had any children on earth; with every one of whom, more or less, he hath at one time or another had solemn disputes about it. So that he knows all the advantages, windings, and turnings in this debate; all the objections and answers in it. And as other controversies, the longer they are on foot, and the further they have been carried, the more they are enlarged, improved, and grow more subtil; so must this needs also, especially in this latter age of the world. The difficulties which a man meets with in making out a right judgment of his state, are greater than in any controversy the world ever knew, and afford stranger knots, and require as acute distinctions to dissolve them. And indeed, such they are, that did not the Holy Ghost sometimes cut, sometimes untie them for believers, by witnessing with our spirits that we are the sons of God, bare reason alone could never determine the matter. Now satan, through long experience and observation, hath all these at his fingers' ends; he hath still observed and laid up what answers hath relieved the spirits of believers, in such and such a doubt cast in by him; and then studies a further reply against the next time; or for the next believer he shall have to do with.

2. As he hath thus throughly studied this controversy,

and knows all the windings and false reasonings in it ; so withal, by his daily studying and considering men, he knows how best to suit those reasonings, both to persons and seasons. It is the sole business of those evil spirits to study men. For this end they go up and down the earth. He knows all the ranks and classes of men in the state of grace ; and according to their ranks, with what sort of temptations to encounter them. For men's temptations are various and manifold, 1 Pet. ii. 6, even as the gifts and operations of the Spirit are, 1 Cor. xii. 4, 5. Now he, having beaten out this controversy with all sorts, knows how to lay the dispute, how to order, marshal, and apply objections, and wield his blows with much success and advantage. That as physicians, having observed the several workings of medicines of all sorts, upon several ages and constitutions, and what effects they have had, prescribe several medicines, according to the several conditions of their patients, though sick of the same disease. Thus satan by observation, finding the hearts of some men answering to some others, "as face to face in water," and withal remembering what reasonings have always taken most with such a sort of Christians whose corruptions and whose graces were much like unto those in this or that man he hath now to deal with ; accordingly he makes use of these reasonings again.

The tempers of men's spirits we know are divers, and so are capable of diversity of suggestions. And again, the operations of grace, as of sin, are various in those several tempers. And God's dealings with, and workings upon his children, are as various as either : some he humbleth much, some are led on with comfort ; some he works on with a sudden and marvellous light, as if the sun should rise on the sudden at midnight ; and on others insensibly, and by degrees, as when the dawning steals upon the day ; and this variety affords rise and occasion for several temptations. So that what kind of work any other Christian hath had, is apt to be made an exception

to another that wants it. I was never thus humbled, says one ; nor I thus comforted, says another. I had a sudden, violent work indeed, which came in like a spring tide, but now the tide is fallen, and my first love abated, says a third. I had some workings and enlightenings, says another, and I was deceived then, and I may be so now also. And so he hath that vast task set him to compare a counterfeit work with a true. Thus every several way of working lies open to several exceptions : and as every earthly calling hath its several temptations, so the several ways and manners of effecting this heavenly calling have their currents of several temptations :— all which satan knows, and hath often traced ; and accordingly knows how to fit them to men, and to prosecute them the most advantageous way.

So, in like manner, he takes the compass of every man's knowledge, notions, and apprehensions ; according to which we are also capable of several temptations. Many reasonings and objections, which, like small hail-shot, could not make any dint upon men of parts and knowledge, both because they, by reason of their knowledge, soar high out of the gun-shot of them, and have also on the "whole armour of God," abounding in all faith and knowledge ; yet may be fittest to level at such as are ignorant, and fly low, and have but some few broken pieces of that armour to defend some parts with. But, on the contrary, those others of his great shot, which he dischargeth on men of knowledge, they would clean fly over the others' heads, and not come near such smaller vessels. Thus the ignorance of the meaning of the Scriptures, and of the ways of grace chalked forth therein, how doth satan use, to the disquiet of many poor and good souls, by putting false glosses upon them ? How many weak souls stick in shallows, and are sometimes a long while terrified with gross mistakes ? and, like small birds, are held long under with limed straws of frivolous objections, which great ones fly away with ? That great apostle being a man of knowledge, was not

easily taken with such chaff; "We are not ignorant of his devices," says he, and therefore satan takes another course with him, comes with downright blows, and falls a buffeting him. Thus doth satan take measure of the bore (as I may so speak) of every man's understanding, and fits them with objections proportionable of several sizes. And as the apostle in his sermons, prepared milk for babes, but strong meat for strong men; so doth satan suit objections to men's notions and apprehensions, still framing them according to their reading.

3. He is able indiseernibly to communicate all his false reasonings (though never so spiritual,) which he doth forge and invent, and that in such a manner as to deceive us by them, and make them take with us. First, he is able not only to put into the heart sollicitations unto sensual and worldly objects; such as that into Judas's heart to betray his Master for money, John xiii. 2, and to tempt married couples severed, to incontinency, I Cor. vii. 5. But also the most subtile and abstracted reasonings concerning things spiritual, which are utterly remote from sense. And in this respect they are termed "spiritual wickednesses;" because they deal in such wickednesses as much as in those that are sensual. And that he is able to suggest such spiritual thoughts and reasonings, appeareth many ways; as by his injecting blasphemous thoughts against God, such as do sometimes transcend the wit and capacity of the receiver of them; this is manifest likewise by Saul's prophesying even from the immediate dictating of "an evill spirit," and from all those damnable heresies which have been broached in all ages. So in after-times, apostasy is ascribed to "spirits of error," and "to the working of satan." Now, by the same reason, there is no reasoning about states, though never so spiritual, but he can suggest it, as well as he did those depths of heresies to the broachers of them. So that satan can not only make those false reasonings, which our own hearts forge, more specious and probable, and suggest further confirmations of them, which are enough

to add unto this darkness ; but he is also able to put in new, which himself invents, of what kind soever they be.

Secondly, he is able to insinuate them in such a manner as to take with us, and deceive us ; yea, and often to set them on with a deep impression ; so commission was not simply given to that "lying spirit," who persuaded Ahab by a lie in the mouths of his false prophets, to suggest a lie, but so to suggest it that it should prevail. And as he is thus able (when God shall give leave,) to delude wicked men's understandings with false reasonings in matters of false doctrine, by reason of that "total darkness" that is in them ; so he is able (if God give leave, as sometimes he doth,) to bring strong delusions upon the minds of God's children also, through false reasonings about their own states, by reason of that darkness which in part remains in them. Only this is to be added, that satan cannot force assent to any falsehood upon the understanding of any man : for how then should they "all have been damned for believing that lie?" 2 Thess. ii. 11, 12, which should not have been, unless it were their own sin. Neither yet doth he so immediately produce an act of assent in us as God doth, when he worketh faith in us ; for then God's power and assistance in working good, should be no more than satan's working evil. And yet the Scripture goes far, when it says of those that believed not the gospel, "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, 2 Cor. iv. 4, which notes a super-added working of blindness unto their own natural blindness : as also when it says, that the "prince of the air" is *Ἐφεγγυων*, that is, "works effectually," Eph. ii. 2, and of the Corinthians, whilst unregenerate, that they were "carried and led away after dumb idols," 1 Cor. xii. 2 ; all which phrases seem to argue not only a further power of working upon men's judgment, than when one man doth endeavour to persuade another ; (because he suggesteth indiscernibly, and with more frequency and importunity, and holdeth the mind more to the object, and presenteth an army of

confirmations at once ; and is able so to marshal them as the mind can scarce resist ; and puts all these upon the spirit with a violent and imperious affirmation ;) but further also they would seem to imply some kind of *physical* working ; though not immediately on the spring of the clock, yet upon the wheels and weights of it ; I mean the *passions* in the body, and the *images* in the fancy ; though not upon the understanding immediately. All which, what influence they have to sway the judgment and pervert it, experience shews.

4. He is further able to follow and continue his reasonings, as occasion may be, and hold out arguments with us, and out-reason us, by putting in new replies to our answers ; and so to maintain the dispute, and to come up with fresh supplies. Which in this respect is called *wrestling*, Eph. vi. 12, " We wrestle not with flesh and blood, but principalities and powers," it being (as the bodily wrestling) transacted by reiterated assaults and attempts to get the victory ; he, as it were, going about to strike up our heels, as wrestlers do, that is, to take from under us those reasonings which supported us ; which kind of spiritual wrestlings how often have we experience of in spiritual agonies ? In the hour of temptation believers find conflicts and disputes, rationally carried along, and pertinent objections brought in against those answers, which they meditate of : in which case therefore divines bid men not to dispute with that cunning sophister.

CHAP VIII.

How Satan works upon our Conscience.

THUS we see how able satan is to assist carnal reason in us against ourselves. We will now further consider what power he may exercise upon that other principle in us, our *conscience*, in accusing us, and laying particulars to our

charge ; in which consisteth the greatest of his strength, even in an army of accusations of us to ourselves ; which in this warfare he musters up against us. If this subtil pleader cannot deceive the judge, (as I may say) with false rules and mistakes in the law itself ; then he endeavours it by misrepresenting the case of the party, and puts in a false bill of accusation, so ordered and coloured, as to procure a judgment against him ; laying before the eyes of men's consciences their by-ends, deadness and hardness of heart, and falseness in such and such turnings of their lives ; excepting against what is good in them, aggravating what is evil, and all to enforce from thence a false conclusion.

By the way we may take notice of a difference between the Holy Ghost's dealing with a believer, when at any time he comes with the Word, and searcheth and tries his heart, and discovers corruptions to him, convincing and reproving him, and that sometimes with some sharpness, for his by-ends and hypocrisies, and between these other siftings and winnowings of satan. The difference is, that the Holy Ghost dealeth sweetly herein, as a father that convinceth his child of his misdemeanours ; but without putting in any such sting as this in the conclusion, that therefore we are hypocrites ; but in these of satan, that is the issue he mainly drives all to, and it is made the burden of all those his accusations, and is as the scope that runs through the whole of his charge. Now in respect to this his misrepresenting our state, and false aggravations of our sins unto us, he is called, as the *tempter*, which is in a general relation, to all sorts of temptations ; so the *accuser*, Rev. xii. 10, or *pleader* against us : and as the accuser of us to God, in God's *court* ; so in the court of our own consciences. And as he tempts us *unto sin* ; so also *for sin*, and *by sin* ; that is, the guilt of it, to draw us to despair. He that accused Job unto God, would sure accuse Job unto himself much more.

And though it may be truly affirmed, that neither satan

nor our own consciences, can ever aggravate unto us too much the intrinsical sinfulness, the heinousness and vile-ness of our sins in their proper colours and true aggravations; yet satan may, in the representation of our sins, put such false apprehensions and such aggravations upon them, as may make us apprehend too much about them; as when it is suggested, that they are utterly unpardonable. He may likewise use them as inductions to prove a false conclusion. And also although our sins can never be enough represented, if it be in order to drive a man to God's free grace, and unto Christ; yet to present them singly, and to hold the mind so to them, as to cause us to *forget our own mercies*, and in such a manner, as thereby God's mercies are concealed from us; this is satan's practice, and is the cause of this deep bondage. And in this respect that name Κατηγορῶν, the accuser, is given to this evil spirit in a direct opposition to that special name and office of the Holy Ghost, Παράκλητος, the *Comforter* or pleader for us. Because as the *Holy Ghost maketh intercession* in our own hearts *unto God for us*, and, upon true repentance, helpeth us to make *apologies* for ourselves, (as the Word is, 2 Cor. vii. 11,) and comforteth us by discovering *our graces given us of God*, and by pleading our evidences, and witnessing with our spirits that we are the sons of God; so, on the contrary, satan is an accuser, by laying to our charge the guilt of sins, by impleading our evidences, misrepresenting our state, thereby to *swallow us up with sorrow*. And further, because in these accusations his scope is to misrepresent our state to us, therefore he is called Διὰβολῶν, a *slanderer*, as one that falsely calumniateth and slandereth all our graces, all God's dealings towards us, all our dealings towards him: which false charges of his, I take most properly to be those *darts*, mentioned Eph. vi. 11, which are there said more especially to oppose our faith. And therefore faith is there said to quench them. These kinds of satan's temptations and accusations against us are, even as darts and arrows that wound, pierce, and run

through the passions and affections, and strike the soul through and through with fears. And besides the sharpness of the *darts* themselves, they are said to be *fiery*, as making double way for themselves. For a piece of iron, though blunt, yet if fired red-hot, runs through without resistance.

And as satan can stir up that guilt that is in us, so he can also work upon that injudiciousness that is in the conscience. For as he hath a power to work upon the rest of the faculties, so also upon the conscience; misleading it in its verdict of our states, as cunning pleaders do a silly jury. The *wards* of conscience are of themselves loose and naturally misplaced, but he with his false keys perverts them much more: it naturally gives an uncertain sound; but he by his false alarms and panic fears, cast in, doth much more confound the testimony of it. And how easy is it to trouble a soul disquieted already, and to work upon jealousies which are raised? We see how far a cunning man can insinuate with jealous natures, to increase suspicions and surmises. When an humour is stirred, how easily is it wrought on? And thus often when the Spirit hath already read us a sharp lecture, and examined our consciences, then satan strikes in, and descants upon it all, to deeper terrors and distress.

CHAP. IX.

How Satan works upon the Passions.

WE have seen how able satan is to work upon our *reason* and *conscience*. It remains that we shew how he can work upon the *passions*. Now it is in respect of his working on these, that the *darts* before mentioned, are principally called *fiery*; namely, for that anguish and inflammation they cause through distempering the affections. Those fears which our own hearts engendered, were but as smoke; these darts cause them to flame and

blaze. The allusion is to the poisoned darts, which the Scythians of old, and other nations now use in war; the venomous heat of which, like a fire in their flesh, killed those that were wounded by them. Job also alludes to those when he says, "The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison thereof drinks up my spirit." And what were those arrows he speaks of, but terrors? So it follows, "The terrors of God do set themselves in array against me." So that as satan inflames other members with a superadded vehemency and violence; (as the tongue, which is said to be *set on fire from hell*: that is, from satan, who is called *hell*, as in that speech, *the gates of hell*; as the good angels, the noblest creatures, are called *heavens*, Heb. vii. 26.) As, I say, he doth thus inflame other members, so in like manner he doth put fire into those darts he wounds the conscience with; and thereby causeth such pangs, that hell-fire, as it were, begins to flame in a man's conscience.

1. When the Holy Ghost hath once lashed the conscience, and made it tender, satan then, may fret it more and more, and be still rubbing upon the sore, by casting in horrid suggestions, and false fears.

2. By renewing the experimental remembrance of those lashes, which the soul hath had from the Spirit, he can amaze the soul with fears of an infinitely sorer vengeance yet to come; and flash representations of hell-fire in their consciences, from those real glimpses they have already felt, in such a manner, as to bewilder the soul in vast and unthought-of horrors.

3. He can then bring home all the threatenings that are thundered forth in the Word against hypocrites, and discharge them all with much violence and noise upon a poor doubting soul. He can and doth shew his prisoners those terrible chains and racks, and other *instruments of death*, as the Psalmist calls them, which God hath *prepared* against sinners, and hath stored up in that great armoury of his *Word*, 2 Cor. x. 6. With the rattling of which chains satan can make a noise in the conscience of a poor

sinner to affright him. Which he is the more enabled to do out of experience of such terrors in himself; "being bound up in chains everlasting, under darkness, to the judgment of the great day," Jude 6. And as a son of consolation, is enabled, "to comfort others the more by the comfort wherewith he hath been comforted of God;" so this "prince of darkness" is the more powerful to terrify weak consciences, by the terrors which he hath felt from the Lord.

4. He can immediately, by his own power, stir the passions of fear and grief, and excite them beyond nature. As the winds can raise the billows in the sea; so can he a tumult in the affections, and put all the soul into a violent perturbation. He is the prince of the airy part of the little world in man, as well as of the elementary region in the great world; and so can raise unnatural storms and vapours that shall darken reason; and cause such thunders and lightnings as shall hurl all into a black confusion; such as if hell and the soul would presently come together. And though it is true that he cannot turn the stream of our affections back, (for God only can do this,) yet he can drive them faster, and cause them to swell above their natural channels; that as a man possest hath the strength of ten men in him, as the man mentioned Luke viii. 29, so shall the affections have that are blown up by him. And as he can raise up other passions in us, so also fears and terrors, jealousies and distrusts. Thus he handled Saul, when God left him: "an evil spirit troubled him;" or (as most read it) "terrified him," I Sam. xvi. 15. And in the raising up these affections, he works more than *morally*; that is, than by barely propounding such objects as shall move them; even *physically*, by stirring up such humours in the body as those passions do act and stir in. He can also disturb the organs of the understanding; as in him, Luke viii. 35, who through satan's working, is intimated "not to have been in his right mind." And when he hath thus disordered all in a man, he comes with his suggestions, and

speaks nothing but wrath and terrors, the heinousness of a man's sins, the fearfulness of God's wrath, unto that conscience that is troubled. And then (look, as when a man's choler is up every small thing provokes him; so now, when fear and melancholy are excited, every suggestion, every surmise doth strike the soul through and through. And thus, through the means of these mists, which environ and darken this sun, he works upon the conscience. For when once those affections cloud the mind, then multitudes of troublesome thoughts arise, and suitable to that passion prevail with a man's spirit; as appears by that speech of Christ, Luke xxiv. 38, "Why are ye troubled, (or afraid,) and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?" Passions which, like heavy weights hung upon a clock, not only make the wheels, the thoughts, to move faster, but also pervert them, and wrest them the wrong way; so that, to a heart thus distempered, all things are presented amiss; even as to a blood-shot eye all things seem red.

CHAP. X.

Seven Advantages Satan hath over us, in all those aforementioned Dealings.

For a general conclusion to this discourse about satan's working on us, I will but mention some of those great advantages he hath in all these his false reasonings to set them on, and to fasten his false conclusions thence deduced; which I therefore bring in here, as being common to all those particulars which have been related.

1. It is no small advantage that he can familiarly suggest them again and again to us. The frequency of any thought that haunts us hath secretly the force of an argument to persuade us. A cunning flatterer, that is continually suggesting, may at last work out a near and a dear friend. As the judge yielded to the widow's impor-

tunity, Luke xviii. 5, so is the mind apt to yield to a suggestion that importunately presents itself; yea, though it be to pass a false sentence against a man's self.

2. He can also represent a multitude of considerations at once, all tending to confirm the same persuasion. He will oftentimes bring a cloud of witnesses and instances to prove us hypocrites; so that, look which way we will, we see nothing else. As he represented to Christ, "all the glory of the world in the twinkling of an eye," so he can set forth a man's sins in such a manner that a man shall have a general prospect of them, and see nothing else, look which way he will. And what force this must have to prevail with the mind to assent, experience shews. As when a man doubting of a truth, reads an opposite party, presenting all that can be said for the other side alone, it often staggers him, till he reads and considers what is said to the contrary. Yea, though a man is settled in the truth, yet sometimes an army of arguments on the other side come in upon him so ranked and ordered, as for the present shall stagger him; so it must needs be in this great controversy about a man's state, when satan shall muster and marshal up an army of objections at once.

3. He is able to hold the attention of the mind so to them as to keep off all that which should any way afford comfort. He can turn down that column in the leaves of our heart, wherein any thing that may comfort us is written, and hold our eyes fixed to read nothing but that other, wherein our sins are written. He can multiply suggestions so fast, and come in with such a tempest, that (as Job complains, Job ix. 18,) he will not suffer a man to take breath; and therefore the apostle calls them the buffetings of satan, 2 Cor. xii. 7, because like unto buffetings, they come in thick and threefold upon a man's spirit, so that it cannot take breath. He rains down temptations sometimes, not by drops, (as in ordinary rains,) but by spouts, as mariners call them, when a cloud falls by wholesale, and often sinks a ship.

4. He adds weight to his lying accusations and false reasonings, by an imperious and obstreperous affirmation that so it is. He suggests not reasons only that are fitted to persuade, but sets them on with words of affirmation suggested. And so, like as in reasoning, a weak spirit is often borne down by a stronger, not by force of argument so much as by strength and violence of spirit; for many, when the iron is blunt, and their arguments want edge, put to the more strength, as Solomon speaks, Eccles. x. 10, and so prevail; and so doth satan; he being a spirit of greater strength than ours. Cunning pleaders may so argue the ease, with such violence and confidence, that, as Soerates said, when his accusers had done, if he had not been very innocent, he should have suspected himself guilty. How much more when the accusation shall fall upon persons that are so guilty as we all are; and the thing also impleaded be that which we are already suspicious of?

5. In that he backeth his false conclusions thence deduced with terrors, this becomes an argument to sense. A conceit that comes in with joy, we are apt to conclude is true; and so, in like manner, what comes in with terror. Such impressions are, as it were, a seal to what is suggested. And as the Holy Ghost sealeth his instructions, Job xxxiii. 16, with impressions of joy, so doth satan his temptations with impressions of fear and disquietude. If a man hath a dream with any strong impression, he is apt to think there is something in it. That which made Nebuchadnezzar think there must needs be something in his dream, when yet he had forgot what it was,—was, that it made “him afraid, and his thoughts troubled him.”

6. Another advantage is, that he works all these impressions undiscerned, so that we know not but that they are our own thoughts; yea, sometimes think that they are from the Holy Ghost. This is an exceeding great advantage, as great as it would be for an enemy to have gotten the opposites' own colours. This causeth us

readily to yield and open the gates to him. And though when the temptation is over, we perceive his delusion, yet still, because we cannot discern his suggestions from our own thoughts, when upon us, therefore he can come again and again with the same temptation, to-day, to-morrow, and the next day, and we perceive it not. Thus Ahab's prophets knew not that satan was a lying spirit in them; for says one of them to Micaiah, "When went the Spirit of God from me to you?" Those "strong delusions," 2 Thess. ii. 10, could not have prevailed upon their minds to have "believed a lie," had it been discerned by them that satan had suggested them.

7 Last of all, a man can no way avoid his suggestions; neither can any take satan off from a man but God. He must rebuke him, none else can. A poor soul fights with satan in darkness, like unto a man that is assaulted by one that carries a dark lanthorn, who can see the assaulted, and how to buffet him, and follows him wherever he goes; whereas the poor man cannot see him, nor who it is that strikes him, nor be aware how to ward off the blow. Therefore the apostle, when buffeted by satan, knew not what to do, but only to have recourse to God by prayer; for he could no more avoid or run away from those suggestions than from himself: nor could all the saints on earth any other way have freed him, till God should cause him to depart.

CHAP. XI.

*The Cases wherein God leaves us unto this Darkness.
First, three Cases extraordinary.*

HAVING despatched the causes of this darkness, I now proceed to the cases wherein, and the ends for which God leaves us to such a condition. The cases are either *extraordinary*, or *ordinary*. I shall speak first of the extraordinary cases, which are three. First, what if God

will use his prerogative, in this his dealing with his children? This he may do, and (as it is thought) in Job's case he did; who is thought by some to be set up as a type among the gentiles of Christ at his crucifying. Although the Lord had cause enough against him, yet no cause is pleaded, but it is resolved into an extraordinary dealing, wherein God took a liberty to glorify himself, by singling out one of the valiantest champions, and setting him hand to hand to wrestle with the powers of darkness. None more just than Job before; none ever lived a stricter life; no man kept more in awe, and that by fearing such a desertion before-hand; which, though he "greatly feared," yet it "came upon him." And God himself, when he came to plead with Job about it, and to shew him a reason of his dealing thus with him, only tells him how great a God he was, and therefore might do as he pleased, and useth no other arguments at all with him. God indeed never wants a cause, nor doth deal thus where sin is not; yet, as is said of the young man, that he was blind, not "for his own sin, nor his parents," (yet not without it,) "but for the glory of God." It was an act of God's prerogative; so was it here. God hath higher ends of glorifying himself in the patience, and the conquest of such a champion as Job was. And God might as well take liberty to deal thus with Job, because he could make him amends, as afterwards he did, in restoring double to him. And indeed it was but the concealing his love for awhile, to shew it the more; as God even then did, in making him more than conqueror.

A second case extraordinary is, when he intends to make a man a wise, able, and strong Christian; *wise* in this, which is the greatest wisdom in the world, to comfort others. This may seem to be the reason of this his dealing with Heman. Heman was brought up in this school of temptation "from a youth," Psal. lxxxviii. 15. Yet in the end, when God raised him up again, this Heman (who lived about David and Solomon's time,) is

reckoned one of the four that were next to Solomon for wisdom, 1 Kings iv. 31. So the great apostle was a man that was exposed to the same combats. He "was buffeted by satan," filled with "inward terrors," as well as "those without." What was this for? Not so much for any personal cause, as to make him able to comfort others, 2 Cor. i. 4, 5. For that comfort which answereth a temptation in one man's heart, will answer the same in another's. When temptations have the same wards, that key which unlockt one man's bolts, will answer to another's. This art of speaking peace, and words of comfort "in season," is the greatest wisdom in the world; and is seldom learnt but in Heman's school. Temptation was one of Luther's masters. Of all abilities of the ministry, Christ instanceth in this, Isai. l. 4, and calleth the tongue of him that is able to speak seasonably to weary souls, "the tongue of the learned;" and therefore Job, ch. xxxiii. 23, to raise up one "whose soul draws nigh to the grave," is said to be the work of "one of a thousand:" which is easily granted, if you consider the danger of such a distress. In Scripture, it is called the "breaking of the bones," Psal. li. 8. It is also called the "wounding of the spirit:" so Solomon, "A wounded spirit who can bear? Prov. xviii. 14. As the power of sin wounds, so the guilt also; and the one as incurably as the other. And it being the spirit of a man which is wounded, that which must heal it must be something dropt into the heart that may come at the spirit. And there are to be peculiar plasters to heal these wounds, because these wounds are often differing. Some objections there are, that often the most learned men never met with in books; and satan hath devised methods, Eph. vi. of tempting souls, which he useth again and again. And a man shall hardly know these depths, and fathom them, unless he hath been in those depths himself; and then he shall see such wonders of God in those deeps, which none else ever saw; and thereby gain such

wisdom as to be able to encourage others by his example to trust in God, and call upon him.

The third case extraordinary is, when a man hath had, or is to have from God an abundance of revelations and comforts. First, in case he hath abundance of revelations from God. As, after that glorious testimony given to Christ at his baptism, "This is my beloved Son, then was Jesus led away to be tempted." In like manner doth God often deal with the members of Christ. This was the great apostle's case, "Lest I should be exalted above measure, through abundance of revelations, a messenger of satan was sent to buffet me," 2 Cor. xii. 7 God had taken him into heaven, and spoken wonderful things to him; and when he comes down again, satan must take him to task. He had been in heaven, and heard the language of angels, and now he must hear by devils the language of hell. This buffeting, I take it, was by satanical injections. Secondly, before God dispenses great revelations and comforts, as before great distresses, he fills the hearts of his children with joy unspeakable; so sometimes before great revelations and comforts, God withdraws himself. The greatest spring-tide of comfort comes in upon the lowest ebb of distress. Distress enlargeth the heart, and makes it thirst the more, whereby it is made more capable of consolation. For that rule holds usually true, That as sufferings abound, so comforts abound also.

CHAP XII.

The ordinary Cases wherein God doth leave us in Darkness.

WE come now to the more ordinary cases. Before I name particulars, I will premise this general rule: God goes not constantly by the same rule in the dispensation

of them. So that no man can say, that in such and such cases, God will desert men. For some men he leaves for a while in darkness, immediately after their conversion. On the contrary, towards others, he never shines in more comforts than at their first conversion. Again, some he deserts upon a gross sin committed; to others he never reveals himself more than after a gross sin repented of; thereby to shew the freeness of his grace. So, likewise, some that have less grace, he fills their sails at death, and they have "an abundant entrance," with full sail, into the "kingdom of Christ;" whereas others that have walked more strictly with God, have not so glorious an end. This rule premised, the ordinary cases follow. 1. In case of carnal confidence; thus Psal. xxx. David had been in great distress of mind, as appears by what is said, "Though heaviness be over-night, yet joy cometh in the morning." In this sun-shine David grew confident, thinking it would always be so with him; and so trusted in that comfort he had; as if he could never have been troubled again. "Now I shall never be removed," says he. This was carnal confidence; and God, to confound it, hid himself again. Now carnal confidence is either, first, when we trust to false signs of grace. This we are apt to do, to take things as infallible signs which are not. Now God, to discover which are false, and which are not, leaves a man; and then he will find all his false signs to leave him, and to be like reeds, that break when any stress is laid on them, and so run into his hand. Or, secondly, when we put too much confidence upon signs, though true, and trust too much to our comforts and graces. When we let all the weight of our support hang on these, God in this case, often leaves us. Or, thirdly, when we think graces and comforts are so rooted in ourselves, that we neglect God and Christ for the upholding, increase, and exercise of them; then God withdraws the light of these, that we may have recourse to the spring. As too much confidence in the power of inherent grace caused Christ to leave Peter to the power of sin, so the

like confidence causeth God to leave us to the guilt of, and terrors that come by, sin.

2. The second case is for neglecting such precious opportunities of comforts and refreshings as God hath vouchsafed; as for the neglect of holy duties, wherein God offered to draw nigh to us, as the sacraments, prayer, meditation, and hearing the word. So Cant. v. 4, 5, 6, 7, Christ stood at the door and knocked; that is, moved the heart of the church to perform the duties in which he useth to come into the heart and visit it. He offered to assist her, and began to prepare her heart, but she made excuses. Upon this, Christ went away; only he left behind him an impression of himself in her heart, enough to stir her up to seek him, in the sense of the want of him.

3. In case of not exercising the graces which a man hath; not stirring them up, when Christians are as it were between sleeping and waking; (which was the church's condition, Cant. v. 2;) then also Christ deserts. To perform duties with the inward man in a drowsy frame, half awake, as it were, and half asleep; "to pray as if we prayed not; to do the work of the Lord negligently; this provoketh God to absent himself. And indeed there is no reason that a man should have present comfort, when he neglects the use of present grace. Isai. lxiv. 7, God complains, that there was "none that stirred up himself; and for this, "God was wroth." Whereas, ver. 5, "God meets him that worketh righteousness," and rejoiceth in him that rejoiceth to work righteousness. God meets such, and rejoiceth with, and draws nigh unto them; but others, that stir not up themselves, God stirs them up by terrors. "He that walketh according to this rule, peace be on him," Gal. vi. 16; not else. Though comfort is not always the present fruit of righteousness, yet it is never without it.

4. In case of some gross sin committed against light unhumbled for, or proving scandalous, or of old sins long forgotten. I will give instances of each particular.

First, for some gross sin committed against light. An instance for this is David, whom we find frequently complaining thus, "My soul cleaveth unto the dust, and is even at death's door. His soul melted, and was dissolved;" all the powers of it failed at the sense of God's wrath, even as wax melts before the fire. Ordinarily, we find in Scripture no such eminent desertion, but we find the cause of it not far off, if we read on. "Remove from me (says David,) the way of lying." He points to the sore of his heart, whercin his grief lay, 1 Sam. xxi. 2. David roundly telleth two or three lies together, when he fled from Saul, and came to Abimelech; who fearing to harbour him, asked why he was alone? He answered, "That the king had commanded him a business;" there is one lie: and that the king had commanded him "secrecy in it;" there is another: and because "my servants" should not know it, "I have sent them away" to several places; there is a third: and again, ver. 8, "I have not brought my sword, because the king's business required haste:" there is a fourth lie. David went on here in a course of lying; they were all *made*, and deliberate lies; which being gross sins, sins against light, and having been some while continued in by him, which therefore he calls a "way of lying," lay heavy on him long after. Therefore he entreats God to take the load of it off: "Remove from me the way of lying." It was the load thereof which lay so heavy on him as to press his soul "to the dust of death." So for the second particular: In case a man be not thoroughly humbled for sin, and it be not confessed; or, if when we committed it, we had shifts to keep us from thinking it to be sin; or to be heinous; or were doubtful whether it were a sin or not, and so were loath to acknowledge it to be a sin; as it is likely David did in the ease of his murder of Uriah, (it was but the chance of war, says he, that cut him off;) God in this ease brings him to the rack, Psal. xxxii.: (it is thought that psalm, as well as the 51st was made upon that occasion.) These sins being known,

and become scandalous, David was to confess publicly. But he was loath to come to this. God in this case, lays his hand so sorely on him, that his "natural moisture was dried up;" (for in men troubled in conscience, their trouble of mind casts their bodies often into as great heats as men that are in burning fevers,) and this was without intermission, "day and night;" and thus he lay "roaring," like a malefactor on the rack; he cried out for mercy to God, yet because not with a broken heart, God therefore accounted it but as "roaring;" that is, the voice of a beast, rather than of a man. And why was David put to the rack thus? He would not confess, and humble himself for his sin; "I was silent, and yet roared," ver. 3. A broken-hearted confession might have saved all this torment. But when in the end he said, "I will confess my sin," ver. 5, and resolved once to lay open all that sin of murder and adultery in the circumstances of them, then God pardoned him. And yet after that, as appears in the 51st psalm, God did not yet "restore the joy of his salvation" (for there he prays for it in the sense of the want of it,) until he had publicly confessed this also, and thoroughly humbled himself. So, when the incestuous person had committed that sin, 1 Cor. v. 1, 9, for which, as then he was not humbled, St. Paul bids them "deliver such a one to Satan," to the tormentor to terrify him, and afflict his spirit. And thus, when that Corinthian was excommunicated, and given up to him, did Satan deal with him.

Yea, and thirdly, this God doth not only presently after the sins are committed, but sometimes a long while after; yea, after that God hath pardoned them also in our consciences, as well as in heaven. Thus, though Job questionless, had humbled himself for the "sins of his youth," and had assurance of the pardon of them, yet God "wrote bitter things against him" many years after, and "made him possess them," as himself speaks. In like manner may the guilt of those sins revive, which long before had been pardoned. After the commission of

some new act, or forgetfulness of the old, God may let them loose upon us afresh.

The reason why gross sins, especially if committed against light, when not confessed thoroughly, after many years, cast us into such desertion, is, because therein we rebel against God's Spirit; and that Spirit doth deal with us as we with him. If you grieve Him, he grieves you; if you rebel against Him, he fights against you as an enemy. When men go about to extinguish the light of direction, which God had set up in their hearts, God puts out the light of comfort, and so leaves them to darkness. But especially then, when our hearts are so full of guile that we plead they are not sins, or extenuate them. If a man keeps a sin concealed, and will not be convinced of it, nor bring it forth by confession, God in that case, brings him to the rack. And if it be that any of our old sins revive, and cause these terrors, it is because we began to look on them as past and gone, and thought we needed not to humble ourselves any more for them; making account they are so buried as that they will never rise again; whereas the remembrance of them should keep us low, and humble us all our days. We are apt to think that time wears out the guilt of sins; but to God they are as fresh as if they had been committed yesterday; and therefore nothing wears them out but repentance. Great sins forgiven must not be forgotten.

5. In case of a *stubborn* spirit under outward afflictions, when we will not stoop to God. This may be part of the case mentioned Isai. lvii. 16, where God, alleging the reason why he contended with a poor soul, gives an account of it, ver. 17 You see where the quarrel began: "for the iniquity of his covetousness I was wrath;" that is, for some inordinate affection. He mentioneth not a gross act of sin, so much as some lust harboured; for which God began to be angry, and to shew the effects of that his anger in smiting him: haply with some outward cross first; "I was wroth, and smote him;" and when

that did no good, God began to be more angry, and to hide himself. "I hid my face;" and this he speaks of inward affliction, which he also calleth, ver. 16, "contending with the soul," and so far leaving it as that the "spirit was ready to fail." And he further intimates the cause of all this, "he went on frowardly in the way of his heart." When outward strokes will not take us off, God deserts our spirits, and wounds them. When the heart remains stubborn under other strokes, he hath no way left in his ordinary course, but to lay strokes on his spirit, and wound that. And this yoke is like to break and tame him, if any will; for this he cannot bear. Outward afflictions man's natural spirit and stubbornness may bear; "the spirit of man will sustain its infirmities," but in this, "the spirit fails in them," ver. 16. Other afflictions are but as taking some stars of comfort out of the firmament, when others are still left to shine to them; but when God's countenance is hid, the sun itself is darkened, and so a general darkness befalls them. And therefore then the heart is driven to God, and broke off from all things else, and then God delights to comfort a man again. "I will restore comfort to him," ver. 18.

6. In case of deserting God's truth, and not professing it, and appearing for it when he calls us to do it. In this case he left many of the martyrs; many of whom, especially till Queen Mary's days, and some then, deserted the truth for a while, and God deserted them. And there is equity in this dealing of God with us: that, as when we are *ashamed of Christ*, the punishment fitted to it is, that Christ will be *ashamed of us*: so, when we will not witness for God, there is no reason his Spirit should witness to us.

7. In case of unthankfulness for the light of God's countenance, and freedom from those terrors which others are in, (which is a sin Christians are apt to run into;) for, as Hos. ii. 9, in case of their being unthankful for outward mercies, God took those mercies away.

and restored them not again till they esteemed them better; so doth God deal likewise in spiritual-assurance, light, and comfort.

CHAP. XIII.

The End for which God leaveth his Children unto this Darkness.

Now let us come to those ends which God may have in this his dealing with one that fears and obeys him. And one may be, to let us see whence spiritual comforts and refreshings come; that God alone dispenseth them how and when he pleaseth; that we may know that it is the "Lord that formed the light, and creates darkness, evil and peace;" and that as "affliction riseth not out of the dust;" so neither does comfort out of our hearts. God will let us see that our hearts are nothing but darkness; and that to cause any spiritual comfort, is as much as it was to create light at first; therefore he says, "I create the fruit of the lips, peace;" which can no way more fully be manifested than by sometimes withdrawing that light. Why doth he sometimes assist us in prayer, and fill the sails; and sometimes leave our hearts empty? Is it not that we may learn that lesson, Rom. viii. 26, "that it is the Spirit that helpeth our infirmities;" and that we of ourselves "know not what, nor how to ask?" This lesson we are slow in learning; nor are we easily brought to acknowledge our dependence on God. In like manner, for the same end, doth he sometimes hide, and sometimes reveal himself, to shew that he is the immediate fountain of happiness, "the God of all comfort," 2 Cor. i. 4, that so we might know whom to thank, whom to depend on, whom to go to for comfort; it being as difficult a thing for us to go out of ourselves, and from the creatures, for comfort to God alone, as to go out of ourselves to Christ alone for righteousness. Hereby also we see, that though we have

never so many outward comforts, yet the comforts of our spirits depend on God alone. For if He in the midst of them, withdraw himself, they all prove but miserable comforters.

Another end God hath in deserting us, is to make trial of our graces, and a discovery of them. God's end in leading his people through the "great wilderness, where no water was," was "to prove them;" and the same end hath God in suffering his people to go through this barrenness and darkness. This is conceived to have been his end in deserting Job; to shew what strong patience was in him. There are many gracious dispositions which have not opportunity to discover themselves but in a time of desertion. Some of those which are the highest acts of grace, would never appear but in such a time.

It were needless to go over all particular graces: I will only instance in that glorious grace of faith, which in this trial does more than all graces else. In all the varieties of conditions we pass through, it is of importance to us; in desertions it doth wonders; standing like Sampson, encountering and conquering alone, when there is none to help. This is certain, there is no grace God tries more than this grace of faith. "Ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations, that the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold which perisheth, being tried in the fire, might be found to glory, praise, and honour;" that is, both to the honour of God, who is believed in, and also of faith itself, which is the most glorious grace a Christian hath; which God loves to try, that the glory of it may appear. Now of all temptations, none try faith more than this of darkness and of terrors. Other temptations strike but obliquely at it; but these strike at that which is the immediate aim and object of it; namely, that God is a believer's God. These speak the direct contrary to what faith endeavours to apprehend, and that directly, and not by consequence only. Again, other temptations are easily answered, whilst the assurance of God's favour remains unshaken. That

answers them all, and shakes them off as Paul the viper off his hand. But when that shall begin to be questioned, (as in this case it is,) who is able to stand ?

Again, in these conflicts of faith with desertions, consisteth the height of our Christian warfare. This is the highest pitched battle upon which all is either won or lost ; for in these a man encounters with God himself, apprehended as an enemy. God called out Job to try him by fighting a single combat with satan, and he became (as I may so say,) too hard for satan alone ; then God joined against him also. Now, then, in that he bore this shock, and yet stood, this argued the strength of faith. It is said of Jacob, "that by strength he had power with God." It argued strength indeed. And this is done by faith, by the power whereof (God's power rather supporting it,) a man relies on God when all his dealings would argue he had forsaken a man ; that though God put on never so angry a countenance, yet faith can read love in his angry looks, and trust God beyond what he sees ; it being the "evidence of things not seen." Then faith goes wholly out of itself, as seeing nothing in itself but barely a capacity of mercy, and "plenteous redemption," which it knows to be in God. Thus faith is a miracle of miracles ; for it is founded, as the earth, upon mere nothing in itself, and yet bears the weight and stress of sins, of the devil, yea, of God himself. This is the faith which we must live by, when all comforts fail, and which "is to honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

And as desertion makes for the trial and discovery of graces, so it is a means sanctified to increase them. It is a means to bring more assurance and establishment. 1 Pet. v. 10, "The God of all grace, after you have suffered awhile, stablish and strengthen you." He knew they could not be settled till they had suffered in this, or some other kind. The tree roots itself the more it is shaken : "comforts abound the more sufferings abound." That light is clearest and strongest that ariseth out of

darkness, because God creates it. Those things which men doubt of most, God gives the greatest evidence of in the end. It also trains you up to fear God more, and to obey him more. Fearing God, and obeying him, most eminently and sensibly appear in that state, Heb. v. 8. Christ himself "learnt obedience by what he suffered." The yoke tames the wildness in beasts, and makes them servicable; and so do these the stubbornness of a man's spirit. Again, it serves to set believers' hearts on work to pray more and more earnestly. The apostle's buffetings made him pray thrice. So Christ, "being in an agony, prayed more earnestly;" and being in fears, he did lift up "strong cries." So Heman, by reason of his terrors, was a man much in prayers: Psal. lxxxviii. 1, "I have cried day and night before thee." Lastly, it causeth them to prize the light of God's countenance the more, when they again obtain it; and to endeavour, by close walking with God as "children of light," to keep it.

CHAP. XIV.

The Use of what hath been said.

IF those that fear God and obey him are exposed to such a condition as hath been described, then "who is among you that feareth not the Lord, nor obeys the voice of his servants?" You that live in known sins, and in omission of known duties, which God's servants, your ministers, tell you, you ought to perform; that pray not with your families; who make not conscience of your speeches nor dealings; "where shall you appear? If the righteous be thus scarcely saved;" if such darkness befall them that are "children of light," what is reserved for you that "love darkness more than light?" And if this befalls them for not stirring up the grace which they have, what shall come to you that are void of it? And not only so, but despise it? If this befalls them for not

humbling themselves for old sins, though long since committed; what will befall you for going on to add new to the old with greediness? If to them, for neglecting the opportunities of drawing nigh to God; what to you for neglecting the offer of grace, and trampling under foot the blood of Christ? All you that think there is no hell; or if there be, that it is not so dark as it is usually painted, look upon Heman ready to run distracted through terrors, and to give up the ghost every moment, Psal. lxxxviii. Look upon David lying on the wheel, and the Spirit of God "breaking his bones," when otherwise he had all outward things at will.

My brethren, God's people may find pains beyond those of the stone, gout, and tooth-ach. The falling of God's wrath on the conscience is more than the dropping a little scalding rheum on a tooth; and yet these are but a taste of that cup which you that obey not, must drink off to the bottom, even to eternity, Psal. lxxv. 8: "There is a cup in the hand of the Lord, and it is full of mixture;" that is, all the bitter ingredients in the world are in it. And here indeed "God pours out the same;" that is, in this life some few sprinklings of it fall from the top of the cup, which good men taste, as experience plainly shews: "but" the bottom, "the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall drink and wring them out:" the vials of it, which will never be emptied, shall be poured forth upon them, even to the utmost drop. If holy men may be thus shut up in darkness, what darkness is reserved for you? even as Jude says, ver. 13, "blackness of darkness; darkness where is weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Blackness of darkness," because there is not one beam of comfort that shines in to all eternity. For this is not for a moment, or a few years, but *for ever*. You "that live many days in pleasure here, and rejoice in them all, remember the days of darkness, for they are many," says Solomon, Eccl. xi. 8. "Many," indeed! "Days!" an eternal night, that shall know no end.

II. Who is among you that fears the Lord, and is translated out of the state of darkness, and yet never was in this darkness? You that have been free from those terrors of conscience, which yet souls that fear God and have obeyed him more than you, have suffered: and likewise you, who, though you enjoy not much ravishing joy, yet "being justified by faith have (a solid) peace with God;" and so walk in freedom of spirit, in the use of God's ordinances, and the performance of holy duties; let me out of this doctrine give all of you this great instruction: to take notice that such kind of troubles there are that befall God's people beyond what you have experience of. Many there are that think not so. Job's friends did not, and therefore censured him. And this is a necessary instruction.

1. Because this very knowledge of it doth prepare men for such a condition, if it should befall them; and therefore to prepare them for afflictions whom he wrote to, the apostle bids them "not think it strange concerning the fiery trial," 1 Pet. iv. 12. For if they be strange to any, then, if they befall them at any time, they are the more grievous. If some strange disease befall a man, which he never heard of before, it amazeth a man, and makes him desperate. But if he hath heard that such and such have had it, and have recovered; this helps to assuage the bitterness of it.

2. Take notice of it, that you may be kept more in dependence upon God, and that you may fear him more. Men that know not any afflictions, beyond what they see with their eyes; nothing beyond loss of friends and credit, often fear God less; and when they come to part with any of these for God, are less willing than those that have been more severely tried. But when they shall know that God's wrath is beyond Pharaoh's wrath, as Moses knew it, who yet in the vast apprehensions of the greatness of it, cries out, Psalm xc. "Who hath known the power of thy wrath?" Then they will obey God and fear him, more than they would all the kings of the

earth ; as Moses did, “ not fearing the wrath of Pharaoh,” Heb. xi. 27 When men enjoy a confluence of all worldly comforts, and think their mountain strong, well built with wife and children about them, with riches, health, and honours, they think they are then more out of danger of God’s wrath than other men ; and are apt to say, “ Soul, thou hast goods laid up for many years :” but know that God, without taking either thy goods, or thy *soul away*, can in this life put thy spirit into such a condition, that thou wouldst give all the world for a moment’s ease ; when all other comforts shall be to thee but as the *white of an egg*, as Job says. As he hath *joys the world gives not*, so he hath *afflictions the world inflicts not*. Therefore fear him more than the loss of all ; obey him rather than keep all : for God can meet with thee in the midst of all. So he met with David, though a king, and then all his wives and kingdom could not comfort him, till God “ healed the bones that he had broken.”

3. Learn not to censure others when they are in this condition. Thou walkest in the light, and thou seest another in the dungeon ; yet he may be dearer to God than thou. It was Job’s friends’ fault, who, having not had experience of such a condition in themselves, concluded he was an hypocrite. If you thus judge, then (as Asaph says,) “ you condemn the generation of the just.”

4. “ Pass your sojourning here in fear ; for even our God is a consuming fire.” Keep the heart in awe with the knowledge of such a state. This kept Job in awe and made him so strict all his days. Read the thirty-first chapter throughout, and you shall see what a righteous man he was, and then see the reason of all, ver. 23, “ Destruction from the Lord was a terror to me ;” and to the same purpose also, chap. iii. 25, he says that “ he had always feared that which now had befallen him.”

5. Lastly, be thankful that God spares thee. Haply thy body is weak ; and if he should fall on thee as on

others, it would destroy thee. But consider that thou hadst a stone in thy heart as well as any other: God hath cured it by gentle draughts, and so dissolved it, and carried it away; when he hath cut others, and put them to much pain in taking it out. Oh! be thankful! You that are healthful and have strong bodies, are you not thankful when you see others sick of the stone, tooth-ach, or gout, whereof you are free? And ought you not to be much more so for the healthiness of your spirits, when others roar all day as on the rack? Oh! be thankful that is not so with you!

III. "Who is among you that feareth the Lord, and hath been in darkness," but now walk in the light again? You who have been in the dungeon, and have been set free again, learn your duty also. 1. Thank our Lord Jesus Christ, and love him the more; for you have tasted what he did for you; you know how bitter the cup was which he drank, and therefore must needs love him more. You also have more experience of God's power and faithfulness, and what a miracle God hath wrought in raising you up again; "He hath shewn you wonders among the dead," as Heman speaks: be thankful.

2. Learn to *pity others* in that condition. Who can do it better than you that have had experience of the like? If you hear of any soul in distress; it is expected of you to pray for him more than of another. Christ learnt to pity us in all our infirmities the more, by bearing our infirmities himself. To that end God raised you up that you might be able to comfort others with *the comforts you have received*; and might pray for them. Therefore Isaiah lvii. 17, when any poor soul is smitten, God, as is there said, is moved to restore him again for his mourners' sakes, as well as his own.

3. Declare *what God hath done for you*. You have been in hell; warn others from coming there. "Knowing the terror of the Lord, persuade men." If the rich man had come from hell, what stories would he have told his brethren? Tell you the like. You have seen

the "wonders of God in the deeps;" now you are ashore, tell men of the rocks, and shelves, and storms they are like to meet with in such and such courses. David says, when his bones were healed again, "then he would teach sinners God's ways."

4. Take heed of what may prove the fuel of such a condition. The devil may come and east you into your old fits if he find the same materials to work upon, into your uneleanness, lying, or unjust dealing, as before. You know what brought David to his broken bones. Likewise take heed of performing duties formally, or coldly, and of resting in them, which are but as a hollow tooth, as Solomon speaks, that is broken; these may cause the tooth-ach again. Take heed of sinning against light. If the devil found no such things in you, he would not trouble you. So also get small doubts answered; let them not lie neglected; they may come in together one day and make an army; though several, and apart, as they now rise in your consciences, you can despise and neglect them.

IV Who is among you walking in darkness that yet fears to offend God as much as hell, and endeavours and desires to obey him in all things, as much as to go to heaven? Such when they find God withdraw, call God's love in question; especially if they were in the sun-shine before, but now "sit in the valley of the shadow of death." God is gone, light is gone: God answers them neither by vision, nor by prophets; neither in praying nor in hearing; and therefore they think he hath forsaken them, east them off, *yea, will never be merciful.* But whoever you are, poor souls! you err, "not knowing the Scriptures," and the manner of your God, to think that he hath east you off; when he is but returned to his place, that you may seek him more earnestly. So it is that you are always in the extremes: if he shines on you, then you think, "your mountain shall never be removed:" if he hides his face, then, "he will never be

merciful." And yet I blame you not for being troubled; for when he "hides his face, the creatures all are troubled," Psalm civ. 29. God would have you lay it to heart when he is angry. It were a sign you had no grace that you made not him your portion, if you could bear his absence and not mourn. But though you should lay it to heart, so as to mourn under it; yet you should not be discouraged. We are not the same to-day that we were yesterday: but "Christ is the same to-day, yesterday, and for ever." To say that he hath cast you off because he hath hid his face, is injurious to him: "In a little wrath have I hid my face for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I remember thee." I have but *hid my face*, not cast thee out of mind; and though *in anger, yet but a little anger*; and not long neither, but *for a moment*; and all that while I am not unmindful of thee, *I remember thee*; and this with *kindness everlasting*.

But you will say, "If this desertion were but for a moment, it were something; but mine, hath been for many years." This life is but a moment; and God hath eternity to shew his love in; time enough to make amends for a few frowns; sufficiency to do it, *everlasting kindness*. Remember what is said in another case: though *he bears long, yet he comes speedily*; that is, though long in our eyes, yet speedily in his, who hath all time before him.

CHAP. XV

Directions for those who are deeply troubled.

FOR their sakes who are deeply troubled, I will prescribe some directions how they are to behave themselves in such a condition, so as to come more comfortably and more speedily out of it. For it is in these long and great

sicknesses of the soul, as in those of the body, men are kept the longer in them, for want of right directions and prescriptions.

I. Take heed of rash, desperate, impatient speeches, or wishes. Such you will be forced to recal again with sorrow. Many a poor soul, after they have had strong hopes that heaven is theirs; yet when the sorrows of hell compass them, are apt to say, they shall be cut off by God's hand, swallowed up of satan, and everlastingly destroyed. This they say in their haste too often. So David, when in doubt about that promise made him, Psalm lxxvii. says, "God will never be merciful." What a desperate speech was this? that what a man sees not at present he should conclude would never be. But he acknowledgeth his error in it: "it was my infirmity," ver. 10, thus to speak. So Job, though for awhile, at the beginning of the storm, he was calm and quiet in his spirit, and therefore, chap. i. ver. 22, it is said, that "in all this;" that is, so long, "he had not charged God foolishly;" yet when the drops of God's wrath began to soak into his soul, he curseth the day of his birth; and wisheth God would cut him off; for which speeches God in the end steps out, taking him up for them; chap. xxxviii. 2, "Who is this (says he,) that talketh thus?" Oh! take heed ye, whose souls are in distress, of such wishes or speeches as these, Oh! that God would cut me off! that I were in hell, and knew the worst! Take heed, I say. When a man is sick and raves, whereas otherwise those about him would use him gently, they are forced to hold and bind him; *impatiens ægrotus crudelem medicum facit*, an impatient patient makes a physician cruel. God would deal more gently with thee, but for such impatiencies. Say not that your graces are no graces, or that he will never be merciful. You abuse him when you do so; therefore take heed of it.

II. Yet make diligent search. Let an inquisition be set up in thy heart, and make an inquiry into two things. First, what might be the true cause, which provokes God

thus to leave thee, and hide himself from thee: and, secondly, what is the main reason which causeth thee to fear, and thus to call all into question? These are two distinct things. For though God hath just cause to leave us to this trouble; yet often the thing that troubles us is a mere mistake. It is therefore necessary to inquire into both.

First, examine what is the true cause that provokes God thus to leave thee. So Lam. iii. 40, "Let us search and try our ways." This was spoken by the church in desertion, as appears by the former part of the chapter. And to help yourselves in this, go over the cases which have been propounded. Hast thou not been confident in false signs? or rested too much on true, to the neglect of Christ, and God's free grace? Didst thou not neglect to stir up thy own graces? Go over all those cases before-mentioned. Some one or other of them will be found to be the cause. This is necessary; for till the cause be known, the heart submits not; neither will the trouble cease, till that which provokes God to lay it on be confessed and forsaken. And if it be a particular sin that God aims at, then usually God useth the horror for, and the guilt of, that very sin to afflict thee; so that then it is easily found out. David easily knew what it was for which God broke his bones. For his very sin was it that was the iron mace, the instrument of God's executing it upon him: "My sin (says he,) is ever before me;" it was ever in his eye. Indeed, in outward afflictions it is more difficult to find out the cause why God afflicts, (unless sometimes you may, through God's wise-disposing hand, find and read the sin in the punishment; they so resemble one another, that a man may say, This cross lay in the womb of such a sin, they are so like.) But in those inward distresses, that sin which moveth God to afflict, God often useth to terrify a person; to cast a man into the distress and to keep him in it; it is both the cause and executioner also. But in case thou canst not find out the cause, as Job, it seems, did not;

and Elihu did suppose he might; follow his counsel till God shew thee the cause; say unto God, "That which I see not teach thou me, and I will not offend any more;" and if thou findest it, say also, "I have borne chastisement for such a sin, I will never offend any more." Till then God will not let thee go.

The second thing to be searched into is, What is the chief reason which makes thee call in question whether God be thy God? This is usually some false reasoning or misapprehension; some mere mistake, some device and sophistry of satan. Therefore take thy soul aside, and seriously examine it, why it is thus troubled? what reason, what ground thou hast to think that God is not thy God? And then examine it whether it be a true ground. As the apostle bids us, "give a reason of our faith;" so ask thou of thy soul, *the reason of its doubting*. Heman thought, and said, that God had cast him off: what persuaded him to think so? *Because God had hidden his face*. It doth not follow, Heman; a father may hide his face from his son, and yet not cast him off. So David also reasoneth, Psalm lxxvii. 2, 3, "I have sought God," prayed, and used the means, "and yet I am troubled," and yet God reveals not himself: and what doth he conclude from this? ver. 7, "Will the Lord east off for ever?" He thought, If God had loved me, he would presently have heard me. This was false reasoning. A father may sometimes seem so angry, that he may throw away his child's petition, and yet be his father still.

It were infinite to reckon up all the false reasonings that souls in distress have fallen into; some being annoyed with blasphemous thoughts, though they are their greatest affliction, yet have thought they have sinned against the Holy Ghost, misapplying Matt. xii. 31, that "blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall never be forgiven;" whereas that place is meant only of those who openly and maliciously said Christ had a devil, and

wrought his miracles by the power of the devil. So some, because they have sinned after being enlightened and tasting the good word of God, think they shall never be renewed, by reason of that place, Heb. vi. 4; whereas the apostle speaks of a wilful and total falling away, both from the power and form of religion. So because some hear there is a time, after which God offers grace no more, fear their time is also past; but without ground. For though it be true, God doth so with many that hear the gospel; yet the word gives us no certain rules to judge he hath done so by any of us. It is good to fear lest thou shouldst provoke him to it, but thou hast no sign to fear he hath done so with thee. And indeed herein lies the main and first business to be done in raising up a troubled soul, namely, to find out the ground of their doubting, and to examine the truth of it and confute it. If a man be falsely imprisoned, or cast in a suit at law, what doth he to remedy it? He seeks to find out the error in the writ: so do thou search out the ground of thy trouble: go to some spiritual lawyer skilled in soul-work; keep not the devil's counsel: he opposeth nothing more than making your doubts known.

III. The third direction I give to such is, that they hear and consider what makes for their comfort, as well as what makes against them. Such as are in distress through satan's temptations, have their hearts so deeply possessed with the misery of their states, that as the people of God, Exod. vi. 9, "Through the anguish of their hearts they listen not" to the good message brought them; nor believe that so good news can be true of them. Many are so strongly prepossessed, and so out of hopes, that they reject all that is spoken for their comfort; so that they will not so much as cast a thought upon any thing that may be an occasion of comfort to them. This was David's infirmity; "My soul refuseth to be comforted," says he. He spilt all the cordials that were brought him. He was not only void of comfort.

but refused it. What? bring me promises? (will such an one say,) you may as well carry them to one in hell. This sullen, desperate obstinacy is a thing you ought to take heed of; for hereby you take satan's part, and that against those you ought to love so dearly, even your own souls. But, as they said, "Let Baal plead for himself;" so let satan plead his own cause; do not you. Hereby also you *forsake your own mercies*; you give up your own right, and are so befooled as to plead against your own title, your own interest in the best things you can have interest in. You give up your portion bequeathed you in your Father's will, which you ought to maintain, and you trust to lying vanities, the sooth-sayings and fortune-tellers, as I may call them, of satan and your own hearts.

IV The fourth direction is, to call to remembrance what formerly hath been between God and you. The remembrance of former things doth often uphold, when present sense fails. This David practised, in the like case when his soul had refused comfort; yet, in the end, he began not only to be willing to listen to what might make for him, but set himself on work to recal to mind, to "consider the days of old," Psalm lxxvii. "I considered (says he,) the songs in the night," that is, that joyful communion he had enjoyed with God, and "I communed with mine own heart, and made diligent search," to see if no grace formerly had been there, and if no grace at present were there; he searched into what might comfort him, as well as into the causes that might provoke God thus to deal with him. In this way remember God's gracious dealings with you; God remembers them to have mercy on you; and why should not you remember them to comfort yourself? Therefore, Heb. vi. 9, 10, "We hope (says he,) better things of you, for God is not unrighteous to forget your labour of love, namely, to reward you; and therefore he calls upon them in like manner, Heb. x. 31, "to call to remembrance the former days" to comfort

them; how they held out when their hearts were tried to the bottom: when shipwreck was made of their goods, good names, and all for Christ; yet they made not shipwreck of a good conscience. And if thou dost thus call to remembrance things of old; and yet canst find no comfort at first from them; yet have recourse to them again and again; for though they comfort not at one time, they may at another; that it may be seen that God comforts by them, and not they alone of themselves.

V If former signs remembered bring thee no comfort, then renew thy faith and repentance: set thy heart to believe and repent afresh as if thou hadst never yet begun. Cease to reason about thy former faith and repentance, and set upon believing and repenting anew. Say, suppose my faith and repentance have not been true hitherto; I will now endeavour after such as is true. Lord, I cast my soul on all thy mercies afresh; I desire now an heart perfect with thee; to part with every sin, to submit to every duty, to set up God and Christ as my aim in all. This of all directions I commend to you, as a special means to dissolve these temptations. Take it, practise it; it is a tried one; and it is that which at last the church comes to, Lam. iii. 40, "Come, let us try our ways, and turn to the Lord;" that is the last way and course she takes. When nothing but hypocrisy and unbelief appear to thee, to be in thy heart, do thou groan after the contrary sincerity, and let satan say his worst. And this direction I the rather prescribe, because, in time of temptation about assurance, it is the usual course of some to spend all their thoughts upon what formerly they have had; laying out all their time and cost in new trials about their former title, and when they have been cast again and again, yet still do nothing but read over old evidences again and again.

But know, that though this is not to be neglected; yet you are not so to look back to your former faith and repentance as to forget to practise new. This is the best way, the shortest cut, and requires as little pains: thou

mayest with as little charge get a new lease, as prove the old one good; yea, thou mayest cut the knot sooner by new faith, than untie it by reasonings and disputings. And the truth is, in the end thou must come to this, for God's great end in deserting is, to put you upon renewing your faith and repentance. Therefore begin to do it soon. And whereas thou thinkest, that by this thou mayest prejudice thy former title; it is not my meaning that thou shouldst utterly give up thy old faith and repentance as counterfeit; my advice is to forbear pleading it for a time, and rather to renew it; and then the comfort of thy old repentance will come in. "If any man," says Christ, "will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it is of God." As the best way to know the truth is not to spend all the time in disputing about it, but to practise it, which puts an end to controversies in men's hearts; so the best way to acquire the comfort of former grace, is to add the practice of believing and repenting anew. This baffles the devil, and gets advantage of him. This puts him upon a new reply, and indeed nonplusseth him. For what can he say to it? He must now prove thou art incapable of grace, that thou shalt never repent, which all the world and devils in hell cannot prove.

VI. And if in this case he urges, (as usually he doth,) that all will be in vain for time to come, as well as it hath been for time past: then sixthly, stand not now disputing it, but be peremptory and resolute in thy faith and turning to God, let the issue be what it will. Faith is never nonplussed. Job vows he "will trust him, though he should kill him," Job xxxi. 15. So do thou, whether he will damn or save thee, do what he will with thee, cease not to cast thyself upon him for mercy. Go thou on to use the means diligently and constantly; and be so much the more diligent. Fear and hate sin still, pray day and night, as Heman did when he thought himself cut off, Psalm lxxxviii. ver. 1, "I have cried day and night, though I be as one thou rememberest no

more." Suppose thou findest no delight in the ordinances, yet use them; though thou art desperately sick, yet eat still; take all that is brought thee; some strength comes of it. Say, let me be damned or saved, I resolve to go on. And there is good reason for it. For if thou shouldst leave off to serve the Lord, then thou art sure to be damned; but by this other way thou mayest in the end prevail. "Who knows but God may be merciful?" So Esther, "If I perish, I perish," And so the lepers; see how they reasoned in a desperate case, 2 Kings vii. 3, 4, "If we go into the city we are sure to die, for the famine is there; if we sit still, we die also. Come! let us fall into the hands of the Assyrians, if they save us alive, so; if they kill us, we shall but die." So reason thou: if I cease humbling myself, praying, attending on the means, I shall certainly perish, I will therefore rather go on to do all these as I can; and if God saves me, a sinner, so; if not, I can but be damned.

VII. Let the child of light that walks in darkness "trust in the name of the Lord." Being thus resolved to turn to God, and to go on to fear and obey him, thou mayest confidently stay upon the name of God, when thou hast nothing else to rest upon. To one who resolves to fear God and obey him, the name of God is an all-sufficient prop and stay to rest on, when he sees nothing in himself, nor any promise in the word belonging unto him. The name of God alone is here opposed to all other means of support. So that when the soul shall look into itself with one eye, and glance over all the word of God with another; and yet shall see not any one grace in the one, nor promise in the other which it may rest upon, yet then looking upon God, and considering what a God he is, and what he says of himself, the sole consideration of what he knows to be in God may support him. This it is to stay upon his name.

By the name of God two things are meant. First, those glorious attributes, especially of grace and mercy, whereby God hath made himself known to us, Ex. xxxiv.

5, 6, 7, &c. The Lord hath proclaimed his name; "The Lord God, merciful, gracious, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and will by no means clear the guilty." Secondly, Jesus Christ, as he is set forth to be righteousness to the sons of men, Jer. xxiii. 6, "This is the name wherewith he shall be called," or made known to us, "The Lord our Righteousness," that is, Jesus Christ, who is God, hath righteousness in himself for us, which may be made ours. So that when a poor soul in distress is not able to say, I see an evidence in myself, whereby I can say, God is my God, or Christ is mine; yet, because I see free grace enough in God, and righteousness in Christ, which I (being a sinful man, and not a devil,) am therefore capable of, and may come to have an interest in, though I know nothing in myself whereby I can challenge any present interest. And because grace and mercy is his name, and our righteousness his Son's name; therefore I cast myself upon both, for pardon and favour, and thereupon my soul leans, stays, and abides. So that these two apprehensions meeting in the heart, help to make up this resting upon his name; namely, first, that there is such grace in God; and that Jesus Christ is appointed to be our righteousness: and, secondly, that I am capable of an interest in both these; and that though there be nothing in me, which may challenge an interest in them, yet there is nothing that excludes me; whereupon I cast myself upon God for both, and there I rest.

The name of God; that is, God's attributes, and Christ's righteousness sufficiently and adequately answer all wants and doubts; all objections and distresses we can have, or can be in; whatsoever our want or temptations be, he hath a name to make supply. For example; consider every letter in his name, mentioned Ex. xxxiv. 5, 6, and it answers to some temptation. Art thou in misery and great distress? He is merciful; "the Lord, merciful;" the Lord, therefore able to help thee; mer-

ciful, therefore willing. Yea, but thou wilt say, "I am unworthy, I have nothing in me to move him to it." Therefore he is gracious; now grace is to shew mercy freely. "Yea, but I have sinned against him long, for many years; if I had come in when I was young, mercy might have been shewn me." To this he says, I am long-suffering. "Yea, but my sins every way abound in number, and it is impossible to reckon them up; and they abound in heinousness; I have committed the same sins again and again." His name also answers this objection; he is abundant in goodness; he abounds more in grace than thou in sinning; and though thou hast been false again and again to him, and broken all covenants, yet he is abundant in truth; better than his word; for he cannot to our capacities express all that mercy that is in him. "Yea, but I have committed great sins, aggravated with many and great circumstances; against love, against knowledge, and wilfully." He forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin; sins of all sorts. "Yea, but there is mercy thus in him only for a few, and I may not be of the number." Yes, there is mercy for thousands; and he keeps it; treasures of it lie by him, and are kept, if men would come in and take them. Object what thou canst, his name will answer thee. Needest thou comfort as well as pardon? He is both Father of mercies, and God of all comfort; that is his name, 2 Cor. i. 3. Needest thou peace of conscience? He is the God of peace. "Yea, but I have an heart empty of grace, and full of corruptions." He is God of all grace to heal thee, as well as of peace to pardon thee. Needest thou wisdom and direction? He is the Father of lights. Is thy heart inconstant and full of double-mindedness? He is unchangeable also. Thus all objections that can be made may be answered out of his name.

The like may be fully shewed in his Son's name; in whom God hath made himself strong to shew mercy and bestow all good things. Whose name is adequate to God's name; of as large extent in worth and merit, as

God's heart is in his purposes of shewing and bestowing mercies? Whose name hath an all-sufficiency in it to supply all our wants and desires, and satisfy all scruples? Consider his name in Isaiah ix. 6, compared with 1 Cor. i. 30. Would we have peace of conscience, and the guilt of sins removed? He is the Prince of peace, and is made righteousness to us. Are we in depths of distress? Are there terrors within, and terrors without, out of which we see no redemption? He is the mighty God, able to save to the utmost, being made redemption to us. Want we grace and his image to be renewed in us? He is the everlasting Father; a Father, to beget his likeness in us, and everlasting, to maintain it for ever, when it is begun; and he is made sanctification to us. Want we wisdom to guide us? He is the Counsellor, and is made wisdom to us. All we want he hath; even as all he hath we want. And further, although we not only want all these, but very much of all these, his name is also Wonderful. For such he is in all these; able to do beyond all our expectations, even to astonishment.

If the soul desires more particular satisfaction in point of justification, which consists in the pardon of sins, and acceptance with God; that other name of his, "The Lord our Righteousness," will answer all objections and doubts. For if that righteousness of his satisfied God, who is "greater than our hearts," it may satisfy our hearts much more. The righteousness of his life and death is not only ἀντίλυτρον, an adequate sufficient ransom, but there is plenteous redemption in it; yea, to superfluity, as the apostle's phrase implies; ὑπερπλέονασε, 1 Tim. i. 14, that is, *overflowing*, more than would serve the turn, and that to pardon his sins, who was "the chief of sinners." He elsewhere challengeth all the powers of sin, hell, and darkness to appear in this dispute, and undertakes to answer them all out of this one position, "Christ hath died," Rom. viii. 34, which is in effect the

same with this, "The Lord our Righteousness: who therefore (says he) shall condemn?"

What can be alleged either in the heinousness of sin in the general, or in any of thy sins in particular, unto which an answer may not be fetched from the righteousness of Christ's death and life? Is it that sin is an offence against the great God? Is not his righteousness the righteousness of Jehovah? "Jehovah our Righteousness," who is the mighty God? Is the glory of this great God, and all his excellencies debased by us in sinning? And will not the emptying of his glory, whose name is the "brightness of his Father's glory," satisfy and make amends? Are our sins the transgression of the holy and righteous law in every part of it? What? Did not Jehovah, who made and gave that law, to make himself our righteousness, make himself under the law? Gal. iv. 4; and, to make up a full righteousness, fulfil every part of it? Rom. viii. 3, 4. Is it thy continuance in sin, and the number and repetition of thy sins that amazeth thee? "All fulness dwells in him," who is our righteousness, and hath dwelt in him longer than sin in thee; and the righteousness of our Messiah is everlasting righteousness; the merit of which an eternity of sinning could not expend, or make void. And is all this righteousness laid up for himself only, or for any other sort of creatures, so that thou mightest never come to have an interest in it? No: the top of our comfort is, that our righteousness is one letter of his name; and that our names are put into his. For us it is, and ours it is ordained to be: as much ours, to save us trusting upon it, as his own to glorify him. Ours; not for himself: he had no need of it, being God blessed for ever. Ours, not the angels': neither the good, (for they are justified by their own:) nor the bad, (they are put out of God's will for ever.) But ours, who are the sons of men; and among them, theirs especially, who are *broken, lost, whose souls draw near to the grave*, and that come and

pray unto God, and stay themselves upon it; unto them God cannot deny it, for it is theirs. So that the name of the Son of God also is all-sufficient to answer all objections.

The mere name of God is support enough for faith; because it is for his *name sake*, and his Son's name sake, that he doth all he doth; and for nothing in us, but merely for what is in himself; so Isai. xlvi. 9, "For my name sake will I defer my anger." So also Ezek. xxxvi. 22, 32, "For my name sake, and not for your sake:" and Isai. xliii. 25, "I am he that blotteth out thy transgression for my own sake, and will not remember thy sins." For this "he blotteth out transgression," and pardoneth. And if it be for his name sake he doth all he doth, and fulfilleth all promises made to us: then when thou seest nothing in thyself to which any promise is made, nothing which may appear to be any argument or motive that he will pardon thee, then trust thou in his name; that because he is God, and hath mercy in him, therefore he will do it.

This then may direct poor souls in distress, what to venture all upon; upon what ground to hazard labours, endeavours, repentance, and all, even upon his name; when they see nothing in themselves to which any promise belongs. Your own hearts may fail, but God's name and his Son's name rested on, will never fail you. Lean on these, not by halves, but *trust perfectly* (as the apostle says) on that mercy you hear is in God, upon *that grace revealed*. Throw and cast your whole souls, your whole weight upon it. He only "hath perfect peace, whose mind is staid on God." Have not half thy soul upon that "rock which is higher than thou," but get all upon it, and when all shall fail, renew thy faith on his name. Thereon rest, there die. To this purpose may that of Solomon serve, Prov. xviii. 10, "His name (says he) is a strong tower; the righteous flee to it, and are safe." Now what end is there, and use of a tower in a city? When all the out-works are taken, the walls scaled, all

fortifications forsaken, the houses left, then a tower holds out last, and is a refuge to flee to. So when the devil beleaguers thee round, and encompasseth thy soul, and the comfort of every grace in thee is taken from thee, and thou art driven from, and art forced to forsake all other thy holds and grounds of comfort, then flee to the *name of the Lord*, as thy *city of refuge*. Say, There is *mercy* in thee, Lord, and *that is thy name*. And there is righteousness in thy Son, and that is his name. I am directed to trust in thy name in time of need. Here rest, and *catch hold* as on the horns of the altar, and if thou diest, die there.

VIII. The eighth direction is, to *wait* upon God, thus *trusting in his name*, in the constant use of all ordinances and means of comfort. *Waiting* is indeed but an act of faith further stretched out. It is a continuing to believe on God, and to look for help from him, with submission, though he stays long ere he comes. Waiting is an act of faith resting on God; and an act of hope expecting help from him; an act of patience, the mind quietly contenting itself till God doth come; and of submission, if he should not come. Therefore says the church, being in this very case, "It is good to hope, and quietly to wait for the salvation of the Lord." It is *good* indeed to do so; for God will afflict the less, ease you the sooner, comfort you the more when he doth come; and in the mean while it enables you to *possess your souls*, and to be yourselves; and to do otherwise, to be impatient, or to *give over looking for the Lord*, as Ahaz did, is the greatest folly that can be; for as Job says, Job xii. 14, "If he shut up, there is no opening;" all the world cannot let you out. He keeps the keys of the dungeon, and you must stay his leisure, and he stays but for a fit time to let you out, Isai. xxx. 18, "He will wait to be gracious to you, for he is a God of judgment," a wise and judicious God, and knows the fittest times and seasons. And that he stays so long, is not out of want of mercy; for he waits and longs to be gracious; but he

doth it out of *judgment*, and his wisdom sees not yet a fit time. He is grieved that you are not yet fit for mercy, that his merey would not yet be exalted if he should shew it, till you further see your misery; and therefore, says he, “Blessed are all they that wait for him.” And as he now waiteth to be the more gracious to thee, so he did heretofore, a long while wait for thee, that thou wouldest begin to turn to him and say, *When will it once be?* Thou madest him stay thy leisure, in turning from thy sin; why may he not make thee stay his, for the pardon of it? And indeed the escaping hell in the end is so great a merey, that it is worth the waiting for all thy days, though thou endure an hell here, and gettest not a good look till the very last gasp. Therefore *put thy mouth in the dust, and wait quietly.*

And waiting thus, go on to *use all the means of grace* more diligently, more constantly, though thou findest no good by them. Omit no ordinance God hath appointed for thy comfort and recovery; as in a long siekness, you still use means though many have failed, as the woman who had the bloody issue, *spent all upon physicians*, in the use of means for her recovery. *That* trouble of mind doth only hurt you, which drives you from the means. Therefore the devil endeavours nothing more than to keep such souls from the Word, from good company, from the sacraments, from prayer, by objecting their unprofitableness unto them, and that all is in vain, and that they do but increase their condemnation. You profit much if you learn no other lesson in the use of the means, but that you are of yourself most unprofitable; and that unless God *teacheth you to profit*, no good is done, and so learnest to depend upon God in the ordinance.

And again, though you should forget all you hear, and should seem to reap no benefit by it, yet hear; for some secret strength is gotten by it. And as for increasing your condemnation, know that utterly to neglect the means is greater condemnation. Therefore read, pray, meditate,

hear, confer, receive the sacraments, forbear not these your appointed meals. Indeed when the body is sick ye use to forbear your appointed food; but when the soul is sick there is more need of it than ever. All these are but meat and medicine, food, physic, cordials, and all. Use reading the Word; *the Scriptures were written for our consolation*; therefore read them much. Attend on preaching, for *God creates the fruit of the lips peace*. Receive the sacrament often; those days are sealing days; go thou and confess thy sins, write over thy pardon, put in all thou knowest by thyself, bring it to Christ to set his seal to it. Only take this caution, that you trust not to the use of the means, but unto God in the means. To think, Oh! I shall have comfort by such a man, or at such a time, in such an ordinance; this often dasheth all. So believe in God as if you used no means, and yet as diligently use the means, as if your confidence were to be in them.

IX. Above all things *pray*, and get others to pray for you; for God often *restores comfort* unto such, at the request of *mourners* for them, Isa. lvii. 18. But yet especially be earnest in pouring forth your complaint yourself; for though the speaking of friends may somewhat further your suit, yet it must be wrought out between God and you in private; and his good-will must be obtained by wooing him in secret. This counsel the apostle gives you, "Is any afflicted? let him pray." And because of all afflictions else, this needeth prayer the most; therefore David pens the 102d psalm on purpose; not for his own use only, but for the use of all others in the like distress; as appears by this title of it: "A prayer for the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord."

When at any time therefore, thy sins and God's wrath meet in thy conscience, then pour forth thy soul, lay open and confess thy sin. When thy case is as Job's was, Job x. 15, 16, 17, that *thou art full of confusion*, so full that thou thinkest thy heart could hold no more; and yet *it*

increaseth, and he fills thee fuller yet ; then do thou pour out thy complaints to him, as he pours confusion into thee ; and when he *hunts* thee, as Job there complains, *like a fierce lion*, fall thou down and humble thyself like a poor and silly lamb. If thou diest, die at his feet, mourning, bleeding out thy soul in tears. And when he hunts thee up and down, and pursues thee with blow after blow, *follow* thou *hard after* him wherever he goes, with complaint after complaint. And when yet he leaves thee not, but *again* and *again returns*, (as some read it) after some intermission, and *shows himself terrible* to thee day after day, night after night ; yet do thou look in the like manner *again and again towards his holy temple*, as Jonah did : and when he begins to bring in new sins, new indictments against thee, (as it is Job x. 17,) *thou renewest thy witnesses* : and when thou thoughtest he had done with thee, he enters into new quarrels and reckonings long since past and forgotten, (as it is in the same verse) *changes and war against thee*, vicissitudes and armies of disquietments ; and when one army is overcome, a new one appears in the field ; then fall thou down, and say as Job at last doth ; *I have sinned*, I have sinned, *what shall I do unto thee?* What shall I do unto thee ? *O thou preserver* (not destroyer) *of men*. These and these abominations I have done, and I cannot now undo them ; and *what shall I do* to obtain thy favour ? Alas ! thou canst do nothing that can satisfy him. Only “ confess thy sin, accept thy punishment. Complain thou not ; put thy mouth in the dust,” Lam. iii. 29, 30. Be still ; say not a word ; but only such whereby thou utterest thy complaints, and dost acknowledge thine own desert of ten thousand times more. Say as in Micah vii. 9, “ I will bear thine indignation, for I have sinned against thee.” Bear witness still to every stroke, that it is not only just, but also *less than thou hast deserved*, and that it is *his mercy thou art not consumed*, and cut off by every blow. The higher he lifts up his hand to strike, the lower let thy soul fall down. *Humble thyself under*

his mighty hand. And still kiss the rod when he hath done, and then take up words of pleading for thyself: (it is for thy life) desiring him to remember what he hath been ever thinking of, even from everlasting, *thoughts of peace* and mercy to *us-ward*, and the *number of them cannot be told.* Plead thou, What are become of all thy thoughts of mercy? *Are they restrained?* What? Are all now on the sudden *forgotten*, which thou hast been thinking on so long? Ask him if he hath forgotten his own name; to be gracious *and abundant in kindness.* Say, thou hast notice given thee of an infinite and all-sufficient righteousness in his Son, laid up in him, and that by his own procurement, whereof his Son never had, nor can have any need himself: and for whom was it then appointed? but for the sons of men; those who are *weary, wounded, sick, broken, lost.* These his Son hath put into his *will*, who still lives to be his own execeuter. And say further to him, It is come to thine ears, that his Spirit is the *Comforter*, a *God of comforts*, and that his Son hath bought them all, *and is anointed with this Spirit* on purpose to pour him forth into the hearts of those that are *wounded and sick, and broken: the whole they have no need of them.*

If it be said unto thee; “Yea, but thou art most unworthy:” answer, But *he professeth to love freely.* If the greatness of thy sins be objected against thee; plead thou again, that *plenteous redemption is with him;* and say, If God hath not enough to pardon me, I am content to go without. If it be objected that thou art ungodly, say, *That thou believest on him that justifieth the ungodly.* If God puts thee off, (as Christ a while did the woman of Canaan) and says he hath no need of thee; say, that thou hast need of him, and canst no longer live without him; for, *in his favour is thy life*, and, that without it thou art undone. If he seems to rebuke thee, and ask, How dardest thou press thus to him who is *the High and Lofty One?* A sinful man to him, *whose name is holy?* say, Thou hast heard himself say; “Thus saith that High and

Lofty One, whose name is holy ; that he dwells with him that is of a contrite spirit, to revive the heart of the humble," Isa. lvii. 15.

If still he doth pursue thee, and his wrath lie heavy on thee, ask him, what is it he aims at? Is it to have the victory, "and overcome when he judgeth?" Freely tell him, I am willing to give it thee, to yield to thee, to stand out with thee in nothing; but am content to submit to thy commanding will in all things, and to thy condemning will also, if thou so please; and that it will be just if thou condemn me: I will justify thee, whilst thou art condemning me; and at the latter day, thou shalt need no other judge against me than myself. Only beseech him to consider what honour it will be to him to *pursue dry stubble*, and to *break a poor dried leaf*, that crumbleth under his fingers; to *break a reed* that is broken already. Say, thou art not a fit match for him, and he hath said, "He will not contend for ever," Isa. lvii. 16, especially when he sees any to lay down their weapons, as thou art content to do.

Or ask him, Lord, is it that thou aimest to have glory out of my eternal condemnation? It is true, thou mayest; thou mayest have glory out of my death and destruction, who never yet hadst it out of my life. But I desire thee to consider this before thou thrustest thy sword into me, that thou hast already *sheathed* it in thy *Son's* bowels. Thou mayest shew as much power in overcoming thy wrath, as in venting it; yea, and have greater glory. Plead, I shall never be able to satisfy thee, though thou shouldst throw me down to hell: thou mayest cast me into prison, but I can never pay the debt: and *what profit will there be* in my blood? Therefore, if satisfaction to thy justice be thy end, thou mayest better accept that which thy Son hath made, and so thou shalt be sure to be no loser by me. Thereby thou wilt not only receive the glory of thy justice, but shew the riches of thy grace and mercy also, and so double the revenue of thy glory in me.

Or, is it (Lord) that that thou aimest to have more obedience from me than heretofore thou hast had? Plead; Lord, this is the way to disable me for service; for while I suffer thy terrors, I am as one among the dead, listless not to thy business only, but to all things else; distracted with terrors, so that the powers of my soul are scattered, and cannot attend upon their duty; and besides this distraction in my spirit, it consumes my strength also, dries up my bones and moisture. Say, "When thou rebukest man for sin, thou makest his beauty to consume away as a moth. Oh! therefore spare me, that I may recover my strength, before I go hence and be no more seen." And withal put him in mind, that if he should go on thus to deal with thee, as thou shouldst not be able to do him much service, so neither to do any long, for that will cut short thy days. Say to him, "How long wilt thou hide thyself? For ever? Shall thy wrath burn like fire? Remember how short my time is." I have but a little time here allotted me, though none of it should be shortened. And for that little time I have to live, the more joy I have, the more service I shall be able to do thee, ("for the joy of the Lord is our strength." Neh. viii. 10,) and more acceptably also, for "thou lovest a cheerful giver." Intreat him to restore thee to the joy of his salvation, so shalt thou be able to do him more service in a week, than in a year now, (long trouble of mind being as long sicknesses, which make all performances weak.)

And if it be objected against thee, that if thou should be trusted with such assurance, thou wouldst turn it into wantonness; reply, that if he pleaseth, he can prevent that, by preparing thy heart for these cordials, so that they shall work kindly on thee; by writing the law of love towards him in thy heart, which, when his love shed abroad shall join therewith, will constrain and strengthen to obedience: and say, that though thou hast indeed a stubborn and self-loving heart, yet he can make his loving kindness overcome it, for it is "stronger than death."

And if through all these discouragements, thy condition prove worse and worse, so that thou canst not pray, but art struck dumb when thou comest into his presence, make signs; groan, sigh, sob, chatter as Hezekiah did, bemoan thyself for thine unworthiness; and desire Christ to speak thy requests for thee, and God to hear him for thee. "Christ is an advocate with the Father," nor was ever cast in any suit he pleaded. See what himself saith, Jer. xxxi. 18, 19, 20, "Ephraim is my son, my pleasant son," and yet he began to "speak against him," as sharp words as ever he hath done against thee; as if he meant never to have mercy on him: upon which Ephraim falls a "bemoaning himself," (as I have taught thee to do) and acknowledgeth it was justly done, having "been a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke." Ephraim began to be ashamed, not able to look up, and seeks after repentance; and that from him, without whose help he was not able to turn to him: "Turn thou me, and I shall be turned;" and to challenge him and his love: "Thou art the Lord, my God." Well! says God, though it be long since "I spake against him," and I have suffered him long to be plunged in misery, "yet I remember him still:" his tears, his sighs, were never out of my mind; and though he thinks I had forgotten him, yet I remember him, and "my bowels are troubled for him," as much and more than he is for himself; and I can forbear no longer, "I will surely have mercy on him."

X. Lastly, having done all this, rest not in ease, but healing; not in ease of conscience, but in healing of conscience. You that are troubled in mind, think not your states to be good, simply because you cease to be troubled; but only then when the issue of your trouble is healing to your spirits, by some sound ground of comfort; and when guidance in God's ways, and more close and steady walking with and waiting upon God is the issue of it. For God may slack the cords and take you off the rack when yet he hath not pardoned you. A traitor who was cast

into the dungeon, and had many irons on him, may be let out of the dungeon, and have his irons taken off, and have the liberty of the tower, and yet not have his pardon; nay, usually before execution they use to take the irons off. Thus it is with many. I thank God, says one, I have had much trouble of mind, such and such sins terrified me, and I could not sleep for them; but now I am well, and they do not trouble me. Yea, but is this all? Thou hast cause to fear that thy irons are but taken off against execution. It is with men in point of justification, as of sanctification. A man that hath had a strong lust stirring in him, if he hath gone a year or two, and findeth it not to stir, he therefore thinks he is utterly freed from it, which yet may be but a restraint of it, not killing of it: so it is often in this trouble of mind, which ariseth from the guilt of sin. Because a man finds not those doubts and terrors in his heart as he hath done heretofore, therefore he presently thinks all is well; when it may be merely a truce, not a peace; a laying down of arms only for a while, to make greater preparation against the soul afterwards; a little enlargement in prison, not a pardon.

That you may further conceive the meaning of this; in different men there is a wide difference, both in the main cause of their trouble, and also in the issue and removal of it. One man's trouble is for the present smart he feels in sin, and out of fears that he shall endure these tortures for ever. Another man's trouble (though it hath often all in it, yet the chiefest of his trouble is a further thing) it is not only the smart of sin, but also the filth, the foulness, the offence of it done to God, that wounds him; neither is it only the want of pardon, which troubleth him, but the want of God's favour, the want of seeing his face. His desire is to live in his sight, and to have God to be his God.

Now such as the wound is, such also is the remedy. Therefore, the one being but troubled with the smart of sin, take that load off, and he as pleasant as ever, it being

present ease that he seeks ; or at the utmost, but pardon of sin, that he may be free from the fears of undergoing that for ever, the earnest whereof he feels in his conscience now. And hence the remedies such men often have recourse to, are unsuitable ; they are but like rattles to still children with. They run to merry company, or to music, as Cain to “ building cities ;” and so put off the terrors of their conscience. Or they run to a formal performance of duties ; even as poor souls under Popery, when they were stung by the friars’ sermons, they set them penances and good deeds to be done, which stilled them awhile, and for them they thought they should have pardon : so men run now to holy duties with the same opinion they did then, as bribes for a pardon, “ What shall I give, (says he in Micah) for the sin of my soul ?”

But the wound of the other being deeper, not the sting of sin only, but the poison of it ; not the smart, but the offence done to God ; not the fear of his wrath, but want of his favour ; therefore accordingly ease from those terrors pacify not him ; no, not simply peace with God. He says not only, “ Oh ! miserable man that I am ; who shall deliver me from this death only ?” but “ who shall deliver me from this body of death ?” If news were brought him that God would pardon him, and call him to a reckoning for any sin, and no more were spoken to his conscience, he would still be troubled, till he had assurance of his good-will also. If it were said, God will indeed pardon thee, but he will never love thee as he did, thou must not come into his sight ; this would grieve the soul more than the other would content it, and he would be everlastingly troubled. Ease, pardon, knocking off his bolts, content him not till he enjoys communion with God, till he sees his face in his ordinances. If the want of the sense of communion with God, and absence from him disquiets a man, then the heart rests not till it hath found its well-beloved.

CHAP. XVI.

Some Observations from the Whole.

UPON the whole I observe, that though “it may befall one” that fears God to walk in darkness, “yet but to few.” He says, “who is among you?” He singlcth such out of a croud. There are those that walk in the light of God’s countenance to their death, and never knew what terror of conscience meant. But when he speaks of those that “fear God and walk in darkness,” such an one is “one of a thousand;” of such an one he says, “who is among you?” Few have experience of such a condition. Job had friends, who certainly were good men, (for Job was to pray for them, and God said he would hear Job for them;) and they, as is likely, knew many good men besides Job; yet when this befell Job, it was so strange to them, that they thought him an hypœrite, as never having themselves felt, or heard of the like in others. When Christ was to go into his agony, he would not have many of his apostles so much as witnesses of it, much less to feel the like; he takes but two or three.

1. The first reason of this is, because though all God’s people are fighting men, and men of valour, yet he hath but a few champions; therefore calls but a few out to fight single combats with Satan; though he exerciseth them all in lighter skirmishes, yet not to fight such bloody battles. “Seest thou not my servant Job, there is none like him?” Him God will venture into the field, but others he will not.

2. As he hath few champions fit for such an encounter, so he hath variety of temptations to exercise his withal; he hath poverty and ill report, and cruel mockings, loss of goods, crosses in friends; and some have enough to do to struggle under one of these; and seldom all befall one. Some spirits are so weak, that they would faint, and not be able to sustain themselves; and God never suffers any

to be "tempted above what they are able," 1 Cor. x. 13. Some men's bodies are weak, and if God should "rebuke them long for sin," they would be brought to nothing; and he "remembers they are flesh, and stirs not up all his wrath." Some men God hath present use of in their callings, which if they were distracted with terrors, they were unfit for.

3. God usually inflicts thus but in case of extremity, when he meets with a very froward heart. Lesser afflictions work with the most of his through his blessing; mercies work, disgrace works, poverty works; and as "he doth not willingly afflict," so not unnecessarily. He puts not men into the dungeon for every fault; and therefore there are few long exercised this way. Think not therefore thou hast not true faith because thou wert never terrified as some have been. As some have true faith and sound peace, who yet have not "joy unspeakable and full of glory;" so some have sound humiliation, who never knew terrors of conscience. You see we may often preach such things, as concern but a few in a congregation. There are but a few walk long in darkness, yet to such Christ doth preach; yea, and for such doth God give gifts, the tongue of the learned. Therefore, as we must not defraud one poor soul of its portion, because none else partake of it; so the rest are not to think much, but stay till their portion come; and if any one poor soul hath had his state discovered, all the rest are to be thankful.

I observe, secondly, that those few who walk in darkness, and yet fear and obey him, "God and Christ hath an especial eye unto," and care of. You see he singles them out, as it were, from all the rest. "Who is among you?" Isa. lxvi. 2, "All these things have my hands made, but to this man will I look that is poor and broken and trembleth at my word;" that is, though all things and persons else in the world be my creatures, and so I have a care of them all; yet to him will I look, that is in such a state, as if there were none else in the church. It

is the office of Christ so to do. "The Spirit is upon him on purpose to open the prison to them that are bound," shut up in this dungeon; "to appoint to them that mourn, beauty for ashes; the oil of joy for mourning; garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness." He is the Shepherd, and will take care of all his sheep. But of whom especially? "The lambs" that are weak; "he will gather them with his arms, and gently lead the ewes with young," those that are travelling and bringing forth, as those under terrors are. He will not over-drive them. He is that "good Shepherd," that will, as he hath promised, Ezek. xxxiv. 16, "Seek out that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and bind up that which is broken, and strengthen that which was sick." He names all casualties that befall them, because he helps in all miseries; yea, and after they have been bewildered "in a cloudy and dark day, he will find them out and deliver them." And if his office would not move him to it, his love would; for he is a "merciful and pitiful High-Priest," Heb. iv. 15; and was "in all points tempted as we are;" and especially, in agony of spirit, therein he drank deepest of any, and therefore is fitted to pity us therein; and the more any is troubled, the more Christ is touched. "In all our afflictions he is afflicted. Since I spake against him (says he) I remember him still, therefore my bowels are troubled for him," Jer. xxxi. 20. When a child is sick, the mother is more troubled, and careful about it, and her mind more upon it, than on all the house besides.

Notwithstanding this, all that are in darkness, think that of all men else, God regards not them. Sion said, "God hath forgotten me," Isa. xlix. 15. So David, "God hath forgotten to be merciful." Because they find their hearts hard to God, they think that his is so to them. Because they can find no love in their hearts to God, they think he bears none to them. But Christ you see especially inquires for such, and overlooks all others. Thou afflicted soul, whoever thou art, God hath "grayed thee on the

palms of his hands," Isa. xlv. 16. Every sigh of thine goes to his bowels, "I will dwell with him," saith God, that is broken, to revive his spirit." He is very nigh to such a one. And are God's eyes upon us any more when we are in trouble of spirit, than on any other? Then let our eyes be upon him: "We cannot tell what to do, but our eyes are towards thee." Let our eyes be towards him for help, as of those that looked on the brazen serpent. Let our eyes be towards him for service, "as the eyes of hand-maidens are on their mistress." Look not to men, nor to credit, but on God in all we do, as if there were none else in the world, to approve ourselves unto.

I observe, lastly, in that which he speaks of those his children that are in darkness, he chooseth rather to describe them by *fear and obedience*, than by any other *grace*; that when the children of God are under terrors, the most eminent grace that doth appear in them, is fearfulness to offend God, and willingness to obey him: other graces may be stirred, but these are most eminent, and therefore he mentioneth these for their comfort. Several occasions draw out several graces. When the sunshine of God's favour melts the heart, then *love* and *obedience* thence proceeding, are most eminent, and also *godly sorrow*. So Mary wept much, and loved much, "for much was forgiven her." On the contrary; when the sense of God's love is withdrawn, and fears and terrors shed abroad in the heart, then *fear and obedience* shew themselves. Therefore "he that is poor and contrite, and trembleth at the Word," are joined, Isa. lxvi. 2, even he that trembleth at every command and threatening, and is fearful to transgress. When the soul is possess'd most with displeasure for sin, and apprehensions of wrath, then it feareth most, and then fear works accordingly against that which may displease. Hence the apostle says, "Seeing our God is a consuming fire," Heb. xii. 29, "let us serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."

CHRIST SET FORTH

IN HIS

DEATH, RESURRECTION, ASCENSION,

SITTING AT GOD'S RIGHT HAND,

AND

INTERCESSION,

AS

THE OBJECT AND SUPPORT OF FAITH.

CHRIST

THE OBJECT AND SUPPORT OF FAITH.

SECT. I.

SHEWING, BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION, THAT CHRIST IS
THE EXAMPLE AND OBJECT OF JUSTIFYING FAITH.

ROM. VIII. 34.

Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

CHAP. I.

The Scope and Argument of this Discourse.

THESE words are a triumphing challenge, uttered by the apostle in the name of all the elect; for so he begins, ver. 33, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies." And then follow these words, "Who shall condemn?" (namely, God's elect.) "It is Christ that died; yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh

intercession for us." This *challenge* we find first published by Jesus Christ himself, our only champion, Isa. l. (a chapter made of and for Christ,) ver. 8, "He is near that justifies me, who will contend with me?" They were Christ's words there, and spoken of God's justifying him; and these are every believer's words here, intended of God's justifying them. Christ is brought in there uttering them, as standing at the high-priest's tribunal, where they *spat* upon him, and *buffeted* him, Isa. l. 6, Matt. xxvi. 67. When he was condemned by Pilate, then he exercised this faith on God his Father, "He is near that justifies me." And as in *that* his *condemnation* he stood in our stead; so in this his hope of his *justification* he speaks in our stead also, and as representing us in both. And upon this the apostle here pronounces, in like words, of all the elect, "It is God that justifies, who shall accuse?" Christ was condemned, yea, "hath died, who therefore shall condemn?" Lo! here the communion we have with Christ in his death and condemnation, yea, in his very faith: if he trusted in God, so may we, and shall as certainly be delivered. Faith and the supports of it, or rather Christ, (as by his death, resurrection, sitting at God's right hand, and intercession, he is the foundation of faith, and the cause of our justification,) is the main subject of these words: all which therefore is the intended subject of this discourse.

We have here four things made matter of triumph to believers, to assure them they shall not be condemned; in that, 1. Christ died. 2. Rose again. 3. Is at God's right hand. 4. Intercedes. So that (for the general) I am to do two things. First, *direct your faith to Christ, as to its right object*: and Secondly, *encourage your faith, from these several actions of Christ for us*, and shew how they all contain matter of triumph in point of justification.

CHAP. II.

Directions to Christ as the Object of Faith. How Christ is the Object of justifying Faith.

BUT ere I come to encourage your faith from the four particulars above mentioned, let me first direct your faith to its proper object, Christ. This I shall do briefly, and only so far as it may be an introduction to the encouragements which may be deduced from the said particulars, by considering, 1. That Christ is the object of our faith, in joint commission with God the Father. 2. In opposition to our own humiliation, or graces, or duties. And, 3. In distinction from the promises.

First, Christ is the object of faith, in joint commission with God the Father. So here, "It is God that justifies," and "Christ that died." They are both of them set forth as the foundation of a believer's confidence. So elsewhere, faith is called "a believing on him" (namely, God,) "that justifies the ungodly," Rom. iv. 5, and "a believing on Christ," Acts xvi. Wherefore faith is to have an eye unto both, for both contribute unto the justification of a sinner. It is Christ that paid the price, by which we are justified; and it is God that accepts of it, and imputes it unto us: therefore justification is ascribed unto both. And this we have, Rom. iii. 24, where it is attributed unto them both together: "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ:" where we see, that God's free grace, and Christ's righteousness, both concur to our justification. Christ paid as full a price as if there were no grace shewn in justifying of us; and yet that it should be accepted for us, is as free grace, and as great, as if Christ had paid never a farthing.

Now as both these meet to justify us, so faith in justification is to look at both these. So it follows in the next verse: "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation,

through faith in his blood." And though it be true, that God justifying is the ultimate object of our faith, (for "Christ leads us by the hand," as the word is, Eph. ii. 18, "unto God:") yet under the New Testament, Christ is the more immediate object of faith; for God dwelling in our nature is made more familiar to our faith than the person of the Father, who is merely God. Under the Old Testament, when Christ was not come in the flesh, their faith had a more usual recourse unto God, who had promised the Messiah, of whom they then had not so distinct thoughts; but now under the New Testament, because Christ is come, and is set forth by God, to transact all our business between God and us, the more usual and immediate address of our faith is to be made unto Christ; who, as he is distinctly set forth in the New Testament, so he is distinctly apprehended by the faith of believers. "Ye believe in God, (says Christ to his disciples,) believe also in me:" make me the object of your trust for salvation, as well as the Father. And therefore when faith and repentance come more narrowly to be distinguished by their more immediate objects, it is "repentance towards God," but "faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ," Acts xx. 21. God and Christ are the objects of both; but Christ is more immediately the object of faith, and God of repentance. So that we believe in God through believing in Christ first, and turn to Christ by turning to God first. And this is there spoken, when they are made the sum of Christian doctrine. And therefore the faith of some being much enlarged to the mercies of God and his free grace, and but in way of supposition unto Christ, (taking for granted that all mercies are communicated in and through Christ, yet so as their thoughts work not so much upon Christ;) although this may be true faith, in that God and his free grace is the joint object of faith, together with Christ and his righteousness; yet it is not such a faith as becomes the times of the gospel: it is of an Old Testament strain. Our faith now should, in the more immediate exercises of it,

be pitched upon Christ, that through him (first apprehended) "our faith might be in God," as the ultimate object of it.

Secondly, Christ is the object of faith, in opposition to our own humiliation, or graces, or duties. 1. We are not to trust in humiliation, as many do, who quiet their consciences from this, that they have been troubled. That promise, "Come to me, ye that are weary and heavy laden, and ye shall find rest," hath been mistaken; for many have misunderstood it, as if Christ had spoken peace simply unto that condition, without any more ado; and so have applied it unto themselves, as giving them an interest in Christ: whereas it is only an invitation of such to come unto Christ, in whom their rest is to be found. If therefore men will rest in being "weary and heavy-laden," and not come to Christ, they sit down in sorrow. This is to make John (who only prepared the way for Christ) to be the Messiah indeed; that is, to think the work of John's ministry, (which was to prepare men for Christ) to be their attaining Christ himself. If you are weary, you may have rest indeed, but you must come to Christ first. For, as if Christ had died only, and not arose, we had been still in our sins; so though we die by sin, as slain by it, yet if we "attain not to the resurrection of faith," we still remain in our sins. 2. We are not to rest in graces or duties; they cannot satisfy our own consciences, much less God's justice. If righteousness could have come by these, then "Christ had died in vain." What a dishonour were it to Christ, that they should share the glory of his righteousness? Were any of your duties crucified for you? Graces and duties are the daughters of faith, the offspring of Christ; and they may in time of need nourish their mother, but not at first beget her.

Thirdly, Christ's person, and not barely the promises of forgiveness, is the object of faith. There are many poor souls humbled for sin, and taken off from their own bottom, who, like Noah's dove, fly over all the Word of

God, to spy out what they may set their foot upon ; and eyeing therein many free and gracious promises, holding forth forgiveness of sins, they close with them, and rest on them alone, not seeking for, or closing with Christ in those promises. This is a common error, and is as if Noah's dove should have rested upon the outside of the ark, and not have come to Noah within : where though she might rest for a while, yet could she not ride out all storms, but must have perished in the end. But we may observe, that the first promise that was given, was not a bare word simply promising forgiveness, or other benefits ; but it was a promise of Christ overcoming satan, and purchasing those benefits : " The Seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." So when the promise was renewed to Abraham, it was not a bare promise of blessedness and forgiveness, but of that seed, in whom the blessedness was conveyed. So that Abraham's faith first closed with Christ in the promise, and therefore he is said to see Christ's day ; and so also the succeeding fathers did, more or less, in their types and sacraments, as appears by 1 Cor. x. 1 ; 2, and if they, then much more are we thus to look at Christ, now really incarnate. Hence our sacraments (which are the seals added to the word of faith) do primarily exhibit Christ unto a believer ; and so (in him) all other promises are ratified and confirmed by them. Now there is the same reason of them, that there is of the promises of the Gospel, (for they preach the gospel to the eye, as the promise doth to the ear) and therefore, as in them the soul is first to look at Christ, and embrace him as tendered in them, and then at the promises tendered with him in them, and not to take the sacraments as bare seals of pardon ; so in receiving a promise, (which is the word of faith) we are first to seek out for Christ in it, as being the foundation of it, and so to take hold of the promise in him. The promise is but the casket, Christ is the jewel in it ; the promise but the field, and Christ the pearl hid in it : the promises are the means by which you believe, not the

things on which you are to rest. And so, although you are to look at forgiveness, as held forth in the promise, yet you are to believe on Christ, in that promise, to obtain this forgiveness.

Christ is the grand promise, in whom all the promises are yea and amen, 2 Cor. i. 20. So that, as it were folly for any man to think that he hath an interest in the lands of an heiress, because he hath got the writings of her estate in his hands ; whereas the interest in the lands goes with her person, and with the relation of marriage to her ; otherwise, without a title to herself, all the writings will be fetched out of his hands again ; so it is with all the promises ; they hang upon Christ, and without him there is no interest to be had in them. To rest on the bare promise, or to look to the benefit promised without eyeing Christ, is not an evangelicall, but a Jewish faith, even such as the formalists among the Jews had, who, without the Messiah, closed with promises, and rested in types, without looking unto Christ the end of them. This is to go to God without a Mediator, and to make the promises of the gospel to be as the law, *nehushtan*, (as Hezekiah said of the brazen serpent) a piece of brass, vain and ineffectual. Like the waters of Bethesda, they heal not, they cleanse not, till this Angel of the covenant come down to your faith in them. Therefore at a sacrament, or when you meet with any promise, get Christ first by faith, and then you may have what you will of him.

There are three sorts of promises, and in the applying of all these, it is Christ that your faith is to meet with. 1. There are *absolute* promises, made to no conditions ; as when Christ is said to come to save sinners. Now in such it is plain, that Christ is the naked object of them. So that if you apply not him, you apply nothing ; for the only thing held forth in them is Christ. 2. There are *inviting* promises ; as that before mentioned, “ Come to me ye that are weary.” The promise is not to weariness, but to coming to Christ : they are bidden to come to him,

if they will have rest. 3. There are *assuring* promises ; as those made to such and such qualifications of sanctification. But still, what is it that is promised in them which the heart should only eye ? It is Christ in whom the soul rests, and not in its grace ; so that the sight of a man's grace is but a door to let faith in at, to converse with Christ, whom the soul loves. Even as at the sacrament, the elements of bread and wine, are but outward signs to bring Christ and the heart together, and then faith lets the outward elements go, treats with Christ, unto whom these let the soul in. So grace is a sign inward, and whilst men make use of it as a sign to let them unto Christ, their confidence being pitched upon him, and not upon their grace, there is no danger in making use of signs. And I see not, but that God might as well appoint his own work of the new creation within, to be as a sign and help to communion with Christ by faith, as he did those outward works of his first creation. Neither is it more derogatory to free grace, or to Christ's honour, for God to make such effects signs of our union with him, than it was to make outward signs of his presence.

SECT. II.

CHRIST THE OBJECT AND SUPPORT OF FAITH FOR
JUSTIFICATION, IN HIS DEATH.



ROM. VIII. 34.

Who shall condemn? Christ hath died.



CHAP. I.

*How not Christ's Person simply, but Christ as dying, is
the object of Faith as justifying.*

I COME now to all these four particulars, in order to shew both how Christ in each is the object of faith as justifying, and what support the faith of a believer may fetch from each of them, in point of justification.

First, Christ as dying, is the object of justifying faith, "Who shall condemn? Christ hath died." For the explanation of which I will, 1. Give a direction or two; and 2. Shew how an encouragement, or matter of triumph, may be fetched from hence.

1. The first direction is this, that in seeking justification in the promises, as Christ is to be principally in the eye of your faith, so it must be Christ as crucified, Christ as dying. This direction I give to prevent a mistake, which souls that are about to believe often run into. For when they hear that the person of Christ is the main object of faith, they conceive, that when one comes first to believe, he should look only upon the personal excellencies of grace and glory which are in Jesus Christ, and so have his heart allured unto Christ by them only, and close with him under those apprehensions. But

although it be true, that there is that disposition in every believer, which if it were to view Christ in his mere personal excellencies, would close with Christ for them alone, as seeing such a beauty in them; yet the first view which an humbled soul always takes of him is of his being a Saviour, made *sin*, and a *curse*, and obeying to the death for sinners. He takes up Christ, in his first sight of him, under the "likeness of sinful flesh," and in that representation it is that he is made a fit object for a sinner's faith to rest upon for salvation. It is Christ that is thus excellent in his Person, yet farther considered, as clothed with his garments of blood, and the qualifications of a Mediator and Reconciler; it is this that makes him so desirable to sinners, and a fit object for their faith (which looks out for justification,) to seize upon, though they take in the consideration of all his other excellencies, to allure their hearts to him. Yea, I say farther, that consider faith as justifying; that is, in that act of it which justifies a sinner; and so, Christ taken only or mainly in his personal excellencies, cannot be called the object of it. But the consideration that maketh Christ the object of faith as justifying, must necessarily be that in Christ which doth justify a sinner; which is, his obedience unto death.

It is true, that there is nothing in Christ with which some answerable act of faith in us doth not close; and from the differing considerations under which faith looks at Christ, those several acts of faith have various denominations: As faith that is carried forth to Christ and his personal excellencies, may be called *uniting* faith; faith that goes forth to Christ for strength to subdue sin, may be called *sanctifying* faith; and faith as it goes forth to Christ for justification, may be called *justifying* faith. For faith in that act looks at what in Christ doth justify a sinner; and therefore Christ, considered as dying, doth in this respect become the most pleasing to a soul that is humbled, for this makes Christ suitable to him as he is a sinner. And therefore thus to represent Christ under the

law, was the main scope of all the sacrifices and types therein: "All things being purged with blood, and without blood there being no remission," Heb. ix. 22. Thus did the apostles also in their sermons. So Paul in his Epistle to the Corinthians, seemed, by the matter of his sermon, to have "known nothing but Christ, and him as crucified," 1 Cor. ii. 2; as Christ above all, so Christ as crucified above all in Christ; as suiting to their condition best whom he endeavoured to draw on to faith on him. Thus in his Epistle to the Galatians, he calls his preaching among them, the preaching of faith, chap. iii. 2. And what was the main scope of it, but the "picturing out (as the word is,) of Christ crucified before their eyes?" ver. 1. So he preached him, and so they received him, and so they "began in the Spirit," ver 3. And thus also doth the seals of the promises (the sacraments,) present Christ to a believer's eye; as they hold forth Christ, so Christ as crucified, their scope being to "shew forth his death till he come," 1 Cor. xi. 26. The bread signifying "Christ's body broken," in the sufferings of it, and the cup signifying the sufferings of his soul, and the pouring of it forth unto death. And hence likewise, as faith itself is called "faith in Christ," so it is called "faith in his blood," Rom. iii. 24, 25, because Christ, as shedding his blood for the remission of sins, is the object of it. And as God hath set forth Christ in the promise, under that picture of him doth faith at first close with him. His Person gives us a title to all the promises, and his blood shews the tenure they hold on; a purchase, and a full price, (*Ἀντιλυτρον*, an adequate price,) 1 Tim. ii. 6. And as "sin is the strength of the law," and of the threatenings thereof; so Christ's satisfaction is the strength of all the promises in the gospel. In a word, an humbled soul is to have recourse to that Christ who is glorified, yet to him as once crucified. He is to go to Christ now glorified, as the Person from whom he is to receive forgiveness; but withal, to him as crucified, as through whom (considered in that condition) he is to receive all.

CHAP. II.

What Faith, in Justification, is especially to look at in Christ's Death.

A SECOND direction for faith towards Christ as dying, is, faith is principally to look unto the end of God and Christ in his sufferings, and not simply at the story of his death and sufferings. It is the mind and intent of Christ in suffering, which faith chiefly eyeth, and which draweth the heart on to rest on Christ crucified. When a believer sees that Christ's aim in suffering was, that sinners might have forgiveness, and that Christ's heart was as full in it to procure it, as the sinner's heart can be to desire it; this draws his heart to rest upon him. And without this, the contemplation of the story of his sufferings will be altogether unprofitable. And yet, the chief use which many make of Christ's sufferings is, to set out to themselves the grievousness of them, thereby to move their hearts to compassion to him, and indignation against the Jews for crucifying him, with an admiring of his love herein: and if they can but get their hearts thus affected, they account this to be grace; when it is no more than what the like tragical story of any noble person will work in ingenuous spirits. And therefore, as these stirrings are but fruits of the flesh, so human inventions, as lively representations of Christ's passion unto the sight or fancy, exceedingly provoke men to such meditations and affections, but they work a bare historical faith only, an historical remembrance, and an historical love, (as I may so call them.) And no other than such doth the reading of the story of it in the word, work in many; but saving faith is mostly taken up with the main scope and drift of all Christ's sufferings. For it is that which answers its own purpose, which is, to obtain forgiveness of sins in Christ crucified.

As God looks principally at the meaning of the Spirit

in prayer, Rom. viii. so doth faith look principally to the meaning of Christ in his sufferings. And therefore you may observe, that the drift of all the apostle's epistles is, to shew the intent of Christ's sufferings; how he was therein set forth to be a "propitiation for sin; to bear our sins upon the tree; to make our peace. He was made sin, (i. e. an offering for sin,) that we might be made the righteousness of God in him," or be justified through him. Thus did that evangelical prophet Isaiah set forth the intent of Christ's sufferings for justification, Isai. liii. And thus, to shew the use and purpose of his sufferings, was the scope of all the apostle's sermons, holding forth the intent of Christ's passion to be the justification and salvation of sinners: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ came into the world to save sinners," 1 Tim. i. 15. Let our faith therefore look mainly to this design of Christ in his suffering to satisfy for our sins, and to justify us sinners. When we consider him as born flesh and blood, think we withal that his meaning was to "condemn sin in our flesh," Rom. viii. 4. Behold we him in his life-time, as "the lamb of God bearing and taking away the sins of the world;" and when upon the cross, let our faith behold the iniquities of us all met in him: "Surely he hath borne our sorrows, bearing our sins in his body on the tree."

CHAP. III.

What Support Christ's Death affords to Faith for Justification.

HAVING thus directed your faith to the right object, Christ, and Christ as dying, let us see what matter of support faith may fetch from Christ's death for justification. And surely that which hath long ago satisfied God himself for the sins of many thousand souls, may well satisfy the heart of any sinner, in respect of the guilt of

any sins that can arise. We see the apostle here, after that large discourse of justification by Christ's righteousness, in the former part of this epistle, having shewed how every way it abounds, ch. v, now doth, as it were, sit down like a man over-convinc'd; as, ver. 31, "What then shall we say to these things?" He speaks as one satisfied, and even astonished with abundance of evidence; having nothing to say, but only to admire God and Christ in this work; and therefore presently challengeth all comers. Let conscience and carnal reason, sin, hell and devils, bring in all their strength, "Who is he that shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? Who shall condemn?" Paul dares to answer them all, and carry it with these few words, "It is God that justifies, it is Christ that died." Christ's redemption is not merely a price or ransom equivalent, or making due satisfaction, according to the just demerit of sin; but it is "plenteous redemption;" there is an abundance of "the gift of righteousness," Rom. v. 17, and "unsearchable riches of Christ," Ephes. iii. 8. Yea, 1 Tim. i. 14, "the grace of our Lord," *υπερπλεονωσα*, we translate it, "was abundant," but the word reacheth farther, "was over-full, redundant, more than enough."

I shall not insist so largely on this first head of Christ's dying, as upon those three following: only I would observe how Christ's satisfaction may be set against the guilt of a poor sinner's offences. What is there that can aggravate sin in the general, or any man's particular sins, that may not be answered out of this, "Christ hath died?" So that whatever evil, according to spiritual reason, a man's conscience may suggest to be in sin, a man's faith may shew a more transcendent goodness to have been in Christ's death, and so oppose the one to the other. Is sin the transgression of the law? Christ dying, the Law-maker was subjected to the law, and will not that make amends? Is sin the debasement of God's glory, manifested in his word and works? Christ's dying was the debasement of the brightness of his glory, who was God

personally manifested in the flesh. The one of them is but as the darkening the lustre of the sun upon a wall, but the other is as the obscuring of the sun itself. Sin's highest evil lies in offending God, but Christ's righteousness is the "righteousness of God himself."

Therefore, get your hearts and consciences distinctly and particularly satisfied in the all-sufficiency, which is in the satisfaction that Christ hath made. As it is a defect in humiliation, that men content themselves with a general apprehension that they are sinners, and so never become truly humbled, so is it a defect in their faith, that they content themselves with a superficial and general conceit, that Christ died for sinners; their hearts not being particularly satisfied about the transcendent all-sufficiency of his death. And thence it is that in time of temptation, when their abounding sinfulness comes distinctly to be discovered, they are amazed, as not seeing that in Christ which might answer to all that sinfulness. But as God saw that in Christ's death which satisfied him, so you should endeavour to see that worth in it which may satisfy God, and then your faith will sit down satisfied also. If a man were to dispute for his life some difficult controversy, wherein are many great and strong objections, he would be sure to study all that might be said on the other part, and to get such a clear and convincing light as might make the truth of his position apparent through those clouds of objections. Now you will all be called one day to dispute for yourselves, (sooner or later,) and therefore such skill you should endeavour to get in Christ's righteousness, how in its fulness and perfection it answereth to all your sinfulness; that your hearts may be able to oppose it against all that may be said of any particular about your sins; that in all the conflicts of your spirits, you may see that in it which could clear your whole account with God.

SECT. III.

FAITH SUPPORTED BY CHRIST'S RESURRECTION.



ROM. VIII. 34.

Yea rather, that is risen again.



CHAP. I.

Christ's Resurrection supporteth Faith two ways: the necessity of Christ's Resurrection for the procuring our Justification.

THE next thing to be looked at in Christ, as he is the object of justifying faith, is his resurrection; which serveth to a double use and end in the matter of justification. First, as an evidence to our faith, that God is fully satisfied by Christ's death; which his resurrection may give us full assurance of: secondly, it hath an influence in our justification itself; yea, and as great an influence as his death had.

I. By way of evidence. Although Christ's obedience in his life and death affords the whole matter of our justification, and makes up the sum of that price paid for us, so that faith may see a fulness of worth therein, to discharge the debt; yet faith hath a comfortable evidence of this from Christ's resurrection. This may fully satisfy our faith, that God himself is satisfied, and that he reckons the debt as paid. So that our faith may boldly come to God, and call for the bond in, as having Christ's resurrection to shew for it, that the debt is discharged.

2. But this is not all: Christ's resurrection has also a real influence in justification. For although the matter of it be wholly the obedience and death of Christ; yet the act of pronouncing us righteous by that his obedience doth depend upon his resurrection. "If Christ be not risen again, ye are yet in your sins, and your faith is in vain:" that is, although you could suppose faith to be wrought in you upon the merit of Christ's dying, yet it would be in vain, if Christ were not risen again: for your title to justification itself would be void: "Ye were yet in your sins." This is said, because his resurrection was it whereby sins (though satisfied for in his death,) were taken off: which I take to be the meaning also of the apostle, Rom. iv. 25, "He was delivered for our sins, and rose again for our justification." When the apostle says, "he was delivered for our sins," he means he laid down that which was the price for them, a satisfaction for them; and in that sense, "he died for our sins;" that is, his death stands instead of our death, and so satisfies for sin. But yet still God's justifying us, and his discharge given us from our sins, depends upon his resurrection: "he rose again for our justification." Justification there imports the act of imputation, and reckoning us just, which he had spoken of before, ver. 22, 23, 24. In a word, to the full discharge of a debt, and freeing the debtor, two things are requisite: 1. The payment of the debt 2. The cancelling of the bond, or receiving an acquittance for the freeing of the debtor. Now the payment was wrought by Christ's death, and the acquittance was at, and by his resurrection.

CHAP. II.

How Christ sustained a double Relation; First, of a Surety for us: Secondly, of a common Person in our stead.

THE better to explain both these, you must consider, that Christ stood in a double relation unto God: 1. Of a

surety, bound to pay the debt for us, and to save our souls: and, 2. Of a *common person*, or as an attorney-at-law in our stead. And both these shew how the resurrection of Christ may support our faith, both by way of evidence, that the debt is paid, and by way of influence that we are thereby acquitted. His being risen, who is our *surety*, clears the first, and his rising as a *common person* illustrates the other.

To explain these two relations: 1. A *surety* is one that undertakes, and is bound to do a thing for another; as, to pay a debt for him, or to bring him safe to such a place; so that when he hath discharged what he undertook, then the party for whom he undertook is discharged also. 2. A *common person* is one who represents, personates, and acts the part of another, by the allowance of the law. So that what he doth in the name of the other, that other whom he personates, is by the law reckoned to do. And in like manner, what is done to him, is reckoned as done to the other. Thus, by our law, an attorney appears for another, and money received by him is reckoned as received by him to whom it was due. Thus the giving possession of an estate, and possession taken of land, if done by, and to a man, who is his lawful attorney, stands as good in law unto a man, as if in his own person it had been done. So ambassadors for princes represent their masters. What is done to them is reckoned as done to the prince; and what they do according to their commission, is all one as if the prince had done it himself. In like manner the marriages of princes are solemnized by proxy. A common person representing his lord is married to a princess in her father's court; and the marriage is as good as if both princes themselves had performed the rites of it.

To be a *common person* then is more than simply to be a *surety* for another; it is a farther thing. And therefore these two relations are to be distinctly considered. Thus an attorney is a different thing from a *surety*. A *surety* undertakes to pay a debt for another; but a common

person serves to perform any common act, which is to stand as the others act, and is as valid, as if he had done it. So that the benefit which is the consequent of such an act shall accrue to him whom he personated. Adam was not a surety for all mankind, he undertook not for them, in the sense before mentioned; but he was a common person representing all mankind; so that what he should do, was to be accounted as if they had done it. Now the better to express and make sure our justification in and by Christ, God did ordain Christ both to be a *surety* for us, and also a *common person*. As Christ took all other relations for us; as, of an Husband, Head, Father, Brother, King, Priest, Captain, that so the fulness of his love might be set forth to us, in that what is defective in any one of these relations is supplied and expressed by the other: even thus did God ordain Christ to take both these relations, of a *surety* and *common person*, in all he did for us, thereby to make our justification by him the more full and legal; and justify (as I may so speak,) our justification itself, or his justifying of us, by all sorts of legal considerations whatever; that whatever the one of these relations might not make good, the other might supply; what fell short in the one, the other might make up; and so we might be most sure never to be condemned.

CHAP III.

The Evidence of Justification which Christ's Resurrection affords to Faith, explained.

I HAVE two things to handle in this chapter: First, how Christ was made a Surety for us: Secondly, what the consideration hereof will contribute to that evidence, which faith hath from Christ's resurrection.

For the first, Christ was appointed by God, (and himself also undertook,) to be our Surety. This you have,

Heb. vii. 22, "He was made Surety of a better testament," or covenant; namely, of the new. Of this covenant Christ is the *Εγγυος*, the Surety, the Promiser, the Undertaker. It was the manner both of the Jews and Romans to make covenants by striking of hands: and in testaments the heir and executer shook hands, or the executer gave his hand to fulfil it. And the word *εγγυησασθαι* is used, not only in promising to pay a debt for another, but also in becoming a pledge for another, to undergo death, or a capital punishment in another's room. And in that famous story of friends, namely, Euephenus and Eucritus, Eucritus did [*ηξιωσεν εγγυησασθαι,*] willingly become a surety for Euephenus, when condemned to die by Dionysius, the tyrant. This very word is used by Polyenus, the historian of that fact. Now such a Surety every way did Christ become unto God for us, both to pay the debt, by undergoing death in our stead, and so to satisfy God; and as the heir to execute his will and testament. He became a Surety of the whole covenant, and every condition in it. He undertook to God to pay our debts for us, and to work in us all that God required should be done by us. And thus to be a Surety, is much more than simply to be an Intercessor or Mediator. God did, as it were, say to Christ, What they owe me, I require it all at thy hands. And Christ undertook it under the penalty that lay upon us to have undergone. Yea, Christ became such a Surety in this for us as is not to be found among men. On earth, sureties are wont to enter into one and the same bond with the creditors, so that the creditor may seize on which of the two he will, whether on the debtor, or on the surety, and so (as usually,) on the debtor first, for him we call the principal; but, in this covenant, God would have Christ's single bond. Therefore he laid all upon Christ, protesting, that he would not deal with us, nor so much as expect any payment from us. This is not the manner of other creditors; they use to charge the debt on both the

surety and the debtor; but in this covenant Christ's single bond is entered; so that God will have nought to say to us till Christ fails him. He hath engaged himself first to require satisfaction at Christ's hands, who is our Surety.

Now then, 2. To make use of this notion, for the clearing the point in hand. It might afford us matter of unspeakable comfort, only to hear of Christ's having been arrested by God for our debt, and cast into prison, and his bond sued, and an execution or judgment served on him, as the phrases are, Isa. liii. 8. For thereby we should have seen how God had begun with our Surety; and that it lay on him to discharge the debt, who was so able to do it. And after this no news could be more welcome to sinners than to have a certain and infallible evidence given, that their Surety had well come off, and had quitted all to satisfaction. Now to evidence this serveth his resurrection; Christ is risen: nothing so sure: therefore certainly the debt is discharged, and he hath paid it to the full. For God having once arrested Christ, and cast him into prison, he could not come forth till he had paid the very utmost farthing. Other debtors may possibly break their prisons; but Christ could not have broke through this, for the wrath of the all-powerful God was this prison, from which there was no escaping; no bail. Nothing would be taken to let him go out, but full satisfaction. And therefore to hear that "Christ is risen," is come out of prison, is an evidence that God is satisfied. Hence the apostle proclaims a mighty victory obtained by Christ's resurrection over death, the grave, and the strength of sin, and cries out, "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord!" You may now rest secure, Christ is risen, who therefore shall condemn?

[CHAP. IV

The Influence Christ's Resurrection hath upon Justification.

The influence Christ's resurrection hath upon our justification depends on two things: the first, in that Christ acted the part of a common person, representing us in what he did, and more particularly in his resurrection. The second, in that from this consideration ariseth not only an evidence to our faith, but a real influence upon our justification.

To prove the first, that instance of Adam serves most fitly. Adam was reckoned as a common person, not standing singly for himself, but representing all mankind: so that what he did was reckoned to his posterity whom he represented: and what was threatened or done to him for what he did, is threatened against his posterity also. Now this man was herein a lively type of Christ, as you have it, Rom. v. 14, "Who was the type of him who was to come." Unto which purpose, the titles the apostle gives Christ and Adam, 1 Cor. xv. 47, are exceeding observable; he calls Adam the first man, and Christ our Lord, the second man; and both for that very purpose which we have in hand. For, first, he speaks of them as if there had never been any more men in the world, nor were ever to be any, except these two: and why? but because they were both common persons, that had the rest included in them. Adam had all the sons of men born into this world included in himself, who are therefore called earthly men, ver. 48, in a conformity to him the earthly man, ver. 47; and Christ, the second man, had all believers, who are called heavenly men, included in him. You see how he sums up the number of all men in two, and reckons but two men in all; these two, in God's account, standing for the rest. And farther observe, that because Adam was a common person,

the shadow and the type of Christ, who was to come after him ; therefore he is called the first man, (of these two,) and Christ, the second man, as typified by him.

Now if you ask, wherein Christ was a common person, representing us, and standing in our stead ? I answer, in all those conditions wherein he was, in what he did, or befell him, whilst here on earth especially : for he had no other end to come into this world, but to sustain our persons, and to act our parts, and to have what was to have been done to us acted upon him. Thus, first, in their several conditions, they both were common persons : that is, what condition the one or the other was in is to be put upon those whom they represented. So the apostle reasons from it, ver. 48, “ As is the earthly man, (namely, the first man Adam,) such are the earthly :” namely, earthly men as well as he ; because he who is a common person representing them was in his condition but an earthly man. And appositely it follows, “ As is the heavenly Man, (namely, the second Man, Christ,) such are the heavenly,” who pertain to him, because he also is a common person, ordained to personate them.

And as in this place the apostle argues Christ to be a common person, as to his condition, by an argument taken from his type Adam ; so, secondly, Rom. v. he argues Christ to have been a common person, in his actions which he did on earth ; and this also from the similitude of Adam, whom, ver. 14, he makes to have been Christ’s type. And he speaks of Adam there as a common person, both in respect of what he did, namely, his sin ; and also in respect of what befell him for his sin, namely, death and condemnation. And because he was in all these not to be considered as a single man, but as one that was all men, by way of representation ; hence, both what he did, they are said to do in him ; and what condemnation or death was deserved by his sin, fell upon them all.

1. For what he did : he sinned ; and, ver. 12, “ All are said to have sinned ;” namely, in his sin ; yea, and

according to those words in the Greek, ἐν ᾧ, you may render that sentence, (and the original bears it, as it is in the margin,) “ In whom all have sinned ;” namely, in Adam, as in a publick person. Their act was included in his, because their persons were included in his. And, 2. For what befell him for sin, that befell them also. Hence, ver. 12, death is said to pass upon all men ; namely, for this, that Adam’s sin was considered as theirs, as it there follows. It is said to pass, even as a sentence of death passeth upon a condemned malefactor. And, ver. 18, judgment is said to come by that one man’s offence, upon all men to condemnation. Now, in Gen. ii. 17, the threatening was spoken only to Adam ; “ In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” And, Gen. iii. 19, that sentence seems to pass upon him alone, “ Unto dust thou shalt return.” Yet in threatening Adam God threatened us all ; and in sentencing Adam to death, he sentenced us also. The curse reached us too : death passed upon all men then, and therefore death reigns over all, because Adam was in all this a common person representing us ; and so all this concerns us, as truly as it did him.

Just so the matter stands in the point of our justification, between Christ and believers ; for Adam was herein his type. Christ was appointed of God as a common person, both in what he did, and in what was done to him : so what he did for us is imputed to us, as if we had done it ; and what was done to him, tending to our justification, is reckoned as done to us. Thus when Christ died, he died as a common person ; when Christ arose, he rose as a common person. And by virtue of that communion which we had with him in all those actions of his it is, that now, when we are born again, we do all rise both from the guilt of sin, and from the power of it ; even as by virtue of the like communion we had had with Adam, we come to be made sinful, when we are first born.

Thus Christ in his death was considered as a common person, and God reckoned us dying then, and would have

us reckon so also. So Rom. vi. 10, the apostle speaking of Christ, saith, "In that he died, he died unto sin once, but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." And this consideration the apostle suggests, both as the greatest encouragement against resting in imperfect mortification begun, (that yet we may comfort ourselves by faith, as reckoning ourselves wholly dead in Christ's death, and so may assure ourselves we shall one day be perfectly dead to sin by virtue of it :) and withal, as the strongest motive unto mortification, to attain the highest degree of it: which therefore he carries along in his discourse throughout that whole chapter. "And how shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? He that is dead is free from sin;" and how then shall we do the least service to it? "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that it might be destroyed." And this communion with Christ as a common person, representing them in his death, he there instructs them to be represented and sealed up to them by their baptism: so ver. 3, 4.

Now as this place holds forth Christ as a common person in his death representing us; so other places hold forth the like of his resurrection. In 1 Cor. xv. 20, the apostle argues, that believers must and shall arise, because "now Christ is risen from the dead, and is become the first-fruits of them that sleep." The force of this argument is founded upon this consideration, that Christ was a common person representing all the rest; and this strongly presented in that expression of his being the first-fruits, in allusion to the rite in the Levitical law. All the sheaves in a field being unholy of themselves, there was some one sheaf in the room of all the rest, (which was called the first-fruit,) which was lifted up, and waved before the Lord; and so all the sheaves abroad in the field, by that act done to this one sheaf, were consecrated unto God, Lev. xxiii. 10. "If the first-fruits be

holy," saith the apostle, "the lump is holy also;" Rom. xi. 16. Thus when we were all dead, Christ, as the first-fruits, riseth, and this in our stead; and so we all rise with him. It follows, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." His argument lies thus: Adam was the first-fruits of them that died; Christ of them that rise. Hence therefore we are elsewhere said (though in respect to another life,) to be risen with Christ, Eph. ii. 5, 6, and (which is yet more,) to sit together with him in heaven: because he, as a common person representing us, sits there in our name and stead,

CHAP. V.

How Christ's representing us as a common Person in his Resurrection, hath an influence upon our Justification.

THIS relation of Christ to us, as a common person, representing us in his resurrection, hath a real influence upon our justification; which I shall make clear by shewing two things: 1. That Christ himself was justified at his resurrection. And, 2. That he was justified then as a common person, representing us therein.

For the first: As Christ sustained our persons in his satisfying for sin by his death; so in his resurrection he was justified and acquitted from our sins, as having in his death satisfied for them. Indeed, when should this acquittance from our sins be given to Christ, but when he had paid the last farthing of the debt? Which was then done, when he began to rise; for his lying in the grave was a part of his humiliation, and so of his satisfaction. Now when he began to rise, then ended his humiliation; and that was the first moment of his exaltation. His acquittance therefore bears date from thence, even from that very hour. Hence we read, as that Christ was condemned, so that he was justified. Thus, 1 Tim. iii. 16, God is said to be "manifest in the flesh, justified in the

Spirit ;" that is, whereas God was manifest in flesh to condemn sin in the flesh, so he was justified in the Spirit from all those sins, and received up to glory. And not to go far, the very words of my text, (" It is God that justifies,") are taken out of Isa. l. 8, 9, where they are spoken by Christ of himself. When he gave " his back to the smiters," and was put to death as a condemned man, he comforts himself with this, " He is near that justifies me, who shall condemn ?" And when was that done, but at his resurrection ? He was justified by God, and declared justified by that resurrection, (as he had been declared condemned by his death,) hence, to be justified is put for his resurrection ; for that was a declaration to all the world, that he was justified from all the sins laid to his charge.

In the second place, I am to shew that this his justification, at his resurrection, was done to him as the first-fruits, and as a common person bearing our persons, and so in our names : from whence will follow, that all believers have been justified in Christ their head, at, or from the time of his resurrection. Now this is proved thus : By the very same reason, that he is said to be the " first-fruits of those that sleep," as representing the rest in his resurrection, upon the same ground he is to be looked at also in this his justification pronounced upon him at his resurrection, even as the first-fruits of them that are justified. And in the same sense, and by the same reason that we are said to be risen with Christ, in his resurrection, we must also be said to be justified with him in this his justification, at his resurrection. And indeed, as there is the same reason for the one that there is for the other, (he being a public person in both) so the rule will hold in all other things which God ever doth to us, or for us, which are common with Christ, and were done to him ; that Christ was the first-fruits of them all, and they may be said to have been done in us, or to us, in him, and with him. Yea, whatever God meant to do for us, and in us, whatever benefit he meant to bestow upon us,

he did that thing first to Christ, and (some way) bestowed the like on him as a common person, that so it might be done to us in our persons in due time, having first been done to him representing our persons; and that by this course taken it might, (when done to us) be effected by virtue of what was first done to him. Thus God meaning to sanctify us, he sanctifies Christ first, in him, as a common person, sanctifying us all: "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through thy truth," John xvii. 19. He sanctifies the human nature of Christ first, as a common person representing us, so that we may be sure to be sanctified afterwards in our own persons, by means of his sanctification. In like manner for our sakes he was justified in the Spirit; because we were to be justified, and so to be justified first in him, and with him as a common person. Now this rule holds in all blessings else bestowed; for Paul pronounceth of them all, that God "hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus," Ephes. i. 3.

In this his being justified, Christ must much rather be considered as a common person representing us, than Adam was, in his condemnation. For Christ in his own person, as he had no sin, so he had no need of any justification from sin, nor should ever have been condemned; and therefore this must be only in respect unto our sins imputed to him: and so herein he was more purely to be considered as a common person for us, than ever Adam was in his being condemned. For Adam, besides his standing as a common person for us, was condemned in his own person; but Christ, in being justified from sin, could only be considered as standing for others. Thus Rom. v. 18, "Therefore as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." He parallels both, only with this difference between Adam's being a common person for us, and Christ's being a common person for us, that the condemnation came upon all by a necessary,

natural covenant, (for by such a covenant was Adam appointed a common person for us) but Christ's being appointed as a common person for us, was by a free gift of grace; and therefore by a free gift it is that the imputation of that which he did, or was done to him, is reckoned ours. As then in Adam all died, when he sinned; so in Christ were all justified, when he was justified. For as in his death Christ was a public person for us; so in his resurrection, and in all that was then done to him. And as when he died, the "just was put to death for the unjust;" so when he arose and was justified, the just, that needed no justification, was justified for the unjust.

And hereupon is grounded this triumph of faith here from Christ's resurrection, "Who shall condemn? It is Christ that is risen:" that is, that was justified at his resurrection. For this act was a solemn discharge from all sin and condemnation; it was a legal acquittance given to Christ for all our sins, and so to us also, considered as in him. His death was but the satisfaction and payment; but this is the act of absolution.

Yet, lest there be a mistake, let me add this, That it is necessary we be justified in our own persons by faith, (notwithstanding this former act thus legally passed) whereby we lay hold upon what God did thus before for us in Christ: for according to the revealed rules of his word, (which he professeth to proceed by at the latter day,) there is a curse and a sentence of condemnation pronounced against us, under which we stand till he shall take it off, by giving us faith; unto which he hath made the promise of justifying us in our own persons.

SECT. IV.

FAITH SUPPORTED BY CHRIST'S ASCENSION, AND SITTING
AT GOD'S RIGHT HAND,



ROM. VIII. 34.

Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ, (who is even at the right
hand of God.)



CHAP. 1.

*How Christ's Ascension affords a farther Degree of
Triumph.*

I COME next to the third great pillar of faith, Christ's being "at God's right hand; and to shew how the consideration hereof may strengthen faith seeking justification. "Who is he that condemneth? Christ is even at God's right hand;" in the opening of which, I shall shew how justification itself depends upon this, and the evidence thereof to us; both which the apostle had here in his eye, and from both which we may derive comfort and assurance.

These two points (Christ's sitting at God's right hand, and his interceding for us) are brought in by the apostle, as those which have a redundant force for the justification of believers; that although the two former abundantly served to secure it, yet these two added to the former, do make the triumph of faith more complete, and us

“ more than conquerors.” Nor doth this place alone make mention of Christ’s sitting at God’s right hand in its influence upon our justification, and the assurance of faith about it; but you have it to the same end, alleged by that other great apostle, 1 Pet. iii. from ver. 18 to the 22d; and the scope of the two apostles in both places is the same. Here the resurrection of Christ and his sitting at God’s right hand are brought in as the ground of this bold challenge and triumph of faith: and there is mentioned the “ answer or plea of a good conscience,” in a believer justified, which it puts into the court, and opposeth against all guilt; the apostle alleging the resurrection of Jesus Christ as one ground of it, (“ the answer of a good conscience, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”) And then further to strengthen this plea of a good conscience, the apostle puts his ascension and sitting at God’s right hand into the bill; so it follows, “ Who is gone to heaven, and is at the right hand of God; angels and authorities, and powers, being made subject to him;” all which the apostle here expresseth in one word, that Christ is even at God’s right hand.

The soul hath sufficient answer against condemnation, in Christ’s death and resurrection, though it should stop there; yea, therein can faith triumph, though it went no further. For it can shew a full satisfaction given in his death, and that accepted by God for us; and Christ acquitted, and we in him. But let it go on, to consider Jesus sitting at God’s right hand, and making intercession for us, and then faith will triumph over all accusers, and be more than conqueror; then it comes to “ much more shall we be saved by his life,” Rom. v. 10. The meaning is, that if his death had power to pay all our debts, then much more hath his life this power; so that his death is but the ground of our faith herein, and the lowest step of this ladder; but these other, are the full triumph of faith. And our spirits should rise, as the apostle here riseth: faith upon these wings may not only fly above all accusation, but even clean out of their sight, and so far above all

such thoughts and fears, as that it may reach to a security, that sins are forgotten, and “ shall be remembered no more.”

What joy was there in the disciples, when they “ saw Christ risen ?” John xx. Therefore in the primitive times, it was used as a voice of joy ; and to this day the Greeian Christians so entertain each other, at that time of the year, with these words : “ The Lord is risen ;” your Surety is out of prison ; but fear not. (As Christ said in another ease, so say I) what will you say, if you see your Surety ascended up to heaven, and that as “ far above angels and principalities as the heavens are above the earth ?” Will you not in your faith and hope proportionably ascend, and have thoughts as far exceeding your ordinary thoughts, as the heavens are above the earth ? Therefore first view him, as ascending into heaven, ere ever he comes to be at God’s right hand, and see what matter of triumph that will afford you ; for that you must first suppose, and it is necessarily included, though not expressed here. But that place fore-quoted out of Peter (1 Pet. iii.) gives us both these particulars : 1. His ascension ; “ who is gone into heaven ;” and 2. His power and authority there ; “ who is at the right hand, and hath all power and authority subject to him.” And therefore both may here come into faith’s triumph ; and that as being included in this one expression.

CHAP. II,

What Evidence for our Justification Christ’s Ascension into Heaven affords, upon the consideration of his being a Surety for us.

FIRST consider what was Christ’s last act, when he was to take his rise, to fly up to heaven : he “ blessed his disciples,” and thereby left a blessing upon earth with them, for all believers, to the end of the world. Christ being

now to go to execute the eternal office of his priesthood in heaven, as Melchisedek blessed Abraham, and in him all the faithful as in his loins ; so did he begin this new part of his priesthood, with blessing the apostles, and in them all believers to the end of the world. This was the last thing that Christ did on earth ; yea this he did whilst ascending, to shew that the curse was gone, and that sin was gone. As if he had said, O my brethren, I have been dead, and in dying made a curse for you ; now that curse I have fully removed, and now I can be bold to bless you, and pronounce all your sins forgiven. And as in Abraham, blessed by Melchisedek, all the faithful were blessed ; so in the apostles, all believers to come are blessed. As when God blessed Adam and Eve, at the first creation, and in them, blessed all that were to come of them ; so Christ in blessing them, blessed us, and all that shall believe through their word, to the end of the world. And that they were thus to be considered as common persons, receiving this blessing for us all, appeareth by Christ's words then uttered, " I am with you to the end of the world ;" that is, with you, and all your successors, both ministers and other believers, Matt. xxviii. 20. And Christ herein did, as God did before him. When God had done his work of creation, " he looked upon all he had done, and saw that it was good, and he blessed it." Thus did Jesus Christ ; now " that he had by one offering perfected for ever all believers," he comfortably vieweth and pronounceth them blessed ; and so goes to heaven, to keep and enjoy the Sabbath of all there.

Now, secondly, let us see him ascending ; and see what comfort that will also afford our faith, towards the persuasion of justification. The apostles stood gazing on him ; and so do you gaze on him by faith, and view him as he is passing into heaven, " leading sin, hell, death, and the devil in triumph" at his chariot wheels. And therefore let your faith triumph in a further evidence of justification. " When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive : " he led captive all our spiritual ene-

mies, that would have captivated us. Now leading of captives is always after a perfect victory. And therefore, whereas at his death he had conquered them, now at his rising scattered them, now at his ascension he leads them captive.

Two triumphing acts were here mentioned : 1. Leading the captives bound to his chariot wheels, as the manner of the Roman triumph was. Now thus did Christ deal with our sins, and all other enemies. 2. The giving gifts to men. It was the custom at their triumphs to cast new coins among the multitude ; so doth Christ throw the greatest gifts for the good of men that ever were given. Therefore, " Who shall condemn ?" Sins and devils are not only dead, but triumphed over. Compare with this that other place, Colos. ii. 15, " Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in himself." So I read it, and the Greek bears it, and so it is in the margin. It is a manifest allusion unto the manner of triumphs among the Romans, even unto two of the most notable parts thereof ; the first, spoiling the enemy upon the place : and this was done by Christ on the cross, having spoiled them first. He speaks it of the devils, our enemies and accusers. Now Christ took away all their power, and spoiled them of all ensigns, weapons and colours, which he did on the place where the battle was fought, namely, on the cross ; and nailed our bond thereto, and having paid the debt, left the bond cancelled ere he stirred off the cross. Having thus spoiled these enemies on the cross, he further makes a public triumphal shew of them in his own person, which is a second act ; as the manner of the Roman emperors was, in their great triumphs, to ride through the city in the greatest state, and have all the spoils carried before them, and the kings and nobles whom they had taken ; and this did Christ at his ascension, plainly manifesting, by this open shew of them, that he had spoiled and fully subdued them. Did Christ, who was your surety, thus triumph ? Then let your faith

triumph likewise; for this was not only done by your surety, but in your stead. The apostle calls for this at our hands here, saying, "We are more than conquerors."

Then, thirdly, see him "entering into heaven." When he comes first to court, after this great undertaking, how doth God look on him? Is God satisfied with what he hath done? When a general comes home, there useth to be great observing how the king takes his service. Christ as a surety undertook for sinners fully to conquer all our enemies. He was to be perfect through sufferings, and those sufferings to be such "as to perfect us also," Heb. x. Now behold your Surety is like a conqueror entered heaven. Let that convince you that he hath satisfied the debt, and performed his commission.

CHAP. III.

What Evidence Christ's sitting at God's right Hand, having been our Surety, affords to our Faith for Justification.

As soon as Christ was carried into heaven, look, as all "the angels fell down and worshipped him;" so his Father welcomed him, with the highest grace that ever yet was shewn. The words which he then spake, we have recorded, Ps. cx. "Sit thou at my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool." And now, what say you? Are ye persuaded yet, that God is satisfied for your sins? What super-abundant evidence must Christ's sitting at God's right hand, give to a doubting heart? It argues, first, that Christ hath perfectly done his work; and that there is no more left for him to do by way of satisfaction. This the word sitting implies. Secondly, it argues that God is as fully satisfied. This his "sitting at God's right hand" implies.

For the first: the phrase of sitting betokens rest, when work is fulfilled. Christ was not to return till he had

accomplished his work, Heb. x. The apostle comparing the excellency of Christ's sacrifice with those of the priests of the old law, says, that "Those priests stood daily offering of sacrifices, which can never take sins away." Their standing implied, that they could never make satisfaction so as to say, We have finished it. But Christ, says he, ver. 12, after he had offered up one sacrifice, for ever sat down on the right hand of God. Mark how he opposeth their standing, to his sitting down. He sat as one who had done his work.

Secondly, his being at God's right hand, as strongly argues that God is satisfied. For if God had not been infinitely well pleased with him, he would never have advanced him so high. And therefore, Heb. x. 10, 11, 12, this is alleged as an evidence that Christ had for ever taken sins away, (which those priests of the law could not do, who therefore often offered the same sacrifice, as ver. 11.) That this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God; as thereby shewing most manifestly, that he had once offered up such a satisfactory sacrifice as had pleased God for ever; and therefore took up his place at God's right hand as an evidence of it.

CHAP. IV.

What Influence Christ's Ascension hath on a Believer's Justification, upon the consideration of Christ's being a common Person for us.

WE have thus seen what evidence both Christ's ascension, and sitting at God's right hand, afford us for this, that Christ being considered as our surety, hath undoubtedly subdued our enemies and sins, and satisfied God. Let us now consider further, what influence both his ascending and sitting at God's right hand as an head, and common person for us, have in them towards the working

and accomplishment of the salvation of believers. And from the consideration of this, our faith may be yet further strengthened.

1. And first for his ascending : consider, that the great end of this was to prepare and provide a place for us. As Joseph was secretly sent before by God's intendment to prepare a place in Egypt for his brethren ; so more openly doth Christ ascend to heaven, professedly declaring that to be his business ; " I go to prepare a place for you ;" and it is my Father's house, where I can provide for you and make you welcome. Thus the Captain of our salvation (" being made perfect through sufferings," and then " crowned with glory and honour," Heb. ii. 10,) is brought in, saying to God, ver. 13, " Behold I and the children which God hath given me ;" I am their Captain, and they must follow me ; " Where I am they must be :". Lo! I am here, and am not to come alone, but to " bring to glory all the children which thou hast given me."

2. He entered into heaven in our names, and is to be considered in that act as a common person, (as well as in his death and resurrection) and so representing us, and also taking possession in our right, as a guardian takes possession for heirs under age. Heb. vi. 20, " The fore-runner is for us entered" into heaven ; " the fore-runner for us," that is, our fore-runner. Under the law, the high-priest entered into the holy of holies, with all the names of the tribes on his breast ; even so doth Christ with ours, as a common person in our names ; thereby shewing that we are to come after him : and this is more than simply to prepare a place ; it is to take possession of a place, and give us a right thereto. So that you may see yourselves as good as in heaven already ; for Christ is entered as a common person for you.

Justification hath two parts ; first, acquittance from sin, and freedom from condemnation ; as here, " Who shall condemn ?" And secondly, justification to life, as it is called, Rom. v. 18, that is, which gives a title to eternal

life. Now the dying and rising of Christ as a common person for us, procures the first, sets us perfectly in that state of freedom from condemnation ; but his entering into heaven, as a common person, sets us far above that state of non-condemnation ; it placeth us in heaven with him. You would think yourselves secure enough, if you were ascended into heaven. As Heman said, that he was free among the dead ; that is, he reckoned himself, in his despair, free of the company in hell, as well as if he had been there ; thinking his name had been enrolled there among them, and his place taken up ; so you may reckon yourselves (as the word is, Rom. 6,) free of the company of heaven, and your places taken up there ; so that when you come to die, you shall go to heaven as to your own place, by as true a title, though not of your own, as Judas went to hell, which is called his own place by the apostle.

CHAP. V.

What Influence Christ's sitting at God's right hand hath upon our Justification, upon the consideration of his being a common Person.

THE consideration of Christ's sitting at God's right hand may, in respect of the influence, that it must have upon our salvation, yet add more security unto our faith ; if we consider the power and authority of the place itself, or the relation he sustains in sitting there. These add strength each to other, both to consider how great a prerogative it is to sit at God's right hand, and that Christ possesseth it all as our head, as a common person representing us.

To consider the prerogatives of the place itself. There is imported in it, 1. Sovereignty of power ; so Christ himself expoundeth it, " Hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power." And so,

Ephes. i. 20, 22, this is made the privilege of God's setting him at his right hand, ver. 20, that "he hath put all things under his feet," ver. 22. A phrase importing the highest sovereignty and power, not used of any creatures, angels, or men. None of them have other things under their feet, in so low a subjection as to be their vassals, especially not all things; and therefore by that very phrase, the putting all things under his feet, the apostle argues, that the man, of whom David in the 8th Psalm had spoken, was no other but Christ; not Adam, nor the angels; for to neither of these hath God subjected all things, but to Christ only, who sits in the highest throne of majesty; and hath a world of enemies made his foot-stool, even all his enemies, (so Psal. cx.) which is the highest triumph in the world. Now to what end hath God committed this power to him, but that himself may be his own executer, and perform all the legacies which he made to those whom he died for? That this was God's very end of investing Christ with this sovereign power, is declared by Christ himself, John xvii. 2, "Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him;" and accordingly at his ascension, to comfort his disciples in the fruit of their ministry, Matt. xxviii. 18, he says, "All power is given to me in heaven and in earth." What holy confidence may this breed in us? He is at God's right hand, and we are in his hands, John x. 28. And all his enemies are under his feet, who then can pull us out? Rev. i. 18, (says Christ) "I have the keys of hell and death." The key is still in the scripture phrase the ensign of power and authority. Now Christ hath both the keys of death, the gate of this world, and of hell, the broad gate of that eternal prison; so that none of his can be fetched out of this world by death, but Christ must first open the door; much less can any go to hell without his warrant. Yea, he hath the keys of the kingdom of heaven also, to open to whom he will.

By his resurrection, we may rest assured, that he hath the keys of death and hell, (for he unlocked the doors, and came out from thence) and by his ascension and sitting at God's right hand, that he hath the keys of heaven, whose door he hath unlocked, and now set open. What need we then fear hell, when Christ our Redeemer hath the keys of it?

2. To sit on God's right hand, imports all judgment to be committed to him; for sitting was a posture of judges, a phrase used to signify their authority. So Prov. xx. 8, "A king that sitteth on the throne of judgment, scattereth the wicked with his eyes;" and so doth Christ his and our enemies. See what Christ says, John v. 21, 22, "The Son of Man raiseth up whom he will; for the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son." Now if he who loved us so, and died for us, be the Judge himself, then "who shall condemn?"

In the last place, add, that Christ sits there as an head, as a common person, for us. First, as an head; so, Eph. i. when the apostle had set forth his power, of being advanced unto God's right hand, "far above all principalities and powers, and above every name that is named, not only in this world, but that which is to come;" and how God "hath put all things under his feet:" he adds, and "hath given him to be head over all things" to the church. Observe, he is said to sit there over all things, not in his own personal right simply, but as a head to the church. He sits not simply as a son, but as an head; and he sits not as an head without a body, and therefore must have his members up to him; wherefore in the next verse it is added, "which is his body, yea, his fullness;" so that Christ is not complete without all his members. He took our flesh, and carried it into heaven, and left us his Spirit on earth, as an earnest that we should follow him.

Nay farther, he is not only said to sit as our head, but

we are also said “to sit together with him;” not that Christ’s being at God’s right hand (if taken for that sublimity of power) is communicable to us; that is Christ’s prerogative only: yet so as that his sitting in heaven is understood to be in our right, and as a common person, and so is to assure us of our sitting there with him in our proportion. So, Rev. iii. 21, it is expressly rendered, “Him that overcometh, I will grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also am set down with my Father on his throne.” There is a proportion observed, though with an inequality: we sit on Christ’s throne, but he only on his Father’s throne; that is, Christ only sits at God’s right hand, but we on Christ’s right hand.

SECT. V.

THE TRIUMPHS OF FAITH FROM CHRIST'S INTERCESSION.

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ROM. VIII. 34.

Who also maketh intercession.

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CHAP. I.

Intercession one part of Christ's Priesthood; and the most excellent part of it.

WE have seen Christ "sitting at God's right hand" as a judge and king, having all authority of saving or condemning in his own hands; and having all power in heaven and earth, to give eternal life to them that believe. Let us now come to his intercession, and the influence which it hath upon our justification.

If you could suppose there were any thing which none of the three former acts could do for us, yet his intercession could do it to the utmost. If money would purchase our salvation, his death hath done it, which he laid down as a price and an equivalent ransom. If power and authority would effect it, his sitting at God's right hand invested with all power in heaven and earth, shall be put forth to the utmost. If favour and entreaties, added to all these, be needful, he will use this also, and for ever make intercession. So that if love, money, or power,

(any of them, or all of them) will save us, we shall be sure to be saved, "saved to the utmost, *εις το παντελες*, all manner of ways, by all manner of means, saved over and over.

For the clearing of this last general head, the intercession of Christ, I shall 1. Shew how unto all those other acts of Christ for us, this of intercession also is to be added, for the effecting our salvation, and the securing our hearts therein. And, 2. The security that faith may assume from this intercession of Christ: "Who shall condemn? It is Christ that maketh intercession for us." Towards the explanation of the first, two things are to be done. First, To shew how necessary and excellent a part of Christ's priesthood his intercession in heaven is. And secondly, To shew the peculiar influence that his intercession hath upon our salvation. I will proceed in the first by degrees.

First, intercession is one part of Christ's priesthood. He is not entered into heaven simply, as a Fore-runner, to take up places for you, but as a Priest also: "made a priest, after the order of Melchizedek." Yea, his sitting at God's right hand is not only as a King armed with power and authority to save us, but he sits there as a Priest too. Thus, Heb. viii. 1, "We have such a high-priest, who is set down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."

In the Levitical priesthood the high-priest's office had two parts; 1. Oblation, or offering the sacrifice. 2. Presentation of it in the holy of holies with prayer and intercession unto God. The one was done *without*, the other *within* the holy of holies. This you may see in many places; especially Levit. xvi. where you have the law about the high-priest's entering into the holy of holies. He was not to come into the holy place within the vail, till first he had offered a sacrifice for himself and the people. Then, when he had killed it, he was to enter with the blood of it into the holy of holies, and sprinkle the mercy-seat therein with it, and to go with incense, and cause a

cloud to arise over the mercy-seat, And this you have also, Heb. xiii. 11. It is said, that "the blood of those beasts that were burnt without the camp, was brought into the sanctuary by the high-priest;" and in Lev. xvi. you find the atonement made as well by the blood, when brought into the holy place, ver. 16, as by the killing of the beast, ver. 11. Both these were acts of the high-priesthood for atonement.

In answer to this type, there are two distinct parts of Christ's priesthood: 1. The offering himself a sacrifice to death, which answers to the killing of the sacrifice without the holy of holies: for answerably he was crucified without the city, Heb. xiii. 12. 2. He carried this his blood into the holy of holies, namely, the heavens, Heb. ix. 12, where he appears, ver. 24, and there also prays in the force of that blood. And the type of those prayers was the cloud of incense made by the high-priest; so it is expressly interpreted, Rev. viii. 3. The angel, Christ, is said to have had "much incense, to offer with the prayers of all the saints;" which incense is his own prayers in heaven, which he continually puts up when the saints pray on earth, and so perfumes all their prayers, and procures all blessings for them. Now both these parts of his priesthood the apostle John mentions in his first Epistle, chap. ii. 2, where, as he calls Jesus Christ a propitiation for our sins, (that is, an oblation, or sacrifice offered up for us;) so likewise he calls him an advocate; both going to make up this his office. And indeed, this latter, of intercession, and bringing his blood into the holy of holies, is but the same action continued. That blood which he offered with tears and strong cries on the cross, (where he likewise interceded,) the same blood he continues virtually to offer up with prayers in the heavens, and makes atonement by both; only with this difference: on earth, though he interceded, yet he more eminently offered up himself; in heaven he more eminently intercedes, and doth but present that offering.

Secondly, intercession was so necessary a part of

Christ's priesthood, that without it he had not been a complete priest. If the high-priest, his type, had only offered sacrifice without the holy of holies, he had not been a perfect high-priest. For to enter into the holy of holies, and to act the part of a high-priest there, was the proper, peculiar work of the high-priest. This shews, that Christ would not have been a high-priest, if he had not gone to perform his office in heaven, as well as upon earth. Yea, if Christ had not gone to heaven, and were not now become a priest there, then the Levitical priesthood would still be in force. For so long as Christ was on earth, though risen, the types of the law held in force, and were not to give way, until all the truth signified by their ministry was fully accomplished; and so, not until Christ was gone into heaven as a priest, and there had begun to do all that which the high-priest had done in the holy of holies.

Thirdly, the intercession of Christ is the height of his priesthood. And this is held forth to us in the types of both these two orders of priesthood that were before him, and figures of him; both that of Aaron and Melchizedek. This was typified in the Levitical priesthood. The highest service of that office was the going into the holy of holies, and making an atonement there. Yea, this was the height of the high-priest's honour, that he did this alone, which did constitute the difference between him and other priests. For they killed and offered the sacrifices without as well as he: every ordinary priest did that; but none but the high-priest was to approach the holy of holies with blood, and this but once a year. This was that high prerogative of the high-priest then; and answerably the height of our high-priest's office (although he alone also could offer a satisfactory sacrifice) lies in this, that he entered into the heavens by his blood, and is set down on the Majesty on high, and in the virtue of his sacrifice there doth intercede.

The excellency of this part of his priesthood was likewise typified by Melchizedek's priesthood, which the apostle argueth to have been much more excellent than

that of Aáron; inasmuch as Levi, Aaron's father, paid tythes to this Melchizedek in Abraham's loins. Now Melchizedek was his type, not so much in respect of his offering of sacrifice on earth, as in respect of that work which he for ever performs in heaven; therefore that same clause, *for ever*, still comes in, in the mention of Melchizedek's priesthood; because in respect of that his continual intercession in heaven, Melchizedek was properly Christ's type.

Yea, to conclude this, all his priesthood would have been ineffectual, if he had not acted the part of a priest in heaven, by intercession there. For by his death he did but begin the execution of his office; in heaven he ends it. And if he had not fulfilled his office in both, the work of our salvation had not been perfected. Not but that his death was a perfect oblation; (it was perfect for an oblation, to which as such nothing can be added.) But still there remained another action of another kind that was to be added to this of oblation, and that is, intercession or praying for us in heaven. Otherwise our salvation were not perfected. For if this priesthood be imperfect, our salvation then must needs be so. The presenting of that his sacrifice in heaven, was the consummation of his priesthood, and the performance of that part there, the perfection of it.

CHAP. II.

The Influence that Intercession hath upon our Justification.

I COME NOW to shew the influence that intercession hath upon our justification; and the reasons why God ordained this work of intercession in heaven to be joined with his death. The reasons either respect 1. God himself, who will have us saved so as himself may be most glorified. Or, 2. Us and our salvation; God ordering all

the links of this golden chain of the causes of our salvation, as should make our salvation most sure. Or 3. Christ himself, whose glory, as the author and finisher of our salvation, of our faith and justification, is to be continued throughout.

The first sort of reasons respect God himself. God having two attributes eminently to glorify, his justice and his free grace, it was meet that there should be two eminent actions of Christ's priesthood, wherein he should apply himself to each. And accordingly in his death he satisfies the demands of justice, by laying down a sufficient price; and in his intercession he entreateth free grace; and thus both come to be alike acknowledged. Heb. iv. 16, we are encouraged to "come boldly to the throne of grace," because we "have an high-priest entered into the heavens." Observe how it is called, *a throne of grace*, which our high-priest now in heaven officiates at. It is so called, because his priesthood there has to do with free grace chiefly. It is a throne of grace, and so to be sued unto; therefore he treateth with God by way of intercession. Of this throne of grace in heaven, the mercy-seat in the holy of holies was the type. And as the high-priest was to enter into the holy of holies by blood, so with incense also, (that is, prayer,) to shew, that heaven is not opened by mere justice, or bringing only a price in hand for it; but by grace also, and that must be entreated. Yea, and justice itself. There was enough in Christ's death to satisfy it; yet, having been wronged, it stood thus far upon it (as those to whom a debt is due, use to do,) namely, to have the money brought home to God's dwelling-house, and laid down there. God will not only be satisfied, and have a sufficient ransom paid, as at Christ's death, but Christ must come and bring it into heaven. Justice will be paid it upon the mercy-seat. For so in the type the blood was to be carried into the holy of holies, and sprinkled upon the mercy-seat. And therefore his resurrection, ascension, and intercession, were but as the

breaking through all enemies, and subduing them, to the end to bring this price or satisfaction to the mercy-seat.

The second sort of reasons why God ordained Christ's intercession to be joined to his death, are taken from what is the best way to effect our salvation, and secure our hearts therein. First in general : God would have salvation made sure, and us saved all manner of ways. 1. By ransom and price, (as captives are redeemed) which was done by his death, which of itself was enough. 2. By power and rescue ; so in his resurrection, and ascension, and sitting at God's right hand, which also was sufficient. Then 3. Again by intercession, a way of favour and entreaty ; and this likewise would have been enough, but God would have all ways concur in it ; whereof notwithstanding not one could fail ; a threefold cord, whercof each twine were enough, but altogether must of necessity hold.

Secondly, the whole application of his redemption hath a special dependence upon his intercession. This all divines attribute unto it, whilst they put this difference between the influence of his death, and that of his intercession on our salvation ; calling his death the means of obtaining it for us ; but his intercession, the means of applying all unto us. Christ purchaseth salvation by the one, but possesseth us of it by the other. One leading instance to shew that his intercession was to be the applying cause of salvation, was given by Christ whilst he was on earth, thereby manifesting what was to be done by him in heaven. When he was on the cross, offering that great sacrifice for sin, he joined prayers for the justification of those who crucified him, " Father forgive them, for they know not what they do ;" so fulfilling that word, Isa. liii. 12, " He bare the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." And the efficacy of that prayer was the cause of the conversion of those three thousand, Acts ii. whom the apostle had expressly charged with the crucifying of Christ ; " Whom ye," says he,

“ by wicked hands have taken, and slain.” These were the first fruits of his intercession, whose prayers still reap the harvest, which in all ages is to grow up unto God on earth!

Thirdly, and more particularly, as the whole application in general, so our justification, in the whole progress of it, depends upon Christ’s intercession. 1. Our first justification (which is given us at our first conversion) depends upon Christ’s intercession. Therefore, in the forementioned prayer on the cross, the thing he prayed for was forgiveness: “ Father forgive them.” Our being justified by faith, and receiving the atonement, depends upon Christ’s intercession; and it was typified by Moses sprinkling the people with blood; which thing Jesus Christ, as a mediator and priest, doth now from heaven: for Heb. xii. 14, it is said, “ You are come so Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and,” (as it is next subjoined,) “ to the blood of sprinkling.” He shed his blood on the cross on earth, but he sprinkleth it now as a priest from heaven. Yet let me add that though this our first justification is to be ascribed to his intercession, yet more eminently intercession is ordained for the accomplishing our salvation, and this other more rarely in the Scripture attributed thereunto. 2. The continuation of our justification depends upon Christ’s living ever to intercede. We owe our standing in grace every moment, to his sitting in heaven, and interceding every moment. There is no fresh act of justification goes forth, but there is a fresh act of intercession. And as though God created the world once for all, yet every moment he is said to create, every new act of providence being a new creation; so likewise, to justify continually, through his continuing free grace to justify us at first; and this Christ doth by continuing his intercession. Christ continues a priest for ever, and so we continue to be justified for ever. 3. There is hereby a full security given us of justification to be continued for ever. The danger either must lie in old sins coming into remembrance, or else

from sins newly committed. Now, first, God hereby takes order, that no old sins shall come up into remembrance ; and to that end it was that he placed Christ as his remembrancer for us. As God ordained the rainbow in the heavens, that when he looked on it he might remember his covenant, never to destroy the world again by water ; so he hath set Christ as the rainbow about his throne. Secondly, As by reason of intercession, God remembers not old sins, so likewise he forgives new. What Christ did on earth, doth more especially procure reconciliation for sins which we do in the state of nature ; but sins which we commit after conversion (though pardoned also by his death) yet the pardon of them is more especially attributed to his life and intercession. So St. John : “ If any man,” (that is, if any believer,) sin, we have an advocate with the Father :” so that intercession principally serves for sins committed after grace received. Not but that sins after conversion are taken away by Christ’s death, and sins before it by his intercession also ; for Christ interceded for those who crucified him, and by that intercession, those three thousand were converted ; yet more eminently the work of reconciliation for sins before conversion, is attributed to his death ; and for sins after conversion, to his intercession.

A third sort of reasons why God ordained this work of intercession to accomplish our salvation by, respect Christ himself ; “ That all might honour the Son even as they do the Father.” For his glory, after all that he had done for us here below, God ordained this work of intercession in heaven. Therefore, when he had done all that was to be done on earth, as appertaining unto the merit of our salvation, he appoints this full and perpetual work in heaven, for the applying and possessing us of salvation, and that as a priest, by praying and interceding in the merit of that one oblation of himself. God would not have him continue to be a priest in title only, or in respect only of past service ; but to have a perpetual spring of honour by new work, and employment in that office,

that so his honour might be for ever ; consecrated or perfected for evermore. For the same reason it became him that the whole work of our salvation, and every part of it, should be so ordered, that he should have as great a hand in every part of it, even to the laying the top stone, as he had in laying the first foundation. And this is expressed, Heb. xii. 2, " Looking to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith." We are to look at his dying, as that which is the beginning of our faith ; and at his sitting at God's right hand, as an Intercessor, for the finishing it ; and so of our final salvation ; that thus he might be the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending ; to whom be glory for ever !

CHAP. III.

The great Security the consideration of Christ's Intercession affords to Faith, for our Justification.

I COME next to shew what strong grounds of security our faith may raise from Christ's intercession for us, in the point of justification : " Who shall condemn ?" It is Christ that intercedes : and herein, 1. What assurance, by way of evidence, this doth afford. 2. What powerful influence this must be of.

First, that Christ intercedes, is a strong evidence to our faith : 1. From the very intent of the work of intercession, and what it is ordained by God to effect. The immediate end of Christ's intercession, is the actual salvation of believers. The end of his death is purchasing a right unto salvation ; but of intercession, the very saving us actually. To this purpose, observe how the Scripture speaks concerning Christ's death, Heb. ix. 12, " He entered into heaven, having obtained redemption ;" that is, by way of right, by procuring a full title to it. But of his intercession it says, Heb. vii. 12, that by it Christ is able " to save to the uttermost, them that come

unto God by him ;” that is, actually to save, and put them in possession of happiness. That is the end and scope of intercession. Now what security doth this afford? for to be saved (in the highest sense) is more than to be justified. It is the actual possessing us of heaven. To outvie the demerits of our sins was the perfection of his death ; but to save our souls is the end and perfection of his intercession. Our sins are the object of the one, and our souls of the other. To that end was intercession added to his death, that we might not have a right to heaven in vain, of which we might be dispossessed. Now, therefore, upon this ground, if Christ should fail of any believer’s salvation, this work of his would fall short of its perfection. That place in Heb. vii. says, not only that Christ will do his utmost to save, but that he will “ save to the uttermost.” So then our comfort is, if Christ approve himself to be a perfect priest, we who come to God by him must be perfectly saved.

Besides, the scope of this work itself, which Christ, as a perfect priest, hath undertaken ; there is, 2. A farther consideration, namely, the end of Jesus Christ himself, who lives in heaven, on purpose to intercede for us, that argues himself engaged by a stronger obligation, he interceding as a surety. He was not only a surety on earth in dying, but he is a surety in heaven by interceding. This you may find to be the scope of Heb. vii. 22. Although it holds true of all parts of his office, yet the mention there of his being a surety, doth in a more special manner refer to his intercession, as appears both by the words before and after. In the words before, ver. 21, the apostle speaks of his priesthood for ever, and subjoins, ver. 22, “ By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament ; and then, after he discourseth of his intercession, and his continuing a priest for ever in that work ; so, ver. 23, 24, 25, “ Wherefore he is able to save to the utmost, seeing he ever lives to make intercession.” Yea, he is therefore engaged to save to the utmost, because even in interceding he is a surety.

He was a surety on earth, and is a surety in heaven; only with this difference: on earth he was a surety to pay a price so sufficient as should satisfy God's justice; (which having paid, he was discharged of that obligation, and his bond for that was cancelled;) but still he remains a surety, bound in another obligation as great, even for the bringing to salvation those believers for whom he died; for their persons remained still unsaved, though the debt was then paid; and till they are saved, he is not quit of this suretiship and engagement.

CHAP IV

The Prevalency of Christ's Intercession demonstrated, from the Greatness of Christ, and his Favour with God.

WE have heard what support to our faith (by way of evidenee) this must afford, that Christ intercedes. Let us consider now, what further assurance will arise to our faith, from the influence which Christ's intercession must needs have, to effect and carry on our salvation. The work of intercession being effectually to procure our salvation, the influence it hath must needs lie in that prevalency, which this intercession of Christ hath with God, to obtain any thing at his hands. Now to raise our apprehensions, how prevalent this intercession must be, let us consider both the person interceding, namely, Christ; and the person with whom Christ intercedes, which is God; the one the Son, the other the Father; and so the greatness of Christ with God, and the graciousness of God to Christ; together with the unity of affection in them both. So that Christ will be sure to ask nothing which his Father will deny; and his Father will not deny any thing which he shall ask.

Now first for the greatness of Christ, the intercessor; that is, his greatness with God the Father. This is often urged in this epistle to the Hebrews, to persuade confi-

dence in us. It was the greatness of his person, which put such an influence into his death, that it was a price more than enough to satisfy justice. And the greatness of his person must needs have as much influence to make intercession prevalent. In a matter of intercession, the character and dignity of the person that intercedes prevails more than any other consideration whatever. We see what great friends procure with but a word speaking, even that which neither money nor any thing else could have obtained. Now Christ must needs be great with God in many respects.

First, in respect of the nearness of his alliance to him. He is the natural Son of God, God of God; and therefore certain to prevail with him. Intercession is a carrying on our salvation in a way of grace and favour, as his death was by way of satisfaction: and answerably it may be observed in the Scripture, that as the all-sufficiency of the satisfaction of his death, is still put upon his being God, and so upon the greatness of his person considered in respect of his nature or essence; so the prevalence of his intercession is founded upon the nearness of his relation unto God, his alliance to him, and the being his Son. Thus, when redemption is spoken of, the sufficiency of the price is eminently put upon his Godhead; the blood of God. And answerably, when the apostle speaks of the prevailing of his intercession in heaven, he puts it upon his Sonship, Jesus the Son; he mentions the nearness of the relation of his person to God, as being that which draws with it that great respect, favour, and grace, he being by this great with God, as great in himself. How effectual must the intercession of such a Son be, who is so great a Son of so great a Father, equal with him, and the express image of his person? Never any son so like, and in such a transcendent manner a son, as the relation of sonship among men is but a shadow of it! Christ is one with the Father, as himself often speaks; and therefore if his Father should deny him any thing, he should then cease to be one with him; he must then deny him-

self, which God can never do. He is in this respect the Beloved, as on whom (originally and primarily) all the beams of God's love do fall. Solomon, the type of Christ, was "the Beloved of God," 2 Sam. xii. 24. And to shew how beloved he was, God, when he first came into his kingdom, bid him "ask what he should give him," 1 Kings iii. 5. Now the like God says to Christ when come first to his kingdom also, Psal. ii. 8, "Ask of me, and I will give thee;" namely, when "he had set him as King on his holy hill," ver. 6. And of him he says, "This is my well-beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleas'd; hear him." God bids us therefore hear him; and that speech was but the echo of his own heart, in that he himself is so well-pleas'd with him, that he will hear him in every thing. How prevalent then must Christ's intercession be, though there were nothing else to be considered?

And he intercedes not only as a Son, (and in that respect a priest for ever) but also as a Son who hath been obedient to his father, and hath done for his sake the greatest service, and that the most willingly that ever was done. Though he was a Son, yet he was to be obedient also, and thereby to become in a further respect a perfect high-priest; even in respect of service done, and obedience performed. And through his obedience, "he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him, called of God an high-priest for ever." That therefore which makes him more sure to prevail, is his obedience and service done; and this also were enough to carry any thing. Accordingly, you find Christ himself urging this his obedience, as the foundation of requests for us. So in that last prayer, John xvii. (which is as it were a pattern of his intercession for us in heaven) he says, "I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work thou gavest me," ver. 4. And whereas two things may be distinctly considered, in that his obedience. 1. The worth of it, as a price in the valuation of justice. 2. The desert of favour and grace with God, which such an obe-

dience might in a way of kindness expect to find at his hands : you may for your comfort consider, that besides what the worth of it, as a price, might exact of justice itself between two strangers, he hath moreover deserved thus much grace and favour with his Father, and in that his obedienc was done for his sake. That therefore his Father should hear him in all the requests that ever he should make ; yea so transcendent was the obedience which he did to his Father, in giving himself to death at his request, that he can never out-ask the merit of this his service. And (which may yet further encourage us) he hath nothing left for himself ; for he hath need of nothing. So that all his favour remains entire, to be laid forth for sinners, and employed for them. And all he can ask for them is less, yea far less, than the service which he hath done to God comes to ; our lives, and pardon, and salvation, these are not enough : they are too small a requital. So that besides his natural grace, and interest which he hath with his Father, as he is his Son, this his acquired favour by his obedience must needs make him prevail, seeing it can never be requited to the full.

CHAP. V.

*The Prevalency of Christ's Intercession demonstrated from
the Righteousness of the Cause he pleads.*

BESIDES grace and favour, Christ can also plead justice, and is able so to carry the point for us. So you have it, 1 John ii. 2, "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." An advocate hath place only in a cause of justice, and this Christ's advocateship is executed by pleading his own satisfaction. So it follows, "who is a propitiation for our sins ;" and can plead his own righteousness so far, that justice itself shall be fain to save the worst of sinners. He can turn justice itself for them so, that justice shall be as forward to save them,

as any other attribute. So that if God be said to be righteous in forgiving us our sins, if we do but confess them, much more when "Jesus Christ the righteous" shall intercede for them.

My purpose is not to insist upon the demonstration of that all-sufficient fulness that is in Christ's satisfaction, such as may in justice procure our pardon and salvation ; but on two things, which are proper to this head of intercession. 1. That there is, even in respect to God's justice, a powerful voice of intercession attributed unto Christ's blood ; and how prevalent that must needs be in the ears of the righteous God. And, 2. Especially when Christ himself shall join with that cry of his blood, himself appearing and interceding in the strength of it.

For the first, the apostle (Heb. xii. 24,) doth ascribe a voice, an appeal, an intercession unto the blood of Christ in heaven. "The blood of sprinkling (says he) speaks better things than the blood of Abel." He makes Christ's blood an advocate to speak for us, though Christ himself were silent. Many other things are said to cry in Scripture, but blood hath the loudest cry of all, in the ears of the Lord of Hosts, the Judge of all the world. Neither hath any cry the ear of God's justice more than that of blood. "The voice of thy brother's blood (says God to Cain) cries unto me from the ground," Gen. iv. 10. Now in that speech of the apostle, is the allusion made unto the blood of Abel, and the cry thereof. And he illustrates the cry of Christ's blood for us, by the cry of that blood of Abel against Cain ; it "speaks better things than the blood of Abel." Christ's blood calls for greater good things to be bestowed on us, for whom it was shed, than Abel's blood did for evil things against Cain, by whom it was shed. For look how loud the blood of one innocent cries for justice against another that murdered him ; so loud will the blood of one righteous (who by the appointment of a supreme Judge, hath been condemned for another) cry for his release. And the more righteous he was, who laid down his life for another, the louder

still is that cry, for it is made in the strength of all that worth which was in him whose blood was shed. Now, to set forth the power of this cry of Christ's blood, let us compare it with that cry of Abel's blood in these two things, wherein it will be found infinitely to exceed it in force and loudness.

First, even the blood of the wickedest man on earth, if wickedly shed, doth cry against him who murdered him. Had Abel murdered Cain, Cain's blood would have called upon God's justice against Abel. But Abel's blood, (there is an emphasis in that) Abel's, who was a saint, his blood cries according to the worth that was in him. Now "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints;" and the blood of one of them cries louder than the blood of all mankind besides. From this I argue, if the blood of a saint cries so, what must the blood of the King of Saints? If the blood of one member of Christ's body, what will then the blood of the head, of far more worth than that whole body? How doth it fill heaven and earth with out-cries, until the promised intent of its shedding be accomplished? And look how the blood of Abel cried for the condemnation of Cain, so does Christ's blood for our pardon; and so much the louder, by how much his blood was of more worth than Abel's was.

But, 2. Christ's blood hath a further advantage over Abel's blood; for that cried but from earth, where it lay shed, and that but for an answerable earthly punishment on Cain, as he was a man upon the earth; but Christ's blood is carried up to heaven. And this is intimated in this place also; for all the particulars, (of which this is one) whereto he says the saints are come, they are all in heaven; neither names he any other than such. And then adds, "And to the blood of sprinkling, which speaks;" as a thing both speaking in heaven, and besprinkled, wherewith heaven is all besprinkled, as the mercy-seat in the holy of holies was, because sinners are to come thither. This blood therefore cries from heaven;

it is next unto God, who sits Judge there; it cries in his very ears; whereas the cry of blood from the ground is further off; and so, though the cry thereof may come up to heaven, yet the blood itself comes not up thither, as Christ's already is. Abel's blood cried for vengeance to come down from heaven; but Christ's blood cries us up into heaven; like to that voice, "Come up hither: Where I am, let them be;" for whom this blood was shed. It is true, the voice and intercession of his blood apart considered, is but metaphorical, (I grant,) and yet real; such a voice as those *groans* are that are attributed to the *whole creation*, Rom. viii. 22. But intercession, as an act of Christ himself, joined with this voice of his blood, is most properly and truly such.

Therefore, in the second place, add to this Christ's own intercession, that Christ by his own prayers, seconds this cry of his blood; that not only the blood of Christ doth cry, but that Christ himself, being alive, doth join with it. And how forcible and prevalent must all this be supposed to be? The blood of a man slain doth cry, though the man remain dead; even as of Abel it is said, (though to another purpose,) "that being dead, he yet speaketh," Heb. xi. but Christ liveth and appeareth. He follows the suit, pursues the cry of his blood himself. His being alive puts a life into his death, adds an infinite acceptation to it with God, and moves him the more to hear the cry of his blood, and to regard it.

To illustrate this by the former comparison: If as Abel's blood cries, so also Abel's soul lives to cry; how doubly forcible must this be! And thus indeed you have it, Rev. vi. 9, where it is said, that "the souls of them which were slain for the testimony which they held, cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not avenge our blood? Yea, see that not only their blood cries, but their souls live, and live to cry. Now not only Christ's soul (as their's) lives to cry, but his whole Person; for he is risen again, and lives to intercede for ever. In Rev. i. 18, Christ appearing to

John, when he would speak but one speech that should move all in him, he says but this, "I am he that liveth, and was dead." And whose heart doth it not move, to read it with faith? And doth it not move his Father to think, My Son, that was dead, and died at my request, for sinners, is now alive again, and liveth to intercede, and liveth to "see the travail of his soul" fulfilled and satisfied? "Who shall condemn? Christ, that was dead, is alive, and liveth to intercede."

CHAP. VI.

The Prevalency of Christ's Intercession demonstrated from the Greatness of his Power.

A THIRD demonstration both of Christ's greatness with God, and his power to prevail for us, is taken from this, That God hath put all power into his hand, to do whatever he will; hath made him his King to do what pleaseth him, either in heaven, earth, or hell; yea, to do all that God himself ever means to do, or all that God desires to do. And certainly, if his Father hath been so gracious to him as to bestow so high and absolute a sovereignty on him, his purpose was never to deny Christ any request; else he would never thus have advanced the human nature. God having placed Christ on his throne, bids him ask even to the whole of his kingdom; for God hath made him a King, sitting on his throne with him; not to share halves, but to have all power in heaven and earth: "He hath committed all judgment to the Son," to save and condemn whomsoever he will; and so far as the kingdom of God is extended, he may do any thing. So, John v. 21, "As the Father raiseth up the dead, so the Son quickeneth whom he will; for as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself," ver. 26. So that Christ's will is as free, and himself as absolute a Monarch and King as God himself is.

Now, then, if He who is King, and doth of himself command all that is done, as absolutely as God himself doth; if He, over and above, to honour his Father, will ask all that himself hath power to do, what will not be done? He asks, who can command the thing to be done: and yet, as he must ask ere the thing be done; so if he ask, it must needs be granted. If he who hath so much power, will join the force of entreaty with a Father that so loves him; if He, who is "the Word of his Father," that commands, creates, and upholds all, will speak a word for us, and ask all that he means to do; how forcibly will such words be? Therefore, observe Christ's manner of praying, John xvii. "Father, I *will* that they, whom thou hast given me, be where I am." He prays like a King, who is in joint commission with God. If God puts that honour upon our prayers, that we are said "to have power with God as Jacob," Hos. xii. 3, that if God be never so angry, yet by "taking hold of his strength," we hold his hands, as Isai. xxvii. 5. That God cries out to Moses, like a man whose hands are held, "Let me alone," Exod. xxxii. 10; yea, that he accounts it as a "command;" (so he styles it, Isai. xlv. 11, "command ye me;" so unable is he to go against it;) then how much more doth Jesus Christ's intercession bind God's hands, and command all in heaven and earth?

Now, that you may see a reason of this, know that this Father and this Son, though two persons, have yet but one will, and one power: "My Father and I are one," saith Christ. So, if God deny him, he must deny himself, which the apostle tells us he cannot do, 2 Tim. ii. 13. And so in the same sense that God is said "not to have power to deny himself;" in the same sense it may be said, he hath not power to deny Christ what he asks. Therefore God might well make him an absolute King, and entrust him with all power; and Christ might well oblige himself, notwithstanding this power to ask all that he means to do; for they have but one will and one power: so that our salvation is made sure by this on all

hands. "I come," says Christ, "not to do my will, but the will of him who sent me; and his will is, that I shall lose none of all those whom he hath given me," John vi. 38, 39. And therefore, "who shall condemn? It is Christ that intercedes." As "who shall resist God's will?" So, who shall resist Christ's intercession? God himself cannot, no more than he can gainsay, or deny himself.

CHAP. VII.

The Prevalency of Christ's Intercession demonstrated from the Graciousness of the Person with whom he intercedes, considered first as he is the Father of Christ himself.

WE have seen the greatness of the Person interceding, and many considerations from thence, which may persuade us of his prevailing for us. Let us now consider the graciousness of the Person with whom he intercedes, which the Scripture doth distinctly set before us, to the end that in this great matter our joy may every way be full. Thus, in 1 John ii. 1, when, for the comfort of believers, the apostle reminds them of Christ's intercession, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate, Jesus Christ the Righteous; (mentioning therein the power and prevalency of such an Advocate, through his own righteousness;) and the more fully to assure us of his success, he adds, "an Advocate with the Father." He suggests the gracious disposition of him upon whose will our case ultimately dependeth, as affording a new comfort; even as great as doth the righteousness and power of the Person interceding. He says not, "with God only," but "with the Father." And that his words might afford the more full matter of confidence, he says not only, "an Advocate with his Father," (though that would have given much assurance,) or with your Father, (though that might afford much boldness;) but with the Father, as intending to take in both; to ascertain us of the prevailing efficacy of Christ's intercession from both.

You have both these elsewhere more distinctly mentioned, John xx. 17, "I go to my Father, and your Father," says Christ. This was spoken after all his disciples had forsaken him, and Peter had denied him. When Christ himself would send them the greatest cordial, what was it? Go tell them, (says he,) not so much that I have satisfied for sin, overcome death, or am risen; but that I *ascend*. For in that which Christ doth for us being ascended, lies the height of our comfort. And whereas he might have said, (and it had been matter of unspeakable comfort,) I ascend to heaven, and so where I am, you shall be also; yet he chooseth rather to say, "I ascend to the Father;" for that contained the foundation of their comfort; even that relation of God's, with which Christ was to deal after his ascending, for them. And because when, before his death, he had spoken of his going to his Father, their hearts had been troubled, John xiv. 28; therefore he here distinctly adds, "I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." He had in effect spoken as much before, in the words fore-going, "Go, tell my brethren;" but that was only *implicitly*; therefore more plainly and *explicitly* he says it, for their further comfort, "I go to my Father and your Father." Thus he utters forth at once, the bottom, the depth of all comfort, the sum of all joy; than which the gospel knows no greater, can go no higher. So that if Christ should intend at this day to send good news from heaven to any of you, it would be but this, "I am here, an Advocate, interceding with *my* Father and *your* Father." All is spoken in that. Even He could not speak more comfort, who is the God of comfort. Now, therefore, let us apart consider these two relations, that Christ is ascended, and intercedes with *his* own Father, and with *our* Father.

First, Christ intercedes with his Father, who neither will nor can deny him any thing. To confirm this, you have a double testimony, and of two of the greatest witnesses in heaven; both a testimony of Christ's own,

whilst he was on earth; and God's own Word also declared, since Christ came to heaven. The first you have, John xi. whilst Christ was here on earth. When he came to raise Lazarus, he says, "Father, I thank thee, that thou hast heard me! (ver. 41;) and I know that thou hearest me always," ver. 42. Thus he was never denied on earth, from the first to the last.

And now he is come to heaven, let us hear God himself speak. When he came first to heaven, God said to him, "Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool." And before Christ opened his mouth by way of any request to God, (which was the office that he was now to execute,) God himself prevented him, and added, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee: ask of me, and I will give thee," Psal. ii. 8. He speaks it at Christ's first coming up to heaven, when he had "his King on his holy hill," as ver. 6. Christ was newly glorified, which was as a new begetting to him, "To-day have I begotten thee:" as if he had said, I know thou wilt ask me now for all that thou hast died for; and this I promise, thou shalt ask nothing but it shall be granted. Then what will not Christ (so great a Son, even equal with his Father,) prevail for, with his Father and for his brethren? Be their case, for the time past, never so desperate, be there never so many threatenings gone out against them, never so many precedents and examples of men condemned before for the like sins, yet Christ will prevail against them all.

CHAP. VIII.

The Power of Christ's Intercession demonstrated, in that he intercedes with God, who is our Father.

IN the second place, Christ is an Advocate for us with our Father. You may perhaps think there is little in that; but Christ puts much upon it. JOHN xvi. 26, 27,

“At that day, (says Christ,) you shall ask in my name, and I say not to you, that I will pray the Father for you; for the Father himself loveth you.” *At that day*, the day he means, through this whole chapter, is that time when the Holy Ghost should be shed upon them. And his scope is, as in the highest manner to promise them that he would pray for them; so, further to tell them for their more abundant assurance, that, besides his prayers, God himself “so loved them,” that indeed that alone were enough to obtain any thing at his hands, which they should but ask in his name; and the truth is, that God took up as vast a love unto us of himself at first, as ever he hath borne since. And all that Christ doth for us is but the expression of that love which was originally in God’s own heart. Thus we find, that out of love, he gave Christ for us: “God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son to die.” Yea, Christ’s death was but a means to commend or set forth that love of his unto us. Christ adds not one drop of love to God’s heart; only draws it out, and makes it flow forth; his heart is as ready to give all to us, as Christ is to ask, and this out of his pure love to us.

Let us now look round, and take a full view of all those particulars that Christ hath done and doth for us, and the several joint influence which they have upon our salvation. 1. In that Christ died, it assures us of a perfect *price* paid for, and a *right* to eternal life thereby acquired. 2. In that he rose again as a common person, this assures us yet further, that there is a formal act of justification passed and enrolled in the court of heaven; and that in his being then justified, all believers were also justified in him. 3. Christ’s ascension into heaven, is a further act of his taking possession of heaven for us. He then formally entering upon that our right in our stead; which is a further confirmation of our salvation. 4. Therefore he sits at God’s right hand, which imports his being invested with “all power in heaven and earth to give” and apply “eternal life to us.” 5. And last of

all, there remains his intercession to complete our salvation. As Christ's death and resurrection were to procure our justification; so his sitting at God's right hand and intercession are to procure salvation; and by faith we may see it done, and behold our souls not only sitting in heaven in Christ, a common person sitting there in our right, as an evidence that we shall come thither; but also, through Christ's intercession begun, we may see ourselves actually possessed of heaven.

CHAP. IX.

Some Encouragements for weak Believers, from Christ's Intercession.

FOR a conclusion, I will add a brief use and encouragement to him who is discouraged from coming to Christ. And I shall confine myself to those most comfortable words which the apostle hath uttered concerning Christ's intercession: "Wherefore he is able to save to the utmost those that come to God by him; seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them."

Let not the want of *assurance* that God will save thee, or that Christ is thine, discourage thee, if thou hast but a heart to come to God by Christ to be saved, though thou knowest not whether he will yet save thee, or not. Go out of thyself, and rest in nothing in thyself. Come unto God through Christ for salvation, though with trembling. Unto God: for he is the ultimate object of our faith, and the Person with whom we have to do in believing, and from whom we are to receive salvation, if ever we obtain it. Come unto God by Christ: which phrase is used in allusion to the worshippers of the *Old Testament*; who, when they had sinned, were directed to go to God by a Priest, who made an atonement for them. Now Christ is the great and true High Priest, "by whom we have access to the Father," Ephes. ii. 18. The word is,

ἁρπαγῶσιν, a leading by the hand. Dost thou not know how to appear before God, or to come to him? Come first to Christ, and he will take thee by the hand and lead thee to his Father. Come unto God by Christ for salvation. Many a poor soul is apt to think that in coming to God by faith, it must not aim at itself, or its own salvation: Yes, it may, for that is here made the business which faith hath with God in coming to him; and this is secretly couched in these words. For the apostle, speaking of the very aim of the heart in coming on purpose, mentions Christ's ability to save: "He is able to save." Come thou therefore unto Christ, as to save thee through his death past, and by the merit of it, so for the present, and for the time to come, to take thy cause in hand, and to intercede for thee. It is a great relief unto a weak soul, that God hath left Christ this work yet to do for us. So that the intercession of Christ may afford matter to a weak faith to throw itself upon Christ to perform it for us.

2. Now, if such a soul ask, "But will Christ, upon my coming to him for salvation, intercede for me, and undertake my cause?" I answer it out of those words, "He lives to intercede for them who come to God by him." He lives on purpose to perform this work; it is the end of his living, the business of his life. And as he received a commandment to die, and it was the end of his life on earth; so he hath received a command to intercede for all that come to God by him. God hath appointed him to this work by an oath: "He sware, and will not repent, thou shalt be a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek."

3. If thy soul yet feareth the difficulty of its own particular ease, in respect of the greatness of thy sins, and the circumstances thereof, or any consideration whatsoever which to thy view doth make thy salvation an hard suit to obtain: the apostle adds, "He is able to save to the utmost," (whatever thy cause be,) and this through his intercession. The same word, "to the utmost,"

is a good word, and well put in for our comfort. Consider it therefore, for it extends itself so far that thou canst not look beyond it. Let thy soul be set upon the highest mount that ever any creature was yet set upon, and which is enlarged to take in the most spacious prospect both of sin and misery, and all the difficulties of being saved that ever any poor humbled soul did cast within itself; yea, join to these all the objections and hinderances of thy salvation that the heart of man can suppose or invent against itself; lift up thy eyes, and look to the *utmost* thou canst see, and Christ by his intercession is able to save thee beyond the furthest compass of thy thoughts, even to *the utmost* and worst case the heart of man can suppose. It is not thy having *lain long* in sin, *long* under *terrors* and *despairs*, or having sinned *often* after many enlightnings, that can hinder thee from being saved by Christ. Do but remember this word, “to the utmost,” and then put in what exceptions thou canst, lay all the bars in thy way that are imaginable; yet know that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against thee.”

4. Again, consider but what it is that Christ, who hath by his death done enough to save thee, doth yet further for thee in heaven. If thou thoughtest thou hadst all the saints in heaven and earth jointly concurring in prayers to save thee; how wouldest thou be encouraged? One word out of Christ’s mouth will do more than all in heaven and earth could do: And what is there then which we may not hope to obtain through his intercession for thee in heaven.

Only, whilst I am thus raising up your faith to him upon the work of his intercession for us, let me speak a word to you, to stir up your love to him, upon the consideration of his intercession. You see you have the whole life of Christ first and last, both here and in heaven laid out for you. He had not come to earth but for you: he had no other business here; “Unto us a Son is born.” He had not died but *for you*: “For us a Son was given.” And when he rose, it was “for

justification :” And now he is gone to heaven, he lives but to intercede for you. He makes your salvation his constant calling. Oh ! therefore let us live wholly unto Him ! For he hath, and doth live unto us. There was much of your time lost before you began to live to him. But there hath been no moment of his time which he hath not lived to, and improved for you. Nor are you able *ever* to live for him but only in this life, for hereafter you shall live with him, and be glorified of him. I conclude : “The love of Christ should constrain us ;” because we cannot but judge this to be the most equal, “that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them, and rose again, and sits at God’s right hand ; yea, and there lives for ever to make intercession for us.”

THE
HEART OF CHRIST
IN
HEAVEN,
TOWARDS
SINNERS ON EARTH.

—◆—
IN THREE PARTS.

THE
HEART OF CHRIST IN HEAVEN,
TOWARDS
SINNERS ON EARTH.



PART I.



THE INTRODUCTION.

JOHN XIII. I.

When Jesus knew that his hour was come, that he should depart out of the world unto the Father, having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them to the end.

HAVING, in the former treatise, set forth our Lord in all those solemn actions of his, his obedience unto death, his resurrection, ascension into heaven, his sitting at God's right hand, and intercession for us; I shall now annex this discourse, which lays open *the Heart of Christ*, as now he is in heaven, sitting at God's right hand, and interceding for us; how it is affected, and graciously disposed towards sinners on earth that come to him; how willing to receive them; how ready to entertain them; how tender to pity them in all their infirmities. The use whereof will be this: to encourage sinners to come more

boldly unto the throne of grace, unto such a Saviour and High-priest, when they shall know how tenderly his heart (though he is now in his glory) is inclined towards them ; and so to remove that great stone of stumbling which we meet with, (and lieth unseen) in the thoughts of men, that Christ being now exalted to so high a distance of glory, as to sit at God's right hand, they cannot tell how to treat with him about their salvation so freely, as those poor sinners did, who were here on earth with him. Had our lot been, (think they) but to have conversed with him, (in the days of his flesh) as Mary and Peter, and his other disciples did here below, we could have been bold with him, and have had any thing at his hands ; for they beheld him before them, a man like unto themselves, and full of meekness and gentleness, he being then himself sensible of all sorts of miseries ; but now he is gone into a far country, and hath put on glory and immortality. The drift of this discourse is therefore to ascertain poor souls, that his heart remains the same it was on earth ; that he intercedes there with the same heart he did here below ; and that he is as meek, as gentle, as easy to be entreated, and as tender in his bowels ; so that they may deal with him as fairly about the great matter of their salvation, and upon as easy terms obtain it of him, as they might if they had been on earth with him : than which, nothing can be more for the comfort of those whose souls pursue after strong and entire communion with Christ.

Now the demonstrations that may help our faith in this, I reduce to two heads : the one shewing, that it is so ; the other, the reasons and grounds why it must needs be so. The first are taken from several passages, in those several conditions of his, at his last farewell before his death, his resurrection, ascension, and now he is sitting at God's right hand. I shall lead you through all the same heads which I have gone over in the former treatise, (though to another purpose) and take such observations from his speeches and carriage, in all those states he went

through, as shall tend directly to persuade our hearts of the point in hand ; namely, that now he is in heaven, his heart remains as graciously inclined to sinners that come to him, as ever on earth. And for a ground, or introduction to the first, I shall take the Scripture above set down ; for those other, another Scripture.

SECT. I.

Demonstrations of Christ's Love to Sinners now, from his last Farewell to his Disciples.

It was long before Christ brake his mind to his disciples, that he was to go away to heaven from them ; but when he begins to acquaint them with it, he at once leaves with them an abundance of his heart, and that not only how it stood towards them, at the present, but what it would be when he should be in his glory. Let us, to this end, but briefly peruse his last carriage, and his last supper, as it is recorded by the evangelist John ; and we shall find this to be the drift of those long discourses, from the 13th to the 18th chapter.

The words which I have prefixed as the text, are the preface unto all that discourse, and shew the argument and sum of all. The preface is this : “ Before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come, that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And supper being ended, —Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God, he then washed his disciples' feet.” Now this preface was prefixed by the evangelist, on purpose to set open a window into Christ's heart, to shew what it was at his departure, and to give a light into all that follows.

1. He premiseth what was in Christ's thoughts : he began deeply to consider, both that he was to depart out

of this world, and that he should shortly be installed into that glory which was due unto him ; so it follows, ver. 3, Jesus “ knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands,” (that is, that all power in heaven and earth was his) in the midst of these thoughts, went and washed his disciples’ feet.

What was Christ’s heart most upon, in the midst of all these elevated meditations ? Not upon his own glory so much, (though it is told us he considered that, thereby the more to set out his love unto us) but his heart ran out in love towards his own : “ Having loved his own,” says the first verse, *τῆς ἰδίας*, a word denoting the greatest nearness, dearness, and intimateness founded upon propriety : all believers are Christ’s own, a piece of himself, his own members, his own flesh. And he considers, that though he was to go out of the world, yet they were to be in the world ; and therefore it is added, “ which were in the world ;” that is, to remain in this world. He had others of his own who were in that world, unto which he was going, even the “ spirits of just men made perfect ;” but he takes more care for his own, who were to remain here in this world, a world wherein there is much evil, both of sin and misery. This is it, which draws out his bowels towards them, even when his heart was full of the thoughts of his own glory : “ having loved his own, he loved them unto the end,” or for ever. So that the scope of this speech is to shew how Christ’s heart and love would be towards them even for ever, when he should be gone unto his Father, as well as it was to shew how it had been here on earth. And to testify what his love would be to them, when in heaven, the evangelist shews, that when he was in the midst of all those great thoughts of his approaching glory, he then took water and a towel, and washed his disciples’ feet. And what was Christ’s meaning in this, but that, whereas when he was in heaven, he could not make such outward visible demonstrations of his heart, by doing such mean services for them ; therefore by doing this in the midst of such

thoughts of his glory, he would shew what he could be content, as it were, to do for them, when he should be in full possession of it ?

This declaration of his mind, we have from his carriage, at this his last farewell. Let us next take a survey of the drift of that which he made at that his farewell discourse, and we shall find the main scope of it to be, further to assure his disciples of what his heart would be unto them. And as what he prayed for them, was for all believers, so also was that which he spake unto them.

First, he lets them see what his heart would be unto them, when in heaven, by that business which he went thither to perform for them : “ I go to send you a Comforter,” whilst you are in this world, and to “ prepare a place for you,” John xiv. 2, when you go out of this world. “ There are many mansions in my Father’s house,” and I go to take them up for you : “ If it had been otherwise,” says he, “ I would have told you.” Whom would not this openness of heart persuade ? But then, the business itself being so much for our happiness ; how much more doth that argue it ? And indeed, Christ himself doth fetch from thence an argument of the continuance of his love to them. So, ver. 3, “ If I go to prepare a place for you,” then doubt not of my love when I am there : all the glory of the place shall never make me forget my business. When he was on earth, he forgot none of the business for which he came into the world ; and now he is gone to heaven, he is entered as a forerunner to take up places there for us : and therefore, 1 Pet. i. 4, salvation is said to “ be reserved in heaven for us.”

And further to manifest his mindfulness of them, and of all believers, when he should be in his glory, he tells them, that when he hath despatched that business for them, he meant to come again to them : so chap. xiv. 3, “ If I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again.” Love descends better than ascends ; and so doth the love of Christ, who indeed is love itself ; and therefore comes

down to us himself: "And receive you unto myself," says Christ, "that so where I am, you may be also." And yet further, the more to express the longings of his heart after them all during that time, he tells them it shall not be long neither ere he doth come again to them. So John xvi. 16, "Again a little while and ye shall see me; a little while and ye shall not see me:" which not seeing him, refers not to that small space of absence whilst dead in the grave; but to that after his ascending, when he should go away, not to be seen on earth again until the day of judgment.

Thirdly, what his heart would be towards them in his absence, he expresseth by the careful provision he would make for their comfort in his absence. John xiv. 18, "I will not leave you as orphans;" (so the word is,) I will not leave you like fatherless and friendless children. My Father and I have only One, who lies in the bosom of us both, and proceedeth from us both; the Holy Ghost, and in the mean time I will send him to you. Ver. 16, "I will pray the Father," says he, "and he shall give you another Comforter." And chap. xvi. 7, he saith, "I will send him to you." And he shall be a better Comforter unto you than I am to be in this dispensation. "It is expedient that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come;" who by reason of his office, will comfort you better than I should do with my bodily presence. And this Spirit, as he is the earnest of heaven, so he is the greatest token and pledge of my love that ever was. And all the comfort he shall speak to you all that while, will be but the expression of my heart towards you. For as he comes not of himself, but "I must send him," John xvi. 7; so "he will speak nothing of himself," but "whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak," ver. 13. And ver. 14, "he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." Him therefore I shall send on purpose to be in my room, and he shall tell you (if you listen to him, and not grieve him) nothing but my love. "He shall glorify me," namely, to you, (for I am in myself already glorified in

heaven.) All his speech in your hearts will be to advance me, and my love unto you ; and it will be his delight to do it. And he will continually be breaking your hearts, either with my love to you, or yours to me, or both. And whereas you have the Spirit now, “ He now dwells with you :” and “ at that day (ver. 20,) you shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you :” he will tell you when I am in heaven, that there is as true conjunction between me and you, as is between my Father and me.

If this were not enough to assure them how his heart would be affected towards them, he assures them he will give them daily experience of it. “ Hitherto you have asked nothing,” (that is, but little) “ in my name, but now ask and you shall receive.” And if otherwise you will not believe, “ believe me,” says he, “ for the works’ sake,” John xiv. 11. He speaks here of the works he would do for them, in answer to their prayers when he was gone ; for it follows, ver. 12, “ He that believeth on me shall do greater works than I, because I go to my Father.” So that it is manifest, he speaks of the works done after his ascension. And how were they to procure them to be done ? By prayer : so it follows, ver. 13, “ And whatsoever you ask in my name, that will I do.” He speaks it of the time when he is gone. And again, ver. 14, “ If you shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it ; as if he had said, though you ask the Father in my name, yet all comes through my hands, and “ I will do it.” Yet further to evidence his love, he not only bids them pray to him, and in his name upon all occasions, but assureth them, that he himself will pray for them. It is the chief work that he doth in heaven : “ he lives ever to intercede :” as he ever lives, so he lives to intercede ever, and never holds his peace till sinners are saved.

In the last place, read but the 17th chapter, and you shall see, that he presently goes apart to his Father, and speaks over all again to him, which he had said unto

them. That chapter (you know) contains a prayer put up just before his suffering, and there he makes his will, and his last request, (for in such a style it runs, "Father, I will," ver. 24,) which will he is gone to see executed in heaven. And this prayer is left us by Christ, as a summary of his intercession for us in heaven. He spake as he meant to do in heaven, and as one that had done his work, and was now come to demand his wages: "I have finished my work which thou gavest me to do," (says he, ver. 4.) And whereas he speaks a word or two for himself in the first five verses, he speaks five times as many for them; for all the rest of the chapter is a prayer for them. He useth all kinds of arguments to move his Father for his children: "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do," says he, and to save them is thy work, which remains to be done for me by thee; and "they are thine, and thou gavest them me;" and I commend to thee but thine own. And says he, though thou hast given me a personal glory which I had before the world was; yet there is another glory which I regard almost as much; and that is, in their being saved: "I am glorified in them," ver. 10, "and they are my joy," ver. 13, and therefore, I must have them "with me wherever I am," ver. 24. Thou hast set thy heart upon them, and hast loved them thyself, as thou hast loved me; "I will that they be where I am," ver. 24, "that they may behold the glory which thou hast given me." He speaks all this, as if he had been then in heaven, and in possession of all that glory.

SECT. II.

Demonstrations from Passages and Expressions after his Resurrection.

CHRIST'S resurrection was the first step unto his glory. When he laid down his body, he laid down all earthly

weakness. "It was sown (as ours is) in weakness;" but with raising it again, he took on him the qualifications of an immortal and glorious body; "it was raised in power;" and therefore, what his heart upon his first rising shall appear to be towards us, will be a certain demonstration what it will continue to be in heaven.

To illustrate this the more, consider that if ever there were a trial taken, whether his love to sinners would continue or not, it was then at his resurrection; for all his disciples, (especially Peter,) had carried themselves the most unworthily towards him. Now when Christ came first out of the other world, clothed with that heart and body which he was to wear in heaven, what message sends he first to them? We would all think, that as they would not know him in his sufferings, so he would now be as strange to them in his glory: or at least his first words would be of their faithlessness and falsehood: no, his first word concerning them is, "Go tell my brethren, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, to my God and your God." You read elsewhere, that it was great love and condescension in Christ so to entitle them; Heb. ii. 11, "He is not ashamed to call them brethren," and for him to call them so when he was entering into his glory, argues the more love. He carries it as Joseph did in the height of his advancement. When he first brake his mind to his brethren, he said, "I am Joseph, your brother:" so Christ says here, tell them you have seen Jesus their brother; I own them as brethren still. But what was the message that he would have delivered unto them? That I, says he, "ascend to my Father, and your Father." A more friendly speech by far than that of Joseph; (though that was full of bowels,) for Joseph, after he had told them he was their brother, adds, "whom you sold into Egypt:" he reminds them of their unkindness; but not so Christ, he reminds them not of what they had done against him. Yea further, you

may observe, that he reminds them, not so much of what he had been doing for them. He says not, Tell them I have been dying for them; or that they little think what I have suffered for them: not a word of that neither. But still his heart is upon doing more; he looks not backward to what is past; but forgets his sufferings, as "a woman her travail, for joy that a man-child is born." Having now despatched that great work on earth for them, he hastens to heaven, to do another. And, though he knew he had business yet to do upon earth that would hold him forty days longer; yet to shew that his heart was longing to be at work for them in heaven, he speaks in the present tense, and tells them, "I ascend;" and he expresseth his joy, not only that he goes to his Father, but also that he goes to their Father, to be an Advocate for them. And is indeed Jesus our Brother alive? and doth he call us brethren? and doth he talk thus lovingly of us? Whose heart would not this overcome?

But this was but a message sent his disciples before he met them. Let us next observe his carriage at his meeting them. When he came first amongst them, this was his salutation, "Peace be to you." It is all one with that speech of his used in parting, "My peace I leave with you." After this he breathes on them, and conveys the Holy Ghost in a further measure into them; so to give an evidence of what he would do more plentifully in heaven: and the mystery of that his breathing on them, was to shew, that this was the utmost expression of his heart, to give them the Spirit, as well as that the Holy Ghost proceeds from him as well as from the Father. And to what end doth he give them the Spirit? Not for themselves alone; but that they, by the gifts and assistance of that Spirit, might "forgive men's sins" by converting them to him. "Whose sins soever ye remit, (namely, by your ministry,) they are remitted to them." His mind you see is still upon sinners, and his care for the conversion of their souls. And therefore his last

words, as they are recorded by St. Luke, are, "Thus it behoved Christ to suffer and to rise,—that repentance and remission of sins should be preached among all nations," and adds, "beginning at Jerusalem;" where he had been but a few days before crucified. Of all places, one would have thought he would have excepted that; but he bids them begin there: let them have the first benefit by my death that were the actors in it. Afterwards indeed, when he appears to the eleven, he upbraids them: but with what? With their "unbelief and hardness of heart." No sin of theirs troubled him, but their unbelief. Which shews how his heart stands, in that he desires nothing more than to have men believe in him; and this now when glorified.

Another time he shews himself to his disciples, and particularly deals with Peter; but yet tells him not a word of his sins, nor of his forsaking of him, but only goes about to draw from him a testimony of his love to himself: "Peter," says he, "lovest thou me?" Christ loves to hear that. Full well do those words sound in his ears, when you tell him you love him, though he knows it already. And what was Christ's aim in drawing this acknowledgment from Peter? that if he loved him he should "feed his lambs." This is the great testimony of love that he would have Peter shew him, when he should be in heaven. And how great a testimony is this, how well Christ's heart was affected to the souls of men, that their salvation was his greatest care. And to what end doth the evangelist record these things of him after his resurrection? One of the evangelists informs us; "These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ;" that you might come to him as the Saviour of the world; and that, "believing, ye might have life-through his name."

SECT. III.

Demonstrations from Passages at and after his Ascension.

LET us next view Christ in his ascending. His carriage then also will further assure our hearts of his desire for the happiness of mankind. "He lifted up his hands and blessed them:" and that we might the more observe it, it is added, "and whilst he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." This benediction Christ reserved to be his last act. And what was the meaning of it, but to bless them, as God blessed Adam and Eve, bidding them increase and multiply, and so blessing all mankind that were to come of them? Thus doth Christ in blessing his disciples, bless all those that shall believe through their word unto the end of the world. This is interpreted by Peter, Acts iii. 26, when speaking to the Jews, he says, "Unto you first, God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you," and how? "in turning away every one of you from his iniquities."

In the next place, let us consider what Christ did when he was come to heaven. How abundantly did he make good all that he had promised in his last discourse? For first, he instantly poured out his Spirit. He then received it, and visibly poured it out. And this Spirit is still in our preaching, and in your hearts in hearing, in praying, in reading, and in holy meditation, and persuades you of Christ's love to this very day; and is in all these the pledge of the continuance of Christ's love still in heaven unto sinners. All our sermons and your prayers are evidences to you, that Christ's heart is still the same towards sinners; for the Spirit that assists in all these, comes in his name, and works all by commission from him. And do none of you feel your hearts moved in the preaching of these things, at this and other times? And who is it that moves you? It is the Spirit which speaks

in Christ's name, even as himself is said to speak from heaven, Heb. xii. 25. And when you pray, it is the Spirit that "makes intercession for you" in your own hearts, Rom. viii. 26, which intercession of his, is but the evidence and echo of Christ's intercession in heaven. The Spirit prays in you, because Christ prays for you: he is an intercessor on earth, because Christ is an intercessor in heaven. He also follows us to the sacrament, and in that glass shews us Christ's face smiling on us; and thus we go away rejoicing that we saw our Saviour that day.

Again, all those works, in answer to the apostles' prayers, are a demonstration of this. The apostles went on to preach forgiveness through Christ, and in his name; and what signs and wonders did accompany them, to confirm that their preaching? And all were the fruits of Christ's intercession in heaven. So that what he promised, as an evidence of his minding them in heaven, was abundantly fulfilled. They, upon his asking, did greater works than he: the apostle makes an argument of it, "How shall we escape," says he, "if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him, God also bearing them witness both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles?" Yea, let me add, that take all the New Testament, and all the promises in it, all was written since Christ's being in heaven, by his Spirit, and that by commission from Christ; and therefore all that you find therein you may build on, as his very heart; and therein see, that what he once said on earth, he repealed not a word now he is in heaven.

Thirdly, some of the same apostles spake with him since, even many years after his ascension. Thus John and Paul, (of which the last was in heaven with him,) and they both give out the same thing of him. St. Paul received the gospel from no man, but by the immediate

revelation of Jesus Christ from heaven. He was converted by the immediate speech of Christ himself; and this long after his ascension. And in that one instance Christ abundantly shewed his purpose to continue to all sorts of sinners to the end of the world. Thus that great apostle telleth us, "For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to all them that should hereafter believe on him." It is express (you see) to assure all sinners, unto the end of the world, of Christ's heart towards them.

Then again, sixty years after his ascension, did the apostle John receive a revelation from him; and the revelation is said to be in a more immediate manner, "The revelation of Jesus Christ;" and you read that Christ appeared to him, and said, "I am he that was dead, and am alive for evermore," Rev. i. 18. Now let us but consider Christ's last words in that his last book, (the last that Christ hath spoken since he went to heaven, or that he is to utter till the day of judgment,) "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches: I am the root and offspring of David;—and the Spirit and the Bride say, come: and let him that heareth say, come: and let him that is athirst come: and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." Christ was now in heaven, and had before promised to come again, and fetch all his disciples to heaven. In the mean time, mark what an echoing and answering of hearts and desires there is between him from heaven, and believing sinners from below: earth calls upon heaven, as the prophet speaks. The bride from earth says unto Christ, Come to me; and the saints' hearts below say, Come, unto him also. And Christ cries out as loud from heaven, Come, in answer unto this desire in them; so heaven and earth ring again of it. "Let him that is athirst come to me; and let him that will come, and take of the water of life freely:" this is Christ's speech unto men

on earth. They call him to come unto earth to judgment; and he calls sinners to come up to heaven unto him for mercy. They cannot desire his coming to them, so much as he desires their coming to him. All which shews how much his heart was engaged to invite sinners to him; that now, when he is to speak but one sentence more, till we hear the sound to judgment, he should especially make choice of these words. Let them therefore for ever stick with you, as being worthy to be your last thoughts when you come to die, and are going to him. He speaks indeed something after them; but that is but to set a seal unto these words, and to the rest of the Scriptures, and to ingeminate his willingness to come quickly. And all this tends to assure us, that this is his heart, and we shall find him of no other mind until his coming again.

THE
HEART OF CHRIST IN HEAVEN,
 TOWARDS
SINNERS ON EARTH.

—◆—
 PART II.
 —◆—

HEB. IV. 15.

For we have not an High-Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities: but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

SECT I.

Demonstrations of Christ's Love to Sinners, drawn from the Influence the whole Trinity hath into the heart of the human nature of Christ in heaven.

THIS text, above any other, speaks the heart of Christ most, and sets out the frame and workings of it towards sinners; and that so sensibly, that it doth, as it were, take our hands and lay them upon Christ's breast, and let us feel how his heart beats, and his bowels yearn towards us, even now he is in glory. To open them, so far as they serve to my present purpose. All that may any way discourage us, he calls by the name of infirmities, thereby meaning both, 1. The evil of afflictions of what sort soever. 2. The evil of sins.

1. That under infirmities he means persecutions and afflictions, is probable; not only in that the word is often used in that sense; but also because his scope is to comfort them against what would pull from them their profession, as that foregoing exhortation ("Let us hold fast our profession,") implies. Now the things which attempted to pull it from them, were chiefly persecutions and oppositions.

2. By infirmities are meant sins also; as appears from the remedy against them, which they are here encouraged to seek at the throne of grace, namely, grace and mercy: "Therefore let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may find mercy and obtain grace to help in time of need:" grace to help against the power of sin, and mercy against the guilt and punishment of it. For a support against both these, he lets us understand how sensibly affected the heart of Christ is to sinners under all these their infirmities, now he is in heaven. This speech of his is as much as if he had said, though Christ is in heaven, yet he retains one tender part in his heart still unarmed, as it were, even to suffer with you, and to be touched if you be. The word is a deep one (*συμπαθεσαι*,) *he suffers with you*; he is as tender in his bowels to you as ever he was. That he might be moved to pity you, he is willing to suffer, as it were, one place to be left naked, on which he may be wounded with your miseries, that so he might be your merciful high-priest.

There are two things which this text gives me occasion to take notice of: 1. That he is touched with a feeling, or sympathizing with us. 2. The way how this comes to pass; even through his having been tempted in all things like unto us.

SECT. II.

The first sort of intrinsical Demonstrations, drawn from the Influence all the three Persons have for ever in the Heart of the human Nature of Christ in Heaven.

AND, first, he is touched still with a feeling of our infirmities. That love which Christ, when on earth, expressed to be in his heart, and which made him die for sinners upon a command of his Father, doth certainly continue in his heart still, now he is in heaven; and that as quick and as tender as ever it was on earth, even as when he was on the cross. It being a law written in the midst of his bowels by his Father, it becomes natural to him, and so indelible, and (as other moral laws of God written in the heart are) perpetual. And as in us, when we shall be in heaven, though faith shall fail, and hope vanish, yet love shall continue; so doth this love in Christ's heart continue also, and suffers no decay; and is shewn as much now, in receiving sinners and interceding for them, and being pitiful unto them, as then in dying for them. This being the great commandment that God layeth on him, to love, and die for, and to continue to love, and receive sinners that come to him, and raise them up at the latter day, certainly he continues to keep it most exactly; we may therefore be sure that he both doth it, and will do it for ever.

And this his love is not a forced love, which he strives only to bear towards us, because his Father hath commanded him; but it is his nature, his disposition; he should not be God's Son else, nor take after his heavenly Father; unto whom it is natural to shew mercy, but not to punish. To punish is his strange work, but mercy pleaseth him; he "is the Father of mercy." Now Christ is his own Son, *ὁ υἱὸς*, (as by the way of distinction he is called) and his natural Son. If we, as the elect of God (who are but the adopted sons) are exhorted to put on

“ bowels of mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, and forbearing ;” then much more must these dispositions be found in Christ, the natural Son ; and these not put on by him, but as natural to him as his sonship is. God is love, and Christ is love covered over with flesh, yea, our flesh. And besides, as God hath fashioned the hearts of all men, and some of the sons of men unto more mercy and pity (naturally) than others, and then the Holy Spirit coming on them to sanctify their natural dispositions, useth to work according to their tempers ; so it is certain that he tempered the heart of Christ, and made it of a softer mould than the tenderness of all men’s hearts put together. When he was to assume a human nature, he is brought in, saying, “ A body hast thou fitted me,” Heb. x. That is, a human nature fitted as in other things, so in the temper of it, for the Godhead to work in best. And as he took a human nature on purpose to be a merciful high-priest, so a human nature, and of special a temper as might be more merciful than all men or angels. His human nature was made without hands ; that is, was not of the make that other men’s hearts are ; though for the matter the same, yet not for the frame of his Spirit. It was a heart bespoke on purpose to be a vessel, or rather fountain of mercy ; and therefore Christ’s heart had naturally in the temper of it, more pity than all men or angels have, as through which the mercies of the great God were to be dispensed unto us.

Observe, how Christ lays open his own disposition : Matt. xi. 28, “ Come to me, you that are weary and heavy-laden,—for I am meek and lowly of heart.” We are apt to think, that he, being so holy, is therefore of a severe disposition against sinners, and not able to bear them ; no, says he, I am meek ; gentleness is my nature and temper ; it is my nature to forgive. Yea, but (may we think) he being the Son of God, and heir of heaven, and especially being now filled with glory, and sitting at God’s right hand, may despise us here below ; though

not out of anger, yet out of that height of his greatness ; and so though we conceive him meek, and not prejudiced with injuries, yet he may be too high to regard the condition of poor creatures. No, says Christ, I am lowly also, willing to bestow my love upon the poorest and meanest. And all this is not an outward carriage only, but it is *Ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ*, in the heart. It is his temper, his disposition, his nature to be gracious, which nature he can never lay aside. And that his greatness, when he came to enjoy it in heaven, would not a whit alter his disposition, appears by this, that he, at the same time when he uttered these words, took into consideration all his glory: “ All things are delivered to me by my Father.” And presently after, for all this, he says, “ Come unto me, all you that are heavy-laden,—I am meek and lowly,” ver. 28, 29. Look therefore what delightful thoughts you use to have of a dear friend, who is of an amiable nature ; or of some eminently holy and meek saint, of whom you think, I could put my soul into such a man’s hands ; even such and infinitely more raised apprehensions should we have of that sweetness and candour that is in Jesus Christ, as being much more natural to him.

Farther : if the same Spirit that was upon Christ, and in him, when he was on earth, doth still rest upon him, now he is in heaven, then these dispositions must still entirely remain in him. When he was on earth, the Holy Spirit rested upon him above measure, and fitted him with a meek spirit for the works of his mediation ; and indeed for this did the Spirit come more especially upon him. Therefore when he was first solemnly inaugurated into that office, the Holy Ghost descended upon him as a dove, to shew those special gracious dispositions wherewith the Holy Ghost fitted Christ to be a mediator. A dove (you know) is the most innocent and most meek creature, having no fierceness in it, expressing nothing but love, and was therefore a fit emblem to express what a temper the Holy Ghost did then fill the heart of Christ with. And though he had the Spirit before, yet

now he was anointed with him (in respect to the execution of his office) in a larger measure. Therefore St. Luke notes upon it, chap. iv. 1, "Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan." And Peter also shews, "how God having anointed him with the Holy Ghost," (namely, at baptism,) "he went about doing good." And that this was the principal thing signified by this descending of the Holy Ghost as a dove upon him, even Christ himself shews; for thus he explains it: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor;" (that is, the afflicted for sin;) "He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised." And when he had read so much in the synagogue, expressing the compassionate disposition of his spirit unto sinners, then he closeth the book, intimating, that these were the main effects of that his receiving the Spirit. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor;" that is, for this end hath he given me his Spirit, because I was designed to this work, and by that Spirit also hath he anointed, or qualified me with dispositions suitable to that work. So was he filled with the Spirit, to that end to raise up in him such sweet affections towards sinners.

And it is certain, that the same Spirit that was upon Christ below, doth still abide upon him in heaven. It must never be said, the Spirit of the Lord is departed from him, who is the bestower of the Holy Ghost upon us. And if the Spirit once given to his members abides with them for ever, much more doth this Spirit abide upon Christ the head, from whom we all receive him, and by virtue of which Spirit's dwelling in him, he continues to dwell in us. Therefore, Peter giving an account how it came to pass, that they were so filled with the Holy Ghost, says, That "Christ having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost," had "shed him forth on them;" which receiving is not to be only

understood of his bare receiving the promise of the Holy Ghost for us ; but further that he had received him first as poured forth on himself, and so shed him forth on them. According to that rule, that whatever God doth unto us by Christ, he first doth it unto Christ. All promises are fulfilled unto him first, and so unto us in him ; and this may be one reason why (as John vii. 39,) “ the Spirit was not as yet given, because Jesus was not as yet glorified.” But now he is in heaven, he is said “ to have the seven Spirits of God.” Rev. i. 3, “ Now those seven Spirits” are the Holy Ghost ; for so it must needs be meant, and not of any creature, as appears by the 4th verse of that chapter, where “ grace and peace are wished from the seven Spirits ;” which are so called in respect of the various effects of the Holy Spirit both in Christ and us, though but one in person.

And herein you may help your faith by an experiment of the Holy Ghost dwelling in your own hearts, and there not only working in you meekness towards others, but pity towards yourselves ; and to that end, stirring up in you unutterable groans before the throne of grace, for grace and mercy. Now, seeing that the same Spirit dwells in Christ’s heart in heaven, that doth in yours here, and always works in his heart for you, and then in yours by commission from him ; rest assured, that that Spirit stirs up in him bowels of mercy infinitely larger towards you, than you can have unto yourselves.

SECT. III.

Other Proofs drawn from several Engagements now lying upon Christ in Heaven.

OTHER proofs of Christ’s love may be drawn from many other engagements continuing and lying upon him, now he is in heaven ; which must needs incline his heart towards us as much, yea, more than ever. As, I. The

continuation of all those near and intimate relations unto us, which no glory of his can make any alteration in. Fleshly relations indeed cease in that other world, because they were made only for this world; but these relations of Christ to us, were made in order to the world to come; and therefore are in their full vigour and strength therein.

To illustrate this by the indissoluble tie of those relations of this world, whereto no difference of condition can give any discharge. We see in Joseph, when advanced, that as his relations continued, so his affections remained the same to his poor brethren, who had injured him, and also to his father. So, Gen. xlv. where he mentioneth his own dignities and advancement; "God hath made me a father to Pharoah, and lord of all his house;" yet he forgetteth not, "I am Joseph your brother," ver. 4. And his affections appeared also to be the same; for he "wept over them, and could not refrain himself," ver. 1, 2. And the like he expresseth to his father, ver. 9, "Go to my father, and say, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord over all Egypt," (and yet thy son Joseph still.) Much more doth this hold good of husband and wife, for they are in a nearer relation yet. But beyond all these relations, the relation of head and members as it is most natural, so it obligeth most. "No man yet ever hated his own flesh," says the apostle, "but loveth and cherisheth it." And it is the law of nature, that "if one member be honoured, all the members are to rejoice with it," 1 Cor. xii. 26; "and if one member suffer, all the rest are to suffer with it." Even so is Christ, as ver. 12. And these relations are those that move Christ to continue his love unto us.

Christ is both the founder, the subject, and the most perfect pattern to us, of the relations that are found on earth. 1. He is the founder of all relations, and affections that accompany them, both in nature and grace. As therefore the Psalmist argues, "Shall he not see, who made the eye?" So do I: Shall not he who put these

affections into parents, and brothers, have them much more in himself? “Though our father Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not; yet, O Lord, thou art our Father, and our Redeemer,” Isa. lxiii. 16. The prophet speaks it of Christ, as appears by ver. 1, 2; and he speaks of Christ as supposed in heaven; for he adds, “Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and thy glory.” There are but two things that should make him forget sinners; his holiness, as they are sinners, and his glory, as they are mean and low creatures. Now he here mentions both, to shew, that notwithstanding either as they are sinners he rejects them not, and as they are base and mean he despiseth them not. 2. He is the subject of all relations, which no creature is. If a man be a husband, yet not a father, or a brother; but Christ is all. No one relation being sufficient to express his love, wherewith he loveth us. 3. He is the pattern of all these our relations, and they all are but the copies of his. Thus in Ephes. v. 25, Christ is made the pattern of the relation and love of husbands: “Husbands,” says the apostle, “love your wives, as Christ loved his church.” Yea, ver. 31, 32, 33, the marriage of Adam, and the very words he then spake of cleaving to a wife, are made but the shadows of Christ’s marriage to his church. Herein I speak, says he, “concerning Christ and the church: and this is a great mystery.” First, a mystery, that is, this marriage of Adam was ordained hiddenly, to signify Christ’s marriage with his church. And secondly, it is a great mystery, because the thing thereby signified is in itself so great, that this is but a shadow of it. And therefore all those relations, and the affections of them, which you see and read to have been in men, are all ordained to be but shadows of what is in Christ; who alone is the truth and substance of all similitudes in nature, as well as the ceremonial types.

If therefore no advancement doth or ought to alter such relations in men, then not in Christ. “He is not

ashamed to call us brethren," Heb. ii. 11. And yet the apostle had just before said of him, ver. 9, "We see Jesus crowned with glory and honour." Yea, and as when one member suffers, the rest are touched with sympathy, so it is with Christ. Paul persecuted the saints, the members; and "why persecutest thou me?" cries the Head in heaven. "We are flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone." And therefore though Christ be now in glory, yet let not that discourage you; for he hath the heart of a husband towards you, being "betrothed unto you for ever, in faithfulness, and in loving-kindness."

This love of Christ unto us is yet further increased, by what he both did and suffered for us on earth; "Having loved his own," so far as to die for them, he will certainly "love them unto the end." We shall find in all sorts of relations, that the having done much for any doth beget a further care and love towards them. And the like effect those eminent sufferings of Christ for us, have certainly produced in him. We may see this in parents: for besides that natural affection planted in mothers towards their children, the very pain, and travail they were at in bringing them forth, increaseth their affections towards them; and therefore the eminency of affection is attributed unto that of the mother towards her child, and put upon this, that it is "the son of her womb," Isaiah xlix. 15. And as it is thus in paternal affection, so also in conjugal. The more lovers have suffered the one for the other, the more is their love increased; and the party for whom they suffered, is thereby rendered the more dear unto them. And as it is thus in these natural relations, so also in spiritual. We may see it in holy men; as in Moses, who was a mediator for the Jews, as Christ is for us. Moses therein being but Christ's type and shadow, and therefore I the rather instance in him. He, under God, had been the deliverer of the people of Israel out of Egypt, with the hazard of his own life, and had led them in the wilderness, and given them that good law that was their wisdom in the sight of all the nations; and what he

had done for them did so mightily engage his heart, that although God in his wrath against them, offered to make of him alone a greater and mightier nation than they were, yet Moses refused that offer, and still went on to intercede for them, and, among others, used this very argument to God, even the consideration of what he had already done for them, thereby to move God to continue his goodness unto them; yea, so set was Moses's heart upon them, that he not only refused that former offer which God made him, but he made an offer unto God of himself, to sacrifice his portion in life for their good: "Rather," says he, "blot me out of the book of life."

We may observe the like zealous love in holy Paul, towards all those converts of his, whom in his epistles he wrote unto; towards whom, that which so much endeared his affections, was the pains, the care, and the sufferings he had had in bringing them unto Christ. Thus towards the Galatians, how solicitous was he? how afraid to lose his labour on them? "I am afraid of you," says he, "lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain;" yea, he utters himself more deeply: "My little children," says he, "I again travail in birth, till Christ be formed in you." What love then must needs be in the heart of Christ, from that which he hath done and suffered for us?

Did Moses ever do that for the people, which Christ hath done and suffered for you? He acknowledged, that he had not born the people in his womb; but Christ bare us all, and we were the travail of his soul. Was Paul crucified for you? But Christ was. Or if Paul had been crucified, would it have profited us? No. If then Paul was content to be in travail again for the Galatians, when he feared their falling away; how doth Christ's heart work towards sinners? he having put in so infinite a stock of sufferings for us already. And he hath so much love to us besides, that if otherwise we could not be saved, he could be content to suffer for us afresh. But he needed to do this but once; so perfect was his

priesthood. Be assured, then, that his love was not worn out at his death, but increased by it. His love it was that caused him to "lay down his life for his sheep; and greater love than this hath no man." But now, having died, this must needs cause him from his soul to cleave the more unto them. When Christ was in the midst of his pains, one, for whom he was then suffering, said, "Lord, remember me, when thou comest into thy kingdom!" And could Christ mind him then? (As you know he did, telling him, "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise,") then surely when Christ came to Paradise, he would do it much more; and remember him too by the surest token; namely, the pains which he was then enduring for him, he remembers both them and us still. If he would have us "remember his death till he comes," then certainly himself remembers it in heaven muchmore: no question but he remembers us, as he promised to do that penitent thief, now he is in his kingdom.

Thirdly, his office still requires of him all mercifulness and graciousness towards sinners: and therefore whilst he continues invested with that office, as he for ever doth, his heart must needs continue full of tenderness. Now that office is his priesthood; which this text mentions as the foundation of our encouragement to come "boldly to the throne of grace, for grace and mercy,—seeing we have a great high-priest entered into the heavens." The office of high-priesthood is altogether an office of grace. As Christ's kingly office is an office of power and dominion, and his prophetic office is an office of knowledge and wisdom; so his priestly office is an office of grace and mercy. The high-priest's office did properly deal in nothing else. If there had not been a mercy-seat in the holy of holies, the high-priest had not been appointed to have gone into it. It was mercy, and reconciliation, and atonement for sinners, that he was to treat about at the mercy-seat. Now this was but a typical allusion unto this office of Christ in heaven. And therefore the apostle in this text, when he speaks of this our high-priest's being

entered into heaven, makes mention of a throne of grace, in answer to that type both of the high-priest of old, and the mercy-seat in the holy of holies. And further to confirm this, the apostle goes on to open that very type, and apply it to Christ, unto this very purpose; and this in the very next words to my text, chap. v. 1, 2, 3, in which he gives a full description of an high-priest, and all the properties that were to be in him, together with the principal end that that office was ordained for. Now the essential qualifications there specified, that were to be in a high-priest, are mercy and grace; and the ends for which he is there said to be ordained are works of mercy and grace. So that these words are a confirmation of what he had said before, and set out Christ the substance, in his grace and mercifulness, under Aaron and his sons the shadows: and all this for the comfort of believers.

Now, first, for the ends for which those high-priests were appointed, they speak nothing but grace and mercy unto sinners. It is said, he was one "ordained for men to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins." There is both the end for whom, and the end for which he was ordained. 1. For whom: he was ordained for men, that is, for men's cause, and for their good. Had it not been for the salvation of men, God had never made Christ a priest. So that he is wholly to employ all his power for them, for whose cause he was ordained a priest. He is to transact *τα προς τον Θεον*, all things that are to be done by us towards God, or for us with God; he is to procure us all favour from God, and to do all that God would have done for our salvation. And that he might do this willingly for us; as every high-priest was taken from among men; so was Christ, that he might be a priest of our own nature, and so be more kind unto us than the nature of an angel could have been. 2. The end for which every high-priest was ordained, shews this: he was to "offer gifts and sacrifices for sins:" sacrifices for sins, to pacify God's wrath against sin, and gifts to procure

his favour. You know the apostle, in the foregoing words, had mentioned grace and mercy, and encouraged us to come with boldness unto this High-priest for both ; and to encourage us the more, he says, the high-priest by his office was to offer for both ; gifts to procure all grace, and sacrifices to procure all mercy for us. Thus you see the ends which he is ordained for, are all matter of grace and mercy. 3. The qualification that was required in a high-priest, was, that he should be “ one that could have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way.” And this is set forth, ver. 2. He that was high-priest, was not chosen for his deep wisdom, but for the mercy and compassion that was in him. That is it, which is here made the special property in an high-priest, as such ; and the essential qualification that was inwardly to constitute and fit him for that office ; as God’s appointment did outwardly.

Now, if this be so essential a property to a high-priest, then it is in Christ most eminently. And he could not have been God’s high-priest, if he had not had such a heart for mercifulness ; yea, and no longer could he have been a priest, than he continued to have a heart that can have compassion. The word which we translate, *to have compassion*, is exceeding emphatical ; it is in the original, *μετριοπαθειν*, and signifies, “ to have compassion according to every one’s measure and proportion :” so that Christ is a high-priest, that “ can have compassion according to the measure of every one’s distress ;” and one that considers every circumstance in it, and will accordingly afford his pity and help. As the measure of any man’s need and distress is from sin and misery, accordingly is he affected towards him. And as we have sins of several sizes, accordingly hath he mercies ; whether they be ignorances, or sins of daily incursion, or sins more gross and presumptuous. And therefore let neither of them discourage any from coming to Christ for grace and mercy.

becoming yet more full by filling them : and this is his inheritance also, as that other was. So that Christ hath a double inheritance ; one personal, and due unto him as he is the Son of God, the first moment of his incarnation, ere he had wrought any one work towards our salvation : another acquired, and merited by his having performed that great service and obedience. And certainly, besides the glory of his person, there is the glory of his office, of mediatorship and headship of his church : and though he be never so full of himself, yet he despiseth not this part of his revenue that comes in from below.

This superadded glory and happiness of Christ is enlarged, as his members come to have the purchase of his death more and more laid forth upon them. So that when their sins are pardoned, their hearts more sanctified, and their spirits comforted, then comes he to see the fruit of his labour, and is comforted thereby ; for he is the more glorified by it : yea, he is more rejoiced in this than themselves can be. And this must needs keep up in his heart his care and love unto his children here below, to water and refresh them every moment.

Take an estimate of Christ's heart herein, from those two holy apostles Paul and John. What (next to immediate communion with Christ) was the greatest joy they had in this world, but only the fruit of their ministry in the lives and hearts of such as they had begotten unto Christ ? See how Paul utters himself, 1 Thess. ii. 19, " What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing ? Ye are our glory and our joy," ver. 20. St. John says the like : " I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth," 3 Epist. 4. Now what were Paul and John but instruments by whom they believed and were begotten ? Neither of these were crucified for them ; nor were these children of theirs, " the travail of their souls." How much more unto Christ, (whose interest in our welfare is so infinitely greater) must his members be his joy and his crown ? And to see them to come in to him for grace and mercy, and to walk in

the truth, rejoiceth him much more ; for he thereby “ sees the travail of his soul,” and so “ is satisfied.” Certainly what Solomon says of parents, that “ a wise son maketh a glad father,” is much more true of Christ. Holiness, faithfulness, and comfortableness in our spirits, do make glad the heart of Christ, our everlasting Father. Himself hath said it ; I beseech you believe him, and carry yourselves accordingly. And if part of his joy arise from hence, that we do well, then doubt not of the continuance of his affections ; for love unto himself will continue them towards us, and readiness to receive us when we come for grace and mercy

There is a fifth engagement which his very having our nature, puts upon him for ever. One great end of that personal union of our nature was, that he might be a merciful high-priest. So that as his office lays it as a duty upon him, so his becoming man qualifies him for the performance of it. This we find both to have been a requisite in our high-priest, to qualify him the better for mercy ; and also one of those great ends, which God had in that assumption of our nature. First, a requisite, on purpose to make him more merciful. So it is said, “ Every high-priest, taken from among men, is ordained for men, that so he might be one that can have compassion ;” namely, with a pity that is natural, such as a man bears to one of his own kind. For otherwise the angels would have made greater high-priests than one of our nature ; but then they would not have pitied men, as men do their brethren, of the same kind and nature with them. And secondly, this was also God’s end in ordaining Christ’s assumption of our nature, which that other place holds forth ; “ Verily, he took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham ;” that is, a human nature ; and “ it beloved him to be like us in all things, that he might be a merciful high-priest, (*ὅνα ἐλεημων γινηται*) to the end he might become, or be made merciful.”

But was not the Son of God as merciful, may some say, without the taking of our nature, as afterwards when he

had assumed it? Or is his mercy thereby made larger than of itself it should have been, had he not took the human nature on him? I answer, yes, he was as merciful: but yet hereby is held forth an evident demonstration, (and the greatest that could have been given unto men) of the everlasting continuance of God's mercies unto men: by this that God is for everlasting become a man; and so we are thereby assured, that he will be merciful unto men, who are of his own nature, and that for ever. For as his union with our nature is for everlasting; so thereby is sealed up to us the continuation of these his mercies, to be for everlasting: so that he can, and will no more cease to be merciful unto men, than himself can now cease to be a man.

The greatest mercy was in God; and unto the greatness of these mercies nothing is, or could be added, by the human nature assumed; but rather Christ's manhood had all his largeness of mercy from the Deity: so that had he not had the mercies of God to enlarge his heart towards us, he could never have held out to have for ever been merciful to us. But this human nature assumed, adds a new way of being merciful. It assimilates all these mercies, and makes them the mercies of a man. It makes them human mercies, and so gives a naturalness and kindness unto them to our capacities. So that God doth now in as kindly and as natural a way pity us, who are flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone, as a man pities a man. Thereby to encourage us to come to him, and to be familiar with God, and treat with him for grace and mercy, as a man would do with a man; as knowing, that in that man Christ Jesus, whom we believe in, God dwells, and his mercies work in and through his heart in a human way.

What comfort may this afford unto our faith, that Christ must cease to be a man, if he continue not to be merciful; seeing the very end of his becoming a man, was, that he might be merciful unto us, and that in a way so familiar to our apprehensions, as our own hearts give the experience

of the like, which otherwise, as God, he was not capable of. And add but this bold word to it, though a true one, that he may now as soon cease to be God, as to be man ; the human nature, (after he had once assumed it) being raised up to all the natural rights of the Son of God ; whereof one (and that now made natural unto him) is to continue for ever united. And he may as soon cease to be either, as not to be ready to shew mercy. So that not only the scope of Christ's office, but also the intention of his assuming our nature, doth lay a further engagement upon him, and that more strong than any, or than all of the former.

THE
HEART OF CHRIST IN HEAVEN.
 TOWARDS
SINNERS ON EARTH.

—◆—
 PART III.
 —◆—

HEB. IV. 15.

For we have not an High-Priest who cannot be touched with the Feeling of our Infirmities, but was in all things tempted like as we are, yet without Sin.

SECT. I.

How this is to be understood, that Christ's Heart is touched with the Feeling of our Infirmities.

HAVING thus given full demonstration of the tenderness of Christ's heart unto us now he is in heaven, I come to open these words ; namely, the way and manner of Christ's being affected with pity unto us ; both how it is to be understood by us, and how such affections come to be in his heart ; whereas God, of himself, was so blessed and perfect, that his blessedness could not have been touched with the least feeling of our infirmities ; neither was he in himself capable of any such affection of pity, or

compassion; he is not a man that he should pity or repent. He can indeed do that for us in our distress, which a man that pities us useth to do; but the affections and bowels themselves he is not capable of. Hence, amongst other ends of assuming man's nature, this fell in before God as one, that God might thereby become loving and merciful unto men, as one man is to another: and so, what before was but improperly spoken, and by way of metaphor in the Old Testament, might now be attributed to him in reality; that God might be said to compassionate as a man, and to be "touched with a feeling of our infirmities." And thus, by this happy union of both natures, the language of the Old Testament, uttered only in a figure, becomes fulfilled in the truth of it, as in all other things the shadows of it were in Christ fulfilled. And this is the first step towards understanding what is here said of Christ.

Add this, that God so ordered it, that before Christ should clothe his human nature with that glory he hath in heaven, he should first take it as clothed with all our infirmities, even the same that cleave unto us. And, during that time, God prepared for him all sorts of afflictions, which we ourselves here meet with, and all that time he was acquainted with, and inured unto the like sorrows that we are. And God left him to that infirmity and tenderness of spirit, to take in all distresses as deeply as any one of us, and to exercise the very same affections under all these distresses that we, at any time, find stirring in our hearts: and this God ordered, on purpose to frame his heart (when he should be in glory,) unto such affections as these, spoken of in the text. And this both this text suggests, as also that fore-mentioned place, Heb. ii. 13, "Forasmuch as we are partakers of flesh and blood, (which phrase doth ever note the frailties of man's nature,) he himself took part of the same, that he might be a merciful high-priest:" and then the apostle gives this reason of it, "for in that himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able (having an

heart fitted out of experience, to pity and) to succour them that are tempted." It was not the bare taking of human nature, (if glorious from the first,) that would thus fully have fitted him to be affectionately pitiful out of experience; but his taking our nature clothed with frailties, and living in this world as we: this hath for ever fitted his heart by experience to be in our very hearts and bosoms; and not barely to know the distress, and, as a man, to be affected with human affection; but experimentally remembering the like in himself; and this likewise the text suggests as the way whereby our distresses are let into his heart the more feelingly. "We have not an high-priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

Observe how fully the apostle speaks of Christ's having been tempted here below. First, for the matter, the several sorts of temptations: he says he was tempted, *καὶ ἀ παντα*, "in all points," or things of any kind, where-with we are exercised. Secondly, for the manner, *καὶ ὡς ἡμεῖς*, "like as we are." His heart having been just so affected, so wounded, pierced, and distressed, in all such trials as ours used to be, only without sin. God (on purpose) left all his affections to their full tenderness and quickness of sense of evil. So that Christ took to heart all that befell him, as deeply as might be; he slighted no cross either from God or men, but had and felt the utmost load of it. Yea, his heart was made more tender in all sorts of affections than any of ours, (even as it was in love and pity,) and this made him "a man of sorrows;" and that more than any other man was, or shall be.

Now therefore, we may easily conceive, how our miseries are let into his heart, and come to stir up such kindly affections of compassion in him. As "all power in heaven and earth is committed unto him" as Son of Man, so all knowledge is given him of all things done in heaven and earth, and this as a son of man too: his

knowledge and power being of equal extent. He is the sun as well in respect of knowledge, as of righteousness, and there is nothing hid from his light and beams, which pierce the darkest corners of the hearts of the sons of men: he knows the sores (as Solomon expresseth it,) and distresses of their hearts. As a looking-glass made in the form of a globe, and hung in the midst of a room, takes in all the things done or that are therein at once; so doth the enlarged understanding of Christ's human nature take in the affairs of this world; especially the miseries of his members; and this at once. He remembers his death still, and the suffering of it; and as he remembers it, to put his Father in mind thereof, so he remembers it also to affect his own heart with what we feel. And his memory presenting the impression of the like now afresh unto him, how it was once with him; hence he comes feelingly and experimentally to know how it is now with us. As God said to the Israelites, "Ye know the hearts of strangers, seeing ye were strangers," and therefore doth command them to pity strangers, and to use them well: so may it be said of Christ, that he doth know the hearts of his children in misery, seeing himself was once in misery. He hath not only such affections as are proper to human nature; but, such affections are stirred up in him, from experience of the like by himself once tasted in a frail nature like unto ours. And thus much for the way of letting in all our miseries into Christ's heart now.

SECT. II.

What Manner of Affection this is.

Now concerning this affection in Christ, how far it extends, and how deep it may reach, I think no man in this life can fathom. "If the heart of a king be inscrutable," (as Solomon speaks,) the heart of the King

of kings in glory is much more so. I will not take upon me to "intrude into things I have not seen," but shall endeavour to speak safely, and therefore warily, so far as the light of Scripture and right reason shall warrant my way.

1. It is certain that this affection of sympathy in Christ is not in all things such a kind of affection as was in him in the days of his flesh. Which is clear by what the apostle speaks of him then, Heb. v. 7, "Who, in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears, was heard in that which he feared." Where we see his state here below is called by way of distinction from what it is now, *the days of his flesh*. By *flesh* is not meant the substance of human nature, (for he retains that still;) but the frail quality of subjection to mortality. It is spoken of man's nature, in respect to its being subject to wearing and decay, by outward casualties or inward passions. And, accordingly the apostle instanteth, as in death, so also in such frail passions and affections as did work suffering and a wearing and wasting of his spirits; such as passionate sorrow, joined with strong cries and tears, and fear. Now these days of his flesh being over and past, all such passionate overflowing of sorrow or fear are ceased therewith, and he is now no way capable of them, or subjected to them.

2. Yet, why may it not be affirmed that for substance the same kind of affection that wrought in his whole man, both body and soul, when he was here, works still in him now he is in heaven? (If this position be allayed with due cautions,) for, if for substance the same flesh and blood remain and have their use; then why not the same affections also? And those not stirring only and merely in the soul, but working in the body also, unto which that soul is joined, and so remaining really human affections? But these affections of pity and sympathy, though they move his bowels, and affect his heart as they did here; yet they do not afflict him in the least, or become

a burden unto his spirit. As in this life he was troubled and grieved, (without sin;) so now he compassionates without the least disquietment or perturbation, which yet necessarily accompanied his affections whilst he was here, because of the frailty in which his body and spirits were framed. His perfection destroys not his affections, but only corrects and amends the imperfection of them.

Again, all natural affections that have not in them something unbecoming that glory wherein Christ now is, both schoolmen and other divines acknowledge to be in him. "Those affections which are natural to man, and have no adhesion of sin or shame unto them, but are wholly governed by reason, and are exempt from such effects as may any way hurt either the soul or the body, may well stand with the state of souls in bliss." Now it becomes him to have such human affections as quicken and provoke him to our help; not such as make him a man of sorrows again; but such as make him a man of succours unto us. Because his members are still under sin and misery, therefore it is no way uncomely for him in that state, to have affections suitable to this his relation. If his state of glory had been wholly ordained for his own personal happiness, then indeed there had been no use of such affections. But his relation to us being one part of his glory, therefore they are most proper for him; yea, it were uncomely if he had them not. Neither are they a weakness in him, as so considered; but rather part of his strength (as the apostle calls them,) *Δυναμεις*. And although such affections might in one respect be thought an imperfection; yet in another respect, (namely, his relation to us,) they are his perfection. As he is our head, it is his glory to be sensible of all our miseries; yea, it were his imperfection if he were not.

And let me add this for our comfort, that though all such affections as are any way a burden to his spirit, or noxious to his body, be not now compatible to him: and

though that passionate frailty, which did help him here to pity, and relieve men in misery, be cut off: yet in those workings of affections which he hath now, (which for substance are the same,) there is, (instead of that passionate frailty,) a greater capaciousness, vastness, and also quickness, so to make up a compensation; and no less effectually to quicken him to relieve us, than those former affections did. For it is certain, that as his knowledge was enlarged upon his entering into glory; so his affections of love and pity are enlarged in solidity, strength, and reality. They are not less, but are only made more spiritual. And as Solomon's heart was as large in bounty and royalty as in knowledge; so Christ's affections of love are as large as his knowledge or his power. They are all of a like extent. So far as God's intention to shew mercy doth reach, (and who knows the end of those riches?) So far doth Christ's disposition to bestow it. Eph. iii. 19, "The love of Christ," God-man, "passeth knowledge." It hath not been diminished by his going to heaven. Though God in his nature be more merciful than Christ's human nature; yet the exercise of Christ's affections is as large as God's purposes of mercy. And all those large mercies are become human mercies; the mercies of a man unto men.

Lastly, if these affections of Christ's heart be not suffering affections; yet we may express this of them, that there is less fulness of joy in Christ's heart whilst he sees us in misery, than when we are presented to him free of them all. To clear this, I must recall that distinction of a double fulness of joy, which Christ is ordained to have: the one natural, due unto his person, as in himself considered: the other additional, and arising from the complete happiness of his church. So Eph. i. 23, though, by reason of his personal fulness, he is said to fill all in all; yet in relation to his church, the perfection of this his body's beatitude, called his fulness, is imperfect. And therefore, until he hath filled them with

all happiness, and delivered them from all misery, himself remains under some kind of imperfection; and his affections also, in comparison of what his heart shall have when they receive this fulness.

I shall add some illustration by this similitude (though it hold not in all things :) the spirits of just men departed are said to be perfect, Heb. xii. yet, because they have bodies unto which they have a relation, they in this respect may be said to be imperfect, till these bodies be reunited and glorified with them. Thus in some analogy it stands between Christ personal, and Christ mystically considered. Although Christ in his own person be complete in happiness; yet in relation to his members he is imperfect, and so accordingly hath affections suited unto this his relation: which is no derogation from him at all. The Scripture therefore attributes some affections to him, which have an imperfection joined with them. Thus expectation and desire, (which are but imperfect affections in comparison of that joy which is in the full fruition of what was expected or desired,) are attributed to him, as he is man, until the day of judgment. Thus, Heb x. 12, 13, he is said to sit in heaven, "expecting till his enemies be made his footstool." The destruction of which enemies will add to the manifestative glory of his kingdom. Now as that will add to the fulness of his greatness; so the complete salvation of his members will add to the completeness of his glory. And as the expectation of his enemies' ruin may be said to be an imperfect affection in comparison of the triumph that one day he shall have over them; so his joy which he now hath in his spouse is but imperfect, in comparison of that which shall fill his heart at the great day of marriage.

SECT III.

How Christ's Heart can be feelingly touched with all our Infirmities; seeing he was tempted without Sin.

THERE remains one difficulty to be removed, which cannot but arise in every good heart. "You told us, (may they say,) that by infirmities, sins were meant; and that the apostle's scope was to encourage us against them also, (and they are indeed the greatest discomforts and discouragements of all other.) Now against them this which the apostle here speaks affordeth us but little comfort; seeing Christ knows not how experimentally to pity us therein, for he knew no sin: yea, the apostle himself doth here except it, 'He was tempted in all things, yet without sin.' It may comfort us indeed, that Christ doth pity us in all other infirmities, because he himself was subject to the like; but he never knew what it was to be vexed with sin, (as I am,) and how shall I relieve myself against that, by what the apostle here speaks of him?" I shall endeavour to give some satisfaction in this by these following considerations.

First, The apostle puts in indeed that he was tempted, yet without sin; and it was well for us that he was thus without sin; for otherwise he had not been a fit priest to have saved us: so Heb. vii. 25, "Such an High-Priest became us as was separate from sinners." Yet withal, consider, that he came as near in that point as might be, "He was tempted in all things," though "without sin" on his part; yet tempted to all sin, so far as to be afflicted in those temptations, and to see the misery of those that are tempted. Even as in taking our nature in his birth, he came as near as could be, without being tainted with original sin, by taking the very same matter to have his body made of that all ours are made of; so in the point of actual sin also, he suffered himself to be

tempted as far as might be, and yet to keep himself pure. And because he was tempted by satan unto sin, therefore it is added, "yet without sin:" it is as if he had said, sin never stained him, though he was outwardly tempted to it.

Then, Secondly, to fit him to pity us, he was vexed with the filth and power of sin in others whom he conversed with, more than any of us with sin in ourselves. His righteous soul was vexed with it, as Lot's with the impure conversation of the Sodomites. He "endured the contradictions of sinners" against himself, Heb. xii. 3, "the reproaches of them that reproached thee," that is, God, "fell upon me," Rom. xv. 3, that is, every sin went to his heart. So as in this there is but this difference betwixt him and us, that we are vexed with sin in ourselves; but his heart with sin in others only; yet so as his vexation was the greater, by how much his soul was more righteous than ours.

Yea, and Thirdly, it may be said of Christ whilst he was here below, that in the same sense wherein he bore our sickness, (who yet was never personally tainted with any disease,) in the same sense he bore our sins; namely thus: Christ, when he came to one that was sick, afflicted himself with his sickness, as if it had been his own. Thus, at his raising of Lazarus, it is said that he groaned in spirit: and this seems to be the best interpretation that I have met with, of that difficult place in Matt. viii. 16, 17, where it is said, "He healed all that were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses." In like manner he might bare our sins, being affected therewith as if they had been his own.

And as for the guilt of sin, and the temptations from it, he knows more of that than any one of us. He tasted the bitterness of that more deeply than we can, and of the cup of his Father's wrath for it; and so is able experimentally to pity a heart wounded with it, and

struggling under such temptations. He knows full well the heart of one forsaken by God, seeing himself felt it, when he cried out, "My God! my God! why has thou forsaken me?"

SECT. IV.

The Uses of all.

THAT which hath been said may afford us the strongest encouragements against our sins of any other consideration whatsoever; and may give us the greatest assurance of their being removed from us: for, First, Christ himself suffers, as it were, under them, as his enemies, which therefore he will be sure to remove for his own quiet's sake. His heart would not be quiet, but that he knows they shall be removed. As God says in the prophet, so may Christ say much more, "My bowels are troubled for him, I remember him still," Jer. xxxi. 20. Secondly, your very sins move him to pity more than to anger. Whilst therefore you look on them as your disease, and complain to Christ of them, and cry out, "O miserable man that I am, who shall deliver me?" Christ takes part with you: his anger is turned upon your sin, yea, his pity is increased the more towards you, even as the heart of a father is to a child that hath some loathsome disease. The object of pity is one in misery whom we love; and the greater the misery is, the more is the pity. Now of all miseries, sin is the greatest, and whilst yourselves look at it as such, Christ will look upon it as such also in you. And he, loving your persons, and hating only the sin, his hatred shall all fall upon the sin, to free you of it by its destruction; but his bowels shall be the more drawn out to you.

2. Whatever trial, or temptation, or misery we are under, we may comfort ourselves with this, that Christ was once under the same; which may comfort us by

considering, First, That we are thereby conformed to his example, for he was tempted in all. Secondly, We may look to that particular instance of Christ's sufferings as a meriting cause to procure succour for us under the same. And, Thirdly, His having once borne the like, assures us, that he experimentally knows the distress of such a condition, and so is yet further moved and quickened thereby to help us.

3. As the doctrine delivered is a *comfort*, so it is the greatest motive against sin, and persuasive unto obedience, to consider, that Christ's heart, if it be not afflicted with, (and how far it may suffer with us we know not,) yet for certain hath less joy in us, in proportion as we are less obedient. You know not by sinning what blows you give the heart of Christ. And take this as one incentive to obedience; if he retain the same heart towards you which he had on earth, endeavour you to have the same heart towards him on earth, which you hope to have in heaven.

4. In all miseries and distresses, you know where to have a Friend to help and pity you; one, whose nature, office, interest, relation, all, engage him to your succour. You will find men, even friends, to be often unreasonable, and their bowels in many cases shut up: well, say to them all, "If you will not pity me, I know one that will; one in heaven, whose 'heart is touched with the feeling of all my infirmities,' and I will go and bemoan myself to him. 'Come boldly,' to lay open your complaints, and 'you shall find grace and mercy to help in time of need.'"

END OF VOLUME VI.

