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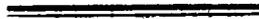


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EXTRACTS

FROM

T H E W O R K S

OF

NATHANAEL CULVERWELL,

Some time Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge.

THE
CHILD'S RETURN.

PROV. xxiii. 26.

My Son, give me thine Heart.

THERE have been such noble and generous spirits in some of the people of God, that they have been frequent in such inquiries as these: "What shall we render the Lord for all his mercies?" And, What shall we return him for all his goodness? And the person in the prophet Micah, though he be of a different temper from these, yet seemeth to be very solicitous and desirous to know what he should bring unto the Lord. For thus you may hear him speak, chap. vi. "Wherewithal shall I appear before the Lord? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams?" &c. No, saith the prophet; "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good, and what doth the Lord require of thee," but that thou shouldst give him thine heart, and that thou shouldst love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength? And therefore he here asks it of thee, "My son, give me thine heart."

These words are spoken by Solomon, but not in his own name. It had been too much for Solomon to have asked it for himself. It doth not become the mouth of

any creature to ask the heart to itself. But Solomon speaks it in the name of wisdom, and so in the name of God himself, the eternal fountain of wisdom. It is he that calls unto the sons of men, and bids them give him their hearts. And though I know that the Hebrew idiom sometimes by *giving the heart*, doth imply no more than the serious consideration and pondering of a thing, the laying it to heart, as we use to speak ; yet I shall take the words here in a fuller sense, as the heart in a special manner is due unto God.

Now as in proverbial speeches there useth to be, so it is here. There is abundance of rich variety, a great deal of treasure locked up in a few words ; we will open some of them to you. And,

I. For the relation, *My son*. Five things are very considerable.

1. He speaks here to a *son*, and not to a *stranger*. No wonder that strangers give not the heart unto God ; no wonder that a pagan gives not the heart unto God. Such as are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of grace. Such as are at a great distance from him ; nay, that live without God in the world ; such as lie like the dry heath, and the barren wilderness, the word of the kingdom never dropped upon them. But thou art a son in near relation to him : he reveals his mind to thee ; he manifests, and displays himself to thee ; he makes his goodness pass before thee. Thou hast the continual droppings of the word upon thee ; his prophets are sent to thee early and late ; thou hast the happy sunshine of his presence with thee, enough to warm and soften a stony heart ; and out of such stones to raise up children unto Abraham. Though an Indian, though an American do not give the heart unto God ; yet a Christian should. Though a stranger do not give him the heart ; yet a son should.

2. A *son*, and not an *enemy*. God doth not expect the hearts of enemies ; such as are in open hostility, and opposition against him ; such as are said to be haters of

him, and hated by him ; such as bid him “ depart from them, for they do not desire the knowledge of his ways :” he doth not look for the hearts of these. He doth, indeed, many times turn the heart of an enemy, meet the heart of a Saul, while he is breathing out slaughters against the church ; but whilst he is in a state of enmity, he doth not look for the heart from them. He will not accept of a traitor's heart. But thou art reconciled to him, and so far from being an enemy, that thou art a son. Thou hast all expressions of love from him ; and thine heart is expected by him, and it will be accepted of him. Though an enemy do not give the heart unto God, yet a son should.

3. A *son*, and not a *slave*. A slave doth a great deal of work and drudgery ; but he doth not give the heart all the while. He works out of fear, he looks upon it as a task, as a burden ; he watches an opportunity for shaking off the yoke. But religion doth not come thus to enslave men, but to enlarge them, to ennoble them ; it comes to beat off the chains and fetters, to beat open the prison doors ; it brings a perpetual jubilee, a perpetual triumph along with it. Religion floweth out of filial principles : *My son*, hear my words ; and *my son*, give me thine heart. If the *Son* make you free, why then you are free indeed ; and if you be free like *sons*, why then you are free indeed. The gospel brings with it a filial liberty, a filial assurance. An evangelical yoke is a soft and pleasant yoke ; a Saviour's burden is *onus alarum*, it does no more load the soul, than wings do a bird, which advance and promote its flight toward heaven. In sin there is nothing but slavery ; in religion there is perfect liberty. Though a slave do not give the heart unto God, yet a son should.

4. A son : thou wast not always so. There was a time when ye were sons of wrath, as well as others ; children of disobedience, as well as others. Adopted sons were not always sons ; now the sons of God are sons by adoption. And let it suffice you, saith the apostle, that in

those former times of your ignorance, of your folly and vanity, you gave your hearts unto other objects ; but now you are come into a state of son-ship, now that ye have this great and honourable gospel-privilege, to be called sons of God ; now withdraw your hearts from former objects. Let them not be bestowed upon former vanities, do not bebase them so much ; fix them only upon your God. Though once thou didst not give thy heart unto God, yet now thou art a son, thou shouldst.

5. A son ; and so in way of mutual affection, thou art to give the heart unto him. He hath given thee his love, and his heart, and his bowels are towards thee ; and wilt not thou return some affection to him again ? Is there the love of a father in him, and shall not there be the obedience of a son in thee ? Is there a flame in him, and is there no spark in thee ? Is there no reflecting of a sun-beam ? Is there no repairing of the streams into the ocean ? As Bathsheba speaks affectionately to her son Solomon : “ What my son ? and what the son of my womb ? and what the son of my vows ? Wilt thou give thy strength unto women ? ” So here. What my son ? and what the son of my loves ? and what the son of my hopes ? Wilt thou give thine heart unto another ? Wilt thou give thy strength unto a creature ? *και ου τεκνον* ; wilt thou thus dishonour and provoke thy God ? If love will not draw thee, what will ? And if a preventing love will not prevail upon thee, what love will ? And if God have not the hearts of sons, where shall he have any hearts to praise him ? Who will admire him, and adore him, if his sons will not ? And then he hath given thee his only Son ; he hath given thee a Saviour, that hath given his heart to thee, that hath given his life for thee, that had his heart pierced through for thy sake ; and is there no attractive power in all this ? That is the fifth thing, thou art a son, and so in way of gratitude and mutual affection, thou art to give thine heart to him.

II. The manner of yielding the heart unto God, is here expressed by way of *giving* ; which includes several things in it

1. Give it cheerfully. God loves a cheerful giver. Religion should be full of alacrity; it doth not come to extort the heart, to hale men to obedience, but to lead them by a sweet and easy way. It doth not storm the castle, but hath it fairly yielded up upon terms of agreement. The work of grace in conversion doth indeed overpower the hearts of men; but it is by making them willing, not by drawing them whilst they are unwilling; but it takes away that reluctancy that is in the hearts of men, and thus compels them to come in. What freer than a gift? Now the heart it is that is to be given unto God. The will hath never more freedom, than when it moves towards God. And those heavenly duties and spiritual performances are to flow freely from the soul, like those voluntary drops that come sweet from the honey-comb of their own accord, without any pressing, without any crushing at all. They are only the dregs of obedience that come forth with squeezing and wringing. The better any thing is, the more freely doth it diffuse itself. There should be no need now of binding the sacrifice with cords unto the altar, unless it be with the cords of love; those soft and silken knots of affection. Cheerfulness puts a lustre upon religion, and makes it amiable, even in the eyes of the world. And truly I cannot tell how any one can give the heart to God, unless he serve him with alacrity.

2. Give it presently. Give it him now, he now calls for it. Now that it is called "to-day, harden not your hearts." Give him a tender heart. Now give thine heart to be framed and fashioned by him; to be stamped and sealed by him. Give him the first-fruits of thy time, the first-fruits of thy strength: he is the Alpha, the first of beings; and therefore whatsoever hath any priority and superiority belongs to him. And truly grace is very sweet and pleasant in the bud. How pleasant is it to see a virgin-light, a morning-light of instruction shining out upon the soul, and in some measure preparing and pre-disposing the heart for the ways of God. O this is an

happy prejudice, an early prepossession of the soul. And this is that which the wise man here intends, when he speaks to a son, to one of tender age. And do but consider it; canst thou give thy heart unto God too soon? Why shouldst thou defer thine own welfare? or is it comely then to offer thine heart unto God, when thou canst give it to none else? Give it presently.

3. Give it, do not lend it only. In giving, there is an alteration of the propriety, which is not in lending. When thou hast given thine heart unto God, thou art no longer thine own. There are some that will lend their hearts unto God, upon some special occasions, for an hour at a sermon, for a little while in prayer; lend it him upon a Lord's day, upon a day of humiliation, and then call for the heart again, and bestow it upon their lusts. But so great a majesty will not borrow of creatures; he will not receive hearts, unless they be wholly given to him.

4. Give it, do not sell it. It is very sordid and odious to be hirelings in religion. They sell their hearts unto God, that serve him only for by-ends. This is a gift with a hook in it; they give somewhat, that they may catch more. They sell their hearts unto God for some temporal ends. Hence it is, that the church hath so many friends in prosperous days. There are many that sell their hearts unto God. You know in the gospel there were some that followed Christ for the loaves, and not for the miracles. There are some that love the additional in religion, more than the principals. Victories are the only arguments to convince some of the rightness of a cause. Esteem of worldly advantages makes many men take a little tincture of religion, who otherwise would not have so much as a shew of it. Whereas religion should be loved for her beauty, and not for her dowry. God should be loved for those excellencies that are in himself; for those treasures of goodness and wisdom that are stored up in his own glorious essence. Thou shouldst love him, though he did not love thee again. Why shouldst not thou love a thing

truly amiable, though thou hast no benefit by it? For thy happiness is but an inferior thing, and is not to have so much of thine heart as he is to have. Thou art only to love thyself, as thou art somewhat of him; thou art to love heaven, as the enjoyment of him; thou art to love the gospel, as the great expression of his love, and all the promises of the right hand, and the left, as the various manifestations of his goodness. Thou art first to give thine heart unto thy God, and then to other things in such measure as they are subordinate to him.

5. Give thine heart, do not keep it to thyself. Wouldst thou be trusted with thine own heart? Wouldst thou be left to thine own deceitful spirit? The best upon earth may very well put up that prayer; "Lord, deliver me from myself!" Lay up thine heart in the hand of a Saviour. Leave it there as a sacred *depositum*. Canst thou lay up thy jewel in a safer cabinet? Let him keep thine heart by his mighty power through faith unto salvation.

6. Give it. God is pleased to call that a gift, which is indeed a debt. All thou art, canst, and hast, is due to him, yet that thy heart may come in a way of freeness, and that he may shew thee how it is accepted by him; he calls it a gift, such a gift as does enrich the giver, not the receiver. It is an honour to thee, it is no benefit to him: his glory doth not shine with borrowed beams. It is neither in the power of a creature to eclipse the brightness of his crown, nor to add one spark to it. If thou doest ill, what hurt hath he by it? Or, if thou doest well, what good flows unto him; any otherwise than as he hath joined his own glory and the welfare of his people together? Thy goodness may profit thyself, and it may extend to men like thyself, but it can make no additions to that which is already perfect. Thy heart is due to him, and it is thine honour that thou mayst give it him.

III. To whom the heart must be given.

1. Not to any created being. No creature can be a centre for the heart to fix in. The heart was not made

for any creature, nor proportioned to it. "Wilt thou set thy heart upon that which is not?" Wilt thou give thine heart to vanity and vexation? Wilt thou set thine heart upon that which hath wings, and can fly away when it listeth? Riches have wings; honours and pleasures have wings, all creature comforts have wings, and can fly away when they please. And therefore,

2. Give not thine heart to the world. Give it not to the smiles and blandishments of the world. Let it not be broken with the frowns and injuries of the world. "Let not your hearts be troubled," saith Christ, "for I have overcome the world." And be not over careful for the things of the world; *μη μεριμνατε*, a Pythagorean would render it, *Cor ne edite : consume not your heart.*

3. Give it not to satan. The devil, that old serpent, would fain be winding and insinuating into hearts; he seeks them, and desires, and would fain by any means obtain them; and we see how many give their hearts unto him. But what, wilt thou give thy darling to the lion? Wilt thou give thy turtle as a prey to the devourer? Wilt thou give thine heart to the destroyer?

4. Give it not to sin. Give it not to a Delilah. Give not thine heart to that which will weaken it; to that which will wound it, to that which will sting and disquiet it. O! keep it calm and serene, keep it pure and unspotted, keep it in its proper freedom and enlargement.

IV. We come to consider the gift itself, what it is that is to be given unto God: the heart.

1. Not thine outward man only, not thy body only. God dwells not so much in these temples made with hands, as in broken and contrite spirits. For he himself is a Spirit, and the Father of spirits, and he will be served in spirit and in truth. He does not ask for a shell, but for a kernel: he does not ask for a casket, but for a jewel. Give him the kernel, give him the jewel, give him thine heart. No question but the body also is to be presented to him, but it is no otherwise accepted of him than as it is animated and enlivened by an obedient heart.

For how else can it be a reasonable service, as the apostle there calls it? Give me thine heart; (1.) Not thine ear only, though it be very commendable to incline an ear unto wisdom, and to receive the gracious words that flow from its mouth; yet the ear is only to be a gate and entrance to let it into the heart; and to hear, in Scripture language, is to obey. The word of God must not hang like a jewel only in the ear, but it must be cabined, and locked up in the heart as its safest repository. (2.) Not thy tongue only; religion is not only to warm thy mouth, but it is to melt thy heart. It does indeed season the discourse, so that savoury words come out of such a mouth. It does set a watch before the lips, and bridle that same unruly evil; but can you think that it reacheth no farther than thus? Can you think that religion dwells here? Is it only a lip-labour, only a matter of discourse? Nay, are there not many that draw near unto God with their lips, and yet their hearts are far from him? (3.) Not thine head only: religion is not a mere notion, it does not consist only in speculatives. You see many times that men of the vastest intellectuals are most defective in practicals. Who of the heads of the world believed in Christ? Who of the scribes and pharisees believed in him? There may be precious pearly truths in a venomous head. And indeed the head can never be given unto God, till the heart be given him also.

2. The heart; not appearances only. Not a surface, not a colour, not a shadow only; but a reality. And this is the weakness of superstition, it gives him only a compliment, a ceremony. They tell him they are his servants; what more ordinary compliment in the mouths of men? They give him outward adoration; they bow the knee to Christ, and so did they that crucified him. What do you do more than they? And this is the vanity of Popery, it does not give God the heart. That spiritual Jezebel gives him only a painted face, she does not give him the heart. She is clothed in scarlet, but she embraces a dunghill. She puts on an outward bravery, but

within there is nothing but rottenness. But the spouse of Christ is all glorious within. When the shadows were multiplied, God called for the heart then, in the times of the law ; much more now in the times of the gospel.

3. The heart, the whole heart. Not a piece of it, not a corner of it only. The true mother would not have the child divided. God indeed loves a broken and a contrite heart ; but he will not accept of a divided heart. This is that royal law, the great commandment ; “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.” But the devil observes the other rule ; *Divide and govern*. He would seem to be very moderate, to be content with a piece of the heart only ; but it is because he knows by this means he shall have all. For God will not have any of it unless he have it entire. And this is one great happiness that comes by religion ; the heart is thus united, and fixed upon one supreme object. Lusts divide the heart, and distract it. The soul does, as it were, bite at two baits at once, and is caught with two several hooks ; this pulls that way, and that pulls another way. Pride calls for this thing, but covetousness forbids it ; which must needs breed a great confusion and tumult in the soul. But when the heart is given unto God, and yields to his sceptre, then other lords shall no longer rule over it. When a Saviour comes into the soul, the winds, and the storms, and the waves obey him.

4. Give thine heart ; that is, all the powers and faculties of thy soul. Give him thine understanding ; set open the windows of thy soul, for the entertaining of such light as shines from heaven. Give thine understanding to be informed by him, to be captivated by him. Give it as wax to the seal, to receive such stamps and impressions as he is pleased to put upon it. Give him thy will, that which glories so much in its own liberty, let it be subject to him. Give him thine affections, those ebbings and flowings of the heart. Let thy joy be in him, let thy trust and confidence be on him, “let all that is within thee, bless his holy name.”

And thus we have run over the words in a way of explication, and we shall give you the sum of all in one observation,—That the heart is to be consecrated unto God.

I. Because it is due to him. Look upon the heart, see whose image and superscription it hath ; if the image of God be upon it, (as sure you cannot but see that, though it be much defaced,) “ Give then unto God the things that are God’s.” If thou wilt not give men their due, yet sure thou wilt not withhold from him his due. It is due unto him upon a fourfold account. 1. As he is the maker of hearts ; the creator of them. All the strength of created beings is due to him ; and the nobler any being is, the more strongly it is engaged to him, for it hath received the more from him. Now the heart of man is a chief piece of God’s workmanship. It is due to him, as it was made by him, and it was made upon this condition, that it should return to him. 2. As he is the Lord and Ruler of hearts ; his throne is in the hearts of men, and it is he only that has dominion and sovereignty over them. It is the great usurpation of popery, that it would tyrannize over the hearts of men. That proud antichrist would sit in the temple of God ; but there is none lord of the conscience but God alone. And he can frame them, and fashion them, and dispose of them as he pleaseth. He can rule those hearts that are most large, and unlimited, and unrestrained. The hearts of princes he can wind them which way he will, even as the rivers of waters. 3. As he is the Judge and Searcher of hearts. We only can see the outward surface and appearance of things ; but God sees into the depth and bottom of things. We look only to the fruit and branches, but he searcheth to the root and foundation. 4. As he is the Spouse of the heart. It is the prophet Hosea’s expression, “ I have espoused thee to myself in mercy, and goodness, and faithfulness ;” so that is an adulterous heart that now goes after creatures. “ Ye adulterers, (says the apostle) know ye not that the love of the world is enmity against God ?”

And the apostle speaks of presenting virgin hearts unto Christ.

II. It is very pleasing and acceptable to him. For, 1. He asks it of thee. He knocks at the door, he woos thine heart, and invites it to himself; and what is the whole mind of the gospel, but to draw hearts unto God with all arguments of love? 2. It is all thou canst give him. Now, saith the apostle, he accepts according to what a man hath. Thou thus castest all thou hast into the treasury; and if thou hadst more, thou wouldst give it him. 3. It is a comprehensive gift, and contains many other things in it. As the apostle says, "He having given thee his Son, how shall he not with him give thee all things also?" This is the spring of motion, that sets the wheels on working. When this royal fort is taken, all the rest will be yielded up presently. When the "heart indites a good matter," then the "tongue will be like the pen of a ready writer;" then thy glory will awake; thy tongue will praise his name, and encourage others in his ways; then thy bowels will be enlarged, and thy hands open to the necessity of the saints; then there will be a covenant made with the eyes, and a watch set before the door of thy lips; then thy feet will run to the place where his honour dwelleth, and all the members of the body will become instruments of righteousness unto holiness. Which shews the vanity of those ignorant ones, who thank God, though they cannot express themselves, yet their hearts are as good as the best; though there be not one beam of light, nor one spark of love in them; whereas a good heart never wanted for some real expression. They that can shew a good heart no otherwise than by saying they have a good one, desire us not to believe them.

They that offered up sacrifices were wont to judge of them most according to the inwards, and God doth thus judge of performances. For, (1.) The least performances, if the heart accompany them, are accepted by him. The Persian monarch was famous for accepting a little water

from the hand of a loving subject. And doth not Christ accept of the same? "He that shall give a cup of cold water to a disciple, in the name of a disciple, shall not lose his reward." What though thou canst not bring costly sacrifices? Bring thy turtle-doves and young pigeons; and these shall be accepted by him. Thou hast no gold, nor jewels; thou canst not bring any silk and purple to the tabernacle; yet bring thy goat's hair, and badger's skins, and these shall be welcome to him. Thou canst not bring cedars to the temple, thou canst not polish, and carve, and guild the temple; well, but canst thou be any ways serviceable to it? Even that shall be rewarded by him. A few broken sighs, if they arise from a broken heart, are very potent and rhetorical. A few tears, if they flow from this fountain, are presently bottled up; he puts your tears in his bottle.

(2.) God accepts of your intentions, if they flow from a pure heart, though they be blasted in the bud, though they never come to the birth.

God judgeth of the soul's complexion by those inward productions, though men judge only by outward expressions. That two-edged sword of God doth thus pierce to the marrow, to the very intentions of the heart. The law of God reacheth intentions, as our Saviour in those heavenly sermons of his upon the mount doth spiritualize it. And God doth in an especial manner punish naked intentions, because men cannot punish them.

(3.) When the heart is upright: though there be some irregularities, yet they are passed by. No doubt that Abraham's faith staggered, when he was put to an equivocation, and we cannot easily excuse Jacob's supplantings, and Rebekah's deceits. There was so much frailty and imperfection in all these, as did plainly spot and blemish them; and yet, the heart being right, God accepted of that, and covered the rest with his pardoning love.

(4.) Hence it is, that God looks not to the outward lump and heap of performances, but looks to the manner

of them, and the spirit from whence they come. This might spare many a papist his beads, which he thinks so necessary for the numbering of his prayers.

The glimmering light of nature taught the heathen thus much, that the gods did not expect any benefit from them, but only a grateful acknowledgment. And this is the reason they give, why they consecrated to their gods barren trees, which indeed were green and flourishing, but brought forth no fruit at all, as the laurel to Apollo; the ivy to Bacchus; the myrtle to Venus; the oak to Jupiter; the pine to Neptune; the poplar to Hercules; and so in many of the rest. And they will tell you, that the gods did not look for any fruit from their worshippers, but looked for homage, obedience, and thankfulness. And it is that which ingenuity teacheth men, not to look to the value of a gift; but to the affection of him that gives it. Away then with those vain ones, that think to bribe heaven with their gifts, and to stop the mouth of justice with their performances. All duties and performances are but to comment and paraphrase upon the heart. In prayer, God expects a flaming heart; in hearing of the word, he looks for a melted heart; in fasting, rend your hearts, and not your clothes; in thanksgiving, he listens to hear whether ye make melody in your hearts. Religion doth spiritualize performances, and doth shell them, and take the kernel; it doth extract the spirits and quintessence of them.

(5.) Hence it is, that, without this, the most pompous performances are rejected. A sacrifice without an heart is an abomination to him. "I hate your burnt-offerings, my soul loathes your solemn assemblies; bring me no more vain oblations:" a corrupt heart soils every ordinance, it stains and discolours every duty, it envenoms every mercy. If such a one pray, it is esteemed howling; if he mourn, it is hanging down the head like a bulrush; if he sacrifice, it is cutting off a dog's neck; if he rejoice, it is but a blaze, a crackling of thorns under the pot.

(6.) In heaven, when outward performances shall vanish, yet then God shall have thine heart, and thou shalt have his face; the well-beloved shall be thine, and thou shalt be his. When preaching shall cease, and prayer shall cease, when sacraments shall disappear, yet then thy naked heart shall be offered unto God; it shall twine about the chiefest good, and by a near and immediate union, shall enjoy it for ever.

III. Thou must give thy heart to God, because thou hast promised it him. Remember that primitive and original vow in baptism. God indeed may take possession of thy heart, if he please; for he hath the key of all hearts; he hath the key of an infant's heart, and can open it if he please. But, however, there is an engagement upon thee by this to give him thine heart. And sure there are few, but some time or other have given him several other promises of their hearts. Didst thou never offer thine heart unto him in a storm? In a judgment? In a sickness? Well then, remember that God takes no pleasure in fools, that make vows and break them. His promises to thee are sure, why should thine be deceitful?

IV. Give thine heart unto him, that he may make it better. It may be thou hast a flinty heart, give it to him, and he will melt it and dissolve it. It may be thou hast a barren and unprofitable heart; give it to him, and he will make it fruitful; he will make it increase and multiply. It may be thou hast an unquiet and discomposed heart; give it him, and he will tune it. It may be thou hast a narrow and contracted heart; give it to him, and he will enlarge it. It may be thou hast a drossy and corrupt heart, give it to him, and he will purify and refine it.

V. Give it him, that he may make it happy, that he may fill it with his love, that he may satisfy it with himself, that he may seal it with his Spirit. It hath toiled already sufficiently, and wearied itself among vanities; it hath gone from flower to flower, and can extract

nothing but bitterness; and still desire opens its wide mouth, and cries aloud, Give, give. Go then to the fountain, to the ocean, and there fill thyself. Dost thou think thou canst suck any sweetness from the breast of a creature? No, but go to the fulness of a Deity, and then stretch thy desires to the utmost compass; widen thine heart as much as thou canst, yet there will be enough to make it run over with happiness.

That is the first thing, why the heart must be given to God. We will consider in the next place, when the heart may be said to be given to him.

(1.) When thou aetest out of a principle of love toward him. What is love, but a giving of the heart? As Delilah speaks to Sampson, "How canst thou say thou lovest me, when thine heart is not with me?" Where there is mutual love, there is a mutual exchange of hearts. God loves himself in thee, and thou findest thyself in God. His thoughts are for thy welfare, and thy thoughts are for his glory. In love there is a mixing and blinding of beings; it knits and weaves souls together.

(2.) Then thine heart is given unto God, when thou dost act out of sincerity, when thou art an Israelite without guile. This is that evangelical allowance, which is put into the balance of the sanctuary, so that a Christian is not found too light. Those spots which thou findest in thine own heart, thou must wash them out in the blood of the Lamb; thou must whiten thine heart in that fountain, which is "set open for the house of David, and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." If thou be sincere, and cordial, and faithful with God, then thine heart is given to him.

(3.) Then thou dost give thine heart unto God, when thou dost fully comply with him in those glorious ends, in those great interests and designs which he doth propound to himself; when thou dost wholly resign up thyself unto him, and sweetly close with his Providence, though never so mysterious and unsearchable; when thou dost pluck out thy right eye for him, and cut off

thy right hand for him ; when thou thinkest not thy life too dear for him.

(4.) Then thou dost give thine heart unto God, when thou dost serve him with vigour. Lukewarm Laodicea could not give the heart unto Christ. When Ephesus falls from her first love, her heart is unbended presently, performances come dropping from her in a weak and languishing manner. Whereas spiritual productions should be strong and masculine, springing and rushing forth with a sacred violence, as God's love comes streaming to thee with an irresistible fulness. Thine heart should boil up a good matter, as the Psalmist speaks. But some are so cold and flat in performances, that you would wonder where the heart was all the while; and to be sure, wherever it was, it was an heart of stone, a Nabal's heart, an heart sunk within them. Popery lays much stress upon the intention of the priest, but the people, in the mean time, may be as remiss as they please. But if they had but a Bible, or such a one as they could understand, they might turn to that place; "Cursed is every one that doth the work of the Lord negligently." Offer such blind and lame sacrifices, offer them to thy prince, offer such imperfect obedience to the pope; see whether he will accept it.

And thus we have seen why the heart must be given unto God, and when it is given to him. We will now shut up all in a word of application.

1. See then how powerful religion is, it commands the heart, it seizeth upon the vitals. Morality comes with a pruning knife, and cuts off sproutings; but religion lays the axe to the root of the tree. Morality looks that the skin of the apple be fair; but religion searcheth to the very core. Morality chides outward exorbitancies; but religion checks secret inclinations. Or at the best in morality there is but a polishing, a gilding, a carving of the heart; but in religion there is a new framing, a new modelling; nay, a new creating. That is the power of godliness; it changeth the heart.

2. See also the odiousness of an hypocrite. He doth not give God the heart; and yet will give any thing else; and will seem to give that too. Treachery and perfidiousness is that which is so much detested by men, as that which cuts the sinews of human society. And though there be some that will practise it, yet there are scarce any that will in express terms patronize it. Now as perfidiousness hinders commerce and intercourse with men, so hypocrisy must needs hinder communion with God. Can you think that a painted sepulchre is a fit place for his Spirit to dwell in? This is that which Christ doth so much upbraid: thou blind pharisee, thou that never reflectest upon thine own heart, thou that keepest a continual poring on the outside only, and lookest to the painting, and whitening, and daubing of that; dost thou think thus to please the pure, and bright, and piercing eye of Omniscience? Thou hast not the black skin of the Ethiopian; thou hast not those eminent spots of the leopard; but thou hast the plague of the heart, thou hast the leprosy within, and is not that more deadly and dangerous? The heart of a publican is far whiter than thine.

3. Yet see the security of a weak Christian; he hath an heart as well as others, and he hath given that to his God. He hath a vital principle, an immortal principle within him. What though the sturdy oaks of Bashan be broken? What though the stately cedars of Lebanon fall? What though the green bay-trees vanish and disappear? What though men of vast abilities, of rare accomplishments, of fair flourishes in religion; what though these draw back from God? Yet a weak vine may stand all this while leaning upon his Beloved, laden with fruit, cheering both God and men; a bruised reed may last all this while. The smoking flax may be kindled into so pure a flame, as that it may outshine a blazing professor. A worm may consume Jonah's gourd, but a whale shall not consume Jonah himself. Outward profession may wither, but nothing shall separate a sincere soul from his God.

4. Such as have not yet given their hearts unto God, let them withhold them no longer. Put up thy weak desires, and pray him to give thee such an heart as may return itself to him. Doth God ask thine heart of thee, and dost thou refuse to give it him? What dost thou ask of him that he denies thee, if it be good for thee? and do but think how easily thou givest thine heart unto any other but thy God. When the world knocks, when satan knocks, thou openest presently; nay, it may be before they knock; and must a Saviour only be excluded? Is there no rhetoric in the love of Christ? Is there nothing that can draw thine heart to him? Are all the cords of love too weak? Dost thou break them all? Will not the influences of the gospel soften thine heart? Will not the blood of a Saviour dissolve it? Will not importunate wooings and beseechings move thee? Out of what rock wert thou hewn, O obdurate soul? Doth a greater than Moses smite the rock, and will it not gush out with water? Dost thou say, thou canst not give it to him? This answer is ready for thee; but, if thou hadst a will to give it him, thou wouldst have a power to give it him too. However, make some weak endeavours; when he moves thee, then offer it to him as well as thou canst, though but with a weak, though but with a trembling hand, and his hand will meet thine, and will presently take it of thee.

5. Such as have given their hearts unto God, have matter of praise and thankfulness. Bless thy God that would receive such a vain and contemptible thing as thine heart was, when first thou gavest it to him. Was it not infinite love to espouse such an heart to himself; to beautify and enrich it, and prepare it for his love; to guide it, and teach it, and rule it; to steep it in all precious sweetness; to dilate it, that it might be more capable of his love; to set a guard about it, and to keep it against the subtilty and vigilancy, the malice and fury of spiritual enemies? How canst thou enough admire the greatness of this his goodness?

THE
PANTING SOUL.

PSALM XLII. 1.

As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.

HERE is one of the sweet strains of David's harp ; one of those bright and sparkling expressions which not only carry a majesty with them, but even include a Deity : one of those holy and strong ejaculations with which he was wont (that I may allude to that of the prophet Isaiah,) to take his soul (that polished shaft,) out of the quiver of the body, and to dart it up to heaven, the place of his treasure and hope, and the dwelling-place of his God. And truly every psalm may well say, as the Psalmist himself says, in the 139th psalm, *I am admirably made, I am curiously wrought* : רִקְמָתִי, so it is in the original ; I am wrought with a needle. There is a spiritual embroidery, a most rare and sacred needle-work in every psalm. They are all wrought by the finger of the Spirit ; and they are like the king's daughter in the 45th psalm, " Their clothing is of wrought gold, their raiment of needle-work, and they are all glorious within." We doubt not but that there is a most divine emphasis in 1

Scripture eloquence, and every jot and tittle in holy writ. As it has eternity stamped upon it, so it has a majesty shining in it. But yet never did heavenly eloquence ride in more solemn and triumphant pomp, than in this Book of Psalms. As if the voice had been here contrary to that in other triumphs, *Remember thou art immortal*. And as for that profane politician, that said he found more sweetness in Pindar's Odes, than in David's Psalms; he might as well have said, (if he had pleased,) that he found more fragrancy in noisome weeds, than in the rose of Sharon, or lily of the vallies; that he found more sweetness in a dunghill, than in a garden of spices, than in an Eden, even a garden of God. Yet the word in the original is appropriated to the panting hart, and may seem to be borrowed from that very noise which it makes in its braying after the water-brooks. Now as for the hart, it is but a melancholy timorous creature at the best, a panting creature. But that which the text chiefly aims at, is the dryness of temper in the hart, which, at some times of the year, (in Autumn chiefly,) is very excessive, especially in those hot and dry countries, and being usually in the desert, doth more discover itself by reason of the scarcity of waters there. It is likely here in the text, it is meant of the hart's panting, when it is chased by the hunter, for the quenching of its thirst, as the following words clearly intimate, "My soul is athirst," &c. *Hæret lateri lethalis arundo*, the arrows of the pursuer stick fast in it, and the venom thereof drinks up its spirits. Why now water-brooks can hardly quench its thirst; with behemoth, in Job, it can drink up rivers, and sup up the ocean at a draught; there is a combustion in its bowels, nothing but fire, fire; nature is on fire, and would fain be quenched, and those little relics of strength that it has, it spends in panting after the streams of water. Thus does the hart pant after the water-brooks, and thus did David's soul; thus does every devout soul pant after the living God; and thus ardently. Religion is no matter of indifferency, as vain

man would imagine. It requires the very flower and vigour of the spirit, the strength and sinews of the soul, the prime and top of the affections. It is no empty wish nor languishing endeavour, no still-born prayer nor abortive resolution will serve the turn. He that is but almost a Christian, shall but almost be saved, and that will be the very emphasis of damnation, to have been within a step of heaven. But there is a grace, a panting grace, we know the name of it, and that is all; it is called zeal, a flaming edge of affection, and the ruddy complexion of the soul; which argues it sound, and shews it lovely. This is that which makes a Christian an holy spark, a son of the coal, even of the burning coal, that was fetched from the altar. Nay, we need not go so low as this, a zealous Christian is an incarnate seraph, what would I say more? He is just of his Saviour's complexion, "white and ruddy, the fairest of ten thousand." This was that which set a lustre upon those shining rubies that adorned the noble army of martyrs. Their souls were athirst even for the living God; they entered into heaven panting, and there they rest themselves to all eternity. And yet there are a generation in the world that are all for a competency in goodness, and are afraid of too much holiness. A Laodicean temper goes under the name of moderation, and a reeling neutrality is styled prudence and discretion. What needs this breathing and panting? this forwardness and eagerness? this vehemency and violence in the way of religion? And they look upon such expressions of affection as this in the text, as upon rhetorical flourishes. Jeremiah surely was strangely melancholy when he wished his head a fountain, that he might weep day and night; and it was more folly in the spouse in the Canticles to be sick of love. Thus does the serpent hiss at the ways of godliness, and thus does the natural man argue. But go, vain man, look upon the panting hart, wonder why it breathes so strongly after the streams of water; bid it pant moderately after the water-brooks, and when thy

empty breath can abate its fervency, then, and not till then, nay, hardly then, wonder at the strength of a Christian's desire after communion with his God. For "as the hart pants after the water-brooks, so panteth his soul after his God," so strongly.

2. "So panteth my soul after thee, O God!" so unsatisfiably: and that in a double sense. 1. It is satisfied with nothing else. 2. It is not satisfied with a little of this.

1. Nothing can still the weary and thirsty hart but the streams of water, and nothing can content the panting soul but the fruition of his God: God rested not till he made man, and man never rests till he enjoys God. He has a soul within him of a vast capacity, and nothing can fill it to the brim, but he that is fulness itself.

It is a voice put into every one's mouth, "Who will shew us any good?" Indeed it is the errand for which we are sent into the world, to find out happiness, and yet we seek it so as if we were loath to find it. And happiness may well have that inscription, which Plutareh tells us was upon the temple of Isis, "No man hath taken off my veil." We knock at every creature's door, but there is nothing within, no filling entertainment for the soul; no creature can bid it welcome. Would you know what they all amount to? If you will believe Solomon's reckoning, the very sum total is, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity and vexation of spirit." Vexation is the very quintessence of the creature, and all that can possibly be extracted out of it. Now if vanity can satisfy, or if vexation can give content, if you can gather grapes off thorns, or figs off thistles, go on to dote upon the creatures, and to be enamoured with a shadow of perishing beauty. The prophet tells us, all the creatures are but as the drop of a bucket; when the water is emptied out of a bucket, perhaps a drop stays still behind, a weak drop, which recollecting all its forces, yet has not strength to fall. And will such a drop, (think you,) satisfy a panting hart? The creatures are weighed in

the balance of the sanctuary, and they are found to be lighter than the dust of the balance, and this will inflame the thirst, rather than quench it. To speak in the epigrammatist's language, they are mere nothing. And surely man is the vainest of all the rest, the index of all the volumes of vanity; that by sin has subjected the creatures unto the bondage under which they groan, and wait to be delivered, and yet dreams of distilling I know not what felicity out of them. And as for that supposed excellency which we fancy in the creatures, it is only to be found in God himself. Surely that is not a panting soul, that forsakes the fountain of living waters, and digs to itself broken and empty cisterns, that will hold no water. The hart pants unsatisfiably after the water-brooks, and the soul as unsatisfiably after communion with its God; is satisfied with nothing else. But

2. It is not satisfied with a little of this; not a drop nor a taste will suffice the thirsty hart; it does not come like a dog to the Nile, a lap and away; a drop can no more quench its thirst, than it could cool Dives's tongue, though indeed he begged for no more. That short refreshment, which is shut up in a drop, does but bespeak a stronger panting after somewhat more full and satisfactory. When the understanding once sees its proper good. O how sweetly, how presently does the will embrace it! and it becomes the well-beloved of the soul. How does it enlarge itself for the entertainment of it. And how does it delight to expatiate in so choice a happiness! He that tasteth a little of God's goodness, thinks he never has enough of it; to be sure, he can never have too much; there is no fear of surfeiting upon happiness. It is true, the least glimpse of God's favourable presence is enough to support and cherish the soul, but it is not enough to satisfy the soul. O how pleasant it is to see Christ through the lattices! and yet the spouse will never leave longing till she see him face to face. There is sweetness indeed in a cluster of Canaan, but yet such as sets the teeth on edge for more. The thirsty hart pants

after the water, and the Christian after fulness of communion with his God: "So panteth my soul after thee, O God!" so unsatisfiably. But

3. "So panteth my soul after thee, O God!" so incessantly, until it be satisfied. The thirsty hart never ceases panting while it has any being. Delay here does but whet desire, and give it time for stronger forces. And what else is a Christian's whole life, but a continued anhelation after his God? And though this may seem very wearisome and tedious, to be always panting; yet the Christian's soul finds far more incomparable sweetness, solid and massy joy, beaten joy, like beaten gold; he finds more of this in the very panting after his God, than any worldling can, when, with the greatest complacency, he takes his fill of his choicest delights, and when he enjoys the smiles and blandishments of fortune, his so much adored deity. The joys of an hypocrite, as they are groundless and imaginary, so, like his services, they are vanishing and transitory. But a Christian, as he is always breathing after his God, so he is always drawing sweetness from him. And here it were easy to shew how, in every condition, the soul breathes after its God, when it sees the vanity of the most flourishing condition, it pants after fulness in its God. When it sees the vexation of a cloudy condition, it pants after contentment only to be found in its God. But I shall instance only in these two, as having some nearer acquaintance with the text, the strong pantings of a tempted soul, and the secret pantings of a languishing and a deserted soul. And

First, in temptations the soul pants after its God. They that are skilled in those terms tell us, that an hart is properly a stag which has escaped a king in hunting. And there are some such Christians that have escaped the prince of the air, (that Nimrod, the mighty hunter,) and all his fiery darts. God has set his bow in the clouds, as a token of peace and reconciliation, (the rainbow, the lace of peace's coat;) and the devil he must set his bow in the clouds too, in the troubled and cloudy spirit; and

there are arrows in the hand of the mighty. And how shall the soul escape these fiery darts, but by panting after its God as the only place of refuge, "a strong tower and a rock of defence," and by breathing after heaven as a place where it is sure to be free from them. "Arise, O Lord, and save me, O my God, from the mouth of the lion that is ready to devour me, lest he tear my soul, and rend it to pieces, while there is none to deliver. Lo, the enemy has bent his bow, and made ready his arrow upon the string, that he may secretly shoot at the upright in heart: but compass me, O God, with thy favour as with a shield; keep me as the apple of thine eye, and hide me under the covert of thy wings. Deliver me from my strong enemy, and from him that hateth me, for he is too strong for me. O send me help from thy sanctuary, and strengthen me out of Sion!" And thus when with a sure recumbency it leans upon its God, it has leisure with an holy triumph to out-brave the enemy. And as for thee, that wouldst make a partition between me and my God, see if thou canst tear me from the bleeding wounds of my dying Saviour; rend me (if thou knowest how) from the bowels, the tenderest bowels of God's dearest compassion: see if the gates of hell can prevail against the rock of eternity. If thou, O God, be with us, if the God of Jacob be our refuge, we will not fear what all the powers of darkness can do against us: "We are more than conquerors." These are the strong pantings of a tempted soul.

Secondly, in desertions, even then the soul pants after its God; when the soul is ready to perish in the dark, it pants after the water-brooks. God dips his pen in gall, and writes bitter things against it. The soul is athirst, and, like its Saviour, can have nothing but gall and vinegar to drink, yet still it pants after its God. It is under a cloud indeed, but even these clouds shall drop fatness, they shall drop upon the dwellings of the wilderness, and the barren soul shall rejoice. Like John the Baptist, it feeds upon honey in the desert, not wild honey.

such as the worldling's joy, but honey out of the rock, upon the tip of the rod like Jonathan's, to open the eye, and to refresh the heart. A soul in a desertion is, as it were, a soul in a consumption, and one only taste of God's sweetest love in Jesus Christ is a sure restorative for such a languishing soul. Now, in the greatest eclipse of God's favour, when there is not so much as a secret light, yet there is a strong influence, nay, stronger than at another time, for *his* strength is proportioned to *our* weakness. And they are Paul's own words, "When I am weak, then I am strong." There is a door of hope opened in the valley of Achor; and now the soul pants after God, as a Father of mercies, and a God of consolations. A God of consolation! What higher, what sweeter strain! All the balm of Gilead seems to be wrapt up in this expression. A God of consolation; that is one who, in the strangest exigencies and greatest repugnances, when comforts fail, can create new comforts, can raise them out of the barren womb of nothing; can do it with a word, for Omnipotence useth to put itself to no greater expenses. The very commanding word, Let there be light in such a soul, is enough to make it more glorious than the empyrean heaven. And now the soul pants thus, as you may hear David panting almost in every psalm; "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord, for ever? And how long wilt thou hide thy face from me? Hath the Lord forgotten to be gracious? And hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? And is his arm shortened that it cannot save? Or is his mercy clean gone for ever, and does his promise fail for evermore?" Weeping hath endured for a night, why comes not joy in the morning? When wilt thou satisfy the longing soul, and fill the thirsty with thy goodness? When wilt thou lead me into thy green pastures, and refresh my soul with sweetness? When, O when, shall I enjoy an ordinance in its orient lustre, in its heavenly beauty, in its full and purest sweetness? When, O blessed Saviour! wilt thou become the lily of the valleys? the beauty and the ornament of the

humble soul? And when shall these valleys stand so thick with corn, that they may laugh and sing? These are the secret pantings of a languishing soul.

Thus you see how the soul pants after its God, even as the hart pants after the water-brooks. We are to discover, in the next place, what manner of communion with its God it is that the soul thus pants after, and that is either mediate communion with him here in his ordinances, or immediate communion with him hereafter in glory. And

First, it strongly desires acquaintance with him here in his ordinances. Chrysostom tells us, that David expresses his affection like a lover in absence. As they have their sighs and passionate complaints; their loving exclamations and sundry discoveries of affection; they can meet with never a tree but in the bark of it they must engrave the name of their darling; so the true lovers of God are always thinking upon him, sighing for him, panting after him, talking of him, and (if it were possible) would engrave the name of the Lord Jesus upon the breasts of all the men in the world. Look upon David, now a banished man, and fled from the presence of Saul, and see how he behaves himself. Not like Themistocles, or Camillus, or some of those brave banished worthies. He does not complain of the ungratefulness of his country, the malice of his adversaries, and his own unhappy success. No, instead of murmuring, he falls a panting, and that only after his God. He is banished from the sanctuary, the palace of God's nearest presence and chiefest residence; he cannot enjoy the beauty of holiness, and all other places seem to him but as the tents of Kedar. He is banished from the temple, and he thinks himself banished from his God, as it is in the following words; "O when shall I come and appear before the face of God!" The whole stream of expositors runs this way: that it is meant of his strong longing to visit the temple, and those amiable courts of his God with which his soul was so much taken, and so it is equivalent to that in the 63d

psalm, "My soul thirstest for thee, to see thy glory and thy power, so as I have seen it in the sanctuary," there to appear before the face of God. In the ordinances appears the face of God, as Calvin speaks. Suppose a glass, when a man hath looked into it, should keep a permanent and unvanishing species of his face, though he himself afterwards were absent, we might well say there was the face of such a man. The gospel is such a glass, representing Christ unto us, so that when we shall come to see him, face to face in heaven, we may be able to say, Surely this is the very Saviour that was described to me in the gospel. God has made himself very conspicuous in his own ordinances. No doubt that, even now, God was a little sanctuary unto David, and he had a private oratory in his own breast, where he could mentally retire, and shut up his thoughts and affections in that interior closet, and yet he pants after the publick worship of his God. Musick in consort is sweetest. And some have taken it for mysterious in nature, that affections are wrought upon in publick more strongly than in private. The ordinances; these are the water-brooks David's heart pants after, living water, bubbling up to eternity. And yet it is not the outside of an ordinance that the soul thus breathes for; alas! there is little sweetness in a shell, as the apostle says in another case, the surface of it soon passes away, and it is practical popery to rest in an *opus operatum*. You may hear David panting in another place, "O who will give me to drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem?" It was not the outward water that he so much longed for. You see when that was brought him at the hazard of men's lives, it was but water spilt upon the ground: no; it was a Saviour to be born in Bethlehem, that his soul thirsted after. Thou hast opened thy mouth wide, (O blessed prophet,) and thy Saviour hath filled it. Thou hast tasted of the water which he has given thee to drink, and thou shalt never thirst any more; but it is a well of water springing up in thee to eternal life. A soul breathes after an ordinance as an opportunity of having

freer intercourse with its God; to have an heavenly tincture upon it; to breathe in so sweet an air, to be steeped in a divine nature, to have foretastes of happiness, a prepossession of heaven, and some dawns of glory. And then it enjoys it in its orient lustre, in its heavenly beauty, in its full and purest sweetness, when it meets with its God there, and increaseth its acquaintance with him. And would you see how the soul thus breathes after its God in every ordinance?

1. In the Word; there it desires the pure milk, as the apostle speaks. Faith pants after a promise, a breast of consolation. The soul lies panting at the pool of Bethesda, and waits for the stirring of the waters.

2. As for the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, there are *mellita flumina*, streaming brooks of butter and honey, as Job speaks. And O how welcome is the panting soul hither! God has sent a messenger to invite him. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, let him come and drink freely: Drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved!" That which Trismegistus feigned is most true here. God sets a great cup full of celestial liquor, with this proclamation, "Up, soul, and drench thyself in this cup of the Spirit." The cup overflows. Here, if ever, the soul is "comforted with flaggons," and "Christ's love is sweeter than wine."

3. How can I tell you the strong pantings of the soul in prayer? The apostle calls them, Rom. viii. 26, *groans unutterable*, when the soul is breathing up sweet odours unto the throne of grace, and heaven itself is thus perfumed. In all these you see how the soul breathes after communion with its God, mediate communion with him here. But,

Secondly, It pants after immediate communion with him in glory, and the following words will bear this sense, "O when shall I appear before the face of God in glory!" Thus Paul pants, "I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ." Thus the souls pant in the Revelation, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly." Here we sip of the water of life, but there we shall drink it up, though

there be eternity to the bottom. Here we are sons of hope, and that is a panting grace. Hope indeed is an early joy ; but when grace shall be ripened into glory, then hope shall be swallowed up in fruition ; and thus “ we with open face, beholding the glory of God, are changed into the same image from glory to glory ;” that is, either from his glory we become glorious, or else from grace to glory ; for grace is glory in the bud, as glory is grace at the full. Surely glory is nothing else but a bright constellation of graces ; and happiness nothing but the quintessence of holiness. And now the soul, by an holy gradation, ascends higher, from those first-fruits and earnest-pennies of joy here, to the consideration of the fulness of glory which it expects hereafter.

But when the soul shall be unsheathed from the body, (that I may allude to the Chaldee idiom,) how gloriously shall it then glister ? Or, to speak in Plutarch’s expression, *η ψυχη εκβασα εκ σωματος ωσπερ εκ νεφους*, when the soul shall be unclouded from the body, in what brightness shall it appear ? What ! did David’s soul, his panting soul, here leap for joy, when he remembered thee, O Sion ? O how triumphantly then does his glorified soul now sing in the new Jerusalem ! Did his soul sing so sweetly in a cage of clay ? What melody (think you,) does it now make, being let loose to all eternity ? Is there such deliciousness in a cluster of grapes, cut down in the brook Eshcol, what then look you for in the vintage of Canaan, the land of promise ? Is but a prospect of that holy land upon the top of mount Pisgah so pleasant and delightful ? Surely then their lot is fallen to them in a fair ground, and they have a goodly heritage, that enjoy the sweetness of the land that flows with milk and honey. Has but a glimpse of God’s favourable countenance such a powerful, such a satisfying influence upon the soul ? O think, (if you can,) how it shall be ravished with the fulness of the beatifical vision ! when the clarified soul shall drink in the beams of glory, and be filled with joy to the very brim. When the panting

soul shall rest itself in the bosom of a Saviour, and fix its eye upon the brightness of his Majesty to all eternity; nay, when eternity shall seem too short for the beholding and admiring of such transcendent excellencies, and for the solemnizing of those heavenly nuptials between Christ and his most beloved spouse. Where all the powers of heaven shall dance for joy, while a consort of seraphim sing an epithalamium. "Beloved," says the apostle, "now are ye the sons of God, but it appears not as yet what ye shall be." This choice prerogative of adoption does but shadow out your future glory, for it appears not as yet what ye shall be. Now ye are sons, but in your minority; sons, but yet insulted over by servants. Now ye are sons, but then ye shall be heirs, heirs of glory, and co-heirs with Christ. Now you see in a glass darkly, in a riddle, and that book which is called the Revelation, is most veiled with obscurity; but then you shall see face to face;—as God promises to manifest himself to Moses; and some think that this place of the apostle alludes to those very words taken out of Num. xii. 6. The riddle that hath posed so many, shall then be explicated. Happiness shall be unmasked, the book shall be unsealed, the white stone shall sparkle most oriently, you shall behold with open face the glory of God, you shall know as you are known. I shall know so as God is pleased to be known by me, to manifest himself unto me. O let every pious panting soul, with its apprehensions raised, and its affections advanced, wait, and long, and breathe for so glorious a time, when the panting soul shall become an enjoying, an embracing soul. When water-brooks shall be turned into rivers of pleasure, ever springing from God's right hand, who is the fountain of being, where the glorious rays that flow from the face of Christ shall gild those pleasant and crystalline streams, and there shall be fresh and eternal ebullitions of joy, so that the pure soul may bathe itself in bliss, and be for ever steeped in inexpressible, in inconceivable sweetness!

MOUNT EBAL.

JUDGES V. 23.

Curse ye Meroz, (saith the angel of the Lord,) curse bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not out to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.

THIS chapter is filled with a triumphant song, that was made by Deborah, that glorious nursing mother in Israel, and after a great and famous conquest, which God had given her and Barak over Jabin and Sisera, and all their mighty hosts. She, presently after the victory, breaks out into a psalm of thanksgiving, she stirs up her soul to the praise of her God, and excites Barak to bear her company in this her joy: "Awake, Deborah, awake," &c. Deborah, in the Hebrew language, signifies a bee; a bee by them is called רבִּיחָה, a working, industrious creature; and this song may well be looked upon as Deborah's honey-comb, a sweet and precious song, dropping from her gracious lips, Deborah's honey-comb; but withal this bee has a sting, "Curse ye Meroz, (saith the angel of the Lord,) curse ye bitterly:" which strikes through all such as maintain not the cause of God against his enemies; "that come not out to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

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If you look upon the foregoing words, you may see there how this holy prophetess takes an exact view of the behaviour of the several tribes in this time of war, when the people of Israel were now opposing the Canaanites, such enemies as God had devoted to destruction. And after special notice taken, she gives just commendations of all such as were active in the Lord's cause, and withal sharp reproofs to all such as were negligent in this their duty. And first, she begins with the praise of them that deserved it.

“Out of Ephraim there was a root of them against Amalek.”] This tribe sent in aid to Israel, and the root that sprung from hence against Amalek was Deborah herself, who judged Israel, dwelling under a palm-tree, between Ramah and Bethel, in mount Ephraim; and by her charge and authority the war was undertaken; it was she that whetted Barak, and encouraged the Israelites against their enemies. “After thee Benjamin, among thy people.”] Against thee, O Amalek, some of this tribe also adjoined themselves to Deborah. “Out of Machir came down governors.”] The tribe of Manasseh branched itself into two noble families, that of Machir, and the other of Jair; and out of Machir there came worthy men to help in the battle. “And out of Zebulun they that handle the pen of the writer.”] Learned men, and skilful lawyers, such as handle the pen, these helped forward in the war, both (1.) By their counsel and advice; and this is none of the smallest aids. Or, (2.) By weapons and outward aid; such as were wont to handle the pen of the writer, they now handle the spear of the soldier. “And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah.”] Choice and worthy ones, heads of the people. “And Issachar.”] Not only the princes, but the rest of the tribe. “And also Barak.”] He was the captain, chief in the war. “He was sent on foot into the valley.” He was the leader of the footmen in the valley. Thus far she commends, in the next words she reproves.

“For the divisions of Reuben, there were great thoughts

of heart; why abodest thou among the sheepfolds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks? For the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart.’] There was great wondering why Reuben came not out to help their brethren; for the divisions of Reuben, that they should hold back, and not accompany the rest of the tribes; many inquiries why Reuben came not. This tribe dwelt beyond Jordan, in goodly pasture; and they too much minded their cattle, and neglected the care of the commonwealth. They were hearing the bleatings of the sheep, and the bellowings of the oxen, when their brethren heard the alarm of war. “Why abodest thou among thy sheepfolds?” Hast thou no care of Israel’s troubles, of the bleeding condition of thy brethren? Dost thou take more care of thy sheep than of them? See how the fierce enemy like a wolf, comes to devour them, and proud Sisera is ready to tear them in pieces! Wilt thou not take as much care of them as of thy sheep?

“Gilead abode beyond Jordan.”} Both the families of Manasseh, Machir and Jair dwelt in Gilead, and possessed it: now the family of Machir was commended before, so that what is said here is meant of Jair. Or else the words are to be taken thus, as an answer to Reuben, why couldst not thou come from beyond Jordan, as well as Gilead; Gilead abode beyond Jordan, and yet he came? and so this tends to Gilead’s praise, and to Reuben’s dishonour.

“And why did Dan remain in ships?”] Either, 1. To shelter themselves from the enemies, when they heard of Jabin and Sisera’s coming. Or else, 2. Dan remained in ships, he minded his own business and merchandise. And why did Dan remain in ships, when all Israel was almost suffering shipwreck?

“Asher continued on the sea-shore, and abode in his breaches.”] The words include a double excuse which Asher had, why it came not to help Israel; 1. They dwelt afar off by the sea-shore. 2. Their towns and cities were

ruinous and not well fenced, and therefore they stayed at home to defend and fortify themselves, they abode in their breaches ; but there was another breach that Ashur might have thought of, a breach of God's law and commandment, which enjoined his people to mutual love, and a joint opposition of their enemies.

“ Zebulun and Naphtali were a people that jeoparded their lives unto the death in the high places of the field.”] After a more general commendation of some tribes, and reproofs of others, she then comes to a special encomium of these two, as most eminent in their service.

“ Zebulun and Naphtali reproached their lives,” so it is in the original ; they esteemed them not worth the having with Israel's ruin ; they preferred God's cause before their lives. *They reproached their lives.* For it seemed a strange thing to others, and little better than ridiculous, for so small a number, a little handful of men, to go against a vast army. Enemies clothed with terror, that might even blow them away in less than an hour : and yet they go out against Jabin and Sisera, they fear not his nine hundred chariots of iron. “ In the high places of the field.”] On mount Tabor, where they might have a view of Sisera's army, a terrible prospect for Zebulun and Naphtali, one would have thought. And yet they march forward with an undaunted resolution.

And Meroz has a more bitter curse than any of the rest. God took notice of all the others' remissness, and hath left it upon record, to the view of all posterity ; but Meroz has a curse with a greater emphasis. “ Curse ye Meroz.”] The Jews have a proverb, We must leap up to mount Gerizzim, but creep unto mount Ebal. You know upon mount Gerizzim all the blessings were pronounced by Moses, as upon mount Ebal all the curses ; so then you must leap up to mount Gerizzim, be forward and ready to bless ; but creep unto mount Ebal, be slow and unwilling to curse ; but where God gives a special command to curse, there you must leap up to mount Ebal too.

“ Curse ye Meroz, saith the angel of the Lord.”] This

does not come out of any private respect that Deborah had, but she has a special command to curse them, "saith the angel of the Lord."'] Expositors are dubious: מלאך יהוה:—it may be rendered, the messenger of the Lord, and so some take it to be Barak, who called out (as is very likely) this city to the war, but they refused to come. But whether it be meant of an angel properly, or of any that had a prophetic spirit, God's messenger, his angel; this we are sure, the drift is to shew that this curse comes by Divine authority. "Curse ye bitterly."'] Curse ye with cursings, an usual Hebraism. But how comes Meroz to have a more bitter curse than any of the rest that came not? This city was very near the place where the battle was fought, it was very nigh mount Tabor, the inhabitants were within the noise of the trumpet; other tribes had excuses, this city none. And no doubt but they were requested by Barak to help, and yet they came not. "Because they came not out to the help of the Lord."'] Why? Does the Lord need any aid? And does the God of hosts need the help of Meroz? Is the hand of omnipotency shortened that it cannot save? Does the mighty God call for help? What means this holy prophetess, when then she says and repeats this, "They came not out to the help of the Lord?" They that help Israel, are said to help the Lord. What is done to the church, God reckons as done for himself, "Inasmuch as ye did it to one of these little ones, ye did it unto me;" O the infinite goodness of God, that hath joined his own glory and the salvation of his people together! He hath wrought Israel's name in the frame of his own glory; it is for his honour to save Israel; they that come not out to help Israel, they come not out to help the Lord.

God needs not the help of men, he can save his people miraculously, he did so here; "The stars fought in their courses against Sisera;" he can raise a glorious army of stars, and can order them as he pleases; they shall all keep their ranks, they shall fight in their courses against Sisera.

How did the stars fight against him? Their beams and influences were their weapons; they wrought impressions in the air, and raised meteors, rain, hail, lightning, thunder. The stars like bright and eminent commanders, lead under them an army of meteors, their trained soldiers, they set them in their several postures, like the centurion, they "say to one, go, and he goeth; and to another, come, and he comes." If they bid the clouds discharge, they instantly dart out lightning-flashes, and present a volley of thunder-claps; they will try what they can do with proud Sisera: and if Israel be too weak for them, the host of heaven shall fight against them; but all this is no thanks to Meroz; nay, it rather aggravates their sin, and so embitters their curse; shall inanimate creatures more sympathize with Israel, than their brethren? Shall the stars fight in their courses, and shall not Meroz stir to help them? And "the river Kishon sweeps them away," (as dung,) "that ancient river, the river Kishon," now swelling by reason of the excess of rain, and drowning many of the Canaanites, as the Egyptians were once drowned in the Red Sea; they sink like lead in the mighty waters. Stars and rivers fight for them, but Meroz will not help them. "Against the mighty,"] Jabiu and Sisera, potent enemies. The church of God has had always mighty opposers: satan the prince of the air, antichrist and his forces. These and many such like observations lie scattered in the words, and might be gathered out of them, but we will unite them all in this one truth, which is directly intended in them.

Doct. Every Christian should be of a publick spirit; he is bound under pain of a bitter curse, (as much as in him lies) to promote the cause of God, and to help the church of God against its mighty enemies. We will branch it into these two particulars: First, it is a thing full of reason and equity, that every one that professes himself an Israelite, should help Israel; that Christians should be of a publick spirit. Secondly, how every one

may help the Lord against the mighty, and stand for the peace of Sion. First, a Christian should be of a publick spirit, not seeking only himself and his own ends ; but he should seek the glory of God, and the good of Sion, of his church and people. 1. It is the very nature of goodness, to diffuse itself abroad in a spreading and liberal manner ; for it does not thus lose any thing, but increases its being by communicating itself. 2. You may see some prints and footsteps of this in nature, some obscure representations of this truth. The sun does not engross its light, but scatters its beams abroad, gilds the whole world with them ; it shines more for others than itself, it is a publick light. Look on a fountain, it does not bind in its streams, seal up itself, and enclose its waters, but spends itself with a continual bubbling forth ; it streams forth in a liberal and communicative manner ; it is a publick spring. 3. And the weak and glimmering light of nature shews thus much, that a man is not born for himself alone ; he is a sociable creature, and sent into the world for the good of others. It is the voice of an heathen, a man's country, and his friends, and others challenge great part of him. 4. Consider, that every man's private welfare is included in the publick. The welfare of Meroz depended upon Israel's safety : what would have become of Meroz, if the rest of their brethren had perished ? So that it was great folly in Meroz, not to come out to the help of Israel. When the disease seizes upon a vital part, as the head, or the heart ; then every member is in danger, though for the present they may be free from pain. The well-being of every private man depends on the publick good. A single drop is soon dried up and consumed ; but a drop in the ocean, when it is united to a multitude of other drops, is there more safe ; and a drop by itself is weak, and can make no resistance, but a drop in the ocean is terrible. Men have a more safe, and a more honourable being, as joined to the whole, than taken singly by themselves. A single drop can do nothing, but a multitude of drops joined together will

make a stream, and carry all before them : a single beam is obscure, but in the sun the centre of rays, meeting in the publick point, they are glorious.

And these arguments may prevail with you as men, living in common society ; but then as Christians,

I. Consider, that God's children have been always of publick spirits, seeking the glory of God, and the good of Sion, Exod. xxxii. 32. " If not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book ;" Moses, out of vehement zeal, would part with his own happiness, rather than Israel should perish ; if it would make more for the glory of God, he would be content to be damned, or at least to have the beams of God's favourable presence withdrawn from him.* Rom. ix. 3, " I could wish, that myself were accursed from Christ, (or separated) for my brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh : " I could be content to have the face of Christ hid from me, for my brethren's sake, as God's face was once hid from Christ upon the cross ; " My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? " A most strong affection and zeal for the publick good. Paul knew what the face of Christ was ; how glorious a sight it was, to see God face to face : and he knew what answer God had given to Moses too : " Him that sins, him will I blot out of my book : " and yet, out of a most ardent desire of the salvation of the Jews, he will part with the face of Christ, so they might be saved ; here were publick spirits indeed !

What should I tell you of Uriah, that famous soldier, his brave resolution ; how we would take no complacency in outward things ? And mark his reason, 2 Sam. xi. 11, " The ark, and Israel, and Judah abide in tents, and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord are encamped in open fields ; " as if he should say, What shall the ark be in danger, and shall Uriah be secure ? Or shall my lord Joab be more forward than I am in Israel's cause ? " As

* See Note in Vol. V. p. 223.

thou livest, and as thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing ;” he shews a most generous and publick spirit ; and this was no small aggravation of David’s sin.

See in Psalm cxxxvii. how the Psalmist and the rest of God’s people behave themselves. “ By the rivers of Babylon we sat down and wept, when we remembered thee, O Sion ! We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof : if I forget thee, Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.” David had a most delicate touch upon the harp ; he could still Saul’s evil spirit with his music ; but “ if I forget thee, Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.” And when did Jeremiah make his lamentation, that whole book of mourning, but when the glory of Sion was laid in the dust ; when Jerusalem, the lady of nations, was made desolate ? God’s people have been always of a publick spirit, and have sympathized with the church.

II. That you may follow so good an example, think whose cause it is. The cause of Israel is the cause of God ; “ To the help of the Lord,” &c. Can you have a better cause ? The good of the church and the glory of God art knit together. So that he that seeks the good of the church, does in the same act seek the glory of God. And he that helps not Israel, comes not out to the help of the Lord. Now you are bound to maintain the cause of God, and to help the Lord. 1. By many engagements. As creatures at his beck, he has a sovereignty and dominion over you. Not to obey the great God is to deny his supremacy. You are bound in a way of thankfulness, to stand for him and his cause, by those sweet mercies, those precious pledges of his love, which he every moment heaps upon you ; by those many blessings that come swimming to you in the blood of a Saviour. 2. By many promises, vows, protestations. Your first and original vow in baptism, obliges you to maintain the cause of God, and of his church, against all the enemies thereof. And you have often repeated this vow, and sealed it again in the Lord’s supper, for you know

that is a sealing up of the covenant: now what is the covenant but this, "That he shall be your God, and you shall be his people?" 3. Certainty to prosper; it is the cause of God; a Christian is on the surest side. There is none but has a mind to prosper, then "pray for the peace of Jerusalem, they shall prosper that love thee." There is none can eclipse the glory of God. It is beyond the power of a creature to dim the lustré of his crown; God will maintain his own cause, or else he should lose of his glory; his mighty arm will get himself the victory. Christ is the captain of his church, and he is the chiefest of ten thousand, (the ensign bearer.) And this is comfort enough for a Christian, the enemies must conquer Christ before they can overcome his church. Christ, the head of the church, is impregnable. This is the second ground why Christians must stand for the cause of the church, because it is the cause of God, to which they are bound. 1. By engagements, many and great. 2. By vows. 3. Encouraged with certainty of success.

III. A Christian is bound to be of a publick spirit by virtue of the communion of saints. Every Christian is a member of Christ's mystical body, and so must take care for the good of the whole. He that is united to Christ the head, must be knit also to the other members; he that does not sympathize with the church, is not of the body; he that can hear of the breaches of Sion, and the decays of Jerusalem; he that can see the apples of God's eye pierced through, and not be affected with it, will you call such an one a member of Christ's body? He that is not truly affected with the bleeding condition of persecuted Christians, does in effect deny this article of his creed, "The communion of saints."

IV. "It is against the mighty." Christians had need have publick spirits, because they have publick enemies; the devil, a publick enemy; antichrist, a publick enemy. They are private enough in respect of their malice and subtilty; but publick in force and opposition. As there is the paw of the lion for strength, so there is the head

of the serpent for wisdom ; but yet the head of the serpent is broken, their wisdom infatuated : “ He that is in heaven can counterplot them, and laugh them to scorn :” but yet thus much you may learn of the enemies of the church, to study the publick good. They seek the ruin of the whole, and why should not you seek the welfare of the whole ? If they be so industrious, so forward and active in a bad cause, will you be negligent and remiss in the best cause, in the cause of God, in the helping of the Lord ? What will not a Jesuit do for the Catholic cause ? He will compass sea and land to gain one proselyte. They do publick mischiefs, and have a malignant and venomous influence in all places where they come ; and why should not Christians do as publick service for God, as they do for the devil ? Come out therefore against the mighty, to the help of the Lord. That which was Meroz’s excuse perhaps, because the Canaanites were mighty ones, therefore they durst not come out against them ; this, God makes the very aggravation of their sin ; for if the enemies were mighty, Israel had more need of their help. And Meroz might have considered, that as there are mighty enemies, so there is a mighty God too, an Almighty God, that can crush proud Sisera, and dash in pieces the strongest enemy. And now you have seen that it is but fit and equal for a Christian to be of a publick spirit, to come out to the help of the Lord.

Secondly, the manner how every Christian may promote the publick good. And here by way of premisal : 1. It must be in a lawful and warrantable way. They that come out to help the Lord must help him in his own ways, such ways as his word allows, or else they do not help the Lord, but offend the Lord in breaking his commandments ; Job xiii. 7, “ Will you speak wickedly for God, and talk deceitfully for him ?” Does God’s glory depend upon man’s sin ? Does he allow any man to sin for the advancing of his glory ? Nay, does he not forbid it and detest it ? It is a clear and undeniable truth of our Saviour ; you must not “ do evil, that good may come of

it." A speech of one of the ancients is ; " You must not tell the least lie, if you could save the whole world by it." To the right conducting of an action, besides the intention of an end, there must be also the choice of just means for the accomplishing of it. 2. In a prudent and orderly way. They that come out to the help of the Lord, must keep their ranks : " The stars fought in their courses against Sisera." Christians must keep their several stations : if there be confusion, you cannot distinguish a Canaanite from an Israelite, a friend from a foe. Let every Christian that studies the publick good, keep his own place ; the magistrate his ; the ministers theirs ; and the people also theirs. And now there are some ways very good and warrantable, by which Christians may come out to the help of the Lord, and to the aiding of Israel.

(1.) By prayer. To be sure this is a lawful means ; and it is a prevalent means too, and has great influence upon the publick good ; Exod. xvii. 11. When Moses held up his hand, then Israel prevailed. It is a special benefit that Christians have by the communion of saints, the prayers one of another. There is a stock of prayers the church has, and the weakest Christian has a share in it. Thou hast the benefit of many Christians' prayers, whose face thou never sawest, whom thou never heardest of ; perhaps he lives in America, or some remote corner of the world ; but wherever he be, thou hast the benefit of his prayers, as a member of the mystical body. For there is no prayer put up to God for his church, but it includes every particular member of the church in it ; so that prayer does wonderfully promote the publick good. " Pray for the peace of Jerusalem," pray for it, that is the way to have it. And many that can use no other means, yet may use this : many weak, and aged, and sickly ones, unfit for war, and yet powerful in prayer. And these weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty. You cannot encounter an enemy ; but you may thus wrestle with the Almighty. You cannot batter down

a strong hold ; but yet you can besiege the throne of grace. You are not fit to be set on a watch-tower, to spy out the approach of an enemy ; but yet you may watch unto prayer. And this is a great advantage that Christians have over their enemies. The enemy knows not how to pray ; they know how to curse, and swear, and blaspheme the name of God ; but they know not how to pray. Or if they do pray, and tell their prayers with their beads, that they may know the number of them ; yet their prayer is turned into sin, “ The prayer of the wicked is an abomination.” Let them cry aloud to their idols, and see if they will hear them ; they cannot look that God should hear them : for, “ If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear my prayer.” O then let Christians know their own happiness, and make use of this spiritual weapon, that opposes the enemy more than all other weapons whatsoever.

And this is the chief use you are to make of all the news you hear, to know how to order your prayers accordingly. No question more ordinary in men’s mouths, than what news ? And I find no fault with the question, it is good and fitting. But news is not to be inquired after only for the satisfying of men’s curiosity ; as the Athenians spent all their time in inquiring for news. But this is the main end of it, to know how to send up your prayers for the good of the church ; and your praises for such mercies as God bestows upon it. All news heard by a person of a publick spirit, will stir up prayer or thanksgiving. This is the use you are to make of news ; if sad news of the church’s misery and desolation, then send up more fervent prayer, that God would repair the breaches of it, and settle it in a flourishing condition ; if welcome news, then praise God for his goodness, and desire him to perfect the great work he has begun. This is one special means to promote the publick good, the prayers of the righteous. And God always, when he intends any great mercy, pours upon his people a spirit of

prayer; he stirs up their hearts in this way; he opens their mouth wide before he fills it.

(2.) **Self-reformation.** This has great influence upon the publick good. And how can you expect a publick and glorious reformation, unless first you reform in private? Look upon the grievances of your own soul; hearken unto those many petitions that are put up for you by the ministers; who beseech you to be reconciled unto God. Every sin adds to wrath; it provokes God, pulls down his judgments, and ripens a nation for destruction, and has a malignant and venemous influence upon the whole. So then the turning from sin, and reforming our ways, is the means to divert judgments, and to bring down mercies. If there were more private reformations in men's spirits; there is no doubt but God would bless the publick reformation. Sin puts more rubs in the way than any enemy or opposer whatsoever. This is the great mountain that hinders the going up of the temple; if this one were but taken away, all others would quickly become a plain. They are very injurious to the publick good, that go on in a course of sinning, against so gracious a God, that does such great things for us. "One sinner destroys much good," as the wise man speaks.

(3.) **United spirits, and a sweet harmony of affections,** graciously consorting together, would help forward the cause of Israel. Jars and dissensions amongst Christians sound very harshly: for the divisions of Reuben, there were great thoughts of heart. What is there can give greater advantage to an enemy, than to see Israelites fall out amongst themselves? You may learn more wisdom of them that are wiser in their generation than the children of light; what a close union and confederacy have they among themselves? Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek, the Philistines, with them that dwell at Tyre. These scales of Leviathan, (as that in Job is usually allegorized,) are shut together as with a close seal. And if they should be at variance and discord among themselves, yet they

have a sure way of reconciliation, by a joint opposition of the godly. Ephraim against Manasseh, and Manasseh against Ephraim, both against Judah. Herod and Pilate made friends in crucifying Christ. If wicked men can agree in opposing goodness, why should not Christians in helping forward goodness? All ye that come out to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty, come with united hearts, and agreeing spirits. Why should there be strife between you, seeing you are brethren? And then consider; what will not united forces do, when you shall join to the work of the Lord with one consent, with one shoulder? What is it that this union will not bring to pass? It will strike terror into the church's enemies, and strengthen the hearts of friends. It will mightily promote the publick good, and tend to the glory of Jerusalem. If men would but lay out themselves, and their several gifts and abilities in one general aim for the advantage of their Master, and good of their fellow-servants, what glorious times should we then see?

(4.) I might add that, with outward aid too, you are bound to promote the publick good, with liberal contribution to relieve the necessity of the Christians, as the church of Macedonia gave above her abilities.

And now for a word of application. 1. It is for the just reproof of most men, that mind not at all the publick good: how do they think to avoid the curse of Meroz, seeing they "come not out to the help of the Lord?" There is a principle of corrupt self-love in men, that makes them of narrow and contracted spirits. All their aims are for themselves; they do not mind the good of the church. If they hear but of a worldly loss, some ship cast away, and their estate be weakened, this will pierce their spirits; it will darken their joy. But they can hear of the ruins of the church, the breaches of Sion, and not be moved with it. Men are more affected with their own private good than with the publick. If they themselves be in the least danger, or some of their near

friends, then you shall have mourning, and sighing, and lamentation : but if the church lie bleeding, and its members be accounted as sheep for the slaughter, they can be merry enough for all this. O how many are there, **that this bitter curse of Meroz will fall heavy upon !** And upon your days of humiliation, be sure to humble yourselves for this ; your want of a publick spirit, your not praying for the peace of Jerusalem. How do you know but that if you had sent up more prayers to heaven, God might have freed the distressed Christians by this time ? As they are guilty of the Christians' blood in an high degree, that shed it in a most inhuman manner ; so I know not how they can excuse themselves from some guilt of it, that do not help themselves by prayers and endeavours as much as in them lies.

2. It is against all such as are in a kind of indifferency and neutrality ; they neither are for one nor other. What is this but the very same case with that of Meroz ? Meroz did not fight against Israel, it did not fight for the Canaanites ; no, but it did not come out to the help of Israel, and therefore it has this bitter curse. Vain men ! that think to content themselves with this, that they do not hurt ! But every man that does not good, does hurt ; he must do either one or other ; the soul is not idle, it is either doing good or evil. And suppose a man did no hurt, yet this is not enough, unless he does good too ; for there are sins of omission as well as of commission. Not doing of publick good is a publick hurt.

3. If there be such a bitter curse upon Meroz for their neglignce and remissness in duty, for not coming out against the mighty ; what severe judgments shall be poured out upon all them that come out against the Lord, that are against the publick good, that wish ill to Sion, that would fain see her in the dust, that hate and persecute Christians, that oppose the power of religion, and the life of the gospel, that are in the very gall of bitterness ? All the curses that are written, and not written, shall flame against them ; and the vials of God's fiercest

wrath shall be emptied upon them. Meroz's curse is bitter ; but in respect of theirs, sweet and easy.

4. Bless God for men of publick spirits; for Zerubbabel and Joshua, such as are building God a temple: Pray God to increase the number of publick spirits, such as may come out to the help of the Lord. As there is a great and bitter curse laid upon Meroz for being negligent in the cause of God, so there are choice and eminent blessings for such as are forward and active in it. God will abundantly recompence all the labour of love which any shall shew for his name ; their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

SPIRITUAL OPTICKS;

OR,

A G L A S S

DISCOVERING THE WEAKNESS AND IMPERFECTION
OF A CHRISTIAN'S KNOWLEDGE IN THIS LIFE.

1 COR. XIII. 12.

For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known.

ST. PAUL, who was of a piercing eye, and had as clear an insight into the mysteries of salvation as any other; whose soul was always mounting towards that third heaven, whither he had once been rapt, and had there heard these words, that neither could nor might be uttered; yet here grants the imperfection of his knowledge, those weak and shadowy apprehensions which he had of the Divine Majesty, while he “saw through a glass darkly;” and encourages himself with the consideration of the full and clear vision which we shall have of him hereafter, when we “shall see God face to face” in glory. Without any farther preamble, we will open the words of the text, that we may see this glass clearly.

Our apostle here advances charity to the highest pitch of commendation as a triumphant grace; a grace that hath eternity stamped upon it. It outlives faith, for that gives place to vision; it outlasts hope, for that is swallowed up in fruition; prophecies shall vanish, and tongues shall be silenced, and knowledge shall pass away. For it is weak and imperfect here, it is in its minority; yea, in its infancy: "When I was a child, I spake as a child." It is cloudy and obscure here; "For now we see through a glass darkly."

1. Now that the gospel beams out upon us with a powerful and glorious ray. It was likely that at the first peeping out of heavenly light, at the evangelical day-break, before the shadows were fully scattered, there would be some obscurity; but it has shined out brighter and brighter till perfect day, and yet still we see thus darkly.

2. (Which is the true and genuine meaning,) Now, whilst we are in this house of our earthly tabernacle; whilst the understanding of a man, which the wise man calls, "The candle of the Lord," is hid in the lantern of the body. Till this partition wall be beaten down, we cannot see God face to face. He that will shoot high, may aim at a star, but he must not think to hit it. Alas! now, when the soul does but try the wing, and flutter towards heaven, it is presently pulled down with an earthly body; it is so depressed here, as that it can hardly look up to heaven. How then shall it see God face to face?

3. "Now we see through a glass." We that have an holy unction, that teacheth us all things; we that have many secret whisperings and breathings of the Holy Spirit, that leads us into all truth; we that are acquainted with the mind of God, that have had many a gracious look from him, yet we see but darkly. No wonder that the sun is too bright for owls, when eagles are dazzled with it: it is likely that such as are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel will be wholly ignorant of these

great things, when they that are nighest God know them but in part; if the sons of the morning, the children of light, see so darkly, then surely a child of darkness will see nothing at all. If Paul, now a glorious apostle, see no more, what could he see when he was a furious persecutor, before the scales fell from his eyes.

4. We that are no novices in Christianity, but have made much progress in the ways of religion, yet we see but darkly. It was likely at the first opening of the soul's eye, at the first cast of it upon heavenly things, that then it would not see so clearly. But it hath been long fixed upon God, eying of his goodness, gazing upon the riches of his grace, viewing all his ways, looking at and prying into his several dealings; and yet still it sees thus darkly. And if a tall and eminent Christian see so little, what shall a babe see, a new-born babe? If a vigorous and sparkling eye see no clearer, what shall a weak distempered eye see? If an experienced apostle, a Paul, see no more; what shall a new disciple see, a Nicodemus, that comes by night? He must needs see but darkly.

The word is but once more used in the New Testament, James i. 23, and there can be no doubt that there it is taken for a looking-glass. And so it is here; our dark, imperfect knowledge of God is set forth by seeing in a glass. 1. Because it is no immediate vision. The object is not primarily and immediately presented to the eye, but by the conveyance of the looking-glass, which is a silent interpreter of the object. And such is our knowledge of God here, and such our communion with him; only some broken beams of glory, some glimpses of his presence scattered here and there, in this ordinance, and in that, glasses of his own making, means of his proper institution. 2. It is a weak and imperfect vision. For, first, according to some, only the shape and resemblance of the thing is seen; the effigies of the object drawn with the pencil of a beam is presented to the eye. And, secondly, the beam begins to be weary,

and is ready to faint; it gives a weak and languishing representation; it is an imperfect vision. And O how dark is our knowledge of God here! What poor manifestations have we of his presence, in comparison of that sight which we look for hereafter! when his essence shall be displayed with a most glorious emphasis?

3. Seeing through a glass is a vanishing and transient vision, as St. James expresses it; "A man having seen his natural face in a glass, goes his way, and presently forgets what manner of man he was." A dying species could not make any strong impression. One direct view of an object is more full and satisfactory than the often seeing it through a glass. The apostle hath applied it to this purpose; knowledge passes away, in respect of that weak and imperfect way of knowledge which we have here; for thus St. Paul glosses upon his own text; "When that which is perfect is come, then that which is imperfect shall be done away."

An ænigma, or riddle, is properly an allegory with a mask on; it is a borrowed speech and a cloudy speech. A knotty intricate speech, sealed up and locked from vulgar apprehensions, that is a riddle. And our knowledge of God here is thus cloudy and ænigmatical, and that if you take it in those three several ways which are usually given of it:

First, By way of removal or negation, when we take away all such things as are inconsistent with a Deity. And thus the Scripture sets him forth; "With him is no beginning of days, nor end of life. He is not a man that he should lie, or the son of man that he should repent. With him is no variableness nor shadow of turning," &c. Now you will easily grant that this is a dark and cloudy knowledge, when we cannot tell you what a thing is, but only what it is not.

Secondly, When we conceive of him in a superlative way, in a way of eminency and transcendency. Many Divine perfections are scattered and broken amongst the creatures, as the same face may be represented in several

glasses ; and all the excellencies of the creatures are collected, and meet eminently in God, as several faces may be seen in one glass. The creatures must be winnowed from all imperfections, and the finest and choicest of them must be taken to give some weak resemblance of a Deity ; the ruddiness of the rose, and the purity of the lily ; nay, the top and excellency of the creation must be brought to shadow out the spouse's beauty ; and yet that this knowledge is weak and imperfect will easily appear.

1. Because these inferior beings are so gross and material, that the purest of them is mere dregs, if compared with so pure an essence ; its gold becomes dross, its silver tin. And when heavenly perfections are set out by the creatures' excellencies, it is but a stooping low to human capacity. The soul would be dazzled at so bright a majesty, unless he were clouded with such expressions.

2. This way of beholding him breeds rather admiration than begets knowledge ; for when we hear of so goodly an essence that hath all excellencies bound up in one vast volume, we wonder what that should be : and admiration is at the best but a stupified kind of knowledge.

3. This rather sets the soul a longing, than gives it any true satisfaction. For when we hear there is so choice a thing, we long to know what it is ; which was a sign we knew it not before, or but very weakly. For true knowledge satiates the soul, there is a complacency and acquiescence in it, especially when it is conversant about so high an object ; so that this way is but dark and full of riddles.

Thirdly, when we consider of God by way of causality, in that vast influence which he hath upon all things, as with him are springing beams of goodness, and overflowing effusions of light. As he is a fountain-essence continually bubbling forth, from whence the several drops of inferior beings have their original : and as he is the main-spring that sets the wheels of those petty entities on working : for "in him we live, move, and have our being." Now this rather shews us that there is a God,

than what he is ; that there is indeed such a prime being, a self-being, an all-being, a giver of being, but still we are to seek what this being is ; so that these apprehensions of him are very weak and shadowy.

But then.] First, When the believing soul returns to God that gave it, it sees him face to face, and fixes its eye upon him to all eternity. As soon as ever the soul is unsheathed from the body, it glisters most gloriously ; as soon as ever it is unclouded from corruption, it shall beam forth most orientally ; as soon as it is let loose from this cage of clay, it sings most melodiously. Nothing hinders a Christian from a sight of God face to face, but the interposition of a gross, earthly body ; it is death's office to break down this wall of separation, that the soul may be admitted into the presence of God. Secondly: Then, at that general day of refreshment, when God shall sit upon his throne in beauty and excellency, as a centre of light, streaming forth to the glorious circumference of the four and twenty elders that sit around the throne. *Face to face.*] This is opposed to seeing in a glass, 1. As a more immediate vision : 2. A clear and perfect vision : 3. A permanent and eternal vision.

In the words there is a plain allusion to that place in Numbers xii. 8, where God promises to manifest himself to his servant Moses face to face. And yet we must not think, that by virtue of this promise, Moses had so full a vision of God as we expect hereafter in glory. No, it is spoken only of God's communicating himself to him in a clearer way than he would to any of the prophets. He would speak to them in riddles, to Jeremiah in the riddle of an almond-tree, of a seething-pot, and so to the rest of the prophets ; but he conversed familiarly with Moses, as a man talks to his friend face to face. And as for Moses's petition in Exod. xxxiii. 18, "I beseech thee shew me thy glory," it was only a desire that God would shew himself in some corporeal resemblance, so as to assure him of his presence, that it would accom-

pany him. And this is God's answer, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee." Besides, there is a plain denial; God tells him he cannot see his face; Moses saw no more of God than the back parts of his glory; he saw them in a corporeal resemblance, and we in an intellectual vision. You see the allusion this place hath to that in Numbers.

Now as for the meaning of the words, "but then face to face." 1. It is not meant of seeing Christ in his human nature face to face, as Job speaks, "These eyes shall see my Redeemer:" for thus the wicked also shall see him with terror and amazement, when the mountains shall be esteemed an easier burden, if they could but cover them from the face of an angry Saviour that will frown them into hell. 2. I take it to be meant of an intellectual beholding the very essence of God, according to that, 1 John iii. 2, "When he shall appear, we shall be like him, and shall see him as he is." And yet it can by no means be a comprehensive vision: for it is impossible that a finite creature should grasp an infinite essence. Or by the face of God may be meant his glory and perfections; for the face is the throne of beauty.

In the following words, St. Paul gives a plainer expression of that which before he had spoke more darkly: "Now I see through a glass darkly, now I know in part; but then face to face, but then I shall know even as also I am known." As when two see one another face to face, the one knows the other by sight as he is known by him.

Now I know in part.] 1. St. Paul on set purpose changes the person, that he may acknowledge his own imperfection. He had included himself before, "Now we see through a glass darkly;" but he will do more apparently, "now I know in part;" and when so great an apostle inculcates his own defects, methinks none should boast of their self-sufficiency.

2. *Now I know in part.]* Here is a reason of our imper-

fection here : “ If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness !” Knowledge is a leading principle, and all graces follow it in proportion. If we knew God more, we should obey him more ; if we knew more of his goodness, we should love him more ; if we knew more of his majesty, we should fear him more ; if more of his faithfulness, we should trust him more ; nay, if we knew him perfectly, all these would be perfect : when knowledge is complete, obedience will be exact.

3. *Now I know in part.*] According to the Syriac, *parum de multo*. 1. Little of that I should know. 2. Little of that I might know. 3. Little of that others know. 4. Little of that I desire to know. 5. Little of that I shall know in glory.

4. *Now I know in part.*] 1. Religion is no fancy, opinion, or conjectural thing. No, we have a certain knowledge of God and his ways here ; we see through a glass, though it be but darkly : there is truth in a riddle, though it be obscure. 2. A Christian begins his acquaintance with God here : he that knows him not in part here, shall never see him face to face in glory. We have here the first glimpse of heaven, a prospect of Canaan, the preface of happiness, the initials of glory.

But then I shall know, Τότε δε επιγνωσομαι.] The word *επιγνωσις* implies bringing a person better acquainted with a thing that he knew before ; a more exact viewing of an object that he saw before afar off. That little portion of knowledge which we have here shall be much improved, our eye shall be raised to see the same things more strongly and clearly. Our knowledge here is but a spark of the light that shall be. When the soul shall say, as the queen of Sheba did to Solomon, in 1 Kings x. “ It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thine acts, and of thy wisdom ; howbeit I scarce believed the words until I came, and mine eyes had seen it, and behold the half was not told me. Happy are thy men, O happy are these thy servants that stand continually before thee.”

Even as also I am known.] The particle *καθως*, *as*, is not a note of equality, but of similitude, as in many other places.

And thus much may serve for explication of the text, for clearing the glass, for opening the ænigma. If you now look into the words, you will find them full of spiritual opticks. Here is vision reflex; “for now we see through a glass darkly:” and here is vision direct; “but then face to face.” We will begin with the first: “now we see through a glass darkly;” and here I shall present many glasses to your view.

First, In the glass of the creature. This is a common and obvious glass presented to every one’s view, and there are some glimmerings of common light, diffused among all, by which they may see into it. Our apostle shews us this glass in Rom. i. 20, “The invisible things of God, &c.” The sense is, that the invisible things of God are seen by the creatures, or by the creation. From the first infancy of the world, ever since it was created, the eternal Power and Godhead have manifested themselves, and the prime cause hath been very apparent in those effects, which could not possibly be produced by any inferior being. This vast volume of the creatures set out by God himself without any errata in it, was printed in so fair a character, as he that ran might read it; and the least letter in it made shew of a most Divine impression. But alas! sin, besides weakening the soul’s eye, hath soiled and defaced the book; and hence we come to see in it so darkly. And yet still the letters are visible, and carry with them the print of a Deity. The world is, as one calls it, *Ænigma Dei*. And it is full of looking-glasses. For God hath communicated several resemblances of himself to the creature, as the face sheds that image upon the glass whereby itself is presented. I need not speak of the blessed angels, those pure and crystal mirrors, what glorious representations they give of their Creator. Look but into yourselves, and you will find immortal souls shewing forth that image according to

which they were made ; or if you will look up to that vast and polished looking-glass, you will see, “ the heavens declaring the glory of God, and the firmament shewing his handy work.” Or cast but an eye upon the poorest and most abject being, and even there you will find some faint resemblances of a Deity. But the Atheist shuts his eyes ; what should a blind man do with a looking-glass ? And yet sometimes there are lightening flashes of terror darted into him, and he begins with the devils “ to believe and tremble.” The Papists, as if there were not glasses enough of God’s making, must have images of their own to put them in mind of God ; their painted glasses. But surely they see through these very darkly. The heathens shall be judged for not ordering their lives according to this glass ; for resisting those relics of primitive light that shined out so strongly upon them. Well, here are glasses, but we see them very darkly, and that by reason of a double defect.

1. In the glass. It is true, some of God’s attributes here clearly shew themselves ; his power and sovereignty ; yea, his wisdom and goodness too ; but those sweetest manifestations of his love, the treasures of free grace and infinite mercy, the whole plan of the gospel, not the least shadow of these is to be found. Now for this very cause the Gentiles in Eph. ii. 12, are called Atheists, because they were without the knowledge of God in Christ. You know they had a goodly company of gods, a whole troop of deities : but they were without God in Christ, and hence they are stiled, “ without God in the world.”

2. In the eye. (1.) Adam, in innocency, had a glorious soul full of light, bright and sparkling eyes, *πυρι λαμπε-
τωνλι εικτην*. He could read the smallest print, the least jot and tittle in the book of nature. See how quickly he tumbles over the vast volume, and in a name gives a brief gloss upon every creature, a concise epitome of their natural histories. He had a fair portion of knowledge, if he could have been contented with it. But he

would fain have more, he must needs be tasting of the tree of knowledge ; and hence sprung our ignorance ; the soul hath ever since been darkened and dim-sighted. Perhaps it can see some goodly capital letters, some fair flourished character ; but there are multitudes of beings in a smaller print, that it takes no notice of.

(2.) The soul might see more, if it would employ itself more, and look oftener into the glass of the creatures. Meditation would raise the creature higher, and distil sweetness out of every object. The soul is busy with every thing it sees, as busy as a bee ; it goes from flower to flower, and the enlightened and pious soul extracts most precious sweetness.

(3.) Some eyes have been dazzled too much with the glitterings of the creature, so as to take the servant for the master ; and have been so much engaged in admiring the glass, that they have forgot the glorious beauty that it represented. What worship and adoration hath the sun had ? Even almost as much as the great Creator of heaven and earth ; strange that they should see so darkly, as not to discern the face from the veil that covers it. For the sun is at best but the shadow of God ; a mere spot, a cloud, if compared with so bright an essence ; and as one saith notably, The sun's worshippers must needs be Atheists in the night-time. You have seen the glass of the creatures, and how in it we see very darkly.

Secondly, In learning's glass. Learning brightens the intellectual eye, and clarifies the soul ; the Hebrew wise men are פתוחי עינים, *aperti*, men with eyes open ; and it sets a man on higher ground, and gives him a fairer prospect of beings, and many advantages over others ; they have eyes and see not ; but these see, and yet very darkly. What need I tell you how invincible doubts blemish their brightest notions ? How the naturalist's head is non-plussed with an occult quality, and he knows not how to take it off. How the choicest moralists are paused, and cannot tell how to extricate themselves. Look up higher to metaphysicks, which some style *fimbria theologiæ* ;

but you may touch the hem of its garment long enough before you find any virtue coming from it. Converse but with the schoolmen's works, and there you shall meet voluminous riddles. It is their grand employment to tie a knot, and then see if they can undo it; to frame an enemy, and then triumph over him; to make an objection, and then answer it if they can: there are speculations enough, but if you see through them, it will be very darkly.

But if you could see very clearly in all these, yet how weak and insufficient are they to acquaint you with the great mysteries of godliness? 1. Some such as have been most eminent in them, have had wits of elevation situated as upon a cliff, but how little have they seen of heaven, and heavenly things! Aristotle, with the rest of the heathens, what uncertain notions had they of a Deity? We are beholden to their dying speeches for most of their divinity. 2. Many, under the light of the gospel, and furnished with helps of human learning; how strangely unacquainted are they with the knowledge of Christ crucified! A plain experienced Christian, (notwithstanding all their auxiliary forces,) only by the help of a Bible, will put a whole army of them to flight. And yet methinks none should be so silly and malicious as to put the fault in learning, whereas there is no greater vicinity than between truth and goodness; and heaven is full of knowledge, as it is of holiness. 3. Sciences themselves are weak and imperfect things, and therefore, as our apostle tells us, knowledge must be abolished, and tongues, which are the vehicles of sciences, shall pass away. So then in this glass we see but darkly.

Thirdly, In the glass of the Scriptures. This is a pure and spotless glass, representing the will of God unto us, an eternal glass, that shall never be broken, more durable than heaven itself: David was looking in this glass day and night. There are many false, flattering glasses in the world; but here the soul may see its face in a most

exact resemblance. It will shew the least spot and deformity; the sinfulness of an idle word, of a vain thought, of a first motion, though without consent, the least tendencies to sin, the first bubblings up of corruption. It deals so plainly, that many are offended with it, and swell the more against it; and thus "sin takes occasion by the commandment," as Rom. vii. Fond Lais breaks her looking-glass because it shews the wrinkles in her face: gives the reason, *Me cernere talem qualis sum nolo, qualis eram nequeo*. Well, the law, that is a glass to shew us our spots, cannot wipe them off; but the gospel is a pure well of salvation, there one may see them and wash them too. In that evangelical mirror you may see the face of a Saviour, coming in an amiable way with smiles of love, with offers of grace and saving mercy. Nay, the gospel is called "the face of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. iv. 6. As suppose a glass, when a man had once looked into it, should keep a permanent and unvanishing image of his face, though he himself afterwards were absent; we might well say, there was the face of such a man; the gospel is such a glass, Christ hath looked into it, and shed his image upon it, and ever since it hath given most glorious representations of him. And, till we come to heaven itself, we cannot meet with more full manifestations of God and Christ, and all the mysteries of salvation, than in the word of God; and yet here we see but darkly. For if we consider them under the Old Testament, how long was their comfort locked up in that ænigma, that primitive promise, which was the first dawning of the gospel; "The Seed of the woman shall break the serpent's head?" And when truth began to shew itself in some fuller discoveries, yet still it was mixed with much obscurity.

They had a two-fold glass. 1. In the glass of the ceremonies they saw very darkly. We could not look for much light where there were so many shadows; where there were so many veils, they could not see face to face.

That the Jews worshipped a cloud for their god, was a mere calumny ; but that they worshipped their God in a cloud we will easily grant, for "all our fathers were under the cloud," 1 Cor. x. 1. The ceremonial law was nothing else but an heap of riddles : who amongst them could tell the meaning of them? Nay, it is well if we that have the type and antitype meeting together can give a just explanation of some of them. Well, this glass is now broken; for ceremonies, like false looking-glasses, represent the object with too much shadow ; and yet still the scarlet whore will be dressing herself by them, because, like flattering glasses, they make her seem fairer and more beautiful. *Majoresq; cadunt altis de montibus umbræ.*

2. In the glass of the prophecies. Here they might see the presence of a deferred deliverance, they might see the face of a promised Messias. Buxtorf tells us, That he is persuaded this is one main reason why the Jews are so ignorant of the Messias, because they are so little versed in the prophets ; they spend their whole time upon the law, but will not cast an eye upon them. He speaks of the modern Jews. God in much mercy hath given them glasses, and they will not vouchsafe to look in them; they were always an obdurate and stiff-necked people, rebelling against the prophets, and they go on to fill up the sins of their fathers. Well, but the seers themselves saw in a riddle, they saw them very darkly. For, 1. A prophecy in the bud is not so easily seen as when it shoots out further, and spreads itself in larger growth. Such passages in Isaiah as seem to us clear as the day, were to them dark and ænigmatical. And we see how obscure St. John's prophecy seems to us. And the devil, who was always God's ape, over-imitated here ; for his oracles were wrapped up in so many clouds, and withal so full of fallacies, as none ever could tell their meaning till events had given the interpretation. The prince of darkness would make all his sayings wear his livery : Divine prophecies are as clear as crystal, if compared with his cloudy oracles. 2. Prophecies at best are but weak and

imperfect things, and therefore they also shall be abolished; no need of them in heaven. They were very beneficial to the church militant, to acquaint her with approaching judgments, and prepare her for intended mercies; but when happiness is present and complete, no need of them then in the church triumphant.

Thus you have seen how they under the law saw but darkly. And if God's peculiar people had so little knowledge of him, in what gross and palpable ignorance did they live that had none of this his light shining upon them; for "in Judah was God known, and his name was famous in Israel. He hath not dealt so with every nation, neither hath the heathen knowledge of his law."

And now if we look upon ourselves, that live under the light of the gospel, even we in this sun-shine see but darkly.

1. There are many evangelical riddles, a God incarnate, a crucified Saviour; which are such, 1. As the angels themselves see darkly, and therefore are still prying to see more. 2. Reason, that great patron of unbelief, wrangles against them; and yet reason itself will dictate thus much, that the mysteries of religion should be above the reach of reason. 3. The greatest part of the world reject them: the Greeks esteemed them foolishness: they thought there was not so much in them as in a riddle; in that there was some hidden sense, but these were plain foolishness in their esteem; the Jews stumbled at a crucified Saviour, and yet themselves were the crucifiers of him. The veil of the temple was rent at his death; but the veil is still upon their hearts, and yet that ere long shall be rent too: and "they shall see him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn, and be in bitterness;" and confess, "We crucified our Love, we crucified our Saviour."

2. There are many practical truths which are mere riddles to carnal spirits: as to forsake all for a persecuted Christ, to cut off right hands, pluck out right eyes, pray for enemies, not to do evil that good may come thereof.

These principles they can hardly digest ; and there are many Christian privileges which they know not what to make of, assurance of God's favour, communion with him, hidden manna, and joy in the Holy Ghost unspeakable. These and such like puzzle the apprehensions ; for it never entered into the heart of a natural man to conceive them, it is too narrow for them to enter.

3. There are many passages which to Christians themselves are dark and ænigmatical, such as we cannot easily understand. The book of the Revelation is all veiled with obscurity, the first things we meet with almost are seven seals : it is full of hidden secrets, and who is there that can unseal the book ? Our adversaries the papists catch at this, and are ready with a double inference : the Scriptures are ænigmatical ; therefore clear them with traditions, therefore keep them from the people. But, 1. When we speak of the Scriptures' darkness, it is but comparatively, in respect of those bright manifestations we shall have of God hereafter. A pearl may be clear and orient, and yet dark in respect of a star. A star may be bright, and yet obscure if compared with the sun. 2. All truths belonging to the essence of a Christian are plain. And there is an assisting spirit, which though they perhaps may scoff at, and some others may unjustly pretend to, yet without doubt it shall lead God's people into all truth. 3. Are their traditions so clear and crystalline, as that we shall see in them better than in the Word ? If you cannot see in a pellucid stream, do you think to see in a muddy standing pool ?

But, say they, the Scriptures are ænigmatical, therefore keep them from the people. Nay, rather explain them to them : therefore set up a faithful ministry, whose "lips may preserve knowledge," and acquaint them with the mysteries of salvation ; and open to them these hidden oracles. And let the people themselves "search the Scriptures, dig for knowledge as for silver, and for wisdom as hid treasure." Again, they had better see in a glass, though but darkly, than not to see at all ; truth

in a cloud, in a riddle, is more amiable than a black and palpable ignorance.

They, however, keep the Scriptures from them, not because they see in them so darkly, but lest they should see in them too clearly; and, above all, they lock up the Revelation, not as it is obscure, but because it threatens the seven hills so much. And thus we have looked upon the third particular, the glass of the Scriptures.

Fourthly, in the glass of providence. Here God's glorious attributes shine forth, his wisdom, justice, goodness, and the rest of that glorious constellation. And Providence sets before us examples, they are glasses in which we may see either the beauty of holiness, or else sin's deformity. And it is no small felicity of this latter age, that we have the use of these glasses, the benefit of so many former examples; and yet we see in them but darkly, they are "a cloud of witnesses," as it is Heb. xii. 1, though in another sense. Providence is very mysterious, and there is no readier way to atheism than to question it, when we cannot give a sufficient account of it. The Indians have a custom once a year to cast a golden bushel into the sea; and thus they think they set a measure and bound to its proud waves, so as it shall not invade their land. Their custom is ridiculous enough, and yet they are far more vain that go about to circumscribe an immense Being with the narrow compass of their reason. Audacious men, that go about to set providence a platform, which if it shall transgress, it presently passes the bounds of justice.

St. Paul, that could have dived as deep as another, and brought up many precious pearly observations with him, yet dares not venture in, but, standing aloof upon the shore, admires the vast and boundless ocean, and as one amazed and almost swallowed up with the very consideration of it, cries out, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" *ανεξιχνίαστοι*, his ways, are in the deep; there is no *ἕχθος* of

them, no, not the least print, no tracing of a deity. That God should shine out only upon some few spots of ground with the light of the gospel, and shut up the rest in palpable darkness; that he should suffer his dearest children to be wronged and insulted, when wickedness in the mean while triumphs securely: these, and many such like, are riddles of Providence, we see in this glass darkly.

Fifthly, in the glass of faith. Here we see "through a glass:" for faith is a sure perspective-glass, by which Abraham's aged eye saw Christ's day though afar off; and the rest of the saints saw him from a distance, and yet embraced him; a glass by which Moses saw Him that was invisible. It is a coloured glass, and does colour the object: it can see a mercy in a judgment, and deliverance in a captivity, help in an exigency. And promises are faith's glasses, and they speak as the looking-glass in the Greek epigram, "If you look on me I look upon you;" if you apply me, I belong unto you. And yet we see here but darkly; for faith itself (not to speak of those many doubtings and waverings that often accompany it, is opposed to vision, 2^d Cor. v. 7, "We walk by faith, and not by sight." Faith, as it lives in the mount, (for "in the mount will the Lord be seen,") so it dies in the mount too like Moses, it never enters into the land of promise.

Sixthly, the glass of the sacraments. Such great and transcendent mysteries as the apprehensions of angels cannot reach unto, are here presented to the senses. Baptism is a looking-glass, where the first beam of God's favourable countenance shews itself, the first expression of his love to a sinful creature. The laver under the law was made of looking-glasses; and the laver of regeneration under the gospel is itself a looking-glass, where you may see a God in covenant with you, and yet he does not shew himself with a spreading and immediate ray, but only in a sacramental reflexion. You may see heaven in this well of salvation. As it was used by way of immersion, there was a riddle of the resurrection; as by

way of sprinkling, there is a riddle of sanctification. You would say, it were no wonder if I should tell you the infant sees in it but darkly; but who is there of riper years that looks on this glass, or makes any use of it? Who is there almost that spends a thought upon his baptism? And as for the sacrament of the Lord's supper, here is a glass that Christ left with his dear spouse when he went away from her, in which she may still see his face, and be mindful of him. "Do this in remembrance of me," and "do it to put me in remembrance of you;" for τῆν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν includes both. There is mutual aspect and reciprocal glances between Christ and a believing soul in the sacrament. Christ looks upon the soul with a gracious eye, and the soul looks upon him with an eye of faith.

And thus we have shewn you the several glasses through which we see but darkly. There remains a sight of God "face to face, to face, to know as we are known." But this hereafter.

READER,

What this to know as we are known should be,
The Author could not tell, but died to see.

EXTRACTS

FROM

T H E W O R K S

OF

JOHN OWEN, D.D.

Some time Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cambridge.



TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,

SOME ACCOUNT OF HIS LIFE.

THE
L I F E
OF
JOHN OWEN, D.D.

DR. JOHN OWEN was a great man, and generally respected as a scholar, a gentleman, and a divine. He was cast out of his deanry of Christ-Church in Oxford, in 1659, not long after Richard's being made protector, and lived privately afterwards at Stadham, till he came to London. Mr. Wood, the Oxonian, who bore him no good will, thinks fit to own, "That the doctor was a person well skilled in the tongues, rabbinnical learning, and Jewish rites and customs ; that he had a great command of his English pen, and was one of the most genteel and fairest writers that appeared against the church of England." But such as were not blinded with prejudice, have freely owned the eminency of the doctor's learning and abilities. He was a man of universal reading, and he had digested it. He was especially conversant in those sciences that are assistant to divinity; and master of them in an unusual degree. He was reckoned the brightest ornament of the University of Oxford, and for several years successively was vice-chancellor there. When laid

aside here, he had thoughts of going into New-England, where he was invited to the government of their university; but he was stopt by particular orders from King Charles. He was also invited to be a professor of divinity in the United Provinces, but refused. He lived the latter part of his life in great reputation, in and about the city of London, where he had a considerable congregation, and was much respected by many persons of note and eminence. On St. Bartholomew's-day, 1683, he parted this life with a cheerful hope of a better; and left behind him a great many valuable writings.

OF
THE MORTIFICATION
OF
SIN IN BELIEVERS:
THE
NECESSITY, NATURE, AND MEANS OF IT.

OF
THE MORTIFICATION
OF
SIN IN BELIEVERS, &c.

CHAP. I.

The Foundation of the ensuing Discourse.

THAT what I have to contribute to the carrying on of mortification in believers, may receive order and perspicuity, I shall lay the foundation of it in those words of the apostle, Rom. viii. 13, "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the flesh, ye shall live;" and reduce the whole to an improvement of the great evangelical truth contained in them.

The apostle having made a recapitulation of his doctrine of justification by faith, and the blessed condition of them who are partakers thereof, ver. 1, 2, 3, of this chapter, proceeds to improve it to the holiness and consolation of believers.

In the words peculiarly designed for the foundation of the ensuing discourse, there is, 1. A duty prescribed; "Mortify the deeds of the body." 2. The persons to whom it is prescribed; "Ye, if ye mortify." 3. A promise annexed to that duty, "Ye shall live." 4. The means of the performance of this duty, the Spirit; "If ye through the Spirit." 5. The condition of the whole,

wherein duty, means, and promise are contained, "If ye," &c.

1. The first thing occurring in the words, as they lie in the entire proposition, is the conditional note, *but if*. The certain connexion that is between the mortifying of the deeds of the body and living, is intimated in this conditional particle. The connexion between mortification and life, is not of cause and effect properly, "for eternal life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ," Rom. vi. 23. But of means and end: God hath appointed this means for the attaining that end which he hath freely promised.

2. The next thing we meet with in the words is, the persons to whom this is prescribed; and that is expressed in the word *ye*, that is, ye believers; ye to whom "there is no condemnation," ver. 1, ye that are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, ver. 9, who are "quickened by the Spirit of Christ," ver. 10, 11, to you is this duty prescribed; and this description of the persons, in conjunction with the duty, is the main foundation of the ensuing discourse.

3. The principal efficient cause of the performance of this duty is the Spirit: the Spirit here is the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of God, that "dwells in us," ver. 9; that quickens us," ver. 11; "the Holy Ghost," ver. 14; the "Spirit of adoption," ver. 15; the Spirit that maketh intercession for us," ver. 26. All other ways of mortification are vain; all helps leave us helpless, it must be done by the Spirit.

4. The duty itself, "Mortify the deeds of the body," is next to be remarked. Three things are here to be inquired into. (1.) What is meant by the body. (2.) What by the "deeds of the body." (3.) What by "mortifying" of them.

(1.) The body, in the close of the verse, is the same with the flesh in the beginning. "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die, but if ye mortify the deeds of the body," that is, of the flesh. The body then here is taken for that corruption of our natures whereof the body, in a

great part, is the instrument; the very members of the body being made servants unto unrighteousness thereby.

(2.) "The deeds of the body:" though the outward deeds are here only expressed, yet the inward are chiefly intended, the "ax is to be laid to the root of the tree;" the deeds of the flesh are to be mortified in their causes; the apostle calls them *deeds*, as that which every lust tends to; through it prove abortive, it aims to bring forth a perfect sin.

(3.) To mortify; *if ye put to death*: a metaphorical expression, taken from the putting of any living thing to death. To kill a man, or any other living thing, is to take away the principle of all his strength, vigour, and power: so it is in this case. Indwelling sin is compared to a person, a living person, called *the old man*, with his faculties and properties, his wisdom, craft, subtilty, and strength; this, says the apostle, must be killed, put to death, mortified, that is, have its power, life, vigour, taken away by the Spirit.

(4.) The promise unto this duty is life: "Ye shall live." The life promised is opposed to the death threatened in the clause foregoing: "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die;" which the same apostle elsewhere expresseth, "Ye shall of the flesh reap corruption," Gal. vi. 8, or destruction from God. Now perhaps the word may not only intend eternal life, but also the spiritual life in Christ, which here we have, not as to the essence and being of it, which is already enjoyed by believers, but as to the comfort and vigour of it; ye shall live, lead a vigorous, comfortable, spiritual life here, and obtain eternal life hereafter.

CHAP. II.

The Necessity of Mortification.

Having laid this foundation, a brief confirmation of the forementioned deductions will lead me to what I chiefly intend, viz.

“That believers, who are freed from the condemning power of sin, ought yet to make it their business to mortify the indwelling power of sin.” So the apostle, Col. iii. 5, “Mortify therefore your members which are upon earth.” Whom speaks he to? Such as were “risen with Christ,” ver. 1. Such as were “dead with him,” ver. 3. Do you mortify, do you make it your daily work. Cease not a day from this work; be killing sin, or it will be killing you; your being dead with Christ, your being quickened with him will not excuse you from this work. And our Saviour tells us how his Father deals with every branch in him that beareth fruit, “he purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit,” John xv. 2.

1. Negligence in this duty casts the soul into a perfect contrary condition to that which the apostle affirms was his, 2 Cor. iv. 16. In these the inward man perisheth, and the outward man is renewed day by day. Sin is as the house of David, and grace as the house of Saul. Exercise and success are the two main cherishers of grace in the heart; when it is suffered to lie still, it withers and decays; and sin gets ground towards the hardening of the heart, Heb. iii. 13. By the omission of this duty, grace withers, lust flourisheth, and the frame of the heart grows worse and worse; and the Lord knows what desperate and fearful issues it hath had with many. When poor creatures will take blow after blow, wound after wound, foil after foil, and never rouse up themselves to a vigorous opposition, can they expect any thing but to be hardened, through the “deceitfulness of sin;” and that their souls should bleed to death?

2. It is our duty to be “perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord,” 2 Cor. vii. 1. To be growing in grace every day, 1 Pet. ii. 2. Now this cannot be done without the daily mortifying of sin. Sin sets its strength against every act of holiness, and against every degree we grow to. Let not that man think he makes any progress in holiness, who walks over the bellies of his lusts; he who doth not kill sin in his way, takes no steps towards his

journey's end. He who finds not opposition from it, and who sets not himself, in every particular, to its mortification, is at peace with it, not dying to it.

This then is the first general principle of our ensuing discourse. Notwithstanding the meritorious mortification of all and every sin in the cross of Christ; notwithstanding the real foundation of universal mortification laid in our first conversion, by conviction of sin, humiliation for sin, and the implantation of a new principle opposite to it; yet sin doth so remain, so act and work, even in believers, that the constant daily mortification of it is incumbent on them. Before I proceed, I cannot but complain of many professors of these days, who, instead of bringing forth such great and evident fruits of mortification as are expected, scarce bear any leaves of it. There is indeed a broad light fallen upon the men of this generation; and together therewith many spiritual gifts communicated, which, with some other considerations, have wonderfully enlarged the bounds of professors and profession; both they and it are exceedingly multiplied and increased. Hence there is a noise of religion and religious duties in every corner; preaching in abundance; so that if you will measure the number of believers by light and profession, the church may have cause to say, Who hath borne me all these? But now if you will take the measure of them by this great discriminating grace of Christians, perhaps you will find their number not so multiplied. The good Lord send out a spirit of mortification to cure our distempers, or we are in a sad condition!

There are two evils which certainly attend every unmortified professor; the first in himself, the other in respect of others. 1. In himself. Let him pretend what he will, he hath slight thoughts of sin; at least of sins of daily infirmity. The root of an unmortified course is the digestion of sin without bitterness in the heart. When a man hath confirmed his imagination to such an apprehension of grace and mercy as to be able, without bitterness,

to swallow and digest daily sins, that man is at the very brink of turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Neither is there a greater evidence of a false and rotten heart in the world, than to drive such a trade. To use the blood of Christ, which is given to cleanse us, 1 John i. 7, Tit. ii. 14; the exaltation of Christ, which is to give us repentance, Acts v. 31; the doctrine of grace, which teaches us to deny all ungodliness, Tit. ii. 11, 12; to countenance sin, is a rebellion, that in the issue will break the bones. 2. To others. It hardens them, by begetting in them a persuasion that they are in as good a condition as the best. Whatever they see in them is so stained for want of this mortification, that it is of no value with them; they have a zeal for religion, but is accompanied with want of forbearance, and universal righteousness. They deny prodigality, but with worldliness; they separate from the world, but live to themselves, taking no care to exercise loving-kindness in the earth; or they talk spiritually, and live vainly; mention communion with God, and are conformed to the world, boasting of forgiveness of sin, and never forgiving others; and with such considerations do poor creatures harden their unregeneracy.

The great sovereign cause of mortification is the *Spirit*; that is, the Holy Ghost. He only is sufficient for this work; all ways and means without him are as a thing of nought; and he is the great efficient of it, he works in us as he pleases. (1.) He is promised of God to do this work; the taking away of the stony heart, that is, the stubborn, proud, rebellious, unbelieving heart, is in general the work of mortification that we treat of. Now this is promised to be done by the Spirit, Ezek. xi. 19, xxxvi. 26, "I will give my Spirit, and take away the stony heart;" and by the Spirit of God is this work wrought, when all means fail. (2.) We have all our mortification from the gift of Christ, and all the gifts of Christ are communicated to us by the Spirit. "Without Christ we can do nothing;" John xv. 5. Having received the

promise of the Holy Ghost, he sends him abroad for that end, Acts. ii. 33.

How doth the Spirit mortify sin? I answer, in general, three ways. 1. By causing our hearts to abound in grace, and the fruits that are contrary to the flesh, and the fruits thereof. So the apostle opposes the fruits of the flesh and of the Spirit: "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." But how? Why, ver. 25, "By living in the Spirit, and walking after the Spirit:" that is, by the abounding of these graces of the Spirit in us, and walking according to them. 2. By a real physical efficiency on the root of sin, for the weakening, destroying, and taking it away. Hence he is called a "Spirit of judgment and burning," Isai. iv. 4, really consuming and destroying our lusts. He takes away the stony heart by an almighty efficiency; he is the fire which burns up the very root of lust. 3. He brings the cross of Christ into the heart of a sinner by faith, and gives us communion with Christ in his death, and fellowship in his sufferings; whereof more afterwards.

If this be the work of the Spirit alone, how is it that we are exhorted to it? Seeing the Spirit of God only can do it, let the work be left wholly to him. To this it must be answered, 1. It is no otherwise the work of the Spirit than as all graces and good works which are in us are his; he works in us to "will and to do of his good pleasure," Phil. ii. 13. He works all "our works in us, Isai. xxvi. 12; "the work of faith with power," 2Thess. i. 11. He causes us to pray, Rom. viii. 26, and yet we are exhorted to all these. 2. He doth not so work our mortification in us as not to keep it still an act of our obedience. The Holy Ghost works in us as we are proper to be wrought upon; that is, so as to preserve our own liberty and free obedience. He works upon our understandings, wills, consciences, and affections, agreeably to their own natures: he works in us, and with us, not against us, or without us; so that his assistance is an

encouragement, as to the facilitating the work, and no occasion of neglect as to the work itself.

Now the life, vigour, and comfort of our spiritual life depend much on our mortification of sin. Strength, and comfort, and power, and peace, in our walking with God, are the objects of our desires. Were any of us asked seriously, what is it that troubles you? We must refer it to one of these heads; either we want strength, or power, vigour, and life, in our obedience, in our walking with God; or we want peace, comfort, and consolation therein. But all these much depend on a constant course of mortification, as a thing that hath an effectual influence thereunto. For

1. This alone keeps sin from depriving us of the one and the other. Every unmortified sin will certainly do two things. It will weaken the soul, and deprive it of its vigour. It will darken the soul, and deprive it of its comfort.

(1.) It weakens the soul, and deprives it of its strength. When David had for awhile harboured an unmortified lust in his heart, it broke all his bones, and left him no spiritual strength; hence he complained that he was sick, weak, wounded, faint; there is, saith he, "no soundness in me," Psalm xxxviii. 3. "I am feeble and sore broken," ver. 8, yea, I cannot so much as look up, Psalm xl. 12. An unmortified lust will drink up the spirit, and all the vigour of the soul.

(2.) As sin weakens, so it darkens the soul. It is a cloud, a thick cloud, that spreads itself over the face of the soul, and intercepts all the beams of God's love and favour. And if the soul begins to gather up thoughts of consolation, sin quickly scatters them. Now in this regard doth the vigour and power of our spiritual life depend on our mortification. It is the only means of the removal of that which will allow us neither the one nor the other.

2. Mortification prunes all the graces of God, and makes room for them in our hearts to grow. The vigour

of our spiritual life consists in the vigour and flourishing of the plants of grace in our hearts. Now as you may see in a garden, let there be a precious herb planted, and let the ground be untilled and weeds grow about it, perhaps it will live still, but be a poor withered thing; whereas let another of the same kind be set in ground naturally as barren as the other; but let it be well weeded, and every thing that is hurtful removed from it, it flourishes and thrives. So it is with the graces of the Spirit that are planted in our hearts.

3. As to our peace; as there is nothing that hath any evidence of sincerity without it, so I know nothing that hath such an evidence of sincerity in it; which is no small foundation of our peace. Mortification is the soul's vigorous opposition to itself; wherein sincerity is most evident.

CHAP. III.

What it is to mortify any Sin.

THESE things being premised, I come to my principal intention of handling some questions that present themselves in this business of mortification. The first, whereunto all are reduced, may be considered as lying under the ensuing proposal.

Suppose a man be a true believer, and yet finds in himself a powerful indwelling sin, consuming his heart with trouble, perplexing his thoughts, weakening his soul, as to communion with God, what shall he do? What course shall he take for the mortification of this sin, that he may be enabled to keep up strength and peace in communion with God? In answer to this important inquiry, I shall—

I. Shew what it is to mortify any sin, that we be not mistaken in the foundation.

II. Give general directions for such things, without

which it will be impossible for any one to get any sin truly mortified.

III. Draw out the particulars whereby this is to be done.

1. There is no man that truly sets himself to mortify any sin, but he aims at, intends, and desires its utter destruction ; that it should leave neither root nor fruit, in the heart or life. He would so kill it, that it should never move or stir any more, cry or call, seduce or tempt to eternity. That it may not exist is the thing aimed at, although it is not soon attained.

2. The mortification of sin consists not in the improvement of a quiet, sedate nature. Some men have an advantage by their natural constitution, that they are not exposed to such violence of unruly passions as many others. Let now these men improve their natural temper, by discipline, consideration, and prudence, and they may seem to themselves and others, very mortified men, when perhaps their hearts are a standing sink of all abominations. Let not such try their mortification by such things as their natural temper gives no life or vigour to. Let them bring themselves to self-denial, unbelief, or some such spiritual sin, and they will have a better view of themselves.

3. A sin is not mortified, when it is only diverted. Simon Magus, for a season left his sorceries ; but his covetousness and ambition remained still. Therefore St. Peter tells him, " I perceive thou art in the gall of bitterness." A man may be sensible of a lust, set himself against it, take care that it shall not break forth as it hath done ; but in the mean time suffer the same corrupted habit to vent itself some other way. And the same is the case of bartering of lusts, and leaving one that a man may serve another. He that changes sensuality for pharisaism, vanity in himself for contempt of others ; let him not think that he hath mortified the sin that he seems to have left. He hath changed his master, but is a servant still.

4. Occasional conquests of sin do not amount to a mortifying of it. There are two occasions wherein men who are contending with any sin, may seem to themselves to have mortified it.

(1.) When it hath had some sad eruption to the disturbance of their peace, terror of their consciences, and evident provocation of God. This awakens all that is in the man, and amazes him, fills him with abhorrency of sin, and himself for it; sends him to God, makes him cry out for life. The whole man, spiritual and natural, being now awaked, sin shrinks in, appears not, but lies as dead before him.

(2.) In a time of some calamity, or pressing affliction; the heart is then taken up with thoughts of fleeing from the present troubles and dangers: this, as a convinced person concludes, is to be done only by relinquishment of sin. It is the anger of God in every affliction that galls a convinced person. To be quit of this, men resolve at such times against their sins. Sin shall never more have any place in them; they will never again give up themselves to the service of it. Accordingly, sin is quiet, stirs not, seems to be mortified; not indeed that it hath received any one wound, but merely because the soul hath possessed its faculties, whereby it should exert itself, with thoughts inconsistent with the motions thereof; which when they are laid aside, sin returns again to its former life and vigour.

What it is to mortify sin is next to be considered.

The mortification of a lust consists, 1. In an habitual weakening of it. Every lust is a depraved disposition, continually inclining the heart to evil. That is the description of him who hath no lust truly mortified, Gen. vi. 5, "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually." He is always under the power of a strong bent and inclination to sin. And the reason why a natural man is not always, perpetually in the pursuit of some one lust night and day, is, because he hath many to serve, every one crying to be satisfied; thence

he is carried on with great variety, but still in general he lies towards the satisfaction of self.

We will suppose then the lust or distemper, whose mortification is inquired after, to be in itself a strong, deep-rooted, habitual inclination and bent of will and affection unto some actual sin, as to the matter of it, though not under that formal consideration, always stirring up imaginations, thoughts, and contrivances about the object of it. Hence men are said to have their hearts set upon evil. A sinful depraved habit, as in many other things, so in this, differs from all natural or moral habits whatever; whereas they incline the soul gently and suitably to itself, sinful habits impel with violence and impetuosity. Whence lusts are said to fight or war against the soul, 1 Pet. ii. 11, to rebel, to lead captive, all which are works of great violence and impetuosity. Now the first thing in mortification is the weakening this habit of sin, that it shall not, with that violence, rise up, tumultuate, entice, disquiet, as it was apt to do.

2. In constant fighting and contending against sin. To be able always to be laying load on sin, is no small degree of mortification. When sin is strong and vigorous, the soul is scarce able to make any head against it. It is implied in this fighting, (1.) To know that a man hath such an enemy; to take notice of it, to consider it as an enemy, and one that is to be destroyed by all means possible. The contest is vigorous and hazardous; it is about the things of eternity. When therefore men have slight and transient thoughts of their lusts, it is no sign they are in a way for their mortification. (2.) To labour to be acquainted with the ways, methods, advantages, and occasions of its success is the beginning of this warfare. So do men deal with enemies. They inquire out their designs, ponder their ends, consider how they have formerly prevailed, that they may be prevented; in this consists the greatest skill. Take this away, and all waging of war, wherein is the greatest improvement of human wisdom and industry, would be brutish. So do they deal

with lust, who mortify it indeed; not only when it is actually vexing, enticing, and seducing, but in their retirements they consider, This is our enemy, this is his way and progress, these are his advantages, thus hath he prevailed, and thus he will do, if not prevented. (3.) To load it daily with all things that are grievous, killing, and destructive to it, is the height of this contest; such an one never thinks his lust dead, because it is quiet, but labours still to give it new wounds, new blows every day.

Unto these heads then do I refer the mortification aimed at; that is, of any one perplexing distemper, whereby the corruption of our nature attempts to exert itself. 1. First, The weakening of its indwelling disposition, whereby it inclines, entices, impels to evils, rebels, and fights against God, by the implanting habitual resistance and cherishing of a principle of grace, that stands in direct opposition to it, is the foundation of it. So by the implanting and growth of humility is pride weakened, passion by patience, uncleanness by purity. 2. The vigour of the spirit, in contending with the lust, by all the means that are appointed thereunto, constantly using the succours provided against its motions, is a second thing here required. 3. Success in several degrees attends these two. Now this, if the distemper hath not an unconquerable advantage from its natural situation, may proceed to such an universal conquest, as the soul may never more sensibly feel its opposition.

CHAP. IV.

General Rules, without which no Lust will be mortified.

THE means whereby a soul may proceed to the mortification of any particular sin, comes next under consideration.

Now there are some general considerations to be premised, concerning some principles of this work, without which no man, be he never so much resolved for the mortification of any sin, can attain thereunto.

1. Unless a man be a believer, he can never mortify any one sin. Mortification is the work of believers, Rom. viii. 13, "If ye through the Spirit," &c. Ye believers, to whom there is no condemnation, ver. 1. They alone are exhorted to it. Col. iii. 5, "Mortify therefore your members that are upon the earth." Who should mortify? You who are risen with Christ, ver. 1. Whose "life is hid with Christ in God," ver. 3. An unregenerate man may do something like it, but the work itself, so as it may be acceptable with God, he can never perform. It is true, it will be required of every person whatever, that hears the law or gospel preached, that he mortify sin. It is his duty, but it is not his immediate duty. It is his duty to do it, but to do it in God's way. If you require your servant to pay so much money for you in such a place, but first to go and take it up in another; it is his duty to pay the money appointed, and you will blame him if he do it not; yet it was not his immediate duty; he was first to take it up, according to your direction. So it is in this case; sin is to be mortified, but something is to be done in the first place to enable us thereto.

But you will say: what then would you have unregenerate men, that are convinced of the evil of sin, to do? Shall they cease striving against sin, live dissolutely, give their lusts their swing, and be as bad as the worst of men? 1. God forbid! It is to be looked on as a great issue of the wisdom, goodness, and love of God, that by manifold ways he is pleased to restrain the sons of men from running into that excess to which the depravedness of their nature would carry them with violence. By what way soever this is done, it is an issue of the care, kindness, and goodness of God, without which the whole earth would be an hell of sin and confusion. 2. There is a peculiar convincing power in the word, which God is often pleased to put forth to the wounding of sinners. And the word is to be preached, though it hath this end, yet not with this end. Let then the word be preached, and the sins of men rebuked, lust will be restrained, though that be not the effect immediately aimed at.

3. Let men know it is their duty, but in its proper place ; I take not men from mortification, but put them upon conversion. He that shall call a man from mending a hole in the wall of his house, to quench a fire that is consuming the whole building, is not his enemy. Poor soul ! it is not thy fore-finger, but thy hectic fever that thou art to apply thyself to the consideration of. Thou settest thyself against a particular sin, and dost not consider that thou art nothing but sin.

Let me add this to them who are preachers of the word. It is their duty to plead with men about their sins, to lay loads on particular sins, but always remember that it be done with that which is the proper end of law and gospel : that is, that they make use of the sin they speak against, to the discovery of the condition wherein the sinner is ; otherwise, haply they may work men to formality and hypocrisy, but little of the true end of preaching the gospel will be brought about. It will not avail to beat a man off from his drunkenness into a sober formality. A skilful master of the assemblies lays his axe at the root, drives at the heart. To inveigh against particular sins of ignorant, unregenerate persons, such as the land is full of, is a good work. But yet, though it may be done with great vigour, if this be all the effect of it, that they are set upon the most sedulous endeavours of mortifying their sins, all that is done, is but like beating the enemy in an open field, and driving him into an impregnable castle. Get you at any time a sinner at the advantage, on the account of any one sin whatever, have you any thing to take hold of him by, bring it to his condition, drive it up to the head, and there deal with him. To break men off particular sins, and not to break their hearts, is to deprive ourselves of advantages of dealing with them.

The second principle is this : without sincerity and diligence in universal obedience, there is no mortification of any one lust to be obtained. I shall a little explain this. When a man finds any lust powerful, strong, he is

not able to bear it, wherefore he sets himself against it, prays against it, groans under it, sighs to be delivered; but in the mean time, perhaps in other duties, in constant communion with God, in reading, prayer, and meditation, in other ways that are not of the same kind with the lust wherewith he is troubled, he is loose and negligent. Let not that man think that ever he shall arrive to the mortification of the lust he is perplexed with. He that hath a running sore upon him, arising from an ill habit of body; let him apply himself with what diligence and skill he can to the cure of his sore, if he leave the general habit of his body under distempers, his labour will be in vain. So will his attempts be, that shall endeavour to stop a bloody issue of sin; and is not equally careful of his universal spiritual constitution. For, 1. let not any man think to do his own work, that will not do God's. God's work consists in universal obedience; to be freed of the present perplexity is their own only. Hence is that of the apostle, 2 Cor. vii. 1, "Cleanse yourselves from all pollution of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord." If we will do any thing, we must do all things. So then it is not only an intense opposition to this or that peculiar lust, but an universal humble temper of heart, with watchfulness over every evil, and the performance of every duty, that is accepted. 2. How knowest thou but that God hath suffered the lust wherewith thou hast been perplexed, to get strength in thee, and power over thee, to chasten thee for thy negligences and lukewarmness in walking before him; at least to awaken thee to the consideration of thy ways, that thou mayest make a thorough change in thy course of walking with him?

The rage and predominancy of a particular lust is commonly the fruit of a careless, negligent course in general; and that upon a double account. (1.) As its natural effect. Lust, in general, lies in the heart of every one; and is subtle, cunning, crafty, it seduces, entices, fights, rebels. Whilst a man keeps a diligent watch over

his heart, its root and fountain; whilst above "all keepings, he keeps his heart, whence are the issues of life and death," lust withers, and dies in it. But if through negligence it make an eruption any particular way, get a passage to the thoughts by the affections; the strength of it bears that way it hath found out, and that way mainly it urgeth, until having got a passage, it then vexes and disquiets, and is not easily to be restrained; that perhaps a man may be put to wrestle all his days in sorrow with that which, by a strict universal watch, might easily have been prevented. (2.) As I said, God often suffers it to chasten our other negligences; for, as with wicked men, he gives them up to one sin, as the judgment of another; so even with his own, he doth leave them sometimes to some vexatious distempers, either to prevent or cure some other evil. Was it not a correction to Peter's vain confidence, that he was left to deny his Master? Now if this be the state of lust in its prevalency, that God often suffers it so to prevail, at least to admonish us, and to humble us, perhaps to chasten and correct us for our general loose and careless walking, is it possible that the effect should be removed, and the cause continued; that the particular lust should be mortified, and the general course be unreformed? He then that would thoroughly mortify any disquieting lust, let him take care to be equally diligent in all parts of obedience, and know that every lust, every omission of duty, is burdensome to God, though but one is so to him.

CHAP. V.

Particular Directions relating to the foregoing Case proposed.

PARTICULAR directions, being the main thing I aim at, come next to be proposed. Now of these some are pre-

vious and preparatory, and in some of them the work itself is contained. Of the first sort are these ensuing.

1. Consider what dangerous symptoms thy lust hath accompanying it. Whether it hath any deadly mark on it, if it hath, extraordinary remedies are to be used ; an ordinary course of mortification will not do it. You will say, what are these dangerous marks and symptoms ? Some of them I shall name.

(1.) Inveterateness ; if it hath lain long corrupting in thy heart ; if thou hast suffered it to abide in power and prevalency, without attempting vigorously the killing of it, and the healing of the wounds thou hast received by it, for some long season, thy distemper is dangerous. Hast thou permitted worldliness, ambition, greediness of study, to eat up other duties ; the duties wherein thou oughtest to hold constant communion with God for some long season ? or uncleanness, to defile thy heart with vain and foolish imaginations ? Thy lust hath a dangerous symptom. In such a case, an ordinary course of humiliation will not do the work ; unless some extraordinary course be taken, such a person hath no ground to expect that his latter end shall be peace.

(2.) Secret pleas of the heart for keeping up its peace, notwithstanding the abiding of a lust, without a vigorous gospel attempt for its mortification, is another dangerous symptom of a deadly distemper in the heart. Now there be several ways whereby this may be done ; I shall name some of them. As, 1. When, upon perplexing thoughts about sin, instead of applying to the destruction of it, a man searches his heart to see what evidences he can find of a good condition, notwithstanding that sin, so that it may go well with him. For a man to gather up his experiences of God is an excellent thing ; but now to do it for this end, to satisfy conscience, which calls for another purpose, is a desperate device of an heart in love with sin. When God shall rebuke him for the distemper of his heart, if, instead of applying himself to get that sin pardoned in the blood of Christ, and mortified by his

Spirit, he shall relieve himself by any such other evidences as he hath, or thinks himself to have, and so disentangle himself from under the yoke that God was putting on his neck; his condition is very dangerous, his wound hardly curable. Thus the Jews, under the gallings of their own consciences, and the convincing preachings of our Saviour, supported themselves with this, that they were Abraham's children, and on that account accepted of God, and so countenanced themselves in all abominable wickedness, to their utter ruin. 2. By applying grace and mercy to an unmortified sin, is this deceit carried on. This is a sign of an heart greatly entangled with the love of sin. That man's wounds stink and are corrupt, and he will without speedy deliverance be at the door of death.

(3.) Frequency of sin's seduction, is another dangerous symptom. This is what I mean, when the sin gets the consent of the will with some delight, though it be not outwardly perpetrated. It is all one upon the matter, whether this be done by choice, or by inadvertency. For that inadvertency itself is in a manner chosen. When we are inadvertent and negligent, where we are bound to watchfulness and carefulness, that inadvertency doth not take off from the voluntariness of what we do thereupon; for although men do not choose and resolve to be negligent and inadvertent, yet if they choose the things that will make them so, they choose inadvertency itself.

(4.) When a man fighteth against his sin only with arguments from the issue, or the punishment due unto it; this is a sign that sin hath taken great possession of the will, and that in the heart there is a "superfluity of naughtiness." Such a man as opposes nothing to the seduction of sin in his heart, but fear of shame among men, or hell from God, is sufficiently resolved to do the sin, if there were no punishment attending it. Try thyself by this also, when thou art by sin driven to make a stand, so that thou must either serve it, or make head against it to suppress it; what dost thou say to thy soul? Is this all, hell will be the end of this course, vengeance

will meet with me, and find me out? It is time for thee to look about thee, evil lies at the door.

(5.) When it is probable that there is, or may be somewhat of judicial hardness, or at least of chastening punishment in thy lust. This is another dangerous symptom. But how shall a man know whether there be any thing of God's chastening hand, in his being left to the disquietness of his distemper? Examine thy heart and ways, what was the condition of thy soul before thou fellest into the entanglements of that sin? Hadst thou been negligent in duties? Hadst thou lived inordinately to thyself? Is there the guilt of any great sin lying upon thee unrepented of? A new sin may be permitted, as well as a new affliction sent, to bring an old sin to remembrance. If thou findest this to have been thy state, awake, call upon God, thou art fast asleep in a storm of anger round about thee.

(6.) When thy lust hath already withstood particular dealings from God against it. This is a sad condition. God often, in his providential dispensations, meets with a man, and speaks particularly to the evil of the heart, as he did to Josep's brethren in their selling him into Egypt. This makes the man reflect on his sin, and judge himself in particular for it. God makes it to be the voice of the danger, affliction, trouble, sickness that he is under. Sometimes in reading the word, God makes a man stay on something that cuts him to the heart, and shakes him as to his present condition. More frequently in hearing the word preached, his great ordinance for conviction, conversion, and edification, doth he meet with men. God often hews men by the sword of his word in that ordinance; strikes directly on their bosom lust; startles the sinner, makes him engage in the mortification of the evil of his heart. Now if his lust have taken such hold on him as to enforce him to break these bonds of the Lord, and to cast these cords from him; if it overcome these convictions, and get again into its old posture; if it can cure the wounds it so receives, that soul is in a

sad condition. These and many other evidences are there of a lust that is dangerous, if not mortal. As our Saviour said of the evil spirit, "This kind goes not out but by fasting and prayer," so say I, of lusts of this kind; an ordinary course of mortification will not do it, extraordinary ways must be fixed on.

This is the first particular direction; consider, whether the sin you are contending with hath any of these dangerous symptoms. The second direction is this, get a clear and abiding sense of the guilt, danger, and evil of that sin.

1. Of the guilt of it. It is one of the deceits of a prevailing lust, to extenuate its own guilt. Is it not a little one? Though this be bad, yet it is not so bad as such and such an evil. Innumerable ways there are whereby sin diverts the mind from a due apprehension of its guilt. Its noisome exhalations darken the mind, that it cannot make a right judgment of things. Let this then be the first care of him that would mortify sin, to fix a right judgment of its guilt in his mind. To which end consider, though the power of sin be weakened by inherent grace in them that have it, so that sin shall not have dominion over them, yet the guilt of sin that doth yet abide is aggravated and heightened by it. I shall not insist on the special aggravations of the sins of such persons; how they sin against more love, mercy, grace, assistance, means, and deliverances, than others. But let this consideration abide in thy mind: there is inconceivably more guilt in the evil of thy heart, that doth remain, than if thou hadst no grace at all.

2. Consider the danger. (1.) Of being hardened by its deceitfulness; this the apostle sorely charges on the Hebrews, ch. iii. 12, 13, "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God, but exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Take heed, saith he, use all

means, consider your temptations, watch diligently ; there is a treachery, a deceit in sin, that tends to the hardening of your hearts from the fear of God. The hardening here mentioned is to the utmost ; utter obduration, sin tends to it, and every lust will make at least some progress towards it. Thou that wast tender, and didst use to melt under the word, under afflictions, wilt grow as some have spoken, sermon proof, and sickness proof ; thou that didst tremble at the presence of God, and appearance before him, when thou hadst more assurance of his love than now thou hast, shalt have a stoutness upon thy spirit not to be moved by these things. Thy soul and thy sin shall be spoken of, and spoken to, and thou shalt not be at all concerned ; but shalt be able to pass over duties, praying, hearing, reading, and thy heart not in the least affected. Sin will grow a light thing to thee ; thou wilt pass it by as a thing of nought ; this it will grow to, and what will be the end of such a condition ?

(2.) Loss of peace and strength all a man's days. To have peace with God, to have strength to walk before God, is the sum of the great promises of the covenant of grace. In these things is the life of our souls. Without them, in some comfortable measure, to live is to die. What good will our lives do us, if we see not the face of God in peace ? If we have not some strength to walk with him ? Now both these will an unmortified lust certainly deprive men of. If ever then thou hast enjoyed peace with God, if ever his terrors have made thee afraid, if ever thou hast had strength to walk with him, or ever hast mourned in thy prayer, think of this danger that hangs over thy head. It is perhaps but a little while and thou shalt see the face of God in peace no more. Perhaps by to-morrow thou shalt not be able to pray, read, hear, or perform any duties with the least life or vigour ; and possibly thou mayest never see a quiet hour whilst thou livest ; that thou mayest carry about thee broken bones full of pain and terror all the days of thy life ; yea,

perhaps God will shoot his arrows at thee, and fill thee with anguish and disquietness, with fears and perplexities, make thee a terror and an astonishment to thyself and others, shew thee hell and wrath every moment; frighten and scare thee with sad apprehensions of his hatred, so that thy sore shall run in the night season, and thy soul shall refuse comfort; so that thou shalt wish death rather than life; yea, thy soul may choose strangling. Consider this a little, though God should not utterly destroy thee, yet he may cast thee into this condition, wherein thou shalt have quick and living apprehensions of thy destruction. Leave not this consideration, until thou hast made thy soul to tremble within thee.

(3.) There is the danger of eternal destruction. For the due management of this consideration, observe, [1.] That there is such a connexion between a continuance in sin, and eternal destruction, that though God does deliver some from a continuance in sin, that they may not be destroyed, yet he will deliver none from destruction that continue in sin. So that whilst any one lies under an abiding power of sin, the threats of destruction and everlasting separation from God are to be held out to him, so Heb. iii. 12, to which add Heb. x. 38. This is the rule of God's proceeding. If any man depart from him, "draw back through unbelief, God's soul hath no pleasure in him," that is, his indignation shall pursue him to destruction; so evidently, Gal. vi. 8. [2.] That he who is entangled under the power of any corruption, can have at that present no clear evidence of his interest in the covenant, by the efficacy whereof he may be delivered from fear of destruction. So that destruction from the Lord may justly be a terror to him; and he may, he ought to look upon it as that which will be the end of his ways. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," Rom. viii. 1. True! but who shall have the comfort of this assertion? Who may assume it to himself? "They that walk after the Spirit,

and not after the flesh." But you will say, Is not this to persuade men to unbelief? I answer, No; there is a two-fold judgment that a man may make of himself, of his person, and of his ways. It is the judgment of his ways, not his person, that I speak of; let a man get the best evidence for his person that he can, yet to judge that an evil way will end in destruction is his duty, not to do it is atheism. I do not say, that in such a condition a man ought to throw away the evidences of his personal interest in Christ; but I say, he cannot keep them. There is a twofold condemnation of a man's self: First, in respect of desert, when the soul concludes that it deserves to be cast out of the presence of God; and this is so far from being the business of unbelief, that it is an effect of faith. Secondly, with respect to the issue and event; when the soul concludes it shall be damned. I do not say this is the duty of any one, nor do I call them to it; but this I say, that the end of the sinful way wherein a man is, ought by him to be concluded to be death, that he may be provoked to fly from it. And this is another consideration that ought to dwell upon such a soul, if it desire to be freed from the entanglement of its lusts.

3. Consider the evils of it; I mean its present evils. Danger respects what is to come; evil what is present: some of the many evils that attend an unmortified lust may be mentioned. (1.) It grieves the blessed Spirit, which is given to believers to dwell in them, and abide with them. So the apostle, Eph. iv. 25—29, dehorting them from many lusts and sins, gives this as the great motive of it, ver. 30, "Grieve not the Holy Spirit, whereby you are sealed to the day of redemption." Grieve not that Spirit of God, whereby you receive so many and so great benefits, of which he instances in one signal and comprehensive one; "sealing to the day of redemption." He is grieved by it, as a tender and loving friend is grieved at the unkindness of his friend, of whom he hath well deserved; so is it with this tender and

loving Spirit, who hath chosen our hearts for a habitation to dwell in. He is grieved by our harbouring his enemies, and those whom he is to destroy. He doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve us, Iam. iii. 33. And shall we daily grieve him? Thus is he said sometimes to be vexed, sometimes grieved at his heart, to express the greatest sense of our provocation. Now if the soul be not utterly hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, this consideration will certainly affect it. Consider who and what thou art, who the Spirit is that is grieved, what he hath done for thee, what he comes to thy soul about, what he hath already done in thee, and be ashamed. (2.) The Lord Jesus is wounded afresh by it; his love is foiled, his adversary gratified. As a total relinquishment of him, by the deceitfulness of sin, is the crucifying him afresh, and "the putting him to open shame," so every harbouring of sin that he came to destroy, wounds and grieves him. (3.) It will take away a man's usefulness in his generation. His works, his endeavours, his labours, seldom receive blessing from God. If he be a preacher, God commonly blows upon his ministry, that he shall labour in the fire, and not be honoured with any success; and the like may be spoken of other conditions.

This then is my second direction; keep alive upon thy heart, and be much in the meditation of these things. Cause thy heart to dwell and abide upon them. Engage thy thoughts in these considerations, let them not go off until they begin to have a powerful influence upon thy soul; until they make it tremble.

CHAP. VI.

Farther Directions proposed.

THIS is my third direction. Load thy conscience with the guilt of it. Not only consider that it hath a guilt, but load thy conscience with the guilt of its actual erup-

tions and disturbances. For the right improvement of this rule, I shall give some particular directions :

1. Take God's method in it; begin with generals, and so descend to particulars. (1.) Charge thy conscience with that guilt which appears in it, from the holiness of the law. Bring the holy law of God into thy conscience, lay thy corruption to it; pray that thou mayest be affected with it. Consider the holiness, spirituality, absoluteness of the law; and see how thou canst stand before it. Be much, I say, in affecting thy conscience with the terror of the Lord in the law, and how righteous it is, that every one of thy transgressions should receive a recompence of reward. Perhaps thy conscience will invent shifts and evasions to keep off the power of this consideration, as that the condemning power of the law doth not belong to thee, thou art set free from it, and the like; and so though thou be not conformable to it, yet thou needest not to be so much troubled at it. But,

1. Tell thy conscience that it cannot manage any evidence to the purpose, that thou art free from the condemning power of sin, whilst thy unmortified lust lies in thy heart; so that perhaps the law may make good its plea against thee for a full dominion, and then thou art lost. Wherefore it is best to ponder to the utmost what it hath to say. 2. Whatever be the issue, yet the law hath commission from God to seize on transgressors, wherever it finds them, and to bring them before his throne, where they are to plead for themselves. This is thy present case, the law hath found thee out; and before God it will bring thee; if thou canst plead a pardon, well and good; if not, the law will do its work. 3. However, this is the proper work of the law, to discover sin in the guilt of it, to awake and humble the soul for it, to be a glass to represent sin in its true colours; and if thou deniest to deal with it on this account, it is not through faith, but through the hardness of thy heart, and the deceitfulness of sin. By such ways, I say, persuade thy con-

science to hearken diligently to what the law speaks in the name of the Lord unto thee about thy lust and corruption. O! if thy ears be open, it will speak with a voice that shall make thee tremble, that shall cast thee to the ground, and fill thee with astonishment. If ever thou wilt mortify thy corruptions, thou must tie up thy conscience to the law, shut it from all shifts and exceptions, until it owns its guilt with a clear and thorough apprehension.

(2.) Bring thy lust to the gospel; not for relief, but for farther conviction of its guilt; look on him whom thou hast pierced, and be in bitterness. Say to thy soul, what have I done, what love, what mercy, what blood, what grace have I despised and trampled on? Is this the return I make to the Father for his love, to the Son for his blood, to the Holy Ghost for his grace? Do I thus requite the Lord! Have I defiled the heart that Christ died to wash, that the blessed Spirit hath chosen to dwell in? And can I keep myself out of the dust? What can I say to the Lord Jesus Christ? How shall I hold up my head with any boldness before him? Do I account communion with him of so little value, that for this vile lust's sake, I have scarce left him any room in my heart? How shall I escape, if I neglect so great salvation? In the mean time, what shall I say to the Lord? Love, mercy, goodness, peace, joy, consolation, I have despised them all, and esteemed them as a thing of nought, that I might harbour a lust in my heart. Entertain thy conscience daily with this treaty. See if it can stand before this aggravation of its guilt. If this make it not sink in some measure and melt, I fear thy case is dangerous.

2. Descend to particulars. As under the general head of the gospel, all the benefits of it are to be considered, as redemption, justification, and the like; so in particular, consider the love toward thine own soul, for the aggravation of the guilt of thy corruption. As, (1.) Consider the infinite patience and forbearance of God towards thee

in particular. Consider what advantages he might have taken against thee, to have made thee a reproach in this world, and an object of wrath for ever. How thou hast dealt treacherously and falsely with him from time to time, flattered him with thy lips, but broken all promises and engagements, and that by the means of that sin thou art now in pursuit of; and yet he hath spared thee from time to time, although thou seemest boldly to have put it to the trial how long he could hold out. And wilt thou yet sin against him? Wilt thou yet weary him, and make him to serve with thy corruptions? (2.) How often hast thou been at the door of being hardened by the deceitfulness of sin; and by the infinite rich grace of God hast been recovered to communion with him again? (3.) All God's gracious dealings with thee in providential dispensations, deliverances, afflictions, mercies, enjoyments, ought here to take place. By these, and the like means, load thy conscience, and leave it not, until it be thoroughly affected with the guilt of thy corruption, until it be sensible of its wound, and lie in the dust before the Lord; unless this be done to the purpose, all other endeavours are to no purpose. Whilst the conscience hath any means to alleviate the guilt of sin, the soul will never vigorously attempt its mortification. (4.) Being thus affected with thy sin, in the next place, get a constant longing, breathing after deliverance from the power of it. Suffer not thy heart one moment to be contented with thy present condition. Assure thyself, unless thou longest for deliverance, thou shalt not have it. Get thy heart then into a panting and breathing frame, long, sigh, cry out; you know the example of David, I shall not need to insist on it.

The fourth direction is, consider whether the distemper with which thou art perplexed, be not rooted in thy nature, and cherished, fomented, and heightened from thy constitution. A proneness to some sins may doubtless lie in the natural temper and disposition of men. In this case consider,

1. This is not in the least an extenuation of the guilt of

thy sin. Some with an open profaneness will ascribe gross enormities to their temper and disposition. And whether others may not relieve themselves from the pressing guilt of their distempers by the same consideration, I know not. It is from the fall, from the original depravation of our natures, that any sin abides in our natural temper. David reckons his being shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin, as an aggravation of his following sin, not a lessening or extenuation of it. That thou art peculiarly inclined unto any sin, is but a peculiar breaking out of original lust in thy nature, which should peculiarly abase and humble thee.

2. That all thou hast to fix upon on this account, in reference to thy walking with God, is that so great an advantage is given to sin, as also to satan, by this thy temper, that without extraordinary watchfulness, care, and diligence, they will assuredly prevail against thy soul. Thousands have been on this account hurried headlong to hell.

3. For the mortification of any distemper, so rooted in nature, unto all other means, there is one expedient peculiarly suited. This is that of the apostle, 1 Cor. ix. 27, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection." The bringing of the body into subjection is an ordinance of God, tending to the mortification of sin. This gives check to the natural root of the distemper, and withers it by taking away its fatness of soil. The bringing of the very body into subjection in the case insisted on, by cutting short the natural appetite, by fasting, watching, and the like, is doubtless acceptable to God, so it be done with the ensuing limitations. (1.) That the outward weakening of the body be not looked upon as a thing good in itself, or that any mortification doth consist therein, which were again to bring us under carnal ordinances, but only as a means for the end proposed; the weakening of any distemper in its natural root. A man may have leanness of body and soul together. (2.) That the means whereby this is done, namely, by fasting and

watching, and the like, be not looked on as things that in themselves can produce true mortification of any sin ; for if they would, sin might be mortified without any help of the Spirit. They are to be looked on only as ways whereby the Spirit may, and sometime doth, put forth strength for the accomplishing of his work, especially in the case mentioned. Want of a right understanding and due improvement of these and the like considerations, hath raised a mortification among Papists, that may be better applied to horses and other beasts of the field, than to believers.

This is the sum of what hath been spoken. When the distemper complained of seems to be rooted in the natural temper, in applying our souls to a participation of the blood and Spirit of Christ, an endeavour is to be used to give check in the way of God to the natural root of that distemper.

The fifth direction is, consider what occasions, what advantages thy distemper hath taken to exert itself, and watch against them all. This is one part of that duty which our blessed Saviour recommends to his disciples under the name of watching, Mark xiii. 37, " I say unto you all, watch ;" which in Luke xxi. 34, is, " Take heed that your hearts be not overcharged:" watch against all eruptions of thy corruptions, consider what ways, what companies, what opportunities, what studies, what businesses, what conditions, have at any time given, or do usually give advantages to thy distempers, and set thyself heedfully against them all. Men will do this with respect to their bodily infirmities. The seasons, the diet, the air that have proved offensive, shall be avoided. Are the things of the soul of less importance? Know that he that dares to dally with occasions of sin, will dare to sin. He that will venture upon temptations unto wickedness, will venture upon wickedness.

The sixth direction is, rise mightily against the first actings of thy distemper, its first conceptions ; suffer it not to get the least ground. Do not say, thus far shall it

go, and no farther. If it have allowance for one step, it will take another. It is impossible to fix bounds to sin. It is like water in a channel ; if it once break out, it will have its course. Dost thou find thy corruption begin to entangle thy thoughts ? Rise up with all thy strength against it, with no less resolution than if it had fully accomplished what it aims at. Consider what an unclean thought would have ; it would have thee roll thyself in folly and filth. Ask envy what it would have ; murder and destruction is at the end of it. Set thyself against it with no less vigour than if it had utterly debased thee to wickedness. Without this course thou wilt not prevail.

Seventhly, exercise thyself to such meditations as may fill thee at all times with self-abasement, and thoughts of thine own vileness : as, 1. Be much in thoughtfulness on the excellence of the majesty of God, and thine infinite inconceivable distance from him ; many thoughts of it cannot but fill thee with a sense of thine own vileness, which strikes deep at the root of any indwelling sin. When Job comes to a clear discovery of the greatness and excellency of God, he is filled with self-abhorrence, and is pressed to humiliation, Job xlii. 5, 6. Think greatly of the greatness of God.

2. Think much of thine unacquaintedness with him. Though thou knowest enough to keep thee low and humble, yet how little a portion is it that thou knowest of him ? The contemplation hereof cast that wise man into that apprehension of himself, which he expresses, Prov. xxx. 2, 3, 4 ; “ Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the Holy. Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended ? Who hath gathered the wind in his fists ? Who hath bound the waters in a garment ? Who hath established the ends of the earth ? What is his name, and what is his Son’s name, if thou canst, tell ? ” Labour with this also to take down the pride of thy heart. What dost thou know of

God? How little a portion is it? How immense is he in his nature? Canst thou look without terror into the abyss of eternity? Thou canst not bear the rays of his glorious being?

Because I look on this consideration of great use in our walking with God, so far as it may have a consistency with that filial boldness which is given us in Jesus Christ, I shall farther insist upon it, to give an abiding impression of it to the souls of them who desire to walk humbly with God. Consider then, I say, to keep thy heart in continual awe of the majesty of God, that persons of the most high and eminent attainments, of the nearest and most familiar communion with God, do yet in this life know but a very little of him and his glory. God reveals his name to Moses, the most glorious attributes that he hath manifested in the covenant of grace, Exod. xxxiv. 5, 6, yet all are but the back parts of God. All that he knows by it is but little, compared to the perfection of his glory. Hence it is with peculiar reference to Moses, that it is said, "No man hath seen God at any time." Of him in comparison with Christ doth he speak; and of him it is here said, No man, no not Moses, the most eminent among them, hath seen God at any time. We speak much of God, can talk of him, his ways, his works, his counsels all the day long; the truth is, we know very little of him; our thoughts, our meditations, our expressions of him are low, many of them unworthy of his glory, none of them reaching his perfections.

You will say, that Moses was under the law, when God wrapped up himself in darkness, and his mind in types, and clouds, and dark institutions. Under the glorious shining of the gospel, which hath brought life and immortality to light, God being revealed from his own bosom, we now know him much more clearly; we see his face now, and not his back parts only.

1. I acknowledge a vast and almost inconceivable difference between the acquaintance we now have with God, after his speaking to us by his own Son, and that which

the generality of the saints had under the law ; for although their eyes were as good, sharp, and clear as ours, their faith and spiritual understanding, not behind ours, the object as glorious unto them as unto us, yet our day is more clear than theirs was ; the clouds are blown away and scattered, the shadows of the night are fled away, the sun is risen, and the means of sight is made more eminent and clear than formerly. Yet,

2. That peculiar sight which Moses had of God, Exod. xxxiv. was a gospel-sight, a sight of God, as gracious, &c. and yet, it is called but his back parts, that is, but low and mean, in comparison of his excellencies and perfections.

3. The apostle exalting to the utmost this glory of light, above that of the law, manifesting that now the veil causing darkness, is taken away ; so that with open or uncovered face we behold the glory of the Lord, tells us how ; as in a glass ; how in that ? clearly, perfectly ? Alas, no. He tells you how that is, 1 Cor. xiii. 12, “ We see through a glass darkly ;” it is not a telescope that helps us to see things afar off, concerning which the apostle speaks ; and yet what poor helps are they ? How short do we come of the truth of things, notwithstanding their assistance ? It is a looking-glass whereunto he alludes, (where are only obscure images of things, and not the things themselves) and a sight therein that he compares our knowledge to. He tells you also that all that we see, by or through this glass, is in a riddle, in darkness and obscurity. And speaking of himself, he tells us, that he saw but in part ; he saw but the back parts of heavenly things, and compares all the knowledge he had attained of God, to that he had of things when he was a child : we know what weak, feeble, uncertain notions children have of things of any abstruse consideration : how when they grow up with any improvement, those conceptions vanish, and they are ashamed of them. Notwithstanding all our confidence of high attainments, all our notions of

God are but childish in respect of his infinite perfections. We lisp and babble, and say we know not what, for the most part, in our most accurate conceptions of God.

CHAP. VII.

The eighth Direction.

Eighthly, in case God disquiet the heart about the guilt of its distempers, take heed thou speak not peace to thyself before God speaks it. This is our next direction; without the observation whereof, the heart will be exceedingly exposed to the deceitfulness of sin. This is a business of great importance. It is a sad thing for a man to deceive his own soul herein. All the warnings God gives us in tenderness to our souls, to try and examine ourselves, tend to the preventing this great evil of speaking peace groundlessly to ourselves, which is to bless ourselves in an opposition to God. It is not my business to insist upon the danger of it, but to help believers to prevent it.

To manage this direction aright, observe, 1. That as it is the great prerogative of God, to give grace to whom he pleases; so he reserves this privilege to himself, to speak peace to whom he pleaseth. 2. As God creates it for whom he pleaseth, so it is the prerogative of Christ to speak it home to the conscience. Take these two previous observations, and I shall give some rules whereby men may know whether God speaks peace to them, or whether they speak peace to themselves only.

(1.) Men certainly speak to themselves, when their so doing is not attended with the greatest detestation imaginable of that sin, in reference wherunto they speak peace. When men are wounded by sin, and knowing there is no remedy for them, but only in the mercies of God, through the blood of Christ, do therefore look to him, and to the promises of the covenant in him, and

thereupon quiet their hearts, and yet their souls are not wrought to the greatest detestation of the sin, upon account whereof they are disquieted, this is to heal themselves, and not to be healed of God. When God comes to speak peace, it fills the soul with shame for all the ways whereby it hath been alienated from him. Let a man make what application he will for healing and peace; let him quiet his heart in the promises of the covenant; yet when peace is spoken, if it be not attended with the detestation and abhorrence of that sin which caused the disquietment; this is not a peace of God's creating, but of our own purchasing. It is but a skinning over the wound, whilst the core lies at the bottom, which will putrefy and corrode, until it break out again.

(2.) When men measure out peace to themselves upon the conclusions that their rational principles will carry them to; this is a false peace. I shall a little explain what I mean. A man hath got a wound by sin; he hath not walked uprightly as becometh the gospel. He considers now what is to be done; light he hath, and knows what path he must take, and how his soul hath been formerly healed. Considering that the promises of God are the outward means for the quieting his heart, he goes to them, searches them out, finds out some, whose literal expressions are directly suited to his condition, says he to himself, God speaks in this promise, here I will take myself a plaster, as long and broad as my wound, and so brings the word of the promises to his condition, and sits him down in peace. But this hath not been the work of the Spirit, who alone can convince us of sin and righteousness. In this case he acts merely upon the principle of conviction; but the Spirit breathes not at all upon all these waters. He doth not wait upon God, who perhaps yet hides his face, and sees the poor creature stealing peace, and running away with it, knowing that the time will come, when he will deal with him again, and call him to a new reckoning; when he shall see it is in vain to go one step, where God doth not take him by the hand.

But how shall we know when we go ourselves, and when the Spirit also doth accompany us? (1.) If any of you are out of the way upon this account, God will speedily let you know it; for besides that you have his promise, that the "meek he will guide in judgment, and teach them his way," Psal. xxv. 9. He will not let you always err. He will, I say, not suffer your nakedness to be covered with fig-leaves, but take them away, and all the peace you have in them, and will not suffer you to settle on such lces; you shall quickly know your wound is not healed. **But,**

(2.) This course is commonly taken without waiting; which is that peculiar act of faith, which God calls for in such a condition. I know God doth sometimes come in upon the soul instantly, wounding and healing it. But ordinarily in such a case God calls for waiting and labouring, attending as the cyc of a servant upon his master. God will have his children lie a while at his door, when they have run from his house, and not instantly rush in upon him; unless he take them by the hand, and pluck them in, when they are so ashamed that they dare not come to him. Now men that speak peace to themselves, commonly make haste; they will not tarry. They do not hearken what God speaks, but on they will go.

(3.) Such a course, though it may quiet the mind, yet it doth not sweeten the heart with rest and gracious content. "Do not my words do good, saith the Lord?" Mic. ii. 7. When God speaks, there is not only truth in his words, that may answer the convictions of our understandings, but also they do good, they bring that which is sweet and good, and desirable to the affections.

(4.) Which is worst of all; it amends not the life, it heals not the evil, it curcs not the distemper. When God speaks peace, it guides and keeps the soul that it turn not again to folly. When we speak it ourselves, the heart is not taken off the evil. Nay, it is the readiest course to bring a soul into a trade of backsliding.

(5.) We speak peace to ourselves, when we do it slightly. This the prophet complains of in some teachers, Jer.

vi. 14. And it is so with some persons, they make the healing of their wounds a slight work ; a look, a glance to the promises does it. The apostle tells us, that the word did not profit some, because, Heb. iv. 2, *μη συγκεκραμεν*®, *it was not well tempered* and mingled with faith. It is not a mere look to the word of mercy in the promise, but it must be mingled with faith, until it is incorporated into the very nature of it.

(6.) Whosoever speaks peace to himself upon one account, and at the same time hath another evil lying upon his spirit, about which he hath had no dealing with God, that man cries peace when there is none. To explain my meaning. A man hath neglected a duty again and again ; his conscience is perplexed, his soul wounded, he hath no quiet in his bones by reason of his sin ; he applies himself for healing, and finds peace. Yet in the mean time perhaps worldliness, or pride, or some other folly, wherewith the Spirit of God is exceedingly grieved, may lie in the bosom of that man, and they neither disturb him, nor he them. Let not that man think that his peace is from God. Then shall it be well with men when they have an equal respect to all God's commandments. God will justify us from our sins, but he will not justify the least sin in us ; " He is a God of purer eyes than to behold iniquity."

(7.) When men of themselves speak peace to their consciences, it is seldom that God speaks humiliation to their souls ; God's peace is humbling peace, melting peace, as it was in the case of David ; never such deep humiliation as when Nathan brought him the tidings of his pardon.

CHAP. VIII.

The general Use of the foregoing Directions.

The considerations which I have hitherto insisted on, are rather of things preparatory to the work aimed at,

than such as will effect it. Directions for the work itself are very few; I mean that are peculiar to it. And they are these that follow:

1. Set faith at work on Christ for the killing of thy sin. His blood is the sovereign remedy for sin-sick souls. Live in this, and thou wilt die a conqueror. Yea, thou wilt, through the good providence of God, live to see thy lust dead at thy feet. But thou wilt say, How shall faith fix on Christ for this purpose? I say, sundry ways.

(1.) By faith fill thy soul with a due consideration of that provision which is laid up in Jesus Christ for this purpose, that all thy lusts, this very lust wherewith thou art entangled, may be mortified. By faith ponder on this, that though thou art no way able by thyself to get the conquest over thy distemper, though thou art even weary of contending, and art utterly ready to faint, yet there is enough in Christ to yield thee relief. In thy greatest distress, consider that fulness of grace, those treasures of strength that are laid up in him. Consider that he is exalted and made "a Prince and Saviour to give repentance unto Israel," Acts v. 31. And if to give repentance, to give mortification, without which the other is not, nor can be. Let then thy faith be exercised with such thoughts as these: "I am a poor, weak creature; unstable as water, I cannot excel; this corruption is too hard for me, and is at the very door of ruining my soul; and what to do I know not; my soul is become as parched ground. I have made promises and broken them, vows and engagements have been as a thing of nought; many persuasions have I had, that I had got the victory, but I am deceived; so that I plainly see, without some eminent succour, I am lost, and shall be prevailed on to an utter relinquishment of God; but although this be my state, yet let the hands that hang down be lifted up, and the feeble knees be strengthened; behold the Lord Christ that hath all fulness of grace in his heart, all fulness of power in his hand; he is able to slay all these his enemies. There is sufficient provision in him for my

relief: he can take my drooping, dying soul, and make me more than a conqueror." If hereby thou dost not find success to a conquest, yet thou wilt be stayed in the chariot, that thou shalt not fly out of the field; thou wilt be kept from lying down under thy unbelief; or turning aside to false remedies. The efficacy of this consideration will be found only in the practice.

(2.) Raise up thy heart by faith to an expectation of relief from Christ; relief in this case from Christ is like the prophet's vision, Hab. ii. 3; "It is for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie; though it tarry, wait for it, because it will not tarry;" though it may seem long to thee, whilst thou art under thy perplexity, yet it shall surely come in the appointed time of the Lord Jesus. If then thou canst raise up thy heart to a settled expectation of relief from Jesus Christ, if thine eyes are towards him, as the eyes of a "servant to the hand of his master," when he expects to receive somewhat from him, thy soul shall be satisfied, he will assuredly deliver thee; he will stay thy lust, and thy latter end shall be peace; only look for it at his hand, expect he will do it. If you will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.

There are two eminent advantages which always attend this expectation of success from Jesus Christ. 1. It engages him to a full and speedy assistance; nothing doth more engage the heart of a man to be helpful to another, than his expectation of help from him, if justly raised and countenanced by him who is to give relief. Our Lord Jesus hath raised our hearts by his kindness, care, and promises, to this expectation; certainly our rising up to it must needs be a great engagement upon him to assist us accordingly. This the Psalmist gives us as an approved maxim, "Thou, Lord, never forsakest them that put their trust in thee." When the heart is once won to rest in God, to repose itself on him, he will assuredly satisfy it. He will never be as water that fails, nor "hath he said at any time to the seed of Jacob, seek ye my face in

vain." If Christ be chosen for the foundation of our supply, he will not fail us. 2. It engages the heart to attend diligently to all means whereby Christ is wont to communicate himself; and so takes in the real assistance of all graces and ordinances whatever. He that expects any thing from a man, applies himself to the means whereby it may be obtained. The beggar that expects an alms, lies at his door, or in his way, from whom he doth expect it. The means wherein Christ communicates himself are, his ordinances ordinarily. He that expects any thing from him, must attend upon him therein. It is the expectation of faith that sets the heart on work. It is not an idle groundless hope that I speak of. If now there be any vigour, efficacy, and power in prayer or the sacrament to this end of mortifying sin, a man will assuredly be interested in it all, by this expectation of relief from Christ. On this account I reduce all particular actings, by prayer, meditation, and the like, to this head: and so shall not farther insist on them when they are grounded on this bottom, and spring from this root; they are of singular use to this purpose.

Now of the importance of this direction for the mortification of a prevailing distemper, you may have a thousand proofs. Who have walked with God under this temptation, and have not found the use and success of it? I dare leave the soul under it, without adding any more. Only some particulars relating thereunto may be mentioned.

(1.) Exercise faith peculiarly on the death and cross of Christ, that is, on Christ as crucified and slain. Mortification of sin is peculiarly from the death of Christ. It is one peculiar, yea, eminent end of the death of Christ, which shall assuredly be accomplished by it. He died to destroy the works of the devil; whatever came upon our natures by his first temptation, whatever corruption receives strength in our persons by his daily suggestions, Christ died to destroy it all. This was his aim, (wherewith he will not fail,) in his giving himself for us, that we might be freed

freed from the power of our sins, and purified from all our defiling lusts. And this, by virtue of his death, shall be accomplished. Hence our washing, purifying, and cleansing, is every where ascribed to his blood. That being sprinkled on us, "purges our consciences from dead works to serve the living God," Heb. ix. 14. This is that we are in pursuit of, that our consciences may be purged from dead works, that they may be rooted out, destroyed, and have place in us no more. This shall certainly be brought about by the death of Christ; there will virtue go out from thence to this purpose. This is that which the apostle intends; Christ by his death destroying the works of the devil, procuring the Spirit for us, hath so killed sin, as to its reign in believers, that it shall not obtain its dominion.

(2.) Then exercise faith on the death of Christ, first, in expectation of power; secondly, in endeavours for conformity. For the first, the direction given in general may suffice. As to the latter, that of the apostle may give us some light, Gal. iii. 1. Let faith look on Christ in the gospel, as he is set forth dying and crucified for us. Look on him under the weight of our sins, praying, bleeding, dying. Bring him in that condition into thy heart by faith; apply his blood so shed to thy corruptions; do this daily.

I have only to add the heads of the work of the Spirit in mortification, which is peculiarly ascribed to him: for this whole work is effected by the power of the Spirit, in all the parts and degrees of it; as,

1. He alone clearly and fully convinces the heart of the evil, and guilt, and danger of the corruption, lust, or sin to be mortified. Without this conviction, or whilst it is faint, there will be no thorough work made. An unbelieving heart will suit with any consideration, until it be overpowered by clear and evident convictions; now this is the proper work of the Spirit, "He convinces of sin," John xvi. 8. He alone can do it. And therefore it is, that wise and knowing men, destitute of the Spirit, do

not think those things to be sins at all, wherein the chief actings of lust consist. It is the Spirit alone that doth this work to the purpose. And this is the first thing that the Spirit doth in order to the mortification of any lust whatever; he convinces the soul of the evil of it; cuts off all its pleas, discovers all its deceits, stops all its evasions, answers its pretences, makes the soul own its abominations, and lie down under the sense of it. Unless this be done, all that follows is in vain. 2. The Spirit alone reveals unto us the fulness of Christ for our relief, which is the consideration that stays the heart from false ways. 3. The Spirit alone establishes the heart in expectation of relief from Christ; which is the great sovereign means of mortification. 4. The Spirit alone brings the cross of Christ into our hearts, with its sin-killing power; for by the Spirit are we baptised into the death of Christ. 5. The Spirit is the author and finisher of our sanctification; gives new supplies in influences of grace for holiness. 6. In all the soul's addresses to God in this condition, it hath support from the Spirit. Whence is the power, life, and vigour of prayer; whence its efficacy to prevail with God? Is it not from the Spirit? He is the Spirit of supplication, enabling us to "pray with groans that cannot be uttered." This is confessed to be the great medium or way of faith's prevailing with God.

THE
NATURE, POWER, DECEIT, AND
PREVALENCY
OF THE
REMAINDERS OF INDWELLING SIN
IN BELIEVERS.

CHAP. I.

The Seat of indwelling Sin. The Heart. What is meant thereby. The Properties of the Heart, as possessed by Sin.

THE power of indwelling sin may appear, First, From its seat. Secondly, Its natural properties. And thirdly, Its operations.

First, For the seat of this, the Scripture every where assigns it to be the heart. There indwelling sin keeps its especial residence. And so it is called by our Saviour, "The evil treasure of the heart," Luke vi. 45; "An evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth evil things." This treasure is the prevailing principle of moral actions that is in men. So in the beginning of the verse, our Saviour calls grace the good treasure of the heart of a good man. It is a principle constantly and

abundantly inciting, consequently bringing forth, actions conformable unto it. And it is also called a treasure, for its abundance. It will never be exhausted; it is not wasted by men's spending on it. Yea, the more lavish men are of this stock, the more they draw out of this treasure, the more it grows and abounds. As men do not spend their grace, but increase it by its exercise, no more do they their indwelling sin. The more men exercise their grace in duties of obedience, the more it is strengthened and increased. And the more men exert the fruits of their lust, the more is that enraged and increased in them. It feeds upon itself, swallows up its own poison, and grows thereby. The more men sin, the more they are inclined unto sin. Every sin increaseth the principle, and fortifieth the habit of sinning. It is an evil treasure that increaseth by doing evil. And where doth this treasure lie? It is in the heart; there it is laid up, there it is kept in safety. All the men in the world, all the angels in heaven, cannot disposses a man of this treasure, it is so safely stored in the heart.

The heart in Scripture is variously used. Sometimes for the mind and understanding; sometimes for the will; sometimes for the affections; sometimes for the conscience; sometimes for the whole soul. Generally it denotes the whole soul of man, and all the faculties of it, not absolutely, but as they are all one principle of moral operations, as they all concur in our doing good or evil: the mind, as it inquireth, discerneth, and judgeth what is to be done, what refused; the will, as it chooseth or refuseth; the affections, as they like or dislike that which is proposed to them; the conscience, as it warns and determines; are all together called the heart. This is the seat, the dwelling-place of this sin. The heart, as it is the entire principle of moral operations, of doing good or evil, as out of it proceed good or evil. Here dwells our enemy; this is the fort, the citadel of this tyrant, where it maintains a rebellion against God.

That we may take a little view of the power of sin,

from this seat of it, we may consider one or two properties of the heart that exceedingly contribute thereto. It is like an enemy in war, whose strength and power lie not only in his numbers, but also in the unconquerable forts that he doth possess. And such is the heart to this enemy of God and our souls, as will appear from the properties of it.

1. It is unsearchable: Jer. xvii. 9, 10, "Who can know the heart? I the Lord search it." The heart of man is pervious to God only; hence he takes the honour of searching the heart as peculiar to himself, and as fully declaring him to be God. We know not the hearts of one another; we know not our own hearts, as we ought. Many there are that know not their hearts, as to their general bent and disposition, whether it be good or bad; but no one knoweth all the secret intrigues, the windings and turnings of his own heart. Hath any one the perfect measure of his own light and darkness? Can any one know what his will will bring forth, upon the proposal of that endless variety of objects that it is to be exercised with? Can any one traverse the various mutability of his affections? Do the secret springs of acting and refusing lie before the eyes of any man? Doth any one know what will be the motions of the mind, in such and such conjunctions of things? Such a suiting of objects, such a pretension of reasonings, such an appearance of things desirable? All in heaven and earth but the infinite all-seeing God, are utterly ignorant of these things. In this unsearchable heart dwells sin; and much of its security, and consequently of its strength, lies in this, that it is past our finding out. We fight with an enemy, whose secret strength we cannot discover, whom we cannot follow into its retirements. Hence often, when we are ready to think sin quite ruined, after a while we find it was but out of sight. It hath coverts and retreats in an unsearchable heart, whither we cannot pursue it. The soul may persuade itself all is well, when sin may be safe in the hidden darkness of the mind, which

it is impossible he should look into ; for whatever makes manifest is light. It may suppose the will of sinning is utterly taken away, when yet there is an unsearchable reserve for a more suitable object, a more vigorous temptation. Hath a man had a contest with any lust, and a blessed victory over it by the Holy Ghost, when he thinks it is utterly expelled, he ere long finds that it was but retired. It can lie so close in the mind's darkness, in the disorder of the affections, that no eye can discover it. The best of our wisdom is but to watch its first appearances, to catch its first under-earth heavings and workings, and to set ourselves in opposition to them ; for to follow it into the secret corners of the heart, that we cannot do. It is true, there is yet a relief in this case, namely, that he to whom the work of destroying sin in us is committed, namely, the Holy Ghost, comes with his ax to the very root, neither is there any thing that is not open and naked unto him. But we, in a way of duty, may hence see what an enemy we have to deal with.

2. As it is unsearchable, so it is deceitful ; it is "deceitful above all things." There is great deceit in the dealings of men in the world, great in their counsels and contrivances, in reference to their affairs, private and publick ; great deceit in their words and actings : the world is full of deceit and fraud. But all this is nothing to the deceit that is in man's heart towards himself. Now deceitfulness, added to unsearchableness, gives a great addition of strength to sin. I speak not yet of the deceitfulness of sin itself, but the deceitfulness of the heart where it is seated. Now this deceitfulness of the heart lies chiefly in two things.

(1.) That it abounds in contradictions, so that it is not to be found and dealt with according to any constant rule and way of procedure. There are some men that seem to be made up of contradictions ; sometimes to be very wise in their affairs, sometimes very foolish, very open, and very reserved ; very facile, and very obstinate ; very easy to be entreated, and very revengeful, all in a

remarkable height. This is generally accounted a bad character: but in general, in respect of moral good or evil, it is so with the heart of every man; flaming hot, and key cold; weak, and yet stubborn; obstinate, and facile. The frame of the heart is ready to contradict itself every moment. Now you would think you had it all in such a way; anon it is quite otherwise. So that none know what to expect from it. The rise of this is the disorder that is brought upon all its faculties by sin. God created them all in a perfect harmony and union. The mind and reason were in perfect subjection and subordination to God; the will answered in its choice of good the discovery made of it by the mind; the affections constantly and evenly followed the understanding. The mind's subjection to God was the spring of the orderly and harmonious motion of the soul, and all the wheels in it. That being disturbed by sin, the rest of the faculties move cross and contrary one to another; the will chooseth not the good which the mind discovers; the affections delight not in that which the will chooseth, but all jar and interfere, cross and rebel against each other. This we have got by our falling from God. Hence sometimes the will leads, the judgment follows: yea, commonly, the affections, that should attend upon all, get the sovereignty, and draw the whole soul captive after them. And hence it is that the heart is made up of so many contradictions. Sometimes the mind retains its sovereignty, and the affections are in subjection. This puts a good face upon things. Immediately the rebellion of the affections, or the obstinacy of the will, take place, and the whole scene is changed. This makes the heart deceitful above all things; it is not constant to itself, is under no certain conduct, but hath a rotation in itself, where oft-times the feet lead and guide the whole.

(2.) Its deceit lies in its full promisings upon the first appearance of things; and this also proceeds from the same principle. Sometimes the whole heart appears in a fair frame, all promiseth to be well. Within a while the

whole frame is changed ; the mind was not at all affected, the affections are gone off, and all the fair promises of the heart are depraved with them. Now add this deceitfulness, and we shall find that the difficulty of dealing with sin in its seat and throne will be exceedingly increased. A deceiving and a deceived heart, who can deal with it? Especially considering that the heart employs all its deceits unto the service of sin. All the disorder that is in the heart, all its false promises, and fair appearances promote the interest of sin. Hence God cautions the people to look to it, "lest their own heart should entice and deceive them." Who can mention the treacheries that lie in the heart of man? It is not for nothing that the Holy Ghost so expresseth it, "It is deceitful above all things ;" uncertain in what it doth, and false in what it promiseth. And hence moreover it is, amongst other causes, that in the pursuit of our war against sin, we have not only the old work to go over and over, but new work still ; still new stratagems to deal with, as the manner will be where unsearchableness and deceitfulness are to be contended with.

There are many other properties of this seat of sin, which might be insisted on, but that would too far divert us ; and therefore I shall pass these over with some few considerations.

1. Never let us reckon that our work in contending against sin, in crucifying, mortifying, and subduing of it, is at an end. The place of its habitation is unsearchable ; and when we may think we have thoroughly won the field, there is still some reserve remaining that we knew not of. Many conquerors have been ruined by their carelessness after a victory ; and many have been spiritually wounded after great successes against this enemy. David was so ; his great surprisal into sin was after a long profession, manifold experiences of God, and watchful keeping himself from his iniquity. And hence, in part, hath it come to pass, that the profession of many hath declined in their old age. They have given over the

work of mortifying of sin before their work was at an end. There is no way for us to pursue sin in its unsearchable habitation, but by being endless in our pursuit. And that command of the apostle which we have, Col. iii. 5, on this account, is as necessary for them to observe who are towards the end of their race, as those that are but at the beginning of it. "Mortify therefore your members that are on the earth;" be always doing it whilst you live. It is true, great ground is obtained when the work is vigorously and constantly carried on. But yet the work must be endless. If we give over, we shall quickly see this enemy exerting itself with new strength. It may be, under some great affliction, or in some eminent enjoyment of God, in the sense of the sweetness of blessed communion with Christ, we have been ready to say, that there was an end of sin, that it was dead and gone for ever. But have we not found the contrary by experience? Hath it not manifested that it was only retired into some unsearchable recesses of the heart; let us then reckon on it, that there is no way to have our work done but by always doing of it.

2. It hath its residence in that which is various, inconstant, deceitful above all things, this calls for perpetual watchfulness against it. An open enemy that deals by violence only, always gives some respite; you know where to have him, and what he is doing, so as that sometimes you may sleep without fear. But against adversaries that deal by deceit and treachery, which have long swords, and reach at the greatest distance, nothing will give security but perpetual watchfulness. It is impossible we should, in this case, be too jealous, doubtful, suspicious, or watchful. The heart has a thousand wiles, and if we are in the least off our watch, we may be sure to be surprised. Hence are those reiterated commands and cautions given for watching, for being circumspect, diligent, careful. There is no living for them who have to deal with an enemy deceitful above all things, unless they persist in such a frame. All cautions that are given in

the case are necessary, especially that, "Remember not to believe." Doth the heart promise fair? Rest not on it, but say to the Lord Christ, Lord, do thou undertake for me. Doth the sun shine fair in the morning? Reckon not on a fair day; the clouds may arise and fall; though the morning give a fair appearance of serenity and peace, turbulent affections may arise, and cloud the soul with sin and darkness.

3. Commit then the whole matter, with all care and diligence, unto him who can search the heart to the uttermost, and knows how to prevent all its treacheries. In the things before-mentioned lies our duty, but here lies our safety. There is no treacherous corner in our hearts but he can search it to the uttermost; there is no deceit in them but he can disappoint it. This course David takes, Psal. cxxxix. After he had set forth the omnipresence of God, and his omniscience, ver. 8, 9, 10, he makes improvement of it, ver. 23: "Search me, O Lord, and try me." As if he had said, It is but a little that I know of my deceitful heart; only I would be sincere, I would not have reserves for sin therein; wherefore do thou, who art present with my heart, who knowest my thoughts long before, undertake this work, perform it thoroughly, for thou alone art able so to do.

CHAP. II.

Indwelling Sin, Enmity against God.

We have seen the seat of this sin. In the next place I shall consider one property of it that belongs unto its nature, and this always wherever it is. And this is that which is expressed by the apostle, Rom. viii. 7, "The carnal mind is enmity against God;" that which is here called, *φρονημα της σαρκος*, "the wisdom of the flesh," is the same with the sin which we insist on. And what says he hereof? "It is enmity against God."

1. It is not only an enemy, for so possibly some reconciliation might be made, but it is enmity itself, and so not capable of accepting any terms of peace. Enemies may be reconciled, but enmity cannot. Yea, the only way to reconcile enemies, is to destroy the enmity. So the apostle in another place tells us, Rom. v. 10, "We who were enemies, are reconciled unto God;" that is a work brought about by the blood of Christ, the reconciling of the greatest enemies. But when he comes to speak of enmity, there is no way for it, but it must be abolished, Ephes. ii. 15, "Having abolished in his flesh the enmity." There is no way to deal with enmity but by its abolition or destruction. And this also lies in it, that every part of it, the least degree of it, that can possibly remain in any one, whilst there is any thing of its nature, is enmity still. It may not be so effectual in operation, but it is enmity still. As every drop of poison is poison, and will infect, and every spark of fire is fire, and will burn; so every thing of sin, the last, the least of it, is enmity, it will poison, it will burn. Mortification abates its force, but doth not change its nature. Grace changeth the nature of man, but nothing can change the nature of sin. It is enmity still, sin still. This then by it is our condition. "God is love," 1 John iv. 8. He is so in himself, eternally excellent and desirable above all. He is so to us, he is so in the blood of his Son, and in all the inexpressible fruits of it, by which we are what we are, and wherein all our future hopes and expectations are wrapped up. Against this God we carry about us an enmity; an enmity that is incapable of cure or reconciliation. Destroyed it may be, it shall be, but cured it cannot be.

And herein lies no small part of its power; it can admit of no terms of peace, of no composition. There may be a composition where there is no reconciliation. There may be a truce where there is no peace. But with this enemy we can obtain neither the one nor the other. It is never quiet, conquering nor conquered. It is in vain for a man to have any expectation of rest

from his lust, but by its death. Some in the tumult of their corruptions seek for quietness by labouring to satisfy them, "making provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof," as the apostle speaks, Rom. xiii. 14. This is to slack fire by wood and oil. As all the fuel in the world, all the fabrick of the creation that is combustible, being cast into the fire, will not at all satisfy it, but increase it; so it is with satisfaction given to sin by sinning, it doth but inflame and increase. If a man will part with some of his goods unto an enemy, it may satisfy him; but enmity will have all, and is not one whit the more satisfied than if it had received nothing at all. Like the lean cattle, that were never the less hungry, for having devoured the fat. You cannot bargain with the fire to take but so much of your houses, ye have no way but to quench it. It is in this case as it is in the contest between a wise man and a fool, Prov. xxix. 9, "Whether he rage or laugh, there is no rest." Whatever temper he be in, his importunate folly makes him troublesome. It is so with this indwelling sin, whether it rage or laugh, whether it violently tumultuate, as it will do on provocations and temptations, or whether it seem to be pleased, all is one; there is no peace, no rest to be had with it. Had it been of any other nature, some other way might have been fixed on, but now all the relief the soul hath must lie in its ruin.

2. It is not only enmity, but enmity against God. It hath chosen a great enemy indeed. It fights against the Spirit, or the Spiritual principle that is in us, to conquer it; it fights against our souls to destroy them. But its proper object is God; it is enmity against God; God as the Law-giver, God as holy, God as the author of the gospel. Why doth it render the soul carnal, unbelieving, unspiritual, weary, wandering? It is because of its enmity to God, whom the soul aims to have communion with in duty. It hath, as it were, that command from satan, which the Assyrians had from their king, "Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel," 1 Kings xxii. 31.

It is neither great nor small, but God himself, the King of Israel, that sin sets itself against. There lies the secret reason of all its opposition to good, even because it relates to God. As the Assyrians, because of his shew of a king, assaulted Jehoshaphat, but when they found it was not Ahab, turned back from pursuing of him. So when there is a shew of the worship of God, sin may make head against it at first, but when the duty cries out in the heart that indeed God is not there, sin turns away to seek out its proper enemy, even God himself. And hence do many poor creatures spend their days in dismal superstitions, without any great reluctance from within, when others cannot be suffered freely to watch with Christ in a spiritual manner one hour.

It is thus also in respect of all propensity to sin, as well as aversion from God. It is God himself that is aimed at. It is true, the pleasures of sin greatly influence sensual affections; but it is the holiness and authority of God, that sin itself rises up against. It hates the yoke of the Lord; "Thou hast been weary of me," saith God to sinners, and that during their performance of abundance of duties. Every act of sin is a fruit of being weary of God. Thus Job tells us what lies at the bottom in the heart of sinners; "They say to the Lord, Depart from us;" it is enmity against him. Here lies the formal nature of every sin, it is an opposition to God, a casting off his yoke, a breaking off the dependence which the creature ought to have on the Creator. And the apostle, Rom. viii. 7, gives the reason why he affirms the carnal mind to be enmity against God; namely, because it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can it. It never is, nor will, nor can be subject to God, its whole nature consisting in opposition to him. The soul wherein it is, may be subject to the law of God, but sin will not be in subjection.

This enmity against God is universal. Some contentions are bounded to particular concerns, this is about

one thing, that about another. It is not so here; the enmity is absolute and universal, as are all enmities that are grounded in the nature of the things themselves: for 1. It is universal to all of God: and, 2. It is universal in all of the soul.

1. It is universal to all of God. If there were any thing of God, his nature, properties, will, his law or gospel, any duty of obedience to him, of communion with him, that sin had not an enmity against, the soul might have a retreat within itself, by applying itself to that of God, to that of duty towards him, to that of communion with him, that sin would make no opposition against. But the enmity lies against God, and all of God, and every thing wherein we have to do with him. It is not subject to the law, nor any part nor parcel, word or tittle of the law. Sin is enmity to God, as God, and therefore to all of God; not his goodness, not his holiness, not his promises only. There is not any thing of him, which it doth not make head against; nor any duty, private, publick, in the heart, in external works, which it opposeth not. And the nearer any thing is to God, the greater is its enmity unto it. The more spirituality is in any thing, the greater is its enmity. That which hath most of God, hath most of its opposition. Concerning them in whom this law is predominant, God says, "Ye have set at nought all my counsel, and you would have none of my reproof," Prov. i. 25. Not this or that part of God's counsel, but all his counsel, whatever he calleth for, in every particular; all is set at nought, and nothing of his reproof attended to. A man would not think it strange that sin should maintain an enmity against God in his law, which comes to condemn it; but it raiseth a greater enmity against him in his gospel, wherein he tenders mercy and pardon, and that merely because more of the glorious properties of God's nature, more of his excellencies and condescension, is manifested therein.

2. It is universal in all of the soul. Would this law of sin have contented itself to have subdued any one

faculty of the soul, would it have left any one at liberty, any one affection free from its yoke and bondage, it might possibly have been with more ease opposed or subdued. But when Christ comes with his spiritual power upon the soul to conquer it to himself, he hath no quiet landing-place. He can set foot on no ground but what he must fight for and conquer. Not the mind, not an affection, not the will only, but all is secured against him. And when grace hath made its entrance; yet sin will dwell in all its coasts. Were any thing in the soul at perfect freedom, there a stand might be made to drive it from all the rest of its holds: but it is universal, and wars in the whole soul. The mind hath its own darkness and vanity to wrestle with; the will its own stubbornness, obstinacy, and perverseness; every affection its own frowardness and aversion from God and sensuality; so that one cannot yield relief unto another as they ought; they have, as it were, their hands full at home. Hence it is that our knowledge is imperfect, our obedience weak, love not unmixed, fear not pure, delight not free and noble.

3. Hereunto might be added its constancy. It is constant unto itself, it wavers not, it hath no thoughts of yielding, notwithstanding the powerful opposition that is made to it both by the law and gospel.

What hath been delivered might give us a little sense of it, and stir up to watchfulness. What can be of a more sad consideration than that we should carry about us constantly that which is enmity against God, and that not in this or that particular, but in all that he is, and in all wherein he hath revealed himself?

There are two general heads of the working of enmity, aversation and opposition. 1. Aversation. Our Saviour describing the enmity that was between himself and the teachers of the Jews, saith in the prophet, "My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me," Zech. xi. 8. Where there is mutual enmity, there is mutual aversation, loathing, and abomination. So it was between

the Jews and the Samaritans, they were enemies, and abhorred one another; as John iv. 9. 2. Opposition, or contending against one another, is the next product of enmity, Isaiah lxiii. 10, "He was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them;" speaking of God towards the people. Where there is enmity, there will be fighting, it is the proper and natural product of it. Now both these effects are found in this sin.

First, There is an aversion in it to God, and every thing of God. All indisposition unto duty, wherein communion with God is to be obtained, all weariness of duty, all carnality or formality under duty, all spring from this root. The wise man cautions us against this evil, Eccles. v. 1, "When thou goest to the house of God, keep thy foot." Hast thou any spiritual duty to perform, and dost thou design the attaining any communion with God? Look to thyself, take care of thy affections, they will be wandering, and that from their aversation to what thou hast in hand. There is not any good that we would do, wherein we may not find this aversation exercising itself. Let us a little consider this aversation in such acts of obedience wherein there is no concernment but that of God and the soul. In publick duties there may be a mixture of other considerations. But let us take into consideration the duties of retirement, as private prayer and meditation, or else extraordinary duties, or duties to be performed in an extraordinary manner.

(1.) In these will this aversation often discover itself. A secret striving will be in them about close and eordial dealing with God. Unless the hand of God in his Spirit be high and strong upon the soul, even when convictions, real esteem of God, and communion with him, have carried the soul into its closet, yet if there be not the vigour and power of spiritual life constantly at work, there will be a secret loathness unto duty; yea, sometimes there will be a violent inclination to the contrary; so that the soul had rather do any thing than vigorously apply itself. Here God and the soul are immediately con-

cerned, and it is a great conquest to do what we would, though we come exceedingly short of what we should do.

(2.) It discovers itself in the mind also. When we address ourselves to God in Christ, we are, as Job speaks, "to fill our mouths with arguments," ch. xxiii. 4, that we may be able to plead with him, as he calls on us to do, Isaiah xliii. 26, "Put me in remembrance, let us plead together." The sum is, that the mind should be furnished with considerations that are prevailing with God, and be in readiness to plead them in the most spiritual manner. Now is there no difficulty to get the mind into such a frame, as to lay out itself to the utmost in this work? To be clear, steady, and constant in its duty? To make use of its stores of promises and experiences? It starts, wanders, flags, all from this secret aversion to communion with God. Some complain that they can make no work of meditation, they cannot bend their minds unto it. I confess there may be a great cause of this, in their want of a right understanding of the duty itself. But yet this secret enmity hath its hand also, both in their minds and in their affections. And here hath been the beginning of the apostasy of many. I am persuaded there are very few that apostatise from a profession of any continuance, but their entrance was either some great and notorious sin that burdened their consciences, tainted their affections, and intercepted all delight in God; or else it was a course of neglect in private duties, arising from a weariness of contending against that powerful aversion which they found in themselves unto them.

As it is in respect of private, so it is also in respect of publick duties, that have any thing extraordinary in them. What strivings, strugglings, and pleadings are there in the heart about them, especially against the spirituality of them! Yea, in and under them, will not the mind and affections sometimes be entangled with things new and strange unto them, such as, at the time of the least serious business, a man would not deign to take into his

thoughts? But if the least liberty or advantage be given to indwelling sin; if it be not perpetually watched over, it will work to a strange and an unexpected issue. In brief, let the soul unclthe any duty whatever, private or publick, any thing that is called good, let a man divest it of all outward respects which secretly insinuate themselves into the mind, and give it some complacency in what it is about, and he shall assuredly find somewhat of the power, and some of the effects of this aversation. It begins in loathness and indisposition, goes on with entangling the mind and affections with other things, and will end, if not prevented, in weariness of God.

1. The great means to prevent the effects of this aversation, is the constant keeping the soul in an universally holy frame. As this weakens the whole law of sin, so particularly this aversation. It is this frame only that will enable us to say with the Psalmist, Psalm lvii. 7, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed." It is utterly impossible to keep the heart in a prevailing holy frame in any one duty, unless it be so in all and every one. A constant even temper in all duties, in all ways, is the only preservative for any one way. Let not him who is neglective in publick, persuade himself, that all will be clear and easy in private, or on the contrary. There is an harmony in obedience, break but one part and you interrupt the whole.

2. Labour to prevent the very beginnings of the workings of this aversation; let grace be beforehand with it in every duty. We are directed, 1 Pet. iv. 7, "to watch unto prayer;" and as it is unto prayer, so unto every duty; that is, to consider and take care that we be not hindered from within, nor from without, as to a due performance of it. Watch against temptations to oppose them, watch against the aversation that is in sin to prevent it. As we are not to give place to satan, no more are we to sin. If it be not prevented in its first attempts, it will prevail.

3. Though it do its worst, yet be sure it never prevail

to a conquest. Be sure you be not wearied out by its importunity; do not faint by its opposition. Take the apostle's advice, Heb. vi. 11, "We desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end, that ye be not slothful." Still hold out in the same diligence. There are many ways whereby men are driven from a constant, holy performance of duties, all of them dangerous, if not pernicious to the soul. Some are diverted by business, some by company, some by the power of temptations, some discouraged by their own darkness; but none so dangerous as this, when the soul gives over in part, or in whole, as wearied by the aversation of sin unto it. Our Saviour's instruction is, we ought "always to pray and not to faint," Luke xviii. 1. Opposition will arise, none so bitter and keen as that from our own hearts; if we faint we perish. "Take heed lest you be wearied," saith the apostle, "and faint in your minds," Heb. xii. 3. Such a fainting as is attended with a weariness, and that with a giving place to the aversation working in our hearts, is to be avoided, if we would not perish. That which is now so difficult, will increase in difficulty if we give way unto it. But if we abide in our station we shall prevail, the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

4. Carry about a constant humbling sense of this close aversation unto spiritualness that yet lies in our nature. If men find the efficacy of it, what consideration can be more powerful to bring them to humble walking with God? That after all the discoveries which God hath made of himself unto them, all the kindness they have received from him; his doing of them good and not evil in all things there should be such an heart of unkindness and unbelief, as to have an aversion to communion with him? How ought the thoughts of it to cast us into the dust, to fill us with shame and self-aborrancy! What have we found in God in any of our approaches or addresses to him, that it should be thus with us? What iniquity have we found in him? "Hath he been a wilderness unto us,

or a land of darkness?" Did we ever lose any thing by drawing nigh unto him? Nay, hath not therein lien all the rest and peace which we have obtained? Is not he the fountain and spring of all our mercies? Hath he not bid us welcome at our coming? Have we not received from him more than heart can conceive, or tongue express? What ail then our foolish and wretched hearts, to harbour such a cursed dislike of him and his ways? Let us be ashamed and astonished at the consideration of it, and walk in an humble sense of it all our days.

CHAP. III.

The Work of this Enmity against God, by way of Opposition.

How this enmity worketh by way of aversation hath been declared. The second way whereby it exerts itself is opposition. Enmity will oppose and contend with that wherewith it is at enmity. It is so in things natural and moral. As light and darkness, heat and cold, so virtue and vice oppose each other. So it is with sin and grace, saith the apostle, these are contrary one to the other, Gal. v. 17, *αντικεινται αλληλοις*, they are *placed, and set in mutual opposition*, and that continually and constantly.

Now there are two ways whereby encmies manage an opposition. By force, and by fraud. And both these are made use of by sin in its enmity against God. I shall begin with the first; or its acting in open opposition to God.

In this there are four things expressing so many distinct degrees in its progress. 1. Its general inclination, *it lusteth*, Gal. v. 17. 2. Its particular way of contending, *it fights or wars*, Rom. vii. 23, James iv. 1, 1 Pet. ii. 11. 3. Its success in this conquest, *it brings the soul into captivity to the law of sin*, Rom. vii. 23. 4. Its *growth and rage* upon success, it comes up to madness, as an enraged enemy

will do, Eccles. ix. 3. All which we must speak to in order.

1. In general it is said to lust, "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit," Gal. v. 17. This word expresseth the general nature of that opposition which sin maketh against God, and his grace in them that believe. And therefore the least degree of that opposition is expressed hereby. Hence all the actings of sin are called the "lusts of the flesh," Gal. v. 16, "Ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." Nor are these lusts of the flesh those only whereby men act their sensuality, in riot, drunkenness, uncleanness, and the like, but they comprehend all the actings of sin whatever, in all the faculties and affections of the soul. Thus Ephes. ii. 3, we have mention of the desires, or wills, or lusts of the mind, as well as of the flesh. The mind hath its lusts, no less than the sensual appetite, which seems sometimes more properly to be called the flesh. And in the products of these lusts there are defilements of the spirit, as well as of the flesh, 2 Cor. vii. 1. That is, of the mind and understanding, as well as of the appetite and the body. Yea, by the flesh in this matter the whole old man is intended. And this flesh lusteth, which is the general foundation of all its opposition unto God. This it doth two ways.

First, In an hidden close propensity unto all evil. This lies in it habitually. Whilst a man is in the state of nature, fully under the power and dominion of this law of sin, it is said, that "every figment of his heart is evil, and that continually," Gen. vi. 5. And where the power of it is broken, yet in its own nature it hath still an habitual propensity unto that which is evil, wherein its lusting doth consist. It is with indwelling sin as with a river; whilst the springs of it are open, and waters continually supplied to its streams, set a dam before it, and it causeth it to rise and swell, until it bear down all, or overflow the banks. Let these waters be dried up in some good measure in the springs, and the remainder may be restrained. But still, as long as there is any

running water, it will constantly press upon what stands before it, according to its weight and strength. And if by any means it make a passage, it will proceed. So is it with indwelling sin; whilst the springs of it are open, in vain is it for men to set a dam before it by their convictions, resolutions, vows, and promises. They may check it for awhile, but it will increase, rise high, and rage at one time or another, until it bear down all those convictions and resolutions, or make itself an underground passage by some secret lust that shall give a full vent unto it. But now suppose the springs of it are much dried up by regenerating grace, the streams of it abated by holiness, yet, whilst any thing remains of it, it will be pressing to have vent, to press forward into actual sin. And this is its lusting.

And this habitual propensity in it is discovered two ways: (1.) In its unexpected surprisals of the soul into foolish, sinful imaginations, which it looked not for, nor was any occasion administered to them. It is with indwelling sin as it is with the contrary principle of sanctifying grace. This gives the soul many a blessed surprisal. It often brings forth an holy frame in the heart and mind, when we have had no previous rational considerations to work them there. And this manifests it to be an habitual principle prevailing in the mind. And thus also is it with indwelling sin; ere the soul is aware, without any provocation or temptation, when it knows not, it is cast into a vain and foolish frame. Sin produceth its figments secretly in the heart, and prevents the mind's consideration of what it is about. And these surprisals, if the soul be not awake to take speedy care for the prevention of their tendency, do often set all on fire, and engage the mind and affections in actual sin. (2.) This habitual inclination manifests itself in its readiness to close with every temptation: as we know it is in the nature of fire to burn, because it immediately lays hold on whatever is combustible. There is from indwelling sin a continual disposition to be slipping, stum-

bling, halting on every occasion. There is nothing so vain, foolish, ridiculous, nothing so vile and abominable, but if it be proposed unto the soul in a way of temptation, there is that in this law of sin, which is ready to answer it, before it be descried by grace. And this is the principal thing in this lusting of sin: it consists in its habitual propensity unto evil, manifesting itself by the involuntary surprisals of the soul unto sin; and its readiness to join with all temptations whatsoever.

Secondly, Its lusting consists in its actual pressing after that which is evil, and actual opposition unto that which is good. The former instances shewed its constant readiness to this work, this now treats of the work itself. It is not only ready, but for the most part always engaged. It lusteth, saith the Holy Ghost, it doth so continually. It stirreth in the soul by one act or other constantly, almost as the blood in the veins. This the apostle calls its tempting, Jam. i. 14, "Every man is tempted of his own lust." Now what is it to be tempted? It is to have that proposed to a man's consideration, which if he close with, it is sin unto him. This is sin's trade. It is raising up in the heart, and proposing to the mind and affections, that which is evil, trying, as it were, whether the soul will close with its suggestions, or how far it can carry them on, though it do not wholly prevail. It is restlessly and continually raising up and proposing innumerable various forms and appearances of evil, in this or that kind, indeed in every kind, that the nature of man is capable to exercise corruption in. Something or other, in matter, or manner, or circumstance, inordinate, unspiritual, unanswerable unto the rule, it hatcheth and proposeth unto the soul.

2. There is its particular way of contending, it *fight*s or *war*s; that is, it acts with strength and violence, as men do in war. (1.) It lusts, stirring and moving inordinate figments in the mind, desires in the appetite and the affections. But, (2.) It rests not there, it cannot rest; it urgeth, presseth, and pursueth its proposals

with earnestness, strength, and vigour, fighting, and contending, and warring to obtain its purpose. Would it merely propose things, and immediately acquiesce in the sentence of the mind that the thing is evil against God, and not farther to be insisted on, much sin might be prevented. But it rests not here, it proceeds to carry on its design, and that with earnestness and contention.

Now this fighting or warring of sin consists in two things: First, In its rebellion against grace. Which appears, 1. In the opposition it makes to the general purpose of the soul. 2. In the opposition it makes to particular duties.

1. In the opposition it makes to the general purpose of the soul. There is none in whom is the Spirit of Christ, but it is his general design to walk in conformity to him in all things. Even from the inward frame of the heart, to the whole compass of his outward actions, so it is with him. This the apostle sets forth, Phil. iii. 12—14, “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” He useth three words excellently expressing the soul’s universal pursuit of this purpose of heart in cleaving to God. First, saith he, *διωκω*, ver. 12, I follow after: the word signifies properly to persecute, which with what earnestness and diligence it is usually done, we know. Secondly, *επεκτεινομαι*, I reach forward, reaching with great intention of spirit and affections. It is a great and constant endeavour that is expressed in that word. Thirdly, *κατα σκοπον διωκω*, I press towards the mark; that is, even as men that are running for a prize. All set forth the vigour, earnestness, diligence, and constancy that is used in the pursuit of this purpose. And this the nature of the principle of

grace required in them in whom it is. But yet we see with what failings their pursuit of this course is attended. The frame of the heart is changed, the heart is stolen away, the affections entangled, eruptions of unbelief and distemp̄ered passions discovered, carnal wisdom, with all its attendances, are set on work, all contrary to the general principle and purpose of the soul. And all this from the rebellion of this law of sin, stirring up the heart to disobedience.

2. It rebels also in respect to particular duties. It raiseth a combustion in the soul against the particular commands of the law of grace. Take an instance in prayer. A man addresseth himself unto that duty, he would not only perform it, but he would perform it in that manner that the nature of the duty and his own condition require. He would pray in the spirit, fervently, with sighs and groans that cannot be uttered; in faith, with love and delight, pouring forth his soul to the Lord; but he will often find a rebellion, a fighting of the law of sin in this matter. He will find difficulty to get any thing done, who thought to do all things. I do not say that it is thus always, but it is so when sin wars and rebels, which expresseth an especial acting of its power.

Secondly, It doth not only rebel, but it assaults the soul; it sets upon the law of the mind and grace, which is the second part of its warring, 1 Pet. ii. 11, "They fight, or war against the soul." James iv. 1, "They fight, or war in your members." Peter shews what they fight against, namely, the soul, and the law of grace therein; James, what they fight by, namely, the members, or the corruption that is in our mortal bodies. It takes the part of an assailant as well as of a resister. It makes attempts for rule and sovereignty, as well as opposeth the rule of grace. Now all war and fighting hath somewhat of violence in it, and there is therefore some violence in that acting of sin, which the Scripture calls fighting and warring. And this assailing efficacy of sin,

as distinguished from its rebelling, consists in these things.

1. In all its positive actings, stirring up to sin by the vanity of the mind, or the sensuality of the affections, whereby it sets upon the soul, when the law of grace is not actually putting it on duty, so that therein it doth not rebel, but assault.

2. Its importunity seems also to be noted in this expression. Enemies in war are restless, pressing, and importunate. So is the law of sin. Doth it set upon the soul? Cast off its motions, it returns; rebuke them by the power of grace, they withdraw for awhile, and return again. Set before them the cross of Christ, they do as those that came to take him. They went backward, and fell unto the ground, but they arose again, and laid hands on him. Sin gives place for a season, but returns and presseth on the soul again. Urge the love of God in Christ, though it be stricken, yet it gives not over. Present hell-fire unto it, it rusheth into the midst of those flames. Reproach it with its folly and madness, it knows no shame, but presseth on still. Let the thoughts of the mind strive to fly from it, it follows as on the wings of the wind. And by this importunity it wearies and wears out the soul; and if the greater remedy, Rom. viii. 13, come not timely, it prevails to a conquest. There is nothing more marvellous nor dreadful in the working of sin, than this its importunity. The soul knows not what to make of it; it dislikes, abhors, abominates the evil it tends to; it despiseth the thoughts of it, hates them as hell, and yet is by itself imposed on with them.

3. It carries on its war, by entangling the affections, and drawing them into a combination against the mind. Let grace be enthroned in the mind, yet if sin entangles the affections, it hath gotten a foot from whence it continually assaults the soul. Hence the great duty of mortification is chiefly directed to take place upon the affections, Col. iii. 5, "Mortify therefore your members

which are upon the earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry." The members that are upon the earth are our affections. For in the outward part of the body sin is not seated. In particular, not covetousness, which is there enumerated to be mortified amongst our members that are on the earth. Yea, after grace hath taken possession of the soul, the affections are the principal seat of the remainders of sin. And when sin can possess any affection, love, delight, fear, it will make fearful assaults upon the soul. For instance, hath it got the love of any one entangled with the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, or the pride of life? How will it take advantage of every occasion to break in upon the soul. It shall do nothing, attempt nothing, be in no place, or company, perform no duty, private or publick, but sin will have one blow or other at it; it will be one way or other soliciting for itself.

This is the sum of what we shall offer on this acting of sin in fighting and warring against our souls, which is so often mentioned in Scripture. And a due consideration of it is of no small advantage unto us, especially to bring us unto self-abasement, to teach us to walk humbly and mournfully before God. There are two things that are suited to humble the souls of men. And they are, first, a due consideration of God, and then of themselves. Of God in his greatness, glory, holiness, power, majesty, and authority; of ourselves in our mean, abject, and sinful condition. Now of all things in our condition, there is nothing so suited unto this end as that which lies before us; namely, the vile remainders of enmity against God, which are yet in our hearts and natures. And it is no small evidence of a gracious soul, when it is willing to search itself in this matter, and to be helped therein from the word of truth. When it is willing that the word should dive into the secret parts of the heart, and rip open whatever of evil and corruption lies therein. Most men love to hear of the doctrine of grace, of the

pardon of sin, of free love, and suppose they find food therein; but to be breaking up the fallow-ground of their hearts, to be inquiring after the weeds and briars that grow in them, they delight not so much. Though this be no less necessary than the other. This path is not so beaten as that of grace, though it be the only way to come to a true knowledge of grace itself. It may be, some who are wise in other truths, may yet be so little skilled in searching their own hearts, that they may be slow in the perception of these things. But this sloth and neglect is to be shaken off, if we have any regard to our own souls. It were to be wished, that we would all apply our hearts more to this work, even to come to a true understanding of the nature, power, and subtilty of this our adversary, that our souls may be humbled; and that, (1.) In walking with God. His delight is with the humble, those that tremble at his word, the mourners in Sion; and such are we only, when we have a due sense of our own vile condition. This will beget reverence for God, a sense of our distance from him, admiration of his grace and condescension, a due valuation of mercy. (2.) In walking with others, it lays in provision to prevent those great evils of judging, spiritual unmercifulness, harsh censuring. This will lead us to meekness, compassion, readiness to forgive, to pass by offences, even when we shall consider what is our state, as the apostle plainly declares, Gal. vi. 1. The man that understands the evil of his own heart, is the only fruitful and truly believing and obedient person. Others are fit only to delude themselves, to disquiet families, churches, and all relations whatever. Let us consider our hearts wisely, and then go and see if we can be proud of our gifts, our graces, our enjoyments. Let us go then and judge, condemn, reproach others that have been tempted; we shall find a great inconsistency in these things.

The third thing assigned to this law of sin is its opposition unto God. What is contained in this expression shall be declared in the ensuing observations. 1. It is

not directly the power of sin that is here expressed, but its success. But success is the greatest evidence of power, and leading captive in war is the height of success. 2. It leads the soul captive unto the law of sin. Not to this or that particular sin, but to the law of sin. God ordereth things so, and gives out such supplies of grace unto believers, that they shall not be made a prey unto this or that particular sin. 3. This leading captive argues a prevalency against the contrary actings of the will. The will opposeth, and makes head, as it were, against the working of sin. And herein consists the lusting of the Spirit against the flesh, Gal. v. 17. That is, the contending of grace to expel and subdue it.

(1.) That the power of sin is great; and this appears in its prevalency unto captivity against the actings and contendings of the will for liberty from it. Had it no opposition made unto it, or were its adversary weak, negligent, slothful, it were no great evidence of its power that it made captives. But its prevailing against diligence, activity, watchfulness, the constant renitency of the will, this evinceth its efficacy.

(2.) This leading captive intimates success. Had it not success in particular, it could not be said at all to lead captive. Rebel it might, assail it might, but it cannot be said to lead captive without some successes. And there are several degrees of the success of sin in the soul. Sometimes it obtaineth the consent of the will, but is cast out by grace, and proceeds no farther. Sometimes it wearies and entangles the soul, that it turns aside, as it were, and leaves contending, which is a success also.

The fourth and last degree of the opposition made by the law of sin to God, and the law of his will and grace, is in its rage and madness. There is madness in its nature, Eccles. ix. 3, "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart." The evil that the heart of man is full of by nature, is that indwelling sin whereof we speak. And this is so in their

heart, that it riseth up unto madness. The Holy Ghost expresseth this rage of sin by a fit similitude, which he useth in sundry places, as Jer. ii. 24, Hos. viii. 9. It maketh men as a wild ass; she traverseth her ways, and snuffeth up the wind, and runneth whither her mind leads her. We may a little consider what lies in this madness and rage of sin.

1. For the nature of it; it seems to consist in a violent, heady, pressing unto evil. Violence, importunity, and pertinacy are in it. It is the torturing of the soul by any sin to force its consent. It riseth up in the heart, is denied by the law of grace, and rebuked; it returns and exerts its poison again; the soul is startled, casts it off; it returns again with new violence and importunity, the soul cries out for help and deliverance, looks round about to all springs of gospel grace, trembles at the furious assaults of sin, and casts itself into the arms of Christ for deliverance. And if it be not able to take that course, it is foiled and hurried up and down through the mire of foolish imaginations, corrupt and noisome lusts, which rend and tear it as if they would devour its whole spiritual life and power. This is plain madness and fury. We need not seek far for instances, we see men mad on their lusts every day; and, which is the worst kind of madness, their lusts do not rage so much in them as they rage in the pursuit of them. Are those greedy pursuits of things in the world, which we see some men engaged in, any thing else but plain madness? God, who searcheth the hearts of men, knows that the most of things that are done with other pretences in the world, are nothing but the actings of men mad and furious in the pursuit of their lusts.

2. Sin riseth not unto this heighth ordinarily, but when it hath got a double advantage. (1.) When it is provoked, enraged, and heightened by some great temptation. Though it be a poison in itself, yet being inbred in nature, it grows not violently outrageous without the contribution of some new poison of Satan unto it in a suitable

temptation. (2.) It must be advantaged by some former entertainment. Sin grows not to this height at its first assault. Had it not been suffered to make its entrance, had there not been some yielding in the soul, this had not come about. The great wisdom of the soul in dealing with indwelling sin, is to put a violent stop unto its beginnings. Venture all on the first die, rather than yield one step. If through the deceit of sin, or the negligence of the soul, or its carnal confidence, it makes any entrance into the soul, and finds any entertainment, it gets strength and power, and insensibly ariseth to the frame under consideration. Thou hadst never had the experience of the fury of sin, if thou hadst not been content with some of its dalliances. Hadst thou not brought up this servant, this slave diligently, it would not have now presumed beyond a son. Now when the law of sin, in any particular, hath got this double advantage, the furtherance of a vigorous temptation, and some prevalency formerly obtained, whereby it is let into the strengths of the soul, it often riseth up to this.

CHAP. IV.

Indwelling Sin proved to be deceitful.

The second way whereby indwelling sin works, is by fraud. It adds deceit unto power. The efficacy of that must needs be great, and is carefully to be watched against, by all such as value their souls.

That sin is deceitful, we have the express testimony of the Holy Ghost, as Heb. iii. 13, "Take heed that ye be not hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." Deceitful it is; take heed of it, watch against it, or it will produce its utmost effect in hardening the heart against God. It is on the account of sin that the heart is said to be "deceitful above all things;" Jer. xvii. 9. Take a man in other things, and as Job speaks, though he "would be wise

and crafty, he is like the wild ass's colt," Job xi. 12, a poor, vain, empty nothing. But consider his heart on the account of this law of sin, it is crafty and deceitful above all things. "They are wise to do evil," saith the prophet, "but to do good they know not," Jer. iv. 22. To the same purpose speaks the apostle, Ephes. iv. 22, "The old man is corrupt according to deceitful lusts!" Every lust, which is a branch of this law of sin, is deceitful; and where there is poison in every stream, the fountain must needs be corrupt. No particular lust hath any deceit in it but what is communicated unto it from this fountain of all actual lust, this *law of sin*. Hence are those manifold cautions that are given us to take heed that we be not deceived, if we would take heed that we do not sin. See Eph. v. 6, 1 Cor. vi. 9, xv. 33, Gal. vi. 7, Luke xxi. 8. From all which testimonies we may learn the influence that deceit hath unto sin, and consequently the advantage that sin has to put forth its power by its deceitfulness. Where it prevails to deceive, it fails not to bring forth its fruit.

The ground of this efficacy of sin by deceit is taken from the faculty of the soul affected with it. Deceit properly affects the mind; it is the mind that is deceived. When sin attempts any other way of entrance into the soul, as by the affections, the mind retaining its right sovereignty, is able to give check and control unto it. But where the mind is tainted, the prevalency must be great. For the mind, or understanding, is the leading faculty of the soul. Hence it is that though the entanglement of the affections be oft-times most troublesome, yet the deceit of the mind is always most dangerous; and that because of the place that it possesseth in the soul, as to all its operations. Its office is to guide, direct, choose, and lead; and "if the light that is in us be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

And this will farther appear, if we consider the nature of deceit in general. It consists in presenting to the mind things otherwise than they are. This is the general

nature of deceit, and it prevails many ways. It hides what ought to be seen and considered, conceals circumstances and consequences, presents what is not, or things as they are not. This is the nature of deceit; it is a representation of a matter under disguises, hiding that which is undesirable, proposing that which indeed is not in it, that the mind may make a false judgment of it. Again, deceit hath advantage by the way of management, which is inseparable from it. It is always carried on by degrees, by little and little, that the whole of the design be not at once discovered. Stephen tells us, that the king of Egypt dealt subtilly or deceitfully with their kindred, Acts vii. 19. How he did it we may see Exod. i. He did not at first fall to killing them, but says, ver. 10, "Come, let us deal wisely," beginning to oppress them. This brings forth their bondage, ver. 11. Having got this ground to make them slaves, he proceeds to destroy their children, ver. 16. He fell not on them all at once, but by degrees. And this may suffice to shew in general, that sin is deceitful, and the advantages it hath thereby.

For the manner and progress of sin in working by deceit, we have it fully expressed James i. 14, 15, "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed; then, when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." This place, declaring the whole of what we aim at in this matter, must be particularly insisted on.

In the foregoing verse, the apostle manifests that men are willing to drive the old trade, which our first parents at the entrance of sin set up with, namely, excusing themselves in their sins, and casting the occasion and blame of them on others. It is not, say they, from themselves, their own nature and inclinations, that they have committed such evils, but merely from their temptations. And if they know not where to fix the evil of those temptations, they will lay them on God himself, rather than go without an excuse. This evil in the hearts of men the apostle rebuketh, ver. 13, "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God, for God cannot be

tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man." And to shew the justness of this reproof, he discovers the true causes of the rise and progress of sin, manifesting that the whole guilt of it lies upon the sinner, and that the whole punishment of it, if not graciously prevented, will be his lot also.

We may observe in the words, 1. The end aimed at in all the actings of sin, or the tendency of it in its own nature, and that is death: "Sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death:" the everlasting death of the sinner; pretend what it will, this is the end it aims at and tends to. Hiding of ends and designs is the principal property of deceit. This sin doth to the utmost; other things innumerable it pleads, but not that it aims at the death, the everlasting death of the soul. And a fixed apprehension of this end of every sin, is a blessed means to prevent its beguiling.

2. The general way of its acting towards that end is by temptation: "Every man is tempted of his own lust." Every man is *tempted*, that is, every man is *beguiled* or deceived by his own lust, or *indwelling sin*, which are the same.

The degrees whereby sin proceedeth in this work of tempting, or deceiving, are five. (1.) Drawing away: "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust." (2.) Enticing: "And is enticed." (3.) The conception of sin: "When lust hath conceived," when the heart is enticed, then lust conceives in it. (4.) The bringing forth of sin in its actual accomplishment: "When lust hath conceived it brings forth sin." (5.) The filling up of the measure of it, whereby the end originally designed by lust is brought about: "Sin when it is finished, bringeth forth death." As naturally and necessarily as it bringeth forth sin, so sin finished infallibly procureth eternal death.

I shall principally consider the three first, wherein the main strength of the deceit of sin doth lie.

The first thing which sin is said to do, working in a way of deceit, is to *draw away*, or to *draw off*. Whence

a man is said to be *drawn off*, or *drawn away*, and diverted, namely, from attending to a course of obedience and holiness. What it aims at in its deceitful working, is to draw off and divert the mind from the discharge of its duty.

There are two things which belong to the mind, in that special office which it hath about the obedience which God requireth. 1. To keep itself and the whole soul in such a posture as may render it ready to all duties of obedience, and watchful against all inticements to the conception of sin. 2. In particular, carefully to attend unto all particular actions, that they be performed as God requireth, for matter, manner, time and season, agreeably unto his will, as also for the obviating all particular tenders of sin in things forbidden. In these two things consists the whole duty of the mind of a believer. And from both of them doth indwelling sin endeavour to draw it off.

The first of these is, the duty of the mind, in reference to the general frame and course of the whole soul; and hereof two things may be considered. (1.) That it is founded in a due, constant consideration of ourselves, of sin, and its vileness; of God and of his goodness. And from both these doth sin labour to draw it off. (2.) In attending to those duties which are suited to obviate the working of sin in an especial manner.

(1.) It endeavours to draw it off from a due consideration and sensibility of its own vileness, and the danger wherewith it is attended. This, in the first place, we shall instance in. A due constant consideration of sin in its nature, in all its aggravating circumstances, in its end and tendency, especially as represented in the blood and cross of Christ, ought always to abide with us. He that walketh humbly walketh safely. This is the design of Peter's advice, 1 Epist. i. 17, "Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." After he himself had miscarried by a different frame of mind, he gives this advice to all believers. It is not a servile fear, perplexing the soul,

that he inculcates, but such a fear as may keep men constantly calling upon the Father, with reference to the final judgment, that they may be preserved from sin, whereof they were in so great danger, which he advises them to: "If ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." This is the humble frame of soul, and how is this obtained? How is this preserved? No otherwise than by a constant, deep apprehension of the evil, vilness, and danger of sin. So was it wrought, so was it kept up in the approved publican: "God be merciful," saith he, "to me a sinner." A sense of sin kept him humble, and humility made way for his access to a testimony of the pardon of sin. This, therefore, in the first place, doth the law of sin put forth its deceit in, namely, to draw the mind from this frame. It secretly and insensibly insinuates lessening, excusing, extenuating thoughts of it; or it draws it off from pondering upon it, from being conversant about it. And if, after the heart of a man hath through the word, Spirit, and grace of Christ been made tender, soft, deeply sensible of sin, it becomes on any account, or by any means, to have less, fewer, or slighter, or less affecting thoughts of it, the mind of that man is drawn away by the deceitfulness of sin.

There are two ways, amongst others, whereby the law of sin endeavours deceitfully to draw off the mind from this duty. 1. It doth it by an horrible abuse of gospel grace. There is in the gospel a remedy provided against the whole evil of sin, the filth, the guilt of it, with all its dangerous consequents. It is the doctrine of the deliverance of the souls of men from sin and death. A discovery of the gracious will of God towards sinners by Jesus Christ. What now is the genuine tendency of this doctrine, of this discovery of grace? This the apostle declares, Titus ii. 11, 12, "The grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live

soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." This it teacheth, this we ought to learn by it. Hence universal holiness is called a "conversation that becometh the gospel," Phil. i. 27. It becomes it as that which is answerable to its end, as that which it requires, and to which it ought to be improved. And accordingly it doth produce this effect where the word is received and preserved in a saving light. But herein doth the deceit of sin interpose itself. It separates between the doctrine of grace, and the use and end of it. It stays upon its notions, and intercepts its influences in its proper application. From the doctrine of the assured pardon of sin, it insinuates a regardlessness of sin. God in Christ makes the proposition, and satan and sin make the conclusion.

Indeed in opposition to this deceit lies much of the wisdom of faith, and power of gospel grace. When the mind is fully possessed with, and cast habitually and firmly into the mould of gospel truth, about the full and free forgiveness of all sins through the blood of Christ, then to be able to keep the heart always in a deep humbling sense of sin, abhorrency of it, and self-abasement for it, is a great effect of gospel wisdom. This is the trial and touchstone of gospel light. If it keep the heart sensible of sin, lowly, and broken on that account; if it teach us to water a free pardon with tears, to detest forgiven sin, to watch diligently for the ruin of that, which yet shall never ruin us, it is divine, from above, of the Spirit of grace.

Hence it comes to pass, that sometimes we see men walking in a bondage frame of spirit all their days, low in their light, mean in their apprehensions of grace, so that it is hard to discern whether covenant, in their principles, they belong unto; whether they are under the law; or under grace, yet they walk with a more conscientious tenderness of sinning, than many who are advanced into higher degrees of light and knowledge than they. Not that the saving light of the gospel is not the only principle of the gospel; but through the deceitfulness of sin

it is variously abused to countenance the soul in a manifold neglect of duties, and to draw off the mind from a due consideration of the nature, desert, and danger of sin. And this is done several ways. (1.) The soul, having frequent need of relief by gospel grace against a sense of the guilt of sin, comes at length to make it a common and ordinary thing, and such as may be slightly performed. Having found a good medicine for its wounds, it comes to apply it slightly, and rather skinneth over, than cureth its sores. A little less earnestness, a little less diligence serves every time, until the soul begins to secure itself of pardon in course. And this tends directly to draw off the mind from its constant and universal watchfulness against sin. He whose light hath made his way of access plain for the obtaining of pardon, if he be not very watchful, is far more apt to become formal, and careless in his work, than he who by reason of mists and darkness, beats about to find his way to the throne of grace. As a man that hath travelled a road passeth on without regard or inquiry; but he who is a stranger unto it, observing all turnings, and inquiring of all passengers, secures his journey beyond the other. (2.) The deceitfulness of sin takes advantage from the doctrine of grace, by many ways to extend the bounds of the soul's liberty beyond what God hath assigned. Some have never thought themselves free from legal bondage, until they have been brought into the confines of sensuality, and some into the depths of it. (3.) In times of temptation this deceitfulness of sin will argue expressly for sin from gospel grace; at least it will plead for these two things: First, That there is not need of such a severe contending against it. If it cannot divert the mind wholly from attending to temptations to oppose them, yet it will endeavour to draw it off, as to the manner of its attendance. They need not use that diligence which at first the soul apprehended to be necessary. Secondly, It will be tendering relief as to the event of sin, that it should not turn to the destruction of the soul, because it may be pardoned by grace. And this

is true, this is the great and only relief of the soul against sin. But when it is pleaded and remembered by the deceitfulness of sin in compliance with temptation, then it is poison; poison is mixed in every drop of this balsam, to the danger, if not death of the soul. And this is the first way whereby the deceitfulness of sin draws off the mind from a due attendance unto that sense of its vileness, which alone can keep it in that humble, self-abased frame that is acceptable with God. It makes the mind careless, as though its work were needless, because of the abounding of grace.

2. Sin takes advantage to work by its deceit in this matter of drawing off the mind from a due sense of it, from the state and condition of men in the world. I shall only give one instance; men in their younger days have naturally their affections more quick, vigorous, and active. Many things befall men in their lives, that take off the edge and keenness of them. But as men lose in their affections, they improve in their understandings. Hence it is, that if what had place formerly in their affections, do not take place in their judgments, they utterly lose them, they have no more place in their souls. But if they are things that come to be fixed in their minds, they continue a high esteem for them, and do cleave as close unto them as they did when their affections were more vigorous. It is thus in things spiritual; the chief seat of the sensibility of sin is in the affections; as these in natural youth are great and large, so are they spiritually in spiritual youth. Besides, such persons are newly come off from their convictions, wherein they have been cut to the heart, and so made tender. Whatever touches upon a wound, is thoroughly felt: so doth the guilt of sin before the wound given by conviction be thoroughly cured. But now when the affections begin to decay naturally, they begin to decay also in things spiritual. Now in these decays, if the soul take not care to fix a deep sense of sin on the mind and judgment, thereby perpetually to affect the heart and affections, it will decay. And here

the deceit of the law of sin interposeth itself. It suffers a sense of sin to decay in the affections, and diverts the mind from entertaining a due, constant, fixed consideration of it. And if as the sensibility of the affections decays, if as they grow heavy and obtuse, great wisdom and grace be not used to fix a due sense of sin upon the mind and judgment, which may provoke, excite, enliven, and stir up the affections every day, great decays will ensue. At first, sorrow, trouble, grief, fear, affected the mind, and would give it no rest. If afterwards the mind do not affect the heart with sorrow, the soul will be in danger of being hardened. And these are some of the ways whereby the deceit of sin diverts the mind from its constant watchfulness.

The second part of this general duty of the mind, is to keep a constant, holy consideration of God and his grace. This evidently lies at the spring-head of gospel-obedience. The way whereby sin draws off the mind from this part of its duty, is open and known sufficiently, though not sufficiently watched against. Now this the Scripture every where declares to be the filling of the minds of men with earthly things. This it placeth in direct opposition to that heavenly frame, which is the spring of gospel-obedience.

Several ways there are whereby the deceitfulness of sin draws off the mind in this particular, but the chief of them is by pressing these things on the mind under the notion of things lawful. So all those who excused themselves in the parable, from coming to the marriage-feast, did it on the account of their being engaged in their lawful callings. One about his farm, another his oxen, the means whereby he ploughed in this world. By this plea were the minds of men drawn off from that frame of heavenliness which is required to our walking with God, and the rules of not loving the world, or using it as if we used it not, are hereby neglected. What wisdom, what watchfulness, what serious frequent examination of ourselves is required, to keep our hearts in an heavenly

frame, in the use and pursuit of earthly things. This is evident, that the engine whereby the deceit of sin draws off the mind in this matter, is the pretence of the lawfulness of things, against which very few are armed with sufficient diligence, wisdom, and skill. And this is the first attempt that indwelling sin makes upon the soul by deceit : it draws away the mind from a diligent attention to its course, in a due sense of the evil of sin, and a due and constant consideration of God and his grace.

CHAP. V.

The Deceit of Sin in drawing off the Mind from a due Attendance unto Duties.

Every duty performed in the strength of the Spirit, is contrary to the law of sin. But yet there are some duties, which in their own nature, and by God's appointment, have a peculiar influence into the weakening and subduing it. And these the mind of a believer ought principally in his whole course to attend unto. And these doth sin in its deceit endeavour principally to draw off the mind from. Two of these duties are, prayer, especially private prayer ; and meditation. These are as the blood and spirits in the veins ; they have the same life, motion, and use. But yet because persons are generally at a great loss in this duty of meditation ; I shall give briefly two or three rules for a right performance of it.

I. Meditate on God with God ; that is, when we would undertake thoughts and meditations on God, his excellencies, his properties, his glory, his majesty, his love, his goodness, let it be done in a way of speaking unto God, in a deep humiliation and abasement of our souls before him. This will fix the mind, and draw it forth from one thing to another, to give glory to God in a due manner, and affect the soul until it be brought into that holy admiration of God, and delight in him, which is

acceptable unto him. My meaning is, that it be done in a way of prayer and praise, speaking unto God.

2. Meditate on the word in the word; that is, in the reading of it, we must consider the sense in the particular passages we insist upon, looking to God for guidance and direction in the discovery of his will therein, and then we must labour to have our hearts affected with it.

3. What we come short of in evenness and constancy in these things, let it be made up in frequency. Some are discouraged because their minds do not regularly supply them with thoughts to carry on their meditations. Let this be supplied by frequent returns of the mind to the subject proposed to be meditated upon, whereby new senses will still be supplied.

These duties, I say, amongst others, do make an especial opposition to the very being and life of indwelling sin. They are perpetually designing its utter ruin. I shall, in the pursuit of our present purpose, 1st, Shew the suitability and usefulness of these duties, unto the ruining of sin. 2dly, Shew the means whereby the deceitfulness of sin endeavours to draw off the mind from a due attendance unto them.

For the first observe, (1.) That it is the proper work of the soul in these duties, to consider all the secret workings and actings of sin, what advantages it hath got, what temptations it is in conjunction withal, what harm it hath already done, and what it is yet farther ready to do. I speak of that prayer which is attended with a due consideration of all the wants, straits, and emergencies of the soul. Without this, prayer is not prayer; that is, whatever shew it hath, it is no way useful, either to the glory of God, or the good of men. A cloud it is without water, driven by the wind of the breath of men. Nor was there ever any more present and effectual poison for souls found out, than the binding them to a constant form of words in their prayers, which themselves do not understand. But in this kind of prayer which we insist on, the Spirit of God falls in to give his assistance, and

that in this very matter of discovering the most secret workings of sin : Rom. viii. 26, " We know not what to pray for as we ought, but he helps our infirmities ;" he discovers our wants to us, and wherein chiefly we stand in need of relief. And we find it by daily experience, that in prayer, believers are led into such discoveries of the secret workings of sin in their hearts, as no considerations could ever have led them into. The Spirit, in this duty, is as the candle of the Lord to the soul, enabling it to search all the inward parts of the belly. It gives a holy, spiritual light into the mind, enabling it to search the deep and dark recesses of the heart, to find out the subtile and deceitful machinations and imaginations of sin therein. Whatever notion there be of it, whatever power and prevalency in it, it is laid hand on, apprehended, brought into the presence of God, judged, condemned. And what can possibly be more effectual for its destruction ? For together with its discovery, application is made to that relief which in Jesus Christ is provided against it. Hence it is the duty of the mind, " to watch unto prayer," 1 Pet. iv. 7. To attend diligently to the estate of our souls, and to deal fervently and effectually with God about it. The like also may be said of meditation, wisely managed.

(2.) In this duty there is wrought upon the heart a deep, full sense of the vileness of sin, with a constant renewed detestation of it, which, if any thing, undoubtedly tends to its ruin. This is one design of prayer, one end of the soul in it, namely, to draw forth sin, to present it unto itself in its vileness and aggravating circumstances, that it may be loathed, abhorred, and cast away as a filthy thing ; as Isa. xxx. 22. He that pleads with God for sin's remission, pleads also with his own heart for its detestation, Hos. xiv. 3. Herein also sin is judged in the name of God ; for the soul in its confession subscribes to God's detestation of it. There is indeed a course of these duties, which convinced persons give up themselves to, as a mere covert to their lust ; they cannot sin quietly,

unless they perform duty constantly. But that prayer we speak of is a thing of another nature, a thing that will allow no composition with sin, much less will serve the ends of the deceit of it, as the other formal prayer doth. It will not be bribed into a secret compliance with any of the enemies of God, or the soul, no not for a moment. And hence it is that often in this duty, the heart is raised to the most effectual sense of sin, and detestation of it, that the soul ever obtains in its whole course of obedience.

(3.) This is the way appointed and blessed of God to obtain strength and power against sin, Jam. i. 5. Doth any man lack, let him ask of God. Prayer is the way of obtaining from God by Christ a supply of all our wants, assistance against all opposition, especially that which is made against us by sin. It is that wherein we call, and upon which the Lord Jesus comes in to our succour, with a suitable help in a time of need, Heb. ii. 17.

(4.) Faith in prayer countermines all the workings of the deceit of sin; because the soul doth therein constantly engage to God to oppose all sin whatsoever. Psal. cxix. 106, "I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments." This is the language of every gracious soul in its addresses to God. The inmost parts thereof engage themselves to God to cleave to him in all things, and to oppose sin in all things. He that cannot do this, cannot pray. To pray with any other frame, is to flatter God with our lips, which he abhorreth.

And this exceedingly helps a believer in pursuing sin to its ruin. For, 1. If there be any secret lust that lies lurking in the heart, he will find it either rising up against this engagement, or using its artifices to secure itself from it. And hereby it is discovered; and the conviction of the heart concerning its evil furthered and strengthened. Sin makes the most certain discovery of itself, and never more evidently than when it is most severely pursued. 2. If any sin be prevalent in the heart, it will weaken the soul, and take it off from the universality of this engagement unto God, it will breed a slight-

ness in it. Now when this is observed, it will exceedingly awaken a gracious soul, and stir it up to circumspection. As a causeless weariness and indisposition of the body is looked on as the sign of an approaching fever, or some dangerous distemper, which stirs up men to use a timely and vigorous prevention, that they be not seized upon by it; so is it in this case. When the soul of a believer finds an indisposition to make fervent, sincere engagements of universal holiness to God, it knows that there is some prevalent distemper in it, finds the place of it, and sets itself against it. 3. Whilst the soul can thus constantly engage itself to God, it is certain that sin can rise unto no ruinous prevalency. Yea, it is a conquest over sin, a most considerable conquest, when the soul doth fully and clearly, without any secret reserve, come off with alacrity and resolution in such an engagement. 4. If the heart be not deceived by cursed hypocrisy, this engagement to God will greatly influence it to a peculiar diligence and watchfulness against all sin. Yea, a sense and consciousness of engagements against sin made to God, make it universally watchful against all its motions and operations. On these, and sundry other accounts, doth faith in this duty exert itself to the weakening of the power of sin. If then the mind be diligent to preserve the soul from the efficacy of sin, it will carefully attend to this duty.

But here, 2dly, Sin puts forth its deceit in its own defence; it labours to divert and draw off the mind. And there are, among others, the following engines, whereby it attempts the accomplishment of its design.

(1.) It makes advantage of its weariness to the flesh. There is an aversation, as hath been declared in the law of sin, to all immediate communion with God. And this the deceitfulness of sin makes use of, to draw the heart by insensible degrees from a constant attendance unto it. It puts in for the relief of the weak and weary flesh. If the mind be not diligently watchful to prevent insinuations from hence; if it dwell not constantly on those consider-

ations which evidence an attendance unto this duty to be indispensable; if it stir not up the principle of grace in the heart to retain its rule and sovereignty, and not to be dallied with by foolish pretences, it will be drawn off.

(2.) The deceitfulness of sin makes use of corrupt reasonings taken from the pressing occasions of life. It suggests that should we attend strictly to all duties in this kind, we should neglect our principal occasions, and be useless to ourselves and the world. And on this general account, particular businesses dispossess particular duties from their due place. Men suppose they have not leisure to glorify God and save their own souls. It is certain that God gives us time enough for all that he requires of us in any kind in this world. No duties need to jostle one another; but it is more tolerable that our duties of holiness should entrench on the duties of our callings, than the contrary; and yet neither doth God require this at our hands in an ordinary course. How little then will he bear with that which is so much worse. Yet thus are the souls of men beguiled. By several degrees they are at length driven from their duty.

(3.) It deals with the mind to draw it off from attention to this duty by a compensation to be made by other duties: as Saul thought to compensate his disobedience by sacrifice. "May not the same duty," it intimates, "performed in publick, or in the family, suffice?" And if the soul be so foolish as not to answer, "Those things ought to be done, and this not to be left undone," it may be ensnared and deceived.

(4.) I may add here that which hath place in all the workings of sin by deceit, namely, its feeding the soul with promises and purposes of a more diligent attendance on this duty when occasions will permit. By this means it brings the soul to say to convictions of duty, as Felix did to Paul, "Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." And by this means often the present season, which alone is ours, is lost irrecoverably.

These are some of the ways whereby the deceit of sin endeavours to draw off the mind from its due attendance on this duty. And this will instruct us where lies the beginning of our declensions and failings in the ways of God, and that either as to our general course, or as to our attendance on especial duties. And this is of great importance. God doth not look at what duties we perform, as to their number and tale, but whether we do them with that intention of mind and spirit which he requireth. Many men perform duties in course, and do not, as it were, so much as think of them. Their minds are filled with other things, only duty takes up so much of their time. This is but an endeavour to mock God, and deceive their own souls. Would you, therefore, take the true measure of yourselves? Consider how it is with you as to your minds. Consider whether, by any of the deceits mentioned, you have not been diverted and drawn away; and if there be any decays upon you in any kind, you will find that there hath been the beginning of them. By one way or other your minds have been made heedless, being beguiled and drawn off from their duty. And this discovery will direct the soul to a suitable way for its recovery, which will never be effected by multiplying of particular duties, but by restoring the mind.

There remains the consideration of the charge of the mind as to particular duties and sins. And in the consideration of it, we shall, First, Shew what is required in reference to particular duties. Secondly, Declare the way of the working of the deceit of sin to draw it off from its attention thereto. The like also shall be done with respect to particular sins.

First, What is required in reference to particular duties?

1. For the right performance of any duty, it is not enough that the thing be performed, but that it be universally fitted to the rule of it. Herein lies the great duty of the mind, namely, to attend to the rule of duties, and to take care that all be ordered thereby. Our progress in obedience is our edification or building. Now it is but a

little furtherance to a building, that a man bring wood and stones, and heap them up together. They must be hewed and squared, and fitted by line and rule, if we intend to build. Nor is it to our edification in faith and obedience, that we multiply duties, if we heap them one upon another, not according to rule. That they be so is the great duty of the mind, and which with all diligence it is to attend to. Ephes. v. 15, "Walk circumspectly," exactly, accurately; that is, diligently in all things, take heed to the rule of what you do.

2. There are some special things which the rule directs, that the mind is to attend to in every duty. As,

(1.) That as to the matter of it, it be full and complete. When men will give alms, or perform other services, but not in the proportion that the rule requireth, and which the mind by diligent attention to it might discover, the whole duty is vitiated.

(2.) As to the principle of it, that it be done in faith, by actual derivation of strength from Christ, without whom "we can do nothing." It is not enough that the person be a believer, but also that faith be peculiarly acted in every duty. For our whole obedience is to be the "obedience of faith," Rom. i. 5, that is, which the doctrine of faith requireth, and which the grace of faith bringeth forth. This therefore ought a believer diligently to attend to, namely, that every thing he doth to God, be done in the strength of Christ; which wherein it consisteth ought diligently to be inquired into by all who intend to walk with God.

(3.) The manner of the performance of every duty is to be regarded. Now there are two things in the manner of the performance of any duty which a believer ought to attend to. 1. That it be done in the way God hath prescribed with respect to the outward performance. And this is especially to be regarded in duties of the worship of God; the matter and outward manner whereof both fall under his command. 2. The affections in duties belong to the performance of them in the inward manner. The commands of God for attendance hereto are innu-

merable, and the want hereof renders every duty an abomination to him. A sacrifice without an heart, without salt, without fire, of what value is it? No more are duties without spiritual affections. And herein is the mind to keep the charge of God; to see that the heart be tendered to him. And we find also that God requireth especial affections to accompany special duties. "He that gives," must do it "with cheerfulness;" which if they are not attended unto, the whole is lost.

(4.) The mind is to attend to the ends of duties; and therein principally is the glory of God in Christ. Several other ends will sin impose upon our duties: especially two it will press hard upon us: First, Satisfaction of our convictions and consciences; Secondly, The praise of men. For self-righteousness and ostentation are the main ends of men that are fallen from God, in all moral duties. In their sins they endeavour to satisfy their lusts, in their duties their convictions and pride. These the mind of a believer is diligently to watch against, and to keep up in all a single eye to the glory of God, as that which answers the great rule of all our obedience; "Whatever you do, do it all to the glory of God." Here then lies no small part of the deceit of sin. Namely, to draw the mind off from this watch, to bring an inadvertency upon it, that it shall not in these things keep the watch and charge of the Lord. And if it can do so, and thereby strip our duties of all their excellencies, it will not much trouble us about the duties themselves. And this it attempts several ways.

1. By persuading the mind to content itself with generals, and not attend to things in particular instances. For example; it would persuade the soul to rest satisfied in a general aim of doing things to the glory of God, without considering how every particular duty may have that tendency. If a man be travelling, it is not only required of him that he bend his course that way, but if he attend not unto every turning, he may never come to his journey's end. And if we suppose that in general

we aim at the glory of God, yet if we attend not to it distinctly upon every duty, we shall never attain the end. And he who satisfies himself with this general purpose, without acting in every especial duty, will not long retain that purpose neither.

2. It draws off the mind from these duties, by insinuating a secret contentment from the duty itself performed, as to the matter of it. This is a fair discharge of a natural conscience. If the duty be performed, though as to the manner of its performance it came short in all things of the rule, conscience and conviction will be satisfied. This the deceitfulness of sin endeavours to draw the mind to, namely, to take up in the performance of the duty itself. Pray thou oughtest, and thou hast prayed; give alms thou oughtest, and thou hast given alms; go on to do the like. If it prevail herein, the mind is discharged from farther attendance and watching unto duty, which leaves the soul on the borders of many evils. For,

3. Hence customariness in all duties will quickly ensue, which is the heighth of sin drawing off the mind from duty. For men's minds may be drawn from all duties, in the midst of the most abundant performance of them. What is done with such a frame, is not done to God. And this is the great reason why professors thrive so little under the performance of a multitude of duties. They attend not to them in a due manner, their minds being drawn off from their watch, and so they have little or no communion with God in them, which is the end whereto they are designed.

Secondly, As it is in respect of duties, so also it is in respect of sins. There are sundry things in every sin, that the mind of a believer is obliged to attend diligently to, for the preservation of the soul from it. Things they are which God hath appointed and sanctified to give effectual rebukes to the whole working of the law of sin; and such as in the law of grace, under which we are, are exceedingly suited and fitted to that purpose. And from

a due consideration of, and attendance unto these, the deceit of sin endeavours by all means to draw off the mind. Some few of them we shall a little reflect upon.

1. The first is the sovereignty of God, the great Law-giver, by whom it is forbidden. This Joseph fixed on in his great temptation, Gen. xxxix. 9, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" There was in it a great evil, a great ingratitude against man, which he pleads also and insists upon, ver. 8, 9; but that which fixed his heart against it was, that it was sin against God, by whom it was severely forbidden.

2. The punishment appointed to it is another thing that the mind ought actually to attend to. And the diversion from this has been an inlet into all manner of abominations. Job professeth another frame in himself, chap. xxxi. 23, "Destruction from God was a terror unto me, and by reason of his highness I could not endure." So the apostle directs believers always to consider what a "fearful thing it is to fall into the hands of the living God," Heb. x. 31. And both these considerations, even the sovereignty of God, and the punishment of sin, are put together by our Saviour, Matt. x. 28, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

3. The consideration of all the love and kindness of God, against whom every sin is committed, is another thing that the mind ought diligently to attend to. And this is a prevailing consideration, if rightly managed. If there be any spiritual ingenuity in the soul, whilst the mind is attentive to this consideration, there can be no prevailing attempt made upon it by the power of sin. Now there are two parts of this consideration. (1.) That which is general in it, which is common unto all believers, 1 John iii. 1, 2, 3, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God; therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the

sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope, purifieth himself even as he is pure." Consider, saith he, the love of God, and the privileges that we enjoy by it: "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!" Such love it is, and such are the fruits of it, that the world knoweth nothing of the blessed condition which we enjoy: "The world knoweth us not." Nay, it is such love, and so unspeakably glorious are the effects of it, that we ourselves are not able to comprehend them. What use then ought we to make of this contemplation? Why, saith he, "Every man that hath this hope purifieth himself." Every man who, being made a partaker of this love, and an hope of the full enjoyment of the fruits of it, of being made like to God in glory, purifieth himself; that is, in an abstinence from all and every sin. (2.) It is to be considered as to such peculiar mercies and fruits of love as every believer's soul hath been made partaker of. There is no believer but, besides the love which he hath in common with all his brethren, hath also in the lot of his inheritance, some enclosures, some especial mercies. He hath some joy which no stranger intermeddleth with. Particular applications of love and mercy to his soul. Now these are all provisions laid in by God, that they may be borne in mind against an hour of temptation. This then is another thing, that it is our duty to attend to, and to oppose effectually to every attempt by the law of sin.

4. The considerations that arise from the blood and mediation of Christ are of the same importance. So the apostle declares, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15, "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." There is a constraining efficacy in this con-

sideration, it is great, forcible, effectual, if duly attended to.

5. Now herein lies the duty of the mind, in reference to particular sins and temptations. It is diligently and carefully to attend to these things, to dwell constantly upon the consideration of them, to have them in continual readiness to oppose to all the lustings, actings, warrings, attempts, and rage of sin. But with respect to these doth sin, in an especial manner, exercise its deceit. It labours by all means to draw off the mind from its due attention to these things; to deprive the soul of this great antidote against its poison. It endeavours to cause the soul to satisfy itself with general undigested notions about sin, that it may have nothing in particular to betake itself to against its temptations. And the ways whereby it doth this may be also briefly considered.

First. It is from the deceit of sin that the mind is spiritually slothful, and negligent to this duty. The principal discharge of its trust in this matter is expressed by watching, which is the great caution that the Lord Jesus gave his disciples, in reference to all their dangers from sin and satan, "I say unto all, Watch." That is, use your utmost diligence and circumspection that you be not surprised and entangled with temptations. It is called also *consideration*; "Consider your ways; consider your latter end." Now, that which is contrary to these indispensable conditions of our preservation, is spiritual slothfulness, as the apostle declares, Heb. vi. 11, 12, "And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end, that you be not slothful." If we shew not diligence, we are slothful, and in danger of coming short of the promises. Now this sloth consists in the following things.

(1.) Inadvertency. It doth not set itself to consider its special concernments. The apostle, persuading the Hebrews with all earnestness to attend diligently, to consider carefully, that they might not be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, gives this reason of their danger,

that they "were dull of hearing," chap. v. 11. That is, that they were slothful, and did not attend to the things of their duty. A secret regardlessness is apt to creep into the soul, and it doth not set itself to a diligent marking how things go with it. (2.) An unwillingness to be stirred up to its duty, Prov. xix. 24, "The slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom, and will not bring it to his mouth again." There is an unwillingness in sloth to take any notice of warnings, calls, or stirrings up by the word, Spirit, judgments. And this is an evidence that the mind is made slothful by the deceit of sin, when especial calls and warnings, whether in a suitable word, or a pressing judgment, cannot prevail with it to pull its hand out of its bosom. (3.) Weak and ineffectual attempts to recover itself to its duty; Prov. xxvi. 14, "As the door turneth itself upon its hinges, so doth the slothful man upon his bed." In the turning of a door upon its hinges, there is some motion, but no progress. It moves up and down, but it is still in the place that it was. So it is with the spiritually slothful man. He makes some motions or faint endeavours towards a discharge of his duty: but goes not on. There, where he was one day, there he is the next; yea, there where he was one year, he gets no ground by them, but is always beginning and never finishing his work. (4.) Heartlessness upon the apprehensions of difficulties and discouragements, Prov. xxii. 13, "The slothful man saith, there is a lion in the way." Every difficulty deters him from duty. He thinks it impossible for him to attain to that exactness and perfection which he is to press after, and therefore contents himself in his old negligence, rather than run the hazard of an universal circumspection. Now if the deceit of sin hath once drawn away the mind into this frame, it lays it open to every temptation.

Secondly. It draws away the mind from its watch, in reference to reprisals. It falls in with some urging temptation, and surpriseth the mind into thoughts quite of another nature than those it ought to insist upon. And

this indeed is the common way of the deceit of sin, as to particular evils. It lays hold on the mind suddenly with thoughtfulness about the present sin, so that either it recovers not itself at all, or if any thoughts be suggested, the mind is so prepossessed, that they make no impression on the soul. Here therefore lies our wisdom, in rejecting the very first motions of sin, because by parlies with them the mind may be drawn off from attending to its preservatives, and so the whole rush into evil. .

Thirdly. It draws away the mind by frequency and long continuance of its solicitations, making at last a conquest of it. And this happens not without an open neglect of the soul, a want of stirring up itself to give an effectual rebuke by the grace of Christ to sin, which would have prevented its prevalency.

The whole effect of this working of the deceitfulness of sin, may be reduced to these three heads. 1. The remission of an universally watchful frame of spirit to every duty, and against all, even the most secret actings of sin. 2. The omission of peculiar attending to such duties as have an especial respect to the ruin of the whole law of sin. 3. Spiritual sloth, as to a diligent regard to all duties and sins. When these three things are brought about, or so far as they are so, so far a man is drawn off by his own lust, or the deceit of sin.

CHAP. VI.

The working of Sin by Deceit to entangle the Affections.

The second thing in the words of the apostle, ascribed unto the deceitful working of sin, is its enticing. A man is drawn away and enticed: and this seems particularly to respect the affections, as drawing away doth the mind. The mind is drawn away from duty, and the affections are enticed into sin. From the prevalency hereof a man is said to be enticed, or entangled as with a bait; so the

word imports. For there is an allusion in it unto the bait wherewith a fish is taken on the hook which holds him to his destruction.

Concerning this effect of the deceit of sin we shall briefly shew two things : First, What it is to be enticed or entangled with the bait of sin, to have the affections tainted with an inclination thereunto ; and when they are so. And, Secondly, What course sin takes, and what way it proceeds in, thus to entice, ensnare, or entangle the soul.

For the first, 1. The affections are entangled when they stir up frequent imaginations about the object which this deceit of sin enticeth to. When sin prevails, and the affections are gone after it, it fills the imagination, possessing it with images of itself continually. Such persons devise iniquity, and work evil on their beds, which they also practise when they are able. As in particular, St. Peter tells us, that they "have eyes full of an adulteress, and they cannot cease from sin," 2 Pet. ii. 14. That is, their imaginations are possessed with a continual representation of the object of their lusts. And it is so in part where the affections are in part entangled with sin, and begin to turn aside to it. John tells us, that the things that are in the world are "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," 1 John ii. 14. The lust of the eyes is that which by them is conveyed unto the soul : now it is not the bodily sense of seeing, but the fixing of the imagination from that sense on such things, that is intended. And this is called the eyes, because thereby things are constantly represented unto the mind and soul, as outward objects are unto the inward sense by the eyes. And oftentimes the outward sight of the eyes is the occasion of these imaginations. So Achan declares how sin prevailed with him, Josh. vii. 21 ; first he saw the wedge of gold, and Babylonish garment, and then he coveted them. He rolled them, the pleasures, the profit of them, in his imagination, and then fixed his heart upon the obtaining them. Now the heart may have

a detestation of sin ; but yet if a man find that the imagination is frequently solicited by it, and exercised about it, such a one may know that his affections are secretly enticed and entangled.

2. This entanglement is heightened when the imagination can prevail with the mind to lodge vain thoughts in it, with secret delight. An abiding thought with delight towards forbidden objects is in all cases actually sinful. And yet, this may be, when the consent of the will is not obtained ; when the soul would not do the thing, about which yet thoughts begin to lodge in the mind. This lodging of vain thoughts in the heart, the prophet complains of as a thing greatly sinful, and to be abhorred, Jer. iv. 14. All these thoughts are messengers that carry sin to and fro between the imagination and the affections, and still increase the inclination to it, inflaming the imagination, and more and more entangling the affections. Achan thinks upon the golden wedge, this makes him love it ; by loving it his thoughts are infected, and return to the imagination of setting forth its worth, and goodly shew, and so by little and little the soul is inflamed to sin. And here if the will parts with its sovereignty, sin is actually conceived.

3. Readiness to attend to extenuations of sin, or the reliefs that are tendered against sin when committed, manifest the affections to be entangled with it. We have shewed, it is a great part of the deceit of sin to tender lessening and extenuating thoughts of sin. Is it not a little one ? Or there is mercy provided, or it shall be in due time relinquished, is its language in a deceived heart. Now when there is a readiness in the soul to hearken to such insinuations arising, it is an evidence that the affections are enticed. When the soul is willing to be tempted, to be courted by sin, to hearken to its solicitations, it hath lost its conjugal affections unto Christ. This is "looking on the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright,"

Prov. xxiii. 21. A pleasing contemplation on the invitations of sin, whose end the wise man gives us, ver. 32. When the deceit of sin hath prevailed thus far on any person, then he is enticed or entangled; the will is not yet come to the actual conception of the sin; but the whole soul is near thereto.

Secondly, Our next inquiry is, how the deceit of sin proceeds and entangles the affections; and two or three of its baits are manifest.

1. It makes use of its proper prevalency upon the mind, in drawing it off from its watch and circumspection. Says the wise man, Prov. i. 17, "Surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird;" or before the eyes of any thing that hath a wing, as in the original. If it hath eyes open to discern the snare, and a wing to carry it away, it will not be caught. And in vain shall the deceit of sin spread its snares for the soul, whilst the eyes of the mind are intent upon what it doth, and so stir up the wings of its will and affections to carry it away. But if the eyes be put out or diverted, the wings are of little use. And therefore this is one of the ways which is used by them who take birds in their nets, they have false lights, or shews of things to divert the sight of their prey; and when that is done, they take the season to cast their nets upon them. So doth the deceit of sin, it first diverts the mind by false reasonings, and then casts its net upon the affections.

2. Taking advantage of such seasons, it proposeth sin as desirable, as exceeding satisfactory. It gilds over the object by a thousand pretences. This is the laying a bait, which the apostle alludes unto. A bait is somewhat suitable, that is proposed to the hungry creature for its satisfaction, and it is by all artifices rendered desirable and suitable. Thus is sin presented by the help of the imagination to the soul; that is, sinful objects, which the affections cleave to. The apostle tells us, that there are pleasures of sin, Heb. xi. 25, which unless they

are despised, as they were by Moses, there is no escaping sin itself. Now this pleasure of sin consisteth in its suitability to give satisfaction to the flesh, to lust, to corrupt affections. Hence is that caution, Rom. xiii. 14, "Make no provision for the flesh to fulfil the lust thereof." That is, do not suffer your minds, thoughts, or affections to fix upon sinful objects, suited to give satisfaction to the lusts of the flesh, to nourish and cherish them. To which purpose he speaks again, Gal. v. 16, "Fulfil ye not the lusts of the flesh." Bring not the pleasures of sin to give them satisfaction. When men are under the power of sin, they are said to "fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind," Eph. ii. 3. Thus therefore the deceit of sin endeavours to entangle the affections, by proposing to them, through the assistance of the imagination, that suitability which is in it to the satisfaction of its corrupt lusts, now set at some liberty by the inadvertency of the mind. It presents its wine as sparkling in the cup, the beauty of the adulteress, the riches of the world to sensual and covetous persons, and somewhat in the like kind, in some degrees to believers themselves. When therefore, I say, sin would entangle the soul, it prevails with the imagination to solicit the heart, by representing this false painted beauty, or pretended satisfactoriness of sin. And then if satan with any peculiar temptation come to its assistance, it often inflames all the affections, and puts the whole soul into disorder.

3. It hides the danger that attends sin, it covers it as the hook is covered with the bait, or the net spread over with meat for the fowl to be taken. It is not indeed possible that sin should utterly deprive the soul of the knowledge of the danger of it. It cannot dispossess it of its persuasion that the wages of sin is death; and that it is the judgment of God, that they that commit sin are worthy of death. But this it will do, it will so take up the mind and affections with the baits and desirableness of sin, that it shall divert them from an actual contem-

plation of the danger of it. What satan did in and by his first temptation, that sin doth ever since. At first Eve guards herself with calling to mind the danger of sin; if we eat, or touch it, we shall die, Gen. iii. 3. But so soon as satan had filled her mind with the beauty and usefulness of the fruit to make one wise, how quickly did she lay aside her practical prevalent consideration of the danger of eating it, the curse due unto it; or else relieves herself with a vain hope and pretence that it should not be executed because the serpent told her so. Now sin, when it presseth upon the soul to this purpose, will use a thousand wiles to hide from it the terror of the Lord, the end of transgressions, and especially of that peculiar folly which it solicits the mind unto. Hopes of pardon shall be used to hide it, and future repentance shall hide it, and present importunity of lust shall hide it, occasions and importunities shall hide it, surprisals shall hide it, extenuation of sin shall hide it, balancing of duties against it shall hide it, fixing the imagination on present objects shall hide it, desperate resolutions to venture the uttermost for the enjoyment of lust in its pleasures and profits, shall hide it. A thousand wiles it hath which cannot be recounted.

4. Having prevailed thus far, gilding over the pleasures of sin, hiding its end and demerit, it proceeds to raise perverse reasonings in the mind, to fix it upon the sin proposed, that it may be conceived and brought forth, the affections being already prevailed upon.

Here we may stay a little, to give some few directions for the obviating the mischief of this deceitfulness of sin. Would we not be enticed or entangled, would we not be disposed to the conception of sin, would we be turned out of the road which goes down to death; let us take heed to our affections, which are of so great concern in the whole course of our obedience, that they are commonly in the Scriptures called by the name of the heart, as the principal thing which God requires in our walking before him. And this is not slightly to be attended unto.

ov. iv. 23, saith the wise man, "Keep thy heart with all diligence," or, as in the original, "above or before all keepings;" before every watch keep thy heart. You have many keepings that you watch unto; you watch to keep your lives, to keep your estates, to keep your reputations, to keep your families; but, saith he, above all these keepings, prefer that, attend to that of the heart, of your affections, that they be not entangled with sin; there is no safety without it. Save all other things and lose the heart, and all is lost, lost to all eternity.

You will say then, What shall we do, or how shall we observe this duty?

1. Keep your affections as to their object, and that, (1.) In general. This advice the apostle gives in this very case, Col. iii. His advice in the beginning of that chapter is to direct us to the mortification of sin, which he expressly engageth in, ver. 5, "Mortify therefore your members which are on the earth." Prevent the working and deceit of sin which wars in your members. To prepare us, to enable us hereunto, he gives us that great direction, ver. 2, "Set your affections on things above, not on things of the earth." Fix your affections upon heavenly things, this will enable you to mortify sin. Fill them with the things that are above, let them be exercised with them. There are above blessed and suitable objects, meet for, and answering to our affections: God himself, in his beauty and glory; the Lord Jesus Christ, who is altogether lovely, the chiefest of ten thousand; grace and glory, the mysteries revealed in the gospel, the blessedness promised thereby. Were our affections filled and possessed with these things, as it is our duty that they should be, and is our happiness when they are; what access could sin, with its painted pleasures, its envenomed baits, have to our souls? How should we loathe all its proposals, and say unto them, "Get ye hence," as abominable things? For what are the pleasures of sin, in comparison of the exceeding recompence of reward which is proposed unto us?

(2.) As to the object of your affections in an especial manner ; let it be the cross of Christ, which hath an exceeding efficacy towards the disappointment of the whole work of indwelling sin. Gal. vi. 14, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus, whereby the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." The cross of Christ he gloried and rejoiced in ; this his heart was set upon, and these were the effects of it ; it crucified the world unto him, made it a dead and undesirable thing. The baits and pleasures of sin are taken all of them out of the world, and the things that are in the world, namely, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. These are the things that are in the world ; from these doth sin take all its baits, whereby it enticeth and entangleth our souls. If the heart be filled with the cross of Christ, it casts death and undesirableness upon them all, it leaves no beauty, no pleasure or comeliness in them. Again, saith he, "it crucifieth me to the world ;" makes my heart, my affections, my desires, dead to all these things. It roots up corrupt lusts and affections, leaves no principle to make provision for the flesh. Labour, therefore, to fill your hearts with the cross of Christ. Consider the sorrows he underwent, the curse he bore, the blood he shed, the cries he put forth, the love that was in all this to your souls, and the mystery of the grace of God therein. Meditate on the vileness, the demerit, and punishment of sin as represented in the cross, the blood, the death of Christ. Is Christ crucified for sin, and shall not our hearts be crucified with him unto sin ? Shall we give entertainment to that, or hearken to its dalliances, which wounded, which pierced, which slew our dear Lord Jesus ? God forbid. Fill your affections with the cross of Christ, that there may be no room for sin.

2. Look to the vigour of the affections towards heavenly things ; if they are not constantly attended to, excited, directed, and warmed, they are apt to decay, and sin lies in wait to take every advantage against them.

Many complaints we have in the Scriptures of those who lost their first love, in suffering their affections to decay. and this should make us jealous over our own hearts, lest we should be overtaken with the like. Wherefore be jealous over them, often strictly examine them, and call them to account; supply unto them due considerations for their exciting and stirring up to duty.

CHAP. VII.

The Conception of Sin through its Deceit.

THE third success of the deceit of sin in its progressive work is the conception of actual sin. When it hath drawn the mind off from its duty, and entangled the affections, it proceeds to conceive sin, in order to the bringing of it forth. Now the conception of sin, in order unto its perpetration, can be nothing but the consent of the will. For, as without the consent of the will sin cannot be committed, so where the will hath consented unto it, there is nothing in the soul to hinder its actual accomplishment. God doth indeed, by various ways, frustrate the bringing forth these conceptions, yet there is nothing in the soul itself that remains to give check unto it. This conceiving of lust or sin then is its obtaining the consent of the will. And hereby the soul is deflowered of its chastity towards God in Christ.

This consent of the will may be considered two ways. 1. As it is exercised about the circumstances, causes, means, and inducements to sin. 2. As it respects this or that actual sin. In the first sense there is a virtual consent of the will unto sin in every inadvertency to the prevention of it, in every neglect of duty that makes way for it, in every hearkening to any temptation leading towards it. But this is not that which we now speak of. But in particular the consent of the will unto this or that actual sin, so far as that either sin is committed, or is

prevented by other means. And herein consists the conceiving of sin.

These things being supposed, that which in the next place we are to consider, is the way that the deceit of sin proceedeth; to procure the consent of the will, and so to conceive actual sin in the soul. To this purpose observe, 1. That the will is a rational appetite; rational, as guided by the mind; and an appetite, as excited by the affections; and so, in its operation or actings, is influenced by both. 2. It chooseth nothing, consents to nothing but as it hath an appearance of good, some present good: so that, 3. We may see hence the reason why the conception of sin is here placed as a consequent of the mind's being drawn away, and the affections being entangled. Both these have an influence into the consent of the will, and the conception of this or that actual sin. Our way therefore here is made plain. We have seen how the mind is drawn away by the deceit of sin, and how the affections are entangled, that which remains is but the proper effect of these things; for the discovery whereof we must instance in some of the corrupt and fallacious reasonings, and then shew their prevalency on the will.

1. The will is imposed upon by that corrupt reasoning, that grace is exalted in pardon; and that mercy is provided for sinners. This first deceives the mind, and that opens the way to the will's consent, by removing a sight of evil. Now the mind being entangled with this deceit, drawn off from its watch by it, diverted from the true ends of the gospel, doth several ways impose upon the will to obtain its consent.

(1.) By a sudden surprisal in case of temptation. Temptation is the representation of a thing as a present good, which is a real evil. Now when a temptation, armed with opportunity, assaults the soul, the principle of grace in the will riseth up with a rejection of it. But on a sudden the mind being deceived by sin, breaks in upon the will with a fallacious reasoning from gospel-

grace and mercy, which first staggers, then abates the will's opposition, and then causeth it to cast the scale by its consent to the side of temptation, presenting evil as a present good; and sin in the sight of God is conceived. Thus is the seed of God sacrificed to Moloch, and the weapons of Christ abused to the service of the devil.

(2.) It doth it insensibly. It insinuates the poison of this corrupt reasoning by little and little, until it hath greatly prevailed. And as the whole effect of the doctrine of the gospel in holiness, consists in the soul's being cast into the frame and mould of it, Rom. vi. 17, so the whole of apostasy from the gospel is principally the casting the soul into the mould of this false reasoning, that sin may be indulged upon account of grace and pardon. Hereby is the soul gratified in sloth and negligence, and taken off from its care as to particular duties and particular sins. It works the soul insensibly off from the mystery of the law of grace, to look for salvation as if we had never performed any duty, with a resting on sovereign mercy through the blood of Christ, and to attend to duties with all diligence, as if we looked to no mercy; that is with no less care, though with more liberty and freedom. This the deceitfulness of sin endeavoureth by all means to work the soul from, and thereby debaucheth the will, when its consent is required to particular sins.

2. The deceived mind imposeth on the will to obtain its consent to sin, by proposing to it the advantages that may arise thereby. It renders that which is absolutely evil, an appearing present good. Pleas for obedience are laid out of the way, and only the pleasures of sin taken under consideration. So saith Ahab, 1 Kings xxi. "Naboth's vineyard is near my house, and I may make it a garden of herbs," therefore I must have it. These considerations of a deceived mind imposed on his will; until it made him obstinate in the pursuit of his covetousness

through perjury and murder. Thus is the guilt and tendency of sin hid under the covert of pleasures, and so is conceived in the soul.

The affections being entangled, greatly further the conception of sin by the consent of the will; and they do it two ways. (1.) By some hasty impulse and surprisal. Being themselves stirred up and drawn forth by some violent provocation or temptation, they put the whole soul as it were into a combustion, and draw the will to consent unto that with which they are entangled. So was the case of David in the matter of Nabal. A violent provocation stirs him up to wrath and revenge, 1 Sam. xxv. 13. He resolves upon it, to destroy a whole family, the innocent with the guilty, ver. 33, 34. Self-revenge and murder were for the season conceived, consented unto, until God graciously took him off. Let that soul which would take heed of conceiving sin, take heed of entangled affections. For sin may be suddenly conceived, the prevalent consent of the will may be suddenly obtained, which gives the soul a fixed guilt, though the sin itself be never actually brought forth.

(2.) Enticed affections procure the consent of the will by frequent solicitations, whereby they get ground insensibly upon it, and enthrone themselves. Take an instance in the sons of Jacob, Gen. xxxvii. 4. They hate their brother, because their father loved him. Their affections being enticed, many new occasions fall out to entangle them farther. This lay rankling in their hearts, and never ceased soliciting their wills, until they resolved upon his death. The unlawfulness, the unnaturalness of the action, the grief of their aged father, the guilt of their own souls, are all laid aside; that hatred and envy that they had conceived against him ceased not until they had got the consent of their wills to his ruin.

CHAP. VIII.

Several Ways whereby the bringing forth of conceived Sin is obstructed.

BEFORE we proceed to the remaining evidences of the power of sin, we shall take occasion to divert unto one consideration that offers itself from that Scripture, which was made the foundation of our discourse on the deceitfulness of sin, namely, James i. 14. The apostle tells us that lust conceiving, brings forth sin; seeming to intimate, that whatever sin is conceived, that also is brought forth. And yet there is a world of sin conceived, that is never brought forth. Our present business then shall be to inquire whence that comes to pass. I answer,

1. That this is not so, is not owing to sin. What it conceives, it would bring forth; and that it doth not, is for the most part but a small abatement of its guilt.

2. There are two things that are necessary in the creature that hath conceived sin, for the bringing of it forth, viz. power, and continuance in the will of sinning, until it be committed. Where these two are, actual sin will unavoidably ensue. It is evident, therefore, that that which hinders conceived sin from being brought forth, must affect either the power or the will of the sinner. This must be from God. And he hath two ways of doing it. First, By his Providence, whereby he obstructs the power of sinning. Secondly, By his grace, whereby he changes the will.

First. When sin is conceived, the Lord obstructs its production by his providence, in taking away that power which is necessary for its bringing forth. As, (1.) Life is the foundation of all power. Now he frequently obviates the power of exerting sin, by cutting short the lives of them that have conceived it. Thus he dealt with the army of Sennacherib. God daily thus cuts off persons who had conceived much mischief in their hearts,

and prevents the execution of it, "Blood-thirsty and deceitful men do not live out half their days."

(2.) God providentially hinders the bringing forth of conceived sin, by taking away the power of them that had conceived it; so that though their lives continue, they shall not have that power, without which it is impossible for them to execute what they had intended. Hereof also we have sundry instances. Thus was the case with the builders of Babel, Gen. xi. His dealing with Jeroboam, 1 Kings xiii. 4, was of the same nature. "He stretched out his hand" to lay hold on the prophet, and it withered and became useless. And this is an eminent way of the effectual acting of God's Providence in the world, for the stopping of that inundation of sin, which else would overflow all the earth. He cuts men short of their moral power, whereby they would effect it. Many a wretch that hath conceived mischief against the church of God, hath, by this means, been divested of his power, whereby he thought to accomplish it. Some have their bodies smitten with diseases, that they can no more serve their lusts, nor accompany them in the perpetrating of folly. Some are deprived of the instruments whereby they would work. There have been for many days sin and mischief enough conceived, to root out the generation of the faithful from the face of the earth, had men strength and ability to their will, did not God cut off their power, and the days of their prevalence. God meets with them, brings them down, that they shall not be able to accomplish their design. And this way of God's preventing sin, seems to be, at least ordinarily, peculiar to the men of the world; God deals thus with them every day, and leaves them to pine away in their sins.

But in some cases, under some violent temptations, or in mistakes, God may thus obviate the accomplishment of conceived sin in believers. And there seems to be an instance of it in his dealing with Jehoshaphat, who had designed, against the mind of God, to join in affinity

with Ahab, and to send his ships with him to Tarshish ; but God brake his ships by a wind, that he could not accomplish what he had designed.

(3.) God providentially hinders the bringing forth of conceived sin, by opposing an external hindering power unto sinners. He leaves them their lives, and leaves them power, only he raiseth up an opposite power to restrain them. An instance hereof we have, 1 Sam. xiv. 45. Saul had sworn that Jonathan should be put to death, and as far as appears, went on resolutely to have slain him ; but God stirs up the spirit of the people, they oppose themselves to the wrath and fury of Saul, and Jonathan is delivered. And to this head are to be referred all the assistances which God hath stirred up for the deliverance of his people against the fury of persecutors.

(4.) God obviates the accomplishment of conceived sin, by removing the objects on whom the sin conceived was to be committed ; Acts xii. 11, yields us a signal instance of this : when the day was coming wherein Herod thought to have slain Peter, God sends and takes him away. So also was our Saviour himself taken away from the murderous rage of the Jews before his hour was come, John viii. 59 ; x. 39. Both primitive and later times are full of stories to this purpose : prison doors have been opened, and poor creatures appointed to die, have been frequently rescued from the jaws of death. So wings were given to the woman to carry her into the wilderness, and to disappoint the world in the execution of their rage, Rev. xii. 14.

(5.) God doth this by some eminent diversions of the thoughts of men who had conceived sin, Gen. xxxvii. 24. The brethren of Joseph cast him into a pit, with an intent to famish him there ; whilst they were, as it seems, pleasing themselves with what they had done, God orders a company of merchants to come by, and diverts their thoughts with that new object from the killing, to the selling of their brother, ver. 26, 27. And how far therein they were subservient to the infinitely wise counsel of

God, we know. Thus also when Saul was in the pursuit of David, and was even ready to prevail against him to his destruction, God stirs up the Philistines to invade the land, which both diverted his thoughts, and drew the course of his actings another way. 1 Sam. xxiii. 27.

And these are some of the ways whereby God is pleased to hinder the bringing forth of conceived sin, by opposing his Providence to the power of the sinning creature. And we may a little, in our way, take a brief view of the great advantages of faith, and the church of God, which may be found in this matter. As,

1. This may give us a little insight into the adorable Providence of God, by these and the like ways obstructing the breaking forth of sin in the world. It is he who makes those dams, and shuts up those flood-gates of corrupted nature, that they shall not break forth to overwhelm the creation. As it was of old, so it is at this day, "Every thought and imagination of the heart of man is evil, and that continually." That all the earth is not in all places filled with violence, as of old, is merely from the hand of God obstructing. From hence alone it is, that the highways, streets, and fields, are not all filled with violence, blood, rapine, uncleanness, and every villany that the heart of man can conceive. O the infinite beauty of Divine wisdom and providence in the government of the world! For the preservation of it asks daily no less power and wisdom than the first making of it.

2. If we look to our own concernments, they will, in an especial manner, compel us to adore the providence of God, in stopping the progress of conceived sin. That we are at peace in our houses, at rest in our beds, that we have any quiet in our enjoyments, is from hence alone. Whose person would not be defiled or destroyed? Whose habitation would not be ruined? Whose blood would not be shed, if wicked men had power to perpetrate all their conceived sin? It may be, the ruin of some of us hath been conceived a thousand times. We are beholden

to this providence for our lives, families, estates, and liberties, for whatsoever is dear unto us. For may we not say with the Psalmist, Psalm lvii. 4, "My soul is among lions, and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword?" And how is the deliverance of men contrived from such persons, Psalm lviii. 6, "God breaks their teeth in their mouths, even the great teeth of the young lions." He keeps this fire from burning, or quencheth it when it is ready to break out into a flame. He breaks their spears and arrows, so that sometimes we are not so much as wounded by them. Some he cuts off and destroys; some he cuts short in their power; some he deprives of the instruments whereby they alone can work. Some he prevents of their desired opportunities, or diverts by other objects, and oftentimes causeth them to spend their power among themselves one upon another. We may say, therefore, with the Psalmist, Psalm civ. 24, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works, in wisdom hast thou made them all, the earth is full of thy riches;" and with the prophet, Hos. xiv. 9, "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things, prudent, and he shall know them; all the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them, but the transgressors shall fall therein."

3. We may see hence the great use of magistracy in the world, that great appointment of God. Amongst other things it is peculiarly subservient to his holy providence, in obstructing the bringing forth of conceived sin, namely, by the terror of him that bears the sword, Rom. xiii. 4, "If thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for the power beareth not the sword in vain, for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath on them that do evil." God fixes this on the hearts of men, and by the dread of it closeth the womb of sin, that it shall not bring forth. The greatest mercies and blessings that in this world we are made partakers of, next to those of

the gospel, come to us through this channel. And indeed, this is the proper work of magistracy, to be subservient to the providence of God in obstructing sin. These then are some of the ways whereby God providentially prevents the bringing forth of sin.

The way that yet remains, whereby God obviates the production of conceived sin, is his working on the will of the sinners, so making sin to consume away in the womb. There are two ways, in general, whereby God thus prevents the bringing forth of conceived sin, by working on the will of the sinner; and they are, 1. By restraining grace. 2. By renewing grace.

1. God doth this in the way of restraining grace, by some arrow of particular conviction fixed in the conscience of the sinner, in reference to the particular sin which he had conceived. This staggers the mind as to the particular intended, causeth the hands to hang down, and the weapons of lust to fall out of them. Hereby conceived sin proves abortive. How God doth this work, by what immediate touches, strokes, blows, rebukes of his Spirit; by what reasonings, arguments, and commotions of men's own consciences, is not for us thoroughly to find out. It is done in an unspeakable variety of ways, and the works of God are past finding out. And thus, in general, doth God every day prevent the bringing forth of a world of sin. He sharpens arrows of conviction upon the spirits of men, as to the particular they are engaged in. Their hearts are not changed as to sin, but their minds are altered as to this or that sin. They break, it may be, the vessel they had fashioned, and go to work upon some other.

2. God prevents the bringing forth of conceived sin by saving grace, and that either in the first conversion of sinners: or, in the following supplies of it.

(1.) This is one part of the mystery of his grace. He meets men sometimes in their highest resolutions for sin, with the highest efficacy of his grace. By this he melts down the lusts of men, causeth them to wither at the

root, that they shall no more strive to bring forth what they have conceived, but be filled with shame and sorrow at their conception. And we have not a few examples of it in our own days. Sundry persons going to this or that place to deride the dispensation of the word, have been met with in the very place, and have been cast down at the feet of God. But there is no need to insist on instances of this. God is pleased to leave no generation unconvinced of this truth, if they do but attend to their own experiences, and the examples of this work of his mercy amongst them. Every day, one or other is taken in the purpose of his heart to go on in sin, and is stopt by the power of converting grace.

(2.) God doth it by the same grace in the renewed communications of it, that is, by special assisting grace. This is the common way of his dealings with believers in this case. That they also, through the deceitfulness of sin, may be carried on to the conceiving this or that sin, was before declared. But God often puts a stop to their progress, or rather to the prevalency of sin in them, by giving them special assistances. Many a believer is at the very brink of some folly or iniquity, when God puts in by the efficacy of assisting grace, and recovers them to an obediential frame of heart again. And this assistance lies under the promise, 1 Cor. x. 13; "There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man, but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it." Temptation shall try us, it is for our good; many holy ends doth the Lord compass by it. But when we are tried to the utmost of our ability, so that one assault more would overbear us, a way of escape is provided. And as this may be done several ways, so this is one of the most eminent, namely, by supplies of grace, to enable the soul to bear up, resist, and conquer.

Besides these general ways, there is one yet more special, that at once worketh both upon the power and

will of the sinner; and this is the way of afflictions. These work by both these ways, in refernce unto conceived sin. They work providentially upon the power of the creature. When a man hath conceived a sin, and is in full pursuit of it, God often sends a sickness, and abates his strength, or a loss cuts him short in his plenty, and so takes him off from the pursuit of his lusts, though it may be his heart is not weaned from them. His power is weakened, and he cannot do the evil he would. In this sense it belongs to the first way of obviating the productions of sin. Great afflictions work not from their own nature immediately, but from the gracious purpose of him that sends them. He insinuates into the dispensation of them, that of grace and power, of love and kindness, which shall effectually take off the heart from sin, Psal. cxix. 67; "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now have I learned thy commandments." And in this way, because of the predominancy of renewing and assisting grace, they belong to the latter means of preventing sin.

And these are some of the ways whereby it pleaseth God to put a stop to the progress of sin, both in believers and unbelievers, if we would endeavour farther to search out his ways unto perfection, yet we must still conclude that it is but "a little portion which we know of him."

CHAP. IX.

The Power of Sin farther demonstrated by the Effects it hath had in the Lives of Believers.

We are now to proceed to other evidences of this sad truth. And that which in the next place may be fixed upon, is the demonstration which this law of sin hath in all ages given of its power, by the fruits that it hath brought forth, even in believers. Now, these are of two sorts. 1. The great actual eruption of sin in their lives.

2. Their declensions from the communion with God, which they had obtained; both which are to be laid to the account of this law of sin, and belong to the fourth head of its progress.

1. Consider the fearful eruptions of actual sins, that have been in the lives of believers,* and we shall find our position evidenced. (1.) They were some of them in the lives of men that were not of the lowest form, or ordinary sort of believers, but of men that had a peculiar eminency in them, on the account of their walking with God in their generations. (2.) And these very men fell not into their sins at the beginning of their profession, when they had had but a little experience of the goodness



* That is, in persons who professed to be believers, or who had once been believers, but who certainly did not believe with *living faith, faith working by love*, (the only faith that availeth, Gal. v. 6,) at the time when they fell into known sin. For he that believeth with such a faith is *born of God*, 1 John v. 1; and *whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin*, that is, known sin, *for his seed, the Divine truth and grace, remaineth in him*, who thus believes, *and he cannot sin*, while that is the case, his enlightened and awakened conscience will not suffer to sin, *because he is born of God, and keepeth himself*, so that the *wicked one toucheth him not* to overcome him. See 1 John iii. 9, and v. 18. *In this one point, especially, the committing or not committing known sin, the apostle assures us, the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil.* And he gives all that should read his epistle, a most solemn caution on this head, adding, *Little children, let no man deceive you. He that doth righteousness, and only he, is righteous, even as he (Christ) is righteous; he that committeth sin is of the devil.* The fact is, as this same apostle testifies, ver. 6, of the same chapter, *whosoever, being in him by a living faith, abideth in him by the continual exercise of that faith, sinneth not*: but, if, instead of continuing in that faith, *grounded and settled*, not being *moved from the hope of the gospel*, as St. Paul speaks, Col. i. 23; such a one *draws back*, Heb. x. 38, from the exercise of this faith and hope of eternal life, and so loses his union with Christ, and is deprived of those communications of grace from him, which he once enjoyed, he may and will commit sin, being now weak and carnal like another man, a man who is not a partaker of regenerating^d and sanctifying grace.

of God, of the sweetness and pleasantness of obedience, of the power and craft of sin, but after a long course of walking with God, and acquaintance with all these things. (3.) As if God had permitted their falls on set purpose, that we might learn to be wary of this powerful enemy; they fell out when they had received great and stupendous mercies from the hand of God, that ought to have been strong obligations unto diligence and watchfulness in close obedience. And yet what prevalency this law of sin wrought in them we see. And there is no end of the like examples; they are all set up as buoys to discover unto us the sands, the shelves, the rocks, whereupon they made their shipwreck. And this is the first part of this evidence of the power of sin, from its effects.

2. It manifests its power in the habitual declensions from zeal and holiness, from the condition of obedience and communion with God, whereunto they had attained, which are found in many believers. Promises of growth and improvement are many and precious; the means excellent and effectual; the benefits great and unspeakable; yet it often falls out, that instead hereof, decays and declensions are found in believers. We have a notable instance in most of the churches that our Saviour awakens to the consideration of their condition, in the Revelations: we may single out one. Many good things there were in the church of Ephesus, for which it is greatly commended; but yet it is charged with a decay and a declension, a gradual falling off: "Thou hast left thy first love, remember therefore whence thou art fallen, and do thy first works." There was a decay both as to faith and love; and as to obedience and works, in comparison of what they had formerly. But what need have we to look back, or search for instances to confirm the truth of this observation? An habitual declension from first engagements unto God, from first attainments of communion with God, from first strictness in duties of obedience is frequent, not to say common among believers. Now, all these declensions proceed from this root; they are all the product of in-

dwelling sin. For the proof hereof I shall not need to go further than the general rule we have already considered, namely, that lust or indwelling sin is the cause of all actual sin, and all habitual declensions in believers. I shall therefore, first, shew, That this doth evince a great power in sin: and secondly, point out the ways whereby it brings forth this cursed effect.

First, it appears to be a work of great power, from the provision that is made against it, which it prevails over. There is in the covenant of grace plentiful provision made, not only for the preventing of declensions and decays in believers, but also for their continually advancing towards perfection. As,

1. The word itself, and all the ordinances of the gospel, are appointed and given us for this end, Eph. iv. 11—15. The dispensation of the word of the gospel, and the ordinances thereof, is designed for our help, assistance, and furtherance, until the whole work of faith and obedience is consummated. It is appointed to perfect and complete that faith, knowledge, and growth in grace and holiness, which is allotted unto us in this world. What if oppositions and temptations lie in the way, satan and his instruments working with great subtilty? Why, ver. 14, these ordinances were designed for our deliverance from all their attempts, that so being preserved in the use of them, “or speaking the truth in love,* we may grow up into him in all things who is the head, even Christ Jesus.”

2. It adds weight to this consideration, that God suffers us not to be unmindful of this assistance he hath afforded us, but is continually calling upon us to make use of the



* It seems the original expression, *αληθευοντες εν αγαπη*, should rather be rendered *teaching or maintaining the truth in love*, viz. love to God and one another, or that devout and charitable disposition which the gospel enjoins, without which our clearest and most extensive knowledge will be of little use to us.

means appointed for attaining the end proposed. He shews them to us, as the angel shewed the water-spring to Hagar. Commands, exhortations, promises, threatenings, are multiplied to this purpose. He is continually saying to us, Why will ye die? Why will ye wither and decay? Come to the pastures provided for you, and your souls shall live. If we see a lamb run from the fold into the wilderness, we wonder not if it be torn and rent of wild beasts; and if we see a sheep leaving its green pastures and water-courses, to abide in dry, barren heaths, we count it no marvel, nor inquire farther, if we see him lean and ready to perish. But if we find lambs wounded in the fold, we wonder at the boldness of the beasts of prey, that durst set upon them there. If we see sheep pining in full pastures, we judge them to be diseased and unsound. It is indeed no marvel that poor creatures, who forsake their own mercies, and run away from the pasture of Christ in his ordinances, are rent and torn with divers lusts, and pine away with hunger and famine. But to see men living under, and enjoying all the means of spiritual thriving, yet to decay daily, to pine and wither, this argues some secret, powerful distemper, which hinders the efficacy of the means they enjoy. This is indwelling sin. So wonderfully powerful, so effectually poisonous it is, that it can bring leanness into the souls of men in the midst of all precious means of growth and flourishing. It may well make us tremble to see men living in the use of the means of the gospel, preaching, praying, administration of sacraments, and yet grow colder every day than other in zeal for God, more selfish and worldly, even habitually to decline as to the degrees of holiness which they had attained unto.

3. Together with the outward means of spiritual growth, there are also supplies of grace continually afforded the saints from their head, Christ Jesus. He comes not only that his sheep may have life, but that "they may have it more abundantly," that is, in a plen-

tiful manner, so as that they may flourish, be fat and fruitful. His treasures of grace are unsearchable, his stores inexhaustible. His heart bounteous and large, his hand open and liberal ; so that there is no doubt, that he communicates supplies of grace for their increase in holiness abundantly unto all his saints. Whence then is it that they do not all thrive accordingly ? As you may see it often in a natural body, so it is here. Though the seat and rise of the blood and spirits in the head and heart be excellently good and sound, yet there may be a withering member in the body ; somewhat intercepts the influences of life unto it. So that though the heart and head perform their office in giving supplies no less to that than to any other member, yet all the effect produced is merely to keep it from utter perishing ; it grows weak, and decays every day. The withering and decaying of any member in Christ's mystical body, is not for the want of his communication of grace, but from the powerful interception that is made of the efficacy of it, by the interposition and opposition of indwelling sin. Hence it is, a great deal of grace will but keep the soul alive, and not give it any eminency in fruitfulness. And this, if any thing, is an evidence of the efficacy of indwelling sin, that it is able to give such a check to the mighty and effectual power of grace ; so that notwithstanding the continual supplies we receive from our head, yet many believers decline and decay, and that habitually, as to what they had attained to ; their last ways not answering their first. This makes the vineyard in the very fruitful hill to bring forth so many wild grapes. This makes so many trees barren in fertile fields.

4. Besides continual supplies of grace communicated unto believers, which keeps them ; there is moreover a readiness in the Lord Jesus Christ to yield peculiar succour, according as their occasions shall require. And this is exceedingly to the advantage of the saints, for their preservation and growth in grace. But notwithstanding all these, such is the power of indwelling sin, so great is its

deceitfulness and restlessness, that many of them for whose growth all this provision is made, go back and decline, even as to their course of walking with God.

CHAP. X.

Decays in Degrees of Grace caused by indwelling Sin. The Ways of its Prevalency.

The ways whereby indwelling sin prevaieth on believers unto habitual declensions and decays, is that which now comes under consideration. Upon the first conversion of sinners to God, they have usually many fresh springs breaking forth in their souls, and refreshing showers coming upon them, which bear them up to an high rate of faith, love, holiness, fruitfulness, and obedience. As upon a land-flood, when many lesser streams run into a river, it swells over its bounds, and rolls on with a more than ordinary fulness. Now if these springs be not kept open, if they prevail not for the continuance of these showers, they must needs decay and go backwards. We shall name one or two of them.

1. They have a fresh, vigorous sense of pardoning mercy. According as this is in the soul, so will its love and delight in God, so will its obedience be. Sinners at their first conversion are very sensible of great forgiveness: "Of whom I am chief," lies next their heart. This greatly subdues their hearts to God, and quickens them to all obedience; even that such poor cursed sinners as they were, should so freely be delivered and pardoned. The love of God and of Christ in their forgiveness, highly conquers and constrains them to live unto God.

2. The fresh taste they have of spiritual things, keeps up such a relish of them in their souls, that worldly contentments whereby men are drawn off from close walking with God, are rendered tasteless and undesirable to them. Having tasted of the wine of the gospel, they desire no

other, for they say, "This is best." Now whilst these and the like springs are kept open in the souls of converted sinners, they constrain them to a vigorous, active holiness. They can never do enough for God; so that often their zeal suffers them not to escape without some blots on their prudence.

One way, therefore, whereby indwelling sin prepares men for decays in grace and obedience, is, it endeavours to stop or taint these springs. And there are several ways whereby it bringeth this to pass.

1. It works by sloth and negligence. It prevails in the soul to a neglect of stirring up continual thoughts of the things which so powerfully influence it, unto strict and fruitful obedience. If care be not taken, if diligence and watchfulness be not used, and all means observed that are appointed of God, to keep a quick and lively sense of them upon the soul, they will dry up and decay, and consequently that obedience that should spring from them will do so also. Isaac digged wells, but the Philistines stopt them, and his flocks had no benefit by them. Let the heart never so little disuse itself to affecting thoughts of the love of God, the cross of Christ, the greatness and excellency of gospel mercy, the beauties of holiness, they will quickly be as much estranged to a man as he can be to them. And so much as a man loseth of faith towards these things, so much will they lose of power towards him. They can effect little or nothing upon him, because of his unbelief, though formerly they were so exceedingly effectual towards him. Indwelling sin, prevailing by spiritual sloth upon the souls of men to produce inadvertency of the motions of God's Spirit in their former apprehensions of Divine love, and a negligence of stirring up continual thoughts of faith about it, decay grows insensibly upon the whole soul. Thus God oft complains that his people had forgotten him, that is, grew unmindful of his love and grace, which was the beginning of their apostasy.

2. By disordering the soul, so that it shall have formal,

weary, powerless thoughts of those things which should prevail with it unto diligence in thankful obedience. The apostle cautions us, that in dealing with God, we should use "reverence and godly fear," because of his purity, holiness, and majesty, Heb. xii. 28, 29. And this is that which the Lord himself spake in the destruction of Nadab and Abihu, "I will be sanctified in them that come to me," Lev. x. 3. He will be dealt with in an awful, holy, reverent manner. So are we to deal with all the things of God, whereby we have communion with him. The soul is to have a great reverence for God in them. When men begin to take them into slight and common thoughts, not improving them to the utmost, for the ends whereto they are appointed, they lose all their beauty and glory. When we have any thing to do, wherein faith or love towards God is to be exercised, we must do it with all our hearts, with all our minds, souls, and strength, not slightly and perfunctorily, which God abhors. He doth not only require that we bear his love and grace in remembrance, but that, as much as in us lieth, we do it according to the worth and excellency of them. Whilst we consider gospel truths, the utmost endeavour of the soul ought to be, that we may be changed into the same likeness; that is, that they may have their full power and effect upon us. Now this is the way of sinners in their first engagements to God. They never think of pardoning mercy, but they labour to affect their whole souls with it, and stir up themselves to suitable affections and returns of constant obedience. They think not of the excellency of Christ, and spiritual things, now newly discovered unto them, but they press with all their might after a farther and a fuller enjoyment of them. This keeps them humble and holy, this makes them thankful and fruitful. But now if the utmost diligence and carefulness be not used to improve and grow in this wisdom, to keep up this frame, indwelling sin will insensibly bring them to content themselves with slight thoughts of these things. And as men decay herein, so they will assuredly

decay in the power of holiness, and close walking with God. The springs being stopped or tainted, the streams will not run so swiftly, at least, not so sweetly as formerly. Some by this means, under an uninterrupted profession, insensibly wither into nothing. They talk of religion and spiritual things as much as ever they did, and perform duties with as much constancy as ever, but yet have poor starving souls as to communion with God.

3. Indwelling sin often prevails to the stopping of these springs of gospel-obedience, by false and foolish opinions, corrupting the simplicity of the gospel; false opinions are the works of the flesh. From the vanity and darkness of the minds of men, with a mixture, more or less, of corrupt affections, do they mostly proceed. The apostle was jealous over his Corinthians in this matter; he was afraid lest their minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ, 2 Cor. xi. 2, 3, which he knew would be attended by a decay and declension in faith, love, and obedience; and thus matters often fall out. We have seen some, who, after they have received a sweet taste of the love of God in Christ, and of the excellency of pardoning mercy, and have walked humbly with God for many years, have, by the corruption of their minds from the simplicity that is in Christ, by false and foolish opinions, despised all their own experiences, and rejected all the efficacy of truth, as to the furtherance of their obedience.

And this is one way whereby indwelling sin produceth this pernicious effect, of drawing men off from the power, purity, and fruitfulness attending their first conversion, bringing them into habitual declension, at least, as to degrees of holiness. There is not any thing we ought to be more watchful against, if we intend effectually to deal with this powerful and subtile enemy. It is no small part of the wisdom of faith, to observe whether gospel truths continue to have the same efficacy upon the soul, as formerly they have had; and whether an endeavour

be maintained to improve them continually as at the first. A commandment that is always practised is always new. And he that really improves gospel truths, though he hears them a thousand times, they will be always new and fresh unto him, because they put him on newness of practice. When to another that grows common under them, they are burdensome and common to him; and he even loathes the manna that he is accustomed to.

Indwelling sin doth this, by taking men off from their watch against the returns of satan. When our Lord Jesus Christ comes first to take possession of any soul, he binds that strong man, and spoils his goods; he deprives him of all his power, dominion, and interest. Satan, being thus dispossessed, leaves the soul, as finding it mortified to its baits. So he left our Saviour upon his first fruitless attempts: but it is said, "he left him only for a season," Lukc *iv.* 13. He intended to return again as he should see his advantage. So it is with believers also; being cast out, he leaves them for a season, at least, comparatively he doth so. Freed from his assaults and perplexing temptations, they proceed vigorously in the course of their obedience. But, satan returns again, and if the soul stands not continually upon his guard against him, he will quickly get such advantages as will put a notable interruption upon his fruitfulness and obedience. Hence some, after they have spent some time, it may be some years, in cheerful, exemplary walking with God, have, upon satan's return, consumed all their latter days in wrestling with perplexing temptations. Now this also is from indwelling sin: I mean, the success is so, which satan doth obtain in his undertaking. This encourageth him, maketh way for his return, and gives entrance to his temptations. You know how it is with them, out of whom he is cast only by conviction; after he hath wandered and waited awhile, he saith, "he will return to his house." And what is the issue? Lusts have prevailed over the man's convictions, and made his soul fit to entertain returning devils. It is so as to the

measure of prevalency that satan obtains against believers. Now the means whereby indwelling sin doth give advantage to satan for his return, are all those which dispose them towards a declension. Satan is a diligent, watchful, and crafty adversary, he will neglect no opportunity. Wherein then soever our spiritual strength is impaired by sin, or which way soever our lust's press, satan falls in with that weakness, and presseth towards that ruin: so that all the actings of sin are subservient to this end of satan.

I shall therefore only at present mention two or three that seem principally to invite satan to attempt to return.

1. It entangleth the soul in the things of the world; all which are so many purveyors for satan. When Pharaoh had let the people go, he heard after awhile that they were entangled in the wilderness, and supposed that he should, therefore, now overtake them, and destroy them. This excited him to pursue after them. Satan finding those whom he hath been cast out from, entangled in the things of the world, by which he is sure to find an easy access, is encouraged to attempt them afresh; and often by this advantage he gains so upon the souls of men, that they are never free of him more whilst they live. And as men's diversions increase from the world, so do their entanglements from satan: when they have more to do in the world than they can well manage, they shall have more to do from satan than they can well withstand.

2. It produceth this effect by making the soul negligent, and taking it off from its watch. We have before shewed at large that this is one main part of the effectual deceitfulness of indwelling sin. Now, there is not any thing in reference to which diligence and watchfulness are more strictly enjoined than the returning assaults of satan, 1 Pet. v. 8, "Be sober, be vigilant;" and why so? "because of your adversary the devil." Unless you are exceeding watchful, at one time or another he will surprise you. And all the injunctions of our blessed Saviour, to watch, are still with reference to him and his

temptations. Now when the soul is made careless and inadvertent, forgetting what an enemy it hath to deal with, or is lifted up with the successes it hath newly obtained, then is satan's time to attempt a re-entrance ; which if he cannot obtain, yet he makes their lives uncomfortable to themselves, and unfruitful to others, in weakening their root, and withering their fruit, through his poisoning temptations.

3. Indwelling sin takes advantage, in putting forth its efficacy and deceit, to withdraw men from their primitive zeal and holiness, from their first faith, love, and works, by the evil examples of professors amongst whom they live. When men first engage in the ways of God, they have a reverent esteem of those whom they believe to have been made partakers of that mercy before themselves. But after awhile they find many of them walking in many things unevenly, and not unlike the men of the world. Here sin is not wanting to its advantage. Insensibly it prevails with men to a compliance with them. This way doth well enough with others, why may it not do so with us also? Such is the inward thought of many, that works effectually in them. And so, through the craft of sin, the generation of professors corrupt one another. As a stream arising from a clear spring, whilst it runs in its own channel, and keeps its water unmixed, preserves its purity, but when it falls in with other streams that are foul, it becomes muddy and discoloured also ; so it is in this case. Believers come forth from the spring of the new birth with purity ; thus for awhile they keep in the course of their private walking with God ; but when they fall into society with others, whose profession flows the same way, yet are muddied and sullied with sin and the world, they are often corrupted with them and by them, and so decline from their first purity, faith, and holiness.

Now lest this may have been the case of any who shall read this, I shall add some few cautions to preserve men from this infection. (1.) In the body of professors there

is a great number of hypocrites. Though we cannot say of this or that man that he is such, yet that some there are is most certain. Our Saviour hath told us, that it will be so to the end of the world. Let men take heed how they give themselves up to a conformity to the professors they meet with, lest, instead of saints and the best of men, they sometimes propose for their example hypocrites, which are the worst; and when they think they are like them who bear the image of God, they conform themselves to those who bear the image of satan.

(2.) You know not what may be the present temptations of those whose ways you observe. It may be they are under some peculiar desertion, and so are withering for a season. It may be they are entangled with some special corruptions, which is their burden, that you know not of; and for any voluntarily to fall into such a frame, as others are cast into by the power of their temptations; or to think that will suffice in them, which they see to suffice in others, whose distempers they know not, is folly and presumption. He that knows such or such a person to be a living man, and of an healthy constitution, if he see him go crawling up and down about his affairs, feeble and weak, sometimes falling, sometimes standing, and making small progress in any thing, will he think it sufficient for himself to do so also? Will he not inquire whether the person he sees have not lately fallen into some distemper or sickness, that hath weakened him and brought him into that condition? Assuredly he will. Take heed, Christians, many of the professors with whom ye converse are sick and wounded; the wounds of some of them stink, and are corrupt because of their folly. If you have any spiritual health, do not think their weak and uneven walking will be accepted at your hands; much less think it will be well for you to become sick and to be wounded also.

(3.) Sin doth this work, by cherishing some secret particular lust in the heart. This the soul contends against faintly. Now where it is thus with a soul, an

habitual declension as to holiness will assuredly ensue. But where indwelling sin hath irritated and given strength to a special lust, it proves a principal means of a general declension. For as weakness in any vital part, will make the whole body consumptive, so will the weakness in any one grace make the soul. It every way weakens spiritual strength. It weakens confidence in God, in faith and prayer. The knees will be feeble, and the hands will hang down in dealing with God, where an unmortified lust lies in the heart. It will take such hold upon the soul, that it shall not be able to look up, Psalm xl. 12. It darkens the mind by innumerable foolish imaginations, which it stirs up to make provision for itself. It galls the conscience with those spots and stains which it brings upon the soul. By these, and the like means, it becomes to the soul like a moth in a garment, to eat up and devour the strongest threads of it, so that though the whole hang loose together, it is easily torn in pieces. Though the person with whom it is thus, do for a season keep up a fair profession, yet his strength is secretly devoured, and every temptation tears and rends his conscience at pleasure. It becomes with such men as it is with some who have for many years been of a sound, strong, athletic constitution; some secret hectic distemper seizeth on them. For a season they take no notice of it; or if they do, they think they shall do well enough with it, and easily shake it off, when they have a little leisure to attend unto it: but for the present they think, as Sampson with his locks cut, they will act as at other times. Sometimes it may be they complain that they are not well, they know not what aileth them, and, it may be, rise violently in an opposition to their distemper; but, after awhile struggling in vain, the vigour of their spirits and strength failing them, they are forced to yield. It is so with men brought into spiritual decays by any secret perplexing corruption. It may be they have had a vigorous principle of obedience and holiness. Indwelling sin, watching its opportunities, by some temp-

tation or other, hath kindled some particular lust. For awhile they take little notice of it. Sometimes they complain, but think they will do as in former times, until being insensibly weakened in their spiritual strength, they have work enough to do in keeping alive what remains and is ready to die, Hos. v. 13.

(4.) It works by negligence of private communion with God in prayer and meditation. I have shewed before, how indwelling sin puts forth its deceitfulness in diverting the soul from watchfulness to these duties. Here, if it prevails, it will not fail to induce an habitual declension in the whole course of obedience. All neglect of private duties is principled by a weariness of God as he complaineth, Isaiah xliii. 22, "Thou hast not called upon me, thou hast been weary of me." Neglect of invocation proceeds from weariness. And where there is weariness, there will be withdrawing from that whereof we are weary. Now God alone being the fountain and spring of spiritual life, if there be a weariness of him, and withdrawing from him, it is impossible but that a decay in the life will ensue. Indeed what men are in these duties, I mean as to faith and love in them, that they are, and no more. Here lies the root of their obedience, and if this fail, all fruit will quickly fail. You may sometimes see a tree flourishing with leaves and fruit goodly and pleasant. After awhile the leaves begin to decay, the fruit to wither, the whole to droop. Search, and you shall find the root, whereby it should draw in moisture from the earth to supply the body and branches with sap and juice for growth and fruit, hath received a wound, is some way perished, and doth not perform its duty; so that though the branches are flourishing awhile with what they had received, their sustenance being intercepted, they must decay. So it is here. These duties of private communion with God are the means of receiving supplies of strength from him. Whilst they do so, the conversation and course of obedience flourish and are fruitful. But if there be a wound in that which should

first take in the spiritual moisture, that should be communicated unto the whole, the rest may for a season maintain their appearance, but after awhile will wither away.

(5.) Growing in notions of truth without answerable practice, is another thing that indwelling sin makes use of to bring believers under a decay. The apostle tells us that knowledge puffeth up, 1 Cor. viii. 1. If it be alone, not improved in practice, it swells merit beyond a due proportion. Like a man that hath a dropsy, we are not to expect that he hath strength according to his bigness. Like trees that are continually running up in head, which keeps them from bearing fruit. When once men have attained to this, that they can receive evangelical truths in a more glorious light, or more clear discovery than formerly, or new manifestations of truth which they knew not before, and please themselves in so doing, without diligent endeavours to have the power of those truths upon their hearts, and their souls made conformable to them, they generally learn to dispose of all truths formerly known, which were sometimes inlaid in their hearts with more efficacy and power. This hath proved, if not the ruin, yet the great impairing of many in these days of light. By this means, from humble close walking, many have withered into an empty, barren, talking profession. All things almost have, in a short season, become alike unto them. Have they been true or false, so they might be debating of them, all is well. This is food for sin, it hatcheth, increaseth it, and is increased by it. A notable way it is for the vanity that is in the mind to exert itself without a rebuke from conscience. Whilst men are talking, and writing, and studying about religion, and hearing preaching, it may be, with great delight, conscience, unless thoroughly awake and circumspect, and furnished with spiritual wisdom, will be very well pacified, and enter no rebuke or pleas against the way that the soul is in. But yet all this may be nothing but the acting of that natural vanity which

lies in the mind, and is a principal part of the sin we treat of. And generally this is so when men content themselves, as was said, with the notions of truth, without labouring after an experience of the power of them in their hearts, and the bringing forth the fruit of them in their lives, on which a decay must needs ensue.

(6.) Growth in carnal wisdom is another help to sin in producing this sad effect. "Thy wisdom and thy knowledge," saith the prophet, "hath perverted thee," Isaiah xlvii. 10. So much as carnal wisdom increaseth, so much faith decays. The proper work of it is to teach a man to trust in himself, of faith to trust wholly in another. So it labours to destroy the whole work of faith, by causing the soul to return into a deceiving fulness of its own. We have woful examples of the prevalency of this principle of declension. How many a poor, humble, broken-hearted creature, who followed after God in simplicity and integrity of spirit, have we seen, through the observation of the ways and walkings of others, and closing with the temptations to craft and subtilty, which opportunities in the world have administered unto them, come to be dipped in a worldly carnal frame, and utterly to wither in their profession? Many are so sullied hereby, that they are not to be known to be the men they were.

(7.) Some great sin lying long in the heart unrepented of, or not repented of as it ought to be, furthers indwelling sin in this work. A great sin will certainly give a great turn to the life of a professor. If it be well cured in the blood of Christ, with that humiliation which the gospel requires, it often proves a means of more watchfulness, fruitfulness, humility, and content. If it be neglected, it certainly hardens the heart, weakens spiritual strength, enfeebles the soul, discouraging it unto all communion with God, and is a notable principle of a general decay. So David complains, Psalm xxxviii. 5, "My wounds stink, and are corrupt, because of my foolishness." His present distemper was not so much

from his sin as his folly, not so much from the wounds he had received, as from his neglect to make a timely application for their cure. It is like a broken bone, which, being well set, leaves the place stronger than before; if otherwise, makes the man a cripple all his days.

It may now be expected, that we should add the especial uses of this discovery that hath been made of the power and success of this great adversary of our souls. But that humility, self-abasement, watchfulness, diligence, and application unto the Lord Christ for relief, which will become those who find in themselves by experience, the power of this law of sin, have been occasionally mentioned and inculcated through the whole preceding discourse: for what concerns the actual mortification of it, I shall only recommend unto the reader another small treatise written long since for that purpose.

To the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

OF
TEMPTATION,
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NATURE AND POWER OF IT.

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CHAP. I.

Of the Nature of Temptation.

MATT. XXVI. 41.

“ Watch and pray that you enter not into Temptation.”

THESE words of our Saviour are repeated with very little alteration in the three evangelists ; only whereas Matthew and Mark have recorded them as above written, Luke reporteth them thus, “ Arise and pray, that you enter not into temptation ;” so that the whole of his caution seems to have been ; Arise, watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation.

Solomon tells us of some, that “ lie down on the top of a mast in the midst of the sea,” Prov. xxiii. 34. Men overborne by security in the mouth of destruction. If ever poor souls lay down on the top of a mast in the

midst of the sea, these disciples with our Saviour in the garden did so. Their Master, at a little distance from them, was offering up prayers and supplications, with strong cries and tears, being then taking into his hand, and beginning to taste that cup that was filled with the curse and wrath due to their sins. The Jews, armed for his, and their destruction, being but a little more distant from them, on the other hand. Our Saviour had a little before informed them, that that night he should be betrayed, and delivered up to be slain; they saw that he was sorrowful, and very heavy. Nay, he told them plainly, that his "soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death;" and therefore intreated them to tarry, and watch with him, now he was dying, and that for them. In this condition, leaving them but a little space, like men forsaken of all love towards him, or care of themselves, they fall fast asleep. Peter, being one of them, who, but a little before, had with so much confidence affirmed, that though all men forsook him yet he never would; our Saviour expostulates the matter in particular with him, ver. 10, "He saith unto Peter, Could you not watch with me one hour?" As if he should have said, Art thou he, Peter, who but now boastedst of thy resolution never to forsake me? Is it likely that thou shouldst hold out therein, when thou canst not watch with me one hour? Is this thy dying for me; to be dead in security, when I am dying for thee? And indeed it was an amazing thing, that Peter should make so high a promise, and be immediately so careless in the pursuit of it; but that we find the root of the same treachery in our own hearts, and see the fruit of it brought forth every day: the most noble engagements to obedience quickly ending in deplorable negligence. In this state our Saviour admonishes them of their condition, their weakness, their danger, and stirs them up to a prevention of that ruin, which lay at the door; saying, "Arise, watch, and pray."

I shall not insist on the particular aimed at here by our Saviour, in this caution to them that were then present

with him: the great temptation that was coming on them, from the scandal of the cross, was doubtless in his eye; but I shall consider the words as containing a general direction to all the disciples of Christ throughout all generations.

There are three things in the words,

First, The evil cautioned against; temptation.

Secondly, The means of its prevalency; by our entering into it.

Thirdly, The way of preventing it; "Watch and pray."

Temptation, in its special nature, as it denotes any evil, is considered, either actively, as it leads to evil, or passively, as it hath an evil and suffering in it; so temptation is taken for affliction, James i. 2. For in that sense we are "to count it all joy when we fall into temptation;" in the other, that we "enter not" into it. Again, actively considered, it either denotes a design for the bringing about the special end of temptation, namely, a leading into evil; so it is said, that God "tempts no man," James i. 13. Or the general nature and end of temptation, which is trial; so God tempted Abraham.

They are not the temptations of God that are here intended. And, therefore, I shall set these apart from the subject of our present consideration, which is, temptation in its special nature, as it denotes an active efficiency towards sinning.

In this sense, temptation may proceed either singly from satan, or the world, or other men in the world, or from ourselves, or jointly from all, or some of them, in their several combinations. 1. Satan tempts sometimes singly by himself, without taking advantage from the world, the things or persons of it, or ourselves. So he deals in his injection of blasphemous thoughts, which is his own work alone. For nature will contribute nothing thereunto, nor any thing that is in the world, nor any man of the world. Herein satan is alone in the sin, and shall be so in the punishment. These fiery darts are prepared in the forge

of his own malice, and shall, with all their poison, be turned into his own heart for ever.

2. Sometimes he makes use of the world, and joins forces against us, without any helps from within. So he tempted our Saviour, by shewing him the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them. And the variety of the assistance he finds from the world, in persons and things, the innumerable instruments he takes from thence are inexpressible.

3. Sometimes he takes in assistance from ourselves also. It is not with us, as it was with Christ, when satan came to tempt him, he declares that he *had nothing in him*. It is otherwise with us : he hath, for the compassing of most of his ends, a sure party within our own breasts. But the principles, ways, and means of temptations, the kinds, degrees, efficacy, and causes of them, are inexpressibly large and various ; the circumstances of them from providence, nature, conditions, spiritual and natural, with the particular cases thence arising, innumerable. I shall content myself with giving a description of the general nature of that which we are to watch against.

Temptation then, in general, is any thing or condition that, upon any account whatever, hath a force or efficacy to draw the mind and heart from its obedience into any sin. In particular, that is a temptation to any man which occasions him to sin, or in any thing to go off from his duty, either by bringing evil into his heart, or drawing out that evil that is in the heart, or any other way diverting him from communion with God, and that constant, equal, universal obedience, in matter and manner, that is required of him.

Having shewed what temptation is, I come, Secondly, to manifest what it is to enter into temptation.

1. This is not merely to be tempted : it is impossible that we should be so freed as not to be at all tempted. Whilst satan continues in his power and malice, whilst the world and lusts are in being, we shall be tempted.

Christ, says one, was made like unto us, that he might be tempted; and we are tempted that we may be made like unto Christ. Temptation in general is comprehensive of our whole warfare; as our Saviour calls the time of his ministry, the time of *his temptation*, Luke xxii. 28. We have no promise that we shall not be tempted at all, nor are to pray for an absolute freedom from temptations, because we have no promise of being heard therein. The direction we have for our prayers, is, "Lead us not into temptation," Matt. vi. 9; it is "entering into temptation," that we are to pray against. We may be tempted, yet not enter into temptation. So that,

2. Something more is intended by this expression, than the ordinary work of satan, and our own lusts, which will be sure to tempt us every day. There is something signal in this entering into temptation. It is something that befalls us peculiarly in reference to seduction to sin, on one account or other, by way of allurements or affright.

3. It is not to be conquered by a temptation; to fall down under it; to commit the sin that we are tempted to. A man may enter into temptation, and yet not fall under temptation. God can make a way for a man to escape, he can break the snare, tread down satan, and make the soul more than conqueror, though it have entered into temptation: Christ entered into it, but was not in the least foiled by it. But,

4. It is as the apostle expresseth it, 1 Tim. vi. 9, *to fall into temptation*, as a man falls into a pit, or a deep place, where are gins and snares, wherewith he is entangled, the man is not presently killed and destroyed, but he is entangled and detained, he knows not how to get free. So it is expressed again to the same purpose, 1 Cor. x. 13, no temptation hath *taken you*: to be taken by a temptation, is to be entangled with it, held in its cords, not finding at present a way to escape. Thence saith Peter, 2 Epist. ii. 9, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations:—" they are entangled

with them, God knows how to deliver them out of them. When we suffer a temptation to enter into us, then we enter into temptation. Whilst it knocks at the door, we are at liberty; but when any temptation comes in and parleys with the heart, reasons with the mind, allures the affections, we enter into temptation.

So then, to our entering into temptation is required,
 1. That on some occasion satan be more earnest than ordinary in his solicitations to sin, by himself or others; or that some lust or corruption by his instigation, and advantages of outward objects provoking, as in prosperity, or terrifying, as in trouble, do tumultuate more than ordinary within us. 2. That the heart be so far entangled with it, as to be put to dispute in its own defence, and yet not be able wholly to cast out the poison which hath been injected. And this usually falls out in one of these two seasons: 1. When satan, by the permission of God, hath got some peculiar advantage against the soul. 2. When a man's corruptions meet with peculiarly provoking objects, through the condition of life he is in, with the circumstances of it.

In this state of things a man is entered into temptation; and this is called the hour of temptation, Rev. iii. 10. The season wherein it grows to a head; the discovery whereof will give farther light into the present inquiry; for when the hour of temptation is come upon us, we are entered into it. Every great and pressing temptation hath its hour, a season wherein it is most vigorous, active, and prevalent. It may be long in rising, it may be long urging more or less; but it hath a season, wherein, from the conjunction of other occurrences, outward or inward, it hath a dangerous hour, and then for the most part, men enter into it. Hence that very temptation, which at one time hath little or no power on a man, at another bears him away before it. It hath from other circumstances got new strength; or the man is weakened, the hour is come, he is entered into it, and it prevails. Let men look for it that are exposed to

temptation, as who is not? They will have a season wherein its solicitations will be more urgent, its reasonings more plausible, pretences more glorious, opportunities more broad and open, the doors of evil made more beautiful than ever they had been. Blessed is he who is prepared for such a season, without which there is no escaping. This is the first thing required to entering into temptation; if we stay here, we are safe.

Before I descend to other particulars, having now entered hereon, I shall shew in general, 1. How commonly any temptation attains its hour. 2. How we may know when any temptation is come to its hour.

It doth the first by several ways. (1.) By long solicitations; causing the mind frequently to converse with the evil solicited to, it begets extenuating thoughts of it. If it makes this process, it is coming towards its hour. It may be, when first it began to press upon the soul, the soul was amazed with the appearance, and cried, Am I a dog? If this indignation be not daily heightened, but the soul by conversing with the evil, begins to grow as it were familiar with it; then the temptation is coming towards its high noon, lust hath then enticed, and is ready to conceive. (2.) When it hath prevailed on others, and the soul is not filled with dislike and abhorrency of their ways, nor with pity and prayer for their deliverance. This proves an advantage to it, and raises it towards its height. (3.) By complicating itself with many considerations, that perhaps are not absolutely evil. So did the temptation of the Galatians to fall from the purity of the gospel, freedom from persecution, union and consent with the Jews. Things, in themselves good, were pleaded in it, and gave life to the temptation itself.

For the second, it may be known, (1.) By its restless urgency. When a temptation is in its hour, it is restless. Satan sees his advantage, considers his conjunction of forces, and knows that he must now prevail, or be hopeless for ever. Here are opportunities, here are advantages, here are specious pleas and pretences; some

ground is already got, all is in a readiness : if he can do nothing now, he must sit down lost in his undertakings. So when he had got all things in a readiness against Christ, he made it the hour of darkness. When a temptation presses within by imaginations and reasonings, without by solicitations, advantages, and opportunities, let the soul know, that the hour of it is come, and the glory of God, with its own welfare, depends on its behaviour in this trial. (2.) When it makes a conjunction of affrightments and allurements. These two comprize the whole force of temptation. When both are brought together, temptation is in its hour. They were both in David's case, as to the murder of Uriah ; there was the fear of his revenge on his wife, and possibly on himself ; fear of the publication of sin at least ; and there was the allurement of his present enjoyment of her. Men sometimes are carried into sin by love to it, and are continued in it by fear of what will ensue. But in any case, where these two meet, then is the hour of temptation.

This then it is to enter into temptation, this is the hour of it, of which more in the process of our discourse. As to the means of prevention prescribed by our Saviour, they are two, 1. Watch. 2. Pray. These two comprize the whole endeavour of faith for the soul's preservation from temptation.

CHAP. II.

That it is our Duty to use all Diligence, lest we enter into Temptation.

HAVING thus opened the words, I shall lay down this observation : that it is the great duty of all believers to use all diligence in the ways of Christ's appointment, that they fall not into temptation.

1. In that compendious instruction given us by our Saviour, concerning what we ought to pray for, this of

not entering into temptation, is expressly one head. Our Saviour kn^ew of what concern it was to us, not to enter into temptation, when he gave us this, as one special subject of our daily dealing with God. And the order of the words shew us of what importance it is, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." So deal with us, that we may be powerfully delivered from that evil which attends our entering into temptation.

2. Christ promiseth this deliverance as a great reward of most acceptable obedience, Rev. iii. 10. This is the great promise made to the church of Philadelphia, wherein Christ found nothing that he would blame. "Thou shalt be kept from the hour of temptation;" not, thou shalt be preserved in it: but he goes higher, "thou shalt be kept from it." There is, saith our Saviour, an hour of temptation coming; a season that will make havoc in the world; multitudes shall then fall from the faith, deny and blaspheme me. O how few will be able to stand and hold out! Some will be utterly destroyed and perish for ever, some will get wounds to their souls that shall never be well healed whilst they live in this world, and have their bones broken, so as to go halting all their days. But, saith he, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience," I will be tender towards thee, and keep thee from this hour of temptation. Certainly that which Christ thus promises to his beloved church, as a reward of her service, love, and obedience, is no light thing; whatever Christ promiseth to his spouse is a fruit of unspeakable love; that is so, in an especial manner, which is promised as a reward of special obedience.

3. Let us to this purpose consider the general issues of men's entering into temptation, and that of bad and good men.

(1.) For the first I shall offer but one or two texts of Scripture, Luke viii. 13, "They on the rock are they which when they hear, receive the word with joy, and have no root, but for a while believe." They are affected with the preaching of the word, and bring forth some

fruits. But until when do they abide? Says he, "In the time of temptation they fall away." When once they enter into temptation, they are gone for ever. We see this accomplished every day; men who have attended on the preaching of the gospel, been affected and delighted with it, that have made profession of it, and have been looked on, it may be, as believers, and thus have continued for some years; no sooner doth a temptation befall them, that hath vigour and permanency in it, but they are turned out of the way, and are gone for ever. So Matt. vii. 26, "He that heareth these words of mine, and doth them not, is like a man that built his house upon the sand." But what doth this house of profession do? It shelters him, keeps him warm, and stands for a while; but, saith he, ver. 27, when the rain descends, when temptation comes, it falls utterly, and its fall is great.

(2.) For the saints of God themselves, let us see, by some instances, what issue they have had of their entering into temptation.

Adam was the Son of God, (Luke iii.) created in the image of God; full of integrity, righteousness and holiness. He had a far greater inherent stock of ability than we, and had nothing in him to entice or seduce him, yet this Adam no sooner enters into temptation, but he is ruined, he and all his posterity with him. What can we expect in the like condition, that have not only in our temptations a cunning devil to deal with, but a cursed world, and a corrupt heart also?

Abraham was the Father of the faithful, Gen. xii. 2, 3, whose faith is proposed as a pattern to all them that shall believe. Yet he, entering twice into the same temptation, namely that of fear about his wife, was twice overpowered by it, to the dishonour of God, and no doubt the disquiet of his own soul.

David is called a man after God's own heart; yet what a dreadful thing is the story of his entering into temptation. He is no sooner entangled, but he is plunged

into adultery; thence, seeking deliverance by his own invention, he is entangled more and more, until he lies as one dead, under the power of sin and folly.

I might mention Noah, Lot, Hezekiah, Peter, and the rest, whose temptations and falls therein are on record for our instruction. Certainly he that hath any heart in these things, cannot but say, as the inhabitants of Samaria upon the letter of Jehu, "Behold two kings stood not before him, how shall we stand?" O Lord! if such mighty pillars have been cast to the ground, how shall I stand before temptations? O keep me, that I enter not in; behold the footsteps of them that have gone in. Whom do you see retiring without a wound? On this account would the apostle have us to exercise tenderness towards them that are fallen into sin, Gal. vi. 1, "Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted:" He doth not say, lest thou also sin, or be overtaken with a fault; but "lest thou also be tempted." Thou seest the power of temptation in others, and considerest not that thou mayest be tempted, nor what will be the condition of thy soul thereupon. Assuredly, he that hath seen so many better, stronger men than himself fail, will think it incumbent on him to remember the battle, and if it be possible, to come there no more. Is it not a madness for a man that can scarce crawl up and down, he is so weak (which is the case of most of us) if he avoid not what he hath seen giants foiled in the undertaking of? Thou art yet whole and sound, take heed of temptation, lest it be with thee as it was with Abraham, David, Peter, who fell in the time of trial.

In nothing doth the folly of the hearts of men shew itself more than in this cursed boldness, after so many warnings from God, and so many sad experiences of running into, and putting themselves upon temptations. Any society, any company, any conditions of outward advantages, without once weighing what their strength, or what the concern of their poor souls is, they are ready for. Though they go over the dead and the slain, that

but even now fell down before them, yet they will go on without regard or trembling. But,

4. Let us consider ourselves; what our weakness is, and what temptation is; its power and efficacy, with what it leads to.

(1.) For ourselves, we are weakness itself. We have no strength, no power to withstand. Confidence of any strength in us is one great part of our weakness. He that says he can do any thing, can do nothing as he should. And, which is worse, it is the worst kind of weakness that is in us; a weakness from treachery; a weakness arising from that party which every temptation hath in us. If a fort be never so strong, yet if there be a treacherous party within, there is no preserving it from the enemy. There are traitors in our hearts, ready to take part with every temptation, and to give up all to them; yea, to solicit and bribe temptations to do the work, as traitors incite an enemy. Do not flatter yourselves that you shall hold out; there are secret lusts that lie lurking in your hearts, which perhaps now stir not, which, as soon as any temptation befalls you, will rise, seduce, and never give over till they are killed, or satisfied.

(2.) Temptations are either publick or private; and let us a little view the efficacy and power of them apart.

1. There are publick temptations; such as that mentioned Rev. iii. 10, that was to come upon the world to try them that dwell upon the earth; or a combination of persecution and seduction for the trial of a careless generation: now concerning such a temptation, consider, that, (1.) It hath an efficacy in respect of God, who sends it to revenge the neglect of the gospel on the one hand, and treachery of false professors on the other. What work hath the Spirit of error made amongst us? Is it not from hence that, as some men delighted not to retain God in their hearts, so he hath "given them up to a reprobate mind?" Rom. i. 28. A man would think it strange, yea, it is matter of amazement, to see persons of

a sober spirit, pretending to great things in the ways of God, overcome, captivated, destroyed, by weak means, sottish opinions, foolish imaginations, such as a man would think it impossible they should ever lay hold on rational men, much less on professors of the gospel. (2.) There is in such temptations, the secret insinuation of examples in those that are accounted good, Matt. xxiv. 12, "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold," &c. The abounding of iniquity in some will insensibly cast water on the zeal and love of others, that by little and little it shall wax cold. Some begin to grow negligent, careless, worldly, wanton; they break the ice towards the pleasing of the flesh: at first others blame, perhaps reprove them, in a short space their love waxes cold, and they also conform to them, and are cast into the same mould with them. (3.) Publick temptations are usually accompanied with strong reasons and pretences, that are too hard for men, or at least insensibly prevail upon them to undervalue the evil whereto the temptation leads, to give strength to that complicated temptation which in these days have even cast down the people of God, hath cut their locks, and made them become like other men; how full is the world of specious pretences and pleadings! As there is the liberty of Christians delivered from bondage, this is a door that in my own observation I have seen sundry going out at into sensuality and apostasy; beginning at a light conversation, proceeding to a neglect of the Sabbath, publick and private duties, ending in dissoluteness and profaneness. These and the like considerations, joined with the ease and plenty, the greatness and promotion of professors, have so brought things about, that, whereas we have by Providence shifted places with the men of the world, we have by sin shifted spirits with them also. We are like a plantation of men carried into a foreign country. In a short space they degenerate from the manners of the people from whence they came, and fall into that of the country whereunto they are brought, as if there were

something in the soil and the air that transformed them.

2. Suppose the temptation is private; this hath been spoken to before; I shall add two things: (1.) Its union and incorporation with lust, whereby it gets within the soul, and lies at the bottom of its actings. The things that are in the world "are the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life." Now it is evident that all these things are principally in the heart, not in the world. But they are said to be in the world, because the world gets into them; mixes itself with them, unites, incorporates. As faith and the promises are said to be mixed, so are lust and temptation mixed; they twine together, receive improvement from one another; grow each of them higher and higher by the strength they administer to one another. Now by this means, temptation gets so deep in the heart, that no contrary reasonings can reach it; nothing but what can kill the lust, can conquer the temptation. Like leprosy that hath mingled itself with the wall; the wall itself must be pulled down, or the leprosy will not be cured. Like a gangrene, that mixes poison with the blood and spirits, and cannot be separated from the place where it is, but both must be cut off together. (2.) In what part soever of the soul the lust be seated, wherewith the temptation is united, it draws after it the whole soul, by one means or other, and so prevents or anticipates any opposition. Suppose it be a lust of the mind, as there are lusts of the mind, and uncleanness of the spirit; such as ambition, vain-glory, and the like; what a world of ways hath it to bridle the affections, that they should not so tenaciously cleave to God, seeing in what it aimeth at there is so much to give them content and satisfaction! It will not only prevent all the reasonings of the mind, but it will draw the whole soul into the same frame. Or suppose it be in the more sensual part, and first possess the affections; what prejudices they will bring upon the understanding, how they will bribe it to an acquiescence; what arguments, what hopes they will

supply it with, cannot easily be expressed. In brief, there is no particular temptation ; but when it is in its hour, it hath such a contribution of assistance from things good, evil, indifferent, is fed by so many considerations, that seem to be most foreign to it, hath such specious pleas, that its strength will easily be acknowledged.

These, I say, are some of many considerations, that might be insisted on, to manifest the importance of the truth proposed, and the fulness of our concern, to take care that we enter not into temptation.

But, it may be asked, What need is there of this great endeavour and carefulness? Is it not said that "God is faithful, who will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape?" 1 Cor. x. 13. I answer, (1.) He that wilfully or negligently enters into temptation, hath no reason in the world to promise himself any assistance from God, or any deliverance from it. The promise is made to them whom temptations befall in their way, whether they will or not ; not to them that wilfully fall into them, that run out of their way to meet with them. And therefore the devil, (as is usually observed,) when he tempted our Saviour, left out that expression of the text of Scripture, which he wrested to his purpose, "all thy ways :", the promise of deliverance is to them who are in their ways ; whereof this is one, to beware of temptation. (2.) To enter on temptation on this account, is to venture on sin, (which is the same with continuing in sin,) that grace may abound, Rom. vi. 1, 2, which the apostle rejects the thoughts of with the greatest detestation. Is it not a madness for a man willingly to suffer the ship wherein he is to split itself on a rock, to the irrecoverable loss of his merchandise, because he supposes he shall in his own person swim safely to shore on a plank? Is it less in him who will hazard the shipwreck of all his comfort, peace, joy, and so much of the glory of God, and honour of the gospel as he is entrusted with, merely on supposition that his soul shall yet escape?

CHAP. III.

Particular Cases ; several Discoveries of the State of a Soul entering into Temptation.

These things being premised, I proceed to the consideration of three particular cases, arising from the truth proposed ; the first whereof relates to the thing itself ; the second to the season thereof ; and the last to our deportment, in reference to the prevention of the evil treated of.

1. Then it may be inquired, how a man may know when he is entered into temptation ? 2. What seasons there are wherein a man may, and ought to fear, that an hour of temptation is at hand ? 3. What directions are given for the preventing of our entering into temptation.

1. How shall a man know whether he be entered into temptation or not, is our first inquiry : I say, then,

(1.) When a man is drawn into any sin, he may be sure that he hath entered into temptation. All sin is from temptation. Sin is a fruit that comes only from that root. Though a man be never so suddenly or violently surprised with any sin, it is from some temptation or other that he hath been so surprised. This is a folly that possesses many, who have yet a quick and living sense of sin. They are sensible of their sins, not of their temptations ; are displeas'd with the bitter fruit, but cherish the poisonous root. Hence, in the midst of their humiliations for sin, they will continue in those ways, those societies, in the pursuit of those ends which have occasioned that sin.

(2.) Temptations have several degrees, some arise to such an height, do so press on the soul, so fight against all opposition, that it must be past all doubt to him who is so assaulted that it is a peculiar temptation he is to wrestle with. When a fever rages, a man knows he is

sick; unless his distemper have made him mad. But entering into temptation may be observed in the lesser degrees of it. As for instance, when the heart begins secretly to like the temptation, and is content to feed it, and increase it by any ways that it may, without downright sin.

(3.) When by a man's state or condition of life, or any means whatever, it comes to pass that his lust and temptation meet with occasions of excitement, let that man know, whether he perceive it or not, that he is certainly entered into temptation. If thy business, course of life, societies, or whatever else it be, cast thee on such things as suit thy corruption; know that thou art entered into temptation; how thou wilt come out, God only knows.

(4.) When a man is weakened, made negligent, or formal in duty, when he can omit duties, or content himself with a careless, lifeless performance of them, without delight, joy, or satisfaction to his soul, who had another frame formerly; let him know, that though he may not be acquainted with the particular distemper wherein it consists; yet in something or other he is entered into temptation, which at the length he will find evident to his trouble and peril. How many have we seen and known in our days, who from a warm profession, have fallen to be negligent, careless, indifferent in praying, reading, hearing, and the like? Give an instance of one who hath come off without a wound. Sundry other evidences there are of a soul's entering into temptation, which upon inquiry it may discover.

I propose this to take off the security that we are apt to fall into; and to manifest what is the peculiar duty to which we are to apply ourselves in the special seasons of temptation.

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CHAP. IV.

What are the best Directions to prevent entering into Temptations.

Having seen the danger of entering into temptation, and the ways and seasons wherein men usually do so : Our next inquiry is, what general directions may be given to preserve a soul from that condition that hath been spoken of. And we see our Saviour's direction in the place spoken of before, he sums up all in these two words, " Watch and pray ;" I shall a little labour to unfold them.

1. There is included in them a clear abiding apprehension of the great evil that there is in entering into temptation. That which a man watches and prays against, he looks upon as evil to him, and by all means to be avoided. This then is the first direction ; Always bear in mind the great danger that it is for any soul to enter into temptation.

It is a woful thing to consider what slight thoughts the most have of this thing. If men can keep themselves from sin itself, in open action, they are content, they scarce aim at more : on any temptation, all sorts of men will venture at any time. How will young men mix themselves with any company ; at first being delighted with evil compay, then with the evil of the company ? How vain are all admonitions and exhortations to them to take heed of such persons ? At first they will venture on the company, abhorring the thoughts of practising their lewdness ; but what is the issue ? Unless it be here or there one, whom God snatches with a mighty hand from the jaws of destruction, they are all lost, and become, after a while, in love with the evil which at first they abhorred. Would it were only thus with young men, such as are unaccustomed to the yoke of the Lord. What sort of men is free from this folly, in one thing or

other? How many have I known that would plead for their liberty, as they called it? They could hear any thing, all things; all sorts of men, all men; they would try all things, whether they came to them in the way of God, or not; and on that account would run to hear every broacher of false and abominable opinions. They had their liberty, they said, they could do it; but the opinions they hated as much as any. What hath been the issue? I scarce ever knew any come off without a wound; the most have had their faith overthrown. Let no man then pretend to fear sin, that doth not fear temptation to it. They are too nearly allied to be separated. Satan hath put them so together, that it is very hard for any man to put them asunder.

Boldness upon temptation, springing from several pretences, hath, as is known, ruined innumerable professors, and still continues to cast many down from their excellency; nor have I the least hope of a more fruitful profession amongst us, until I see more fear of temptation. Sin will not long seem great or heavy unto any, to whom temptations seem light or small.

This is the first thing in this general direction: The daily exercise of our thoughts with an apprehension of the great danger that lies in entering into temptation. Grieving the Spirit of God, disquietment of our own souls, loss of peace, hazard of eternal welfare, lie at the door. If the soul be not prevailed with to observe this direction, all that ensues will be of no value. Temptation despised will conquer. And if the heart be made tender and watchful here, half the work of securing a good conversation is done. And let not him go any farther, who resolves not to improve this direction in a daily conscientious observation of it.

2. There is this in it also, that it is not a thing in our own power to preserve ourselves from entering into temptation. Therefore are we to pray that we may be preserved from it, because we cannot save ourselves. This is another means of preservation; as we have no

strength to resist a temptation that assaults us, when we are entered into it, so to reckon that we have no power or wisdom to keep ourselves from entering into temptation, but must be kept by the power and wisdom of God, is a preserving principle. We are in all things kept by the power of God. This our Saviour instructs us in, not only by directing us to pray that we may not be led into temptation, but also by his own praying for us, that we may be kept from it. Christ prays his Father to keep us; and instructs us to pray that we may be so kept. It is not then a thing in our own power. The ways of our entering into temptation are so many, various, and imperceptible; the means of it so efficacious and powerful; the entrance of it so deceitful, subtile, insensible, and plausible; our weakness, our unwatchfulness so unspeakable; that we cannot in the least preserve ourselves from it. We fail, both in wisdom and power, for this work.

Let the heart then commune with itself, and say, "I am poor and weak, Satan is subtle and powerful; watching constantly for advantages against my soul; the world earnest, pressing, and full of specious pleas and ways of deceit; my own corruption violent, enticing, entangling, conceiving sin, and warring in me, against me. Occasions and advantages of temptation innumerable in all things I do or suffer, in all businesses and persons with whom I converse. The first beginnings of temptation insensible and plausible; so that left unto myself, I shall not know that I am ensnared, until my bonds be made strong, and sin hath got ground in my heart; therefore on God alone will I rely for preservation. This will make the soul to be always committing itself to the care of God, resting itself on him; and to do nothing, undertake nothing without asking counsel of him. So that a double advantage will arise from the observation of this direction, both of singular use for the soul's preservation from the evil feared. (1.) The engagement of the compassion of God, who hath called the fatherless and helpless to rest upon

him ; nor did ever soul fail of supplies, who, in a sense of want, rolled itself on him, on the account of his gracious invitation. (2.) The keeping it in such a frame as, on various accounts, is useful for its preservation. He that looks to God for assistance in a due manner, is both sensible of his danger, and conscientiously careful in the use of means to preserve himself; which two, of what importance they are in this case, may be easily apprehended.

3. This also is in it, exert faith on the promise of God for preservation. To believe that he will preserve us, is a means of preservation. For this God will certainly do, or make a way for us to escape out of temptation, if we fall into it under such a believing frame. We are to pray for what God hath promised. Our requests are to be regulated by his promises and commands, which are of the same extent. Faith closes with the promises, and so finds relief. This James instructs us in, chap. i. 5, 7. What we want we must ask of God. But we must ask it in faith, for otherwise we must not think "that we shall receive any thing of the Lord." This then also is in this direction of our Saviour, that we act faith on the promises of God for our preservation out of temptation. He hath promised that he will keep us in all our ways; that we shall be directed in a way that though we are fools, "we shall not err in it," Isai. xxxv. 8; that he will lead us, guide us, and deliver us from the evil one. Set faith on work on these promises. It is not easily conceived what a train of graces faith is attended with, when it goes forth to meet Christ in the promises; nor what a power for the preservation of the soul lies in this thing.

4. Weigh these things severally; and (1.) Take prayer into consideration. To pray that we may not enter into temptation, is a means to preserve us from it. Glorious things are by all men, that know aught of those things, spoken of this duty; and yet the truth is, not one half of its excellency, power, and efficacy is known. He that would be little in temptation, let him be much in prayer.

This calls in the help that is laid up in Christ for us, Heb. iv. 16. This casteth our souls into a frame of opposition to every temptation. When Paul had given instruction for the taking to ourselves the whole armour of God, that we might stand in the time of temptation, he added this general close of the whole, Eph. vi. 18, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication."

Without this all the rest will be of no efficacy. And therefore consider what weight he lays on it: *praying always*, that is, at all times and seasons, or be always ready for the discharge of that duty, *with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit*; putting forth all kinds of desires unto God, that are suited to our condition, according to his will, and which we are assisted in by the Spirit, and watching thereunto, lest we be diverted by any thing whatever; and that not for a little while, but with all perseverance; continuance lengthened out to the utmost. The soul so framed, is in a sure posture; and this is one of the means without which this work will not be done. If we do not abide in prayer, we shall abide in cursed temptations. Let this, then, be another direction. Abide in prayer! And that expressly to this purpose; that we enter not into temptations. Let this be one part of our daily contending with God, that he would preserve our bodies, souls, and spirits, and keep our hearts and our ways, that we may not be entangled; that his good and wise providence may order our ways and affairs, that no pressing temptation may befall us; that he would give us diligence, carefulness, and watchfulness over our own ways: so shall we be delivered, when others are held with the cords of their own folly.

The other part of our Saviour's direction, namely, to watch, is more general, and extends itself to many particulars.

1. Watch the seasons wherein men usually enter into temptation. There are sundry seasons wherein an hour

of temptation is at hand ; and will unavoidably seize upon the soul, unless it be delivered by mercy in the use of watchfulness. When we are under such a season, then we are peculiarly to be upon our guard, that we enter not into temptation. Some of those seasons may be named.

(1.) A season of unusual outward prosperity is usually accompanied with an hour of temptation. Prosperity and temptation go together ; yea, prosperity is a temptation, many temptations ; and that because without eminent supplies of grace, it is apt to bring the soul into a temper exposed to any temptation, and provides it with fuel and food for all ; it hath provision for lust, and darts for satan. The wise man tells us, that the “ prosperity of fools destroys them,” Prov. i. 32 ; it hardens them in their way, makes them despise instruction, and put the evil day, (whose terror should influence them into amendment) far from them. Without a special assistance, it hath an inconveivably malignant influence on believers themselves. Hence Agur prays against riches, because of the temptation that attends them, “ Lest,” saith he, “ I be full and deny thee, and say who is the Lord,” Prov. xxx. 8, 9. Lest, being filled with them, he should forget the Lord ; as God complains his people did, Hos. xiii. 6. We know how David was mistaken in this case, Psal. xxx. 6, “ I said in my prosperity, I shall never be moved :” all is well, and will be well ; but what was at hand, what lay at the door, that David thought not of, ver. 7, “ Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled :” God was ready to hide his face, and David to enter into temptation, and he knew it not.

Thou wantest that which should poise and ballast thy heart. Formality in religion will be apt to creep upon thee, and that lays the soul open to all temptations in their full power and strength. Satisfaction and delight in outward comforts, the poison of the soul, will be apt to grow upon thee. In such a time be vigilant, be circumspect, or thou wilt be surprised. Job says, that in

his affliction God "made his heart soft," chap. xxiii. 16. There is a hardness, an insensible want of spiritual sense, gathered in prosperity, that if not watched against, will expose the heart to the deceits of sin and baits of satan. Watch and pray in this season, many men's negligence in it hath cost them dear, their experience cries out to take heed. Blessed is he that feareth always, but especially in a time of prosperity.

(2.) A time of slumber, of neglect in communion with God, of formality in duty, is a season to be watched in, as that which hath certainly some other temptation attending it. Let a person in such an estate awake and look about him; his enemy is at hand, and he is ready to fall into such a condition as may cost him dear all the days of his life. His present estate is bad enough in itself; but it is an indication of that which is worse, that lies at the door. The disciples that were with Christ in the mount, had not only a bodily, but a spiritual drowsiness upon them. What says our Saviour to them? "Arise, watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation." We know how near one of them was to a bitter hour of temptation, and not watching, he immediately entered into it.

Consider then thy state and condition! Doth thy light burn dim? or though it give to others as great a blaze as formerly, dost thou see so clearly the face of God in Christ, as thou hast done? is thy zeal cold? or if it do the same works as formerly, is thy heart warmed with the love of God, and to God, in them as formerly, but only thou proceedest in the course thou hast been in? Art thou negligent in the duties of praying or hearing? Or, if thou dost observe them, is it with that life and vigour as formerly? Does thy delight in the people of God faint and grow cold? Or is thy love to them changing from that which is purely spiritual, into that which is carnal, upon the account of suitableness of principles, and natural spirits, if not worse foundations? If thou art drowsing in such a condition as this, take

heed ; thou art falling into some woful temptation, that will break all thy bones, and give thee wounds that shall stick by thee all the days of thy life. Yea, when thou awakest, thou wilt find it hath laid hold on thee already, though thou perceivedst it not ; it hath smitten and wounded thee, though thou hast not complained, nor sought for relief or healing. If any one that reads the word of this direction be in this condition, if he hath any regard for his poor soul, let him now awake, before he be entangled beyond recovery. Take this warning from God ; despise it not.

(3.) A season of great spiritual enjoyments is often by the malice of satan, and the weakness of our hearts, turned into a season of temptation. We know how the case stood with Paul, 2 Cor. xii. 7, he had glorious spiritual revelations of God and Jesus Christ ; instantly satan falls upon him ; a messenger from him buffets him, so that he earnestly begs its departure ; but yet is left to struggle with it. God is pleased sometimes to give us especial discoveries of himself and his love ; to fill our hearts with his kindness, Christ takes us into the banqueting-house, and gives our hearts their fills of love ; and this by some signal work of his Spirit, overpowering us with a sense of love, in the unspeakable privilege of adoption. A man would think, this was the securest condition in the world. What soul does not cry with Peter on the mount, " It is good for me to be here," to abide here for ever ? But yet very frequently some bitter temptation is at hand. Satan sees that being possessed by the joy before us, we neglect many ways of approach to our souls, wherein he seeks and finds advantages against us. Is this then our state ? Does God give us to drink of the rivers of pleasure that are at his right hand, and satisfy our souls with his kindness as with marrow and fatness ? Let us not say, we shall never be moved ; we know not how soon God may hide his face, or a messenger from satan buffet us.

Besides, there lies often worse deceit in this business.

Men cheat their souls with their own fancies, instead of a sense of God's love by the Holy Ghost ; and when they are lifted up with their imaginations, it is not expressible how fearfully they are exposed to all manner of temptations ; and how then are they able to find relief from their own deceivings wherewith they sport themselves ? May we not see such every day ? Persons walking in the vanities and ways of this world, yet boasting of their sense of the love of God ? Shall we believe them ? We must not then believe truth itself, and how woeful must their condition be !

(4.) A fourth season is a season of self-confidence ; then usually temptation is at hand. The case of Peter is clear unto this : " Though all men should deny thee, I will not : " though I were to die for it, I would not do it. This said the poor man, when he stood on the very brink of that temptation, that cost him such bitter tears. And this taught him so far to know himself all his days, and gave him such acquaintance with the state of all believers, that when he had received more of the Spirit and of power, yet he had less of confidence, and saw it was fit that others should be so also ; and therefore persuades all men to " pass the time of their sojourning here in fear," 1 Pet. i. 17, not to be confident and high, as he was, lest, as he did, they should fall. At the first trial he compares himself with others, and vaunts himself above them ; " Though all men should forsake thee, yet I will not ; " he fears every man more than himself. But when our Saviour afterwards comes to him, and puts him directly upon the comparison, " Simon Peter, lovest thou me, more than these ? " He hath done comparing himself with others, and only crieth, " Lord, thou knowest that I love thee : " he will lift up himself above others no more. Such a season often falls out. Temptations are abroad in the world, false doctrines, with innumerable other allurements ; we are ready every one to be confident, that we shall not be surprised with them ; though all men should fall into these follies, yet we will not ;

surely we shall never go off from our walking with God ; it is impossible our hearts should be so sottish. But, says the apostle, “ Be not high-minded, but fear ; let him that standeth take heed lest he fall.” Wouldst thou think that Peter, who had walked on the sea with Christ, confessed him to be the Son of God, been with him on the mount, when he heard the voice from the excellent glory, should, at the word of a servant-girl, instantly fall a cursing and swearing that he knew him not ? Let them take heed of self-confidence, who have any mind to take heed of sin. And this is the first thing in our watching, to consider well the seasons wherein temptation usually makes its approaches, and be armed against them. And these are some of the seasons wherein temptations are nigh at hand.

CHAP. V

Several Acts of Watchfulness against Temptation proposed.

That part of watchfulness against temptation which we have considered, regards the outward means, occasions, and advantages of temptation ; proceed we now to that which respects the heart itself. Watching or keeping of the heart, which above all keepings we are obliged to, comes within the compass of this duty also ; for the right performance whereof, take these ensuing directions.

1. Let him that would not enter into temptation labour to know his own heart, to be acquainted with his own spirit, his natural frame and temper, his lusts and corruptions, his natural, sinful, or spiritual weaknesses, that finding where his weakness lies, he may be careful to keep at a distance from all occasions of sin. Our Saviour tells the disciples, that “ they knew not what spirit they were of,” which, under a pretence of zeal, betrayed them into ambition and desire of revenge. Had they

known it, they would have watched over themselves. David tells us, Psal. xviii. 23, that he considered his ways, and "kept himself from his iniquity," which he was particularly prone to.

There are advantages for temptations lying often in men's natural tempers and constitutions. Some are naturally gentle, easy to be entreated, pliable, which though it be the noblest temper of nature, yet if not watched over, will be a means of innumerable surprisals and entanglements. Others are earthly, froward, morose; so that envy, malice, selfishness, peevishness, harsh thoughts of others, repinings, lie at the very door of their natures, and they can scarce step out, but they are in the snare of one or other of them. Others are passionate, and the like. Now he that would watch that he may not enter into temptation, has need to be acquainted with his own natural temper; that he may watch over the treacheries that lie in it continually. Take heed lest you have a Jehu in you, that shall make you drive furiously, or a Jonah in you, that will make you ready to repine, or a David that will make you hasty in your determinations as he was often in the warmth of his natural temper. He who watches not this thoroughly, who is not exactly skilled in the knowledge of himself, will never be disentangled from one temptation or another.

Again, as men have peculiar natural tempers, so they may have peculiar corruptions, which either by their natural constitution or education and other prejudices, have got deep rooting in them. This also is to be found out by him, who would not enter into temptation. Unless he know it, unless his eyes be always on it, unless he observe its motions, advantages, it will continually be entangling him. This then is our sixth direction in this kind: labour to know thine own temper, what spirit thou art of; what associates in thy heart satan hath, where corruption is strong, where grace is weak. How many have all their comforts blasted, and peace disturbed, by natural passion and peevishness? How many are rendered

useless in the world, by their own gentleness and facility? Be acquainted then with thy own heart. Though it be deep, search it: though it be dark, inquire into it: though it give all its distempers other names than what are their due, believe it not. Were not men utter strangers to themselves, did they not give flattering titles to their natural distempers, did they not strive rather to justify, palliate, or excuse the evils of their hearts, than to destroy them, it would be impossible that they should all their days hang in the same briers without attempt for deliverance.

2. When thou knowest the state and condition of thy heart, watch against all such occasions, employments, companies, retirements, businesses, as are apt to entangle thy natural temper, or provoke thy corruption. It may be, there are some ways, some companies, some businesses, that thou never in thy life escapedst them, but sufferedst by them more or less, through their suitability to entice or provoke thy corruption. It may be thou art in a condition of life that wearies thee day by day, on the account of thy ambition, passion, discontent; if thou hast any love to thy soul, it is time for thee to awake, and to deliver thyself as a bird from the evil snare. Peter would not come again in haste to the high-priest's hall, nor would David walk again on the top of his house. But the particulars of this instance are so various, that it is impossible to enumerate them. Herein lies no small part of that wisdom, which consists in ordering our conversation aright. Seeing we have so little power over our hearts, when once they meet with suitable provocations, we are to keep them asunder, as a man would do fire and the combustible parts of the house wherein he dwells.

3. Be sure to lay in provision in store, against the approaching of any temptation. This also belongs to our watchfulness over our hearts. You will say, What provision is intended, and where is it to be laid up? Our hearts, as our Saviour speaks, are our treasury. There

we lay up whatever we have, good or bad ; and thence do we draw it for our use. When an enemy draws nigh to a fort to besiege it ; often, if he find it well manned, and furnished with provision for a siege, he withdraws and assaults it not. If satan, the prince of this world, come, and find our hearts fortified against his batteries, he not only departs, but flees ; he “ will flee from us,” Jam. iv. 7. For the provision to be laid up, it is that which is provided in the gospel for us. Gospel provisions will do this work ; that is, keep the heart full of a sense of the love of God in Christ. This is the greatest preservative against the power of temptation. A man may, nay he ought to lay in provisions of the law also ; fear of death, hell, punishment, with the terror of the Lord in them. But these are far more easily conquered than the other. Nay, they will never stand alone against a vigorous assault. A heart stored with them will struggle for a while, but quickly cease. But store the heart with a sense of the love of God in Christ ; with a taste of the virtue of the blood of Christ, and of his love in shedding it ; get a relish of the privileges we have thereby ; fill the heart with thoughts of the beauty of holiness, and thou wilt in an ordinary course of walking with God, have great peace as to temptations. The apostle tells us, that the peace of God *φρουρησει τας καρδιας*, Phil. iv. 7, shall keep our hearts ; *φρουρα*, is a military word, a garrison ; and so *φρουρησει* is, *shall keep as in a garrison*. Now a garrison hath two things attending it. First, that it is exposed to the assaults of its enemies. Secondly, that safety lies in it from their attempts. It is so with our souls : they are exposed to temptations, are assaulted continually : but if there be a garrison in them, temptation shall not enter, and consequently we shall not enter into temptation. Now how is this done ? Saith he, the peace of God shall do it. What is this peace of God ? A sense of his love and favour in Jesus Christ. Let this abide in you, and it shall garrison you against all assaults whatever. Besides, there is that in an especial manner,

which is also in all the rest of the directions ; namely, that the thing itself lies in a direct opposition to all the ways that temptation can make use of to approach our souls. Contending to obtain and keep a sense of the love of God in Christ, in the nature of it, obviates all the workings of temptation. Let this be a third direction then in our watching against temptation, lay in a store of gospel provisions, which may make the soul a defenced place against all the assaults thereof.

4. In the first approach of any temptation, the directions following are also suited to carry on the work of watching.

(1.) Be always awake, that thou mayest have an early discovery of thy temptation ; that thou mayest know it to be such. Most men perceive not their enemy till they are wounded by him. Yea, others may sometimes see them deeply insensible ; they sleep without any sense of danger, till others come and awake them, by telling them that their house is on fire. Temptation is not easily discoverable, as it denotes such a way or thing as may be made use of for the ends of temptation ; few take notice of it until it is too late ; and they find themselves entangled, if not wounded. Watch then, to understand betimes the snares that are laid for thee ; to understand the advantages thy enemies have against thee, before they get strength ; before they are incorporated with thy lusts, and have distilled poison into thy soul.

(2.) Consider the aim and tendency of the temptation, whatever it be, and of all that are concerned in it. Those who concur in thy temptation are satan and thy own lusts. Thine own lust never rises up, but its intendment is the worst of evils. Hence look upon it in its first attempts, what pretences soever may be made, as thy mortal enemy. Know then, that, in the first assault of any temptation, the most cursed, sworn enemy is at hand, is setting on thee, and that for thy utter ruin : so that it were the greatest madness in the world to throw thyself into his arms to be destroyed.

Hath satan any more friendly intention towards thee, who is a sharer in every temptation? To beguile thee as a serpent, to devour thee as a lion, is the friendship that he owes thee. I shall only add, that the sin he tempts thee to against the law is not the chief thing he aims at; his principal design lies against thy interest in the gospel. He would make sin but a bridge to get over to a better ground to assault thee, as to thy interest in Christ. He who perhaps will say to-day thou mayest venture on sin, because thou hast an interest in Christ; will to-morrow tell thee that thou hast no interest in him, because thou hast done so.

(3.) Meet thy temptation in its entrance with thoughts of faith concerning Christ on the cross. This will make it sink before thee. Entertain no parley, no dispute with it, if thou wouldst not enter into it. Say, it is Christ that died, that died for such sins as these. This is "taking the shield of faith to quench the fiery darts of satan," Eph. vi. 16. Faith doth it, by laying hold on Christ crucified, his love therein, and what from thence he suffered for sin. Let thy temptation be what it will; be it unto sin, to fear or doubting for sin, or about thy condition, it is not able to stand before faith lifting up the standard of the cross.

But suppose the soul hath been surprised by temptation, and entangled unawares, so that now it is too late to resist the first entrances of it; what shall such a soul do, that it may not be plunged into it, and carried away with the power thereof?

1. Do as Paul did; beseech God again and again that it may *depart from thee*, and thou shalt either be speedily delivered out of it, or receive a sufficiency of grace, not to be foiled utterly by it.

2. Flee to Christ in a peculiar manner, as he was tempted; and beg of him to give thee succour in this needful time of trouble, Heb. ii. 18. The apostle instructs us herein, "in that he hath been tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted:" this is the

meaning of it ; when you are tempted, and are ready to faint ; when you want succour, you must have it, or you die ; exert faith peculiarly on Christ, as he was tempted ; that is, consider that he was tempted himself, that he suffered thereby, that he conquered all temptations, and that not merely on his own account, seeing for our sakes he submitted to be tempted, but for us ; and draw, yea, expect succour from him, lie down at his feet, make thy complaint known to him, beg his assistance, and it will not be in vain.

3. Look to him who hath promised deliverance ; consider that he is faithful, and will not suffer thee to be tempted above what thou art able. Consider that he hath promised a comfortable issue of these trials and temptations. Call all the promises to mind, of assistance and deliverance. Ponder them in thy heart, and rest upon it, that God hath innumerable ways that thou knowest not of to give thee deliverance ; as, (1.) He can send an affliction, that shall mortify thy heart to the temptation, whatever it be ; that, which before was a sweet morsel, shall neither have taste nor relish in it ; thy desire to it shall be killed ; as was the case with David ; or, (2.) He can, by some providence, alter that whole state of things from whence thy temptation doth arise ; so taking fuel from the fire, causing it to go out of itself ; as it was with the same David in the day of battle ; or, (3.) He can tread down satan under thy feet, that he shall not dare to suggest any thing any more, (the God of peace shall do it,) that thou shalt hear of him no more ; or, (4.) He can give thee such a supply of grace, that thou shalt be freed, though not from the temptation itself, yet from the danger of it, as was the case with Paul ; or, (5.) He can give thee such a comfortable persuasion of good success, that thou shalt have refreshment in thy trials, and be kept from the trouble of the temptation ; or, (6.) He can utterly remove it, and make thee a complete conqueror. And innumerable other ways he

hath of keeping thee from entering into temptation, so as to be foiled by it.

4. Consider where the temptation, wherewith thou art surprised, hath made its entrance, and by what means, and with all speed make up that breach. Stop that passage which the waters have made to enter in at. Deal with thy soul like a wise physician; inquire when, how, by what means thou didst fall into this distemper; and if thou findest negligence, carelessness, want of keeping watch over thyself, to have given rise to it, fix thy soul there; bewail that before the Lord; make up that breach, and then proceed to the work that lies before thee.

CHAP VI.

The last general Direction, Watch against Temptation, by constantly keeping the Word of Christ's Patience.

ONE general direction remains, which is comprehensive of all that went before, and also adds many more particulars unto them. This contains an approved antidote against the poison of temptation; a remedy that Christ himself hath marked with a note of efficacy and success. It is given, Rev. iii. 10, in the words of our Saviour himself to the church of Philadelphia, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell in the earth." Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever: as he dealt with the church of Philadelphia, so will he deal with us: if we keep the word of his patience, he will keep us from the hour of temptation. This then requires our peculiar consideration. And therefore I shall shew,

1. What it is to keep the word of Christ's patience. And,
2. How this will be a means of our preservation.

1. The word of Christ is the word of the gospel; the word by him revealed from the bosom of the Father.

This word is called the word of Christ's patience, upon the account of that patience and long-suffering which, in the dispensation of it, the Lord Christ exerciseth both in his bearing with men, and enduring from them. Three things are implied in keeping this word. Knowledge : valuation : obedience.

First, Knowledge. He that will keep this word must know it. (1.) As a word of grace and mercy, able to save us : "It is the power of God unto salvation," Rom. i. 19. "The grace of God that bringeth salvation," Titus ii. 11. "The word of grace, that is able to build us up, and to give us an inheritance among all them that are sanctified," Acts xx. 32. When the word of the gospel is known, as a word of mercy, grace, and pardon, as the sole evidence for life, as the conveyance of an eternal inheritance, when the soul finds it such, it will strive to keep it. (2.) As a word of holiness and purity, able to sanctify us ; "Ye are clean through the word I have spoken to you," saith our Saviour, John xv. 3. To that purpose is his prayer, John xvii. 17. He that knows not the word of Christ's patience, as a sanctifying, cleansing word upon his own soul ; neither knows it nor keeps it. (3.) As a word of liberty and power, to set him free ; and this not only from the guilt of sin and wrath, for that it doth, as it is a word of grace and mercy ; not only from the power of sin, for that it doth as it is a word of holiness, but also from all outward respects of men of the world, that might entangle or enslave him ; it declares us to be Christ's freemen, and in bondage unto none. We are not by it freed from due subjection to superiors, nor from any duty, 1 Pet. ii. 16 ; but it is a word of freedom, liberty, and deliverance from bondage, in respect of conscience, as to the worship of God, Gal. v. 1, and in respect of ignoble, slavish respects to the men or things of the world ; the gospel giving a free, large, and noble spirit in subjection to God, and none else ; a spirit "not of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind," 2 Tim. i. 7 : a mind in

nothing terrified, Phil. i. 28, not swayed with any bye respect. And he that thus knows the word of Christ's patience is even thereby freed from innumerable, from unspeakable temptations. (4.) He must know it also as a word of consolation to support him in every condition; and to be a full portion in the want of all. It is a word attended with joy unspeakable, and full of glory; it gives support, refreshment, peace, consolation, in every condition. Thus to know the word of Christ's patience, thus to know the gospel, is the first part, and it is a great part of this condition of our preservation from the hour and power of temptation.

Secondly, Valuation of what is thus known, belongs to the keeping of this word; it is to be kept as a treasure, 2 Tim. i. 14, *την καλην παρακαταθηκην*, that excellent *depositum*. That is, the word of the gospel, *keep it*, saith the apostle, *by the Holy Ghost*; and "hold fast the faithful word," Tit. i. 9. It is a good treasure, a faithful word, hold it fast. It is a word that comprises the whole interest of Christ in the world. To value that as our chief treasure, is to keep the word of Christ's patience.

Thirdly, Obedience: personal obedience, in the universal observation of all the commands of Christ, is the keeping of his word. Close adherence unto Christ in holiness, and universal obedience, when the opposition the gospel meets with renders it signally the word of his patience, is the life and soul of the duty required.

We are arrived then to the sum of this condition of freedom from the power of temptation. He that, having a due acquaintance with the gospel, as a word of mercy, holiness, liberty, and consolation, values it as his choicest treasure; makes it his business, and the work of his life, to give himself up to it in universal obedience; then especially, when opposition and apostasy put the patience of Christ to the utmost, he shall be preserved from the hour of temptation. This is that which is comprehensive of all that went before; and is exclusive of all other

ways for obtaining the end proposed ; nor let any man think without this to be kept one hour from entering into temptation.

2. That this will be a sure preservative, may appear from the ensuing considerations : (1.) It hath the promise of preservation, and this alone hath it. It is solemnly promised to the church of Philadelphia on this account. Now in every promise are to be considered, the faithfulness of the Father who gives it ; the grace of the Son, which is the matter of it ; the power and efficacy of the Holy Ghost, which puts the promise in execution. And all these are engaged for the preservation of such persons from the hour of temptation.

(2.) This constant, universal keeping of Christ's word of patience will keep the heart and soul in a frame wherein no prevalent temptation, by virtue of any advantages whatever, can seize upon it, so as totally to prevail against it. This exercises grace in all the faculties of the soul ; and compasses it with the whole armour of God. The understanding is full of light, the affections of love, let the wind blow from what quarter it will, the soul is fortified ; let the enemy assault when, or by what means he pleaseth, all things in the soul are upon the guard : especially upon a two-fold account doth deliverance and security arise from this hand. 1. By the mortification of the heart to the matter of temptations. The prevalency of any temptation arises from hence, that the heart is ready to close with the matter of it. There are lusts within, suited to the proposals of the world, or satan without. Now keeping the word of Christ's patience, in the manner declared, keeps the heart mortified to these things. " I am crucified with Christ ;" he that keeps close to Christ is crucified with him ; and is dead to all the desires of the flesh and the world. Here the match is broken, and all love, entangling love dissolved. 2. In this frame the heart is filled with better things, and so fortified against the matter of any temp-

tation. See what resolution this put Paul upon, Phil. iii. 8. All was as dross and dung to him. Who would go out of his way to have his arms full of dross and dung? And whence was it that he had this estimation of the most desirable things in the world? It was from that dear estimation he had of the excellency of Christ. When the soul is exercised in communion with Christ, walking with him, he drinks new wine, and cannot desire the old things of the world, for he says the new is better. He tastes every day how gracious the Lord is, and therefore longs not after the sweetness of forbidden things. He that makes it his business to eat daily of the tree of life, will have no appetite for other fruit, though the tree that bears them seems to stand in the midst of paradise.

(3.) He that so keeps the word of Christ's patience is always furnished with preserving considerations, and preserving principles.

First, He is furnished with preserving considerations, that powerfully influence his soul in walking diligently with Christ. Besides the sense of duty which is always upon him, he considers, 1. The concern of Christ, whom his soul loves. He considers that the presence of Christ is with him, his eye upon him, that he ponders his heart and ways, as one greatly concerned in his deportment in a time of trial. So Christ manifests himself to do, Rev. ii. 18, 20. He considers all; what is acceptable, what is to be rejected. He knows that Christ is concerned for his own honour, that his name may not be evil spoken of by reason of him; that he is concerned in love to his soul; having that design respecting him, to present him holy, and unblamable, and unreprouable in his sight; concerned on the account of this gospel, the progress and acceptation of it in the world; its beauty would be slurred, its good things reviled, its progress stopped, if such an one should be prevailed against; concerned in his love to others, who are grievously scandalized, and

perhaps ruined by the miscarriages of such. There is no man who keeps the word of the patience of Christ, but is full of this pressing consideration; it dwells on his heart and spirit, and the love of Christ constrains him so to keep his heart and ways. 2. The consideration of the temptations of Christ in his behalf, and the conquest he made in all assaults, dwell also on his spirit. The prince of this world came upon him; every thing in earth or hell, that hath either allurement or affrightment in it, was proposed to aim, to divert him from the work of mediation, which he had undertaken. His whole life he calls the time of his temptation; but he resisted all, conquered all, and is become a captain of salvation to them that obey him. And, says the soul, shall this temptation, these arguings, this plausible pretence, this self-love, this sensuality, this bait of the world, turn me aside, prevail over me, to desert him who went before me in the ways of all temptations, that his holy nature was obnoxious to, for my good? 3. Thoughts of the loss of love, of the smiles of the countenance of Christ, frequently exercise such a soul. He knows what it is to enjoy the favour of Christ, to have a sense of his love, to converse with him; and perhaps knows also what it is to be in the dark, distanced from him.

Secondly, He that keeps the word of Christ's patience, hath preserving principles whereby he is influenced. For, 1. In all things he lives by faith. Now upon a twofold account hath faith the power of preservation from temptation annexed to it. (1.) Because it empties the soul of its own wisdom, understanding, and fulness, that it may act in the wisdom and fulness of Christ. The only advice for preservation in trials and temptations lies in that of the wise man, Prov. iii. 5, "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not to thine own understanding." This is the work of faith: the great failing of men in trials, is their leaning to their own understanding. What is the issue of it? Job xviii. 7, "The steps of his strength shall be straitened, and his own counsel shall cast him down." First

he shall be entangled, and then cast down ; and all by his own counsel, until he come to be ashamed of it. Whenever in our trials we consult our own understandings, the principle of living by faith is stifled, and we are, in the issue, cast down by our own counsels. Now nothing can empty the heart of this, but faith, not living to ourselves, but having Christ to live in us. (2.) Faith, making the soul poor, empty, helpless in itself, engages the power of Jesus Christ for assistance.

2. Love to the saints, with care that they suffer not upon our account, is a great preserving principle in a time of temptation. How powerful this was in David, he declares in that earnest prayer, Psalm lxix. 6, " Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord God of Hosts, be ashamed for my sake. Let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel." O let not me so miscarry, that those for whom I would lay down my life should be put to shame, or be evil spoken of.

Would you then be kept from the hour of temptation, would you watch against entering into it, as deductions from what hath been delivered in this chapter, take the ensuing cautions.

1. Take heed of leaning on deceitful assistances ; as, (1.) On your own counsels, understandings, reasonings. Though you argue in them never so plausibly, they will leave you, betray you. When the temptation comes to any height, they will all turn and take part with your enemy, and plead as much for the matter of the temptation, as they pleaded against it before.

(2.) The most vigorous actings by prayer, fasting, and other such means against that particular temptation where-with you are exercised. This will not avail you, if in the mean time there be neglects on other accounts. What avails to any man to wrestle, cry, contend as to any particular temptation, and immediately fall into worldly ways, worldly compliances, looseness, and negligence in other things ? It is righteous with Jesus Christ to leave such an one to the hour of temptation.

(3.) The general security of saints' perseverance, and preservation from total apostasy. Every security that God gives us is good in its kind, and for the purpose for which it is given to us ; but when it is given for one end, to use it for another, that is not good or profitable. To make use of the general assurance of preservation from total apostasy, to support the spirit in a particular temptation, will not advantage the soul. Many relieve themselves with this, until they find themselves in the depth of perplexities.

2. Apply yourselves to this great means of preservation of faithful keeping the word of Christ's patience, in the midst of all temptations. If you neglect this, you will certainly enter into temptation, and as certainly fall into sin. Flatter not yourselves ; some of you are old disciples ; you think it impossible you should ever be seduced ; but, "let him" (whoever he be,) "that standeth take heed lest he fall !" It is not any grace received, it is not any experience obtained, that will preserve you from any evil, unless you stand upon your watch : "What I say to you," says Christ, "I say to all, Watch." Perhaps you may have had some good success for a time in your careless frame ; but awake, admire God's tenderness and patience, or evil lies at the door. If you will not perform this duty, in one thing or other you will be tempted, you will be defiled, and what will be the end thereof ?

This may seem but as a noise of words for the present, but if it ever be thy condition, thou wilt find it to be full of woe and bitterness. O ! then, let us strive to keep our spirits unintangled, avoiding all appearance of evil, and all ways leading thereto : especially all ways, businesses and employments, that we have already found disadvantageous to us.

he shall be entangled, and then cast down ; and all by his own counsel, until he come to be ashamed of it. Whenever in our trials we consult our own understandings, the principle of living by faith is stifled, and we are, in the issue, cast down by our own counsels. Now nothing can empty the heart of this, but faith, not living to ourselves, but having Christ to live in us. (2.) Faith, making the soul poor, empty, helpless in itself, engages the power of Jesus Christ for assistance.

2. Love to the saints, with care that they suffer not upon our account, is a great preserving principle in a time of temptation. How powerful this was in David, he declares in that earnest prayer, Psalm lxix. 6, " Let not them that wait on thee, O Lord God of Hosts, be ashamed for my sake. Let not those that seek thee be confounded for my sake, O God of Israel." O let not me so miscarry, that those for whom I would lay down my life should be put to shame, or be evil spoken of.

Would you then be kept from the hour of temptation, would you watch against entering into it, as deductions from what hath been delivered in this chapter, take the ensuing cautions.

1. Take heed of leaning on deceitful assistances ; as, (1.) On your own counsels, understandings, reasonings. Though you argue in them never so plausibly, they will leave you, betray you. When the temptation comes to any height, they will all turn and take part with your enemy, and plead as much for the matter of the temptation, as they pleaded against it before.

(2.) The most vigorous actings by prayer, fasting, and other such means against that particular temptation where-with you are exercised. This will not avail you, if in the mean time there be neglects on other accounts. What avails to any man to wrestle, cry, contend as to any particular temptation, and immediately fall into worldly ways, worldly compliances, looseness, and negligence in other things ? It is righteous with Jesus Christ to leave such an one to the hour of temptation.

(3.) The general security of saints' perseverance, and preservation from total apostasy. Every security that God gives us is good in its kind, and for the purpose for which it is given to us ; but when it is given for one end, to use it for another, that is not good or profitable. To make use of the general assurance of preservation from total apostasy, to support the spirit in a particular temptation, will not advantage the soul. Many relieve themselves with this, until they find themselves in the depth of perplexities.

2. Apply yourselves to this great means of preservation of faithful keeping the word of Christ's patience, in the midst of all temptations. If you neglect this, you will certainly enter into temptation, and as certainly fall into sin. Flatter not yourselves ; some of you are old disciples ; you think it impossible you should ever be seduced ; but, "let him" (whoever he be,) "that standeth take heed lest he fall!" It is not any grace received, it is not any experience obtained, that will preserve you from any evil, unless you stand upon your watch : "What I say to you," says Christ, "I say to all, Watch." Perhaps you may have had some good success for a time in your careless frame ; but awake, admire God's tenderness and patience, or evil lies at the door. If you will not perform this duty, in one thing or other you will be tempted, you will be defiled, and what will be the end thereof ?

This may seem but as a noise of words for the present, but if it ever be thy condition, thou wilt find it to be full of woe and bitterness. O ! then, let us strive to keep our spirits unintangled, avoiding all appearance of evil, and all ways leading thereto : especially all ways, businesses and employments, that we have already found disadvantageous to us.



ΧΡΙΣΤΟΛΟΓΙΑ:

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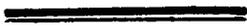
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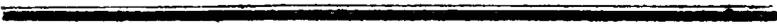
GLORIOUS MYSTERY

OF

**THE PERSON OF CHRIST,
GOD AND MAN.**



Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord ; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ—*Phil.* iii. 8.



THE
P R E F A C E.

IT is a great promise concerning the Person of Christ, as he was to be given unto the church, (for he was a Child born, a Son given unto us, Isa. ix. 6,) that God would lay him in “ Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation, whereon he that believed should not make haste,” Isa. xxviii. 16. Yet was it also foretold concerning him, that this precious foundation should be “ for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence, to both the houses of Israel ; for a gin, and for a snare unto the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” So as that “ many among them should stumble and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken,” Isa. viii. 15. According to this promise and prediction, it hath fallen out in all ages of the church, as the apostle Peter declares concerning the first of them : “ Wherefore,” saith he, “ also it was contained in the Scripture, Behold I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect and precious, and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe, he is precious ; but unto them that are disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, and a

stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even unto them that stumble at the word, being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed," 1 Epist. chap. ii. 6, 7, 8.

Unto them that believe unto the saving of the soul, he is, he always hath been precious ; the sun, the rock, the life, the bread of their souls, every thing that is good, useful, amiable, desirable, here or unto eternity. In, from, and by him, is all their spiritual and eternal life, light, power, growth, consolation, and joy here, with everlasting salvation hereafter. By him alone do they desire, expect, and obtain deliverance from that woeful apostasy from God, which is accompanied with all, which containeth in it virtually and meritoriously, whatever is evil, noxious, and destructive unto our nature, and which without relief will issue in eternal misery. By him are they brought into the nearest alliance and friendship with God, the firmest union unto him, and the most holy communion with him, that our finite natures are capable of, and so conducted unto the eternal enjoyment of him. For "in him shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory," Isa. xlv. 25. For "Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation, they shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end," ver. 17

On these and the like accounts, the principal design of their whole lives, unto whom he is thus precious, is to acquaint themselves with him, the mystery of the wisdom, grace, and love of God, in his person and mediation, as revealed unto us in the Scripture, which is "life eternal," John xvii. 3 ; to trust in him, as to all the everlasting concernments of their souls ; to love and honour him with all their hearts ; to endeavour after conformity unto him, in all those characters of Divine goodness and holiness, which are represented unto them in him. In these

things consist the soul, life, power, beauty, and efficacy of the Christian religion, without which, whatever outward ornaments may be put upon its exercise, it is but an useless, lifeless carcass. The whole of this design is expressed in those heavenly words of the apostle, Phil. iii. 8—12; “ Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I might win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith. That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead: not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which I also am apprehended of Christ Jesus.” This is a Divine expression of that frame of heart, of that design which is predominant and efficacious in them unto whom Christ is precious.

But, on the other hand, according unto the fore-mentioned prediction, as he hath been a sure foundation unto all that believe; so he hath in like manner been a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence unto them that stumble at the word. There is nothing in him, nothing wherein he is concerned, nothing of him, his person, his nature, his office, his grace, his love, his power, his authority, his relation unto the church, but it hath been unto many a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. Concerning these things have been all the contests which have fallen out among those that outwardly have made profession of

the Christian religion. And the contentions about them do rather increase than abate, unto this very day; the dismal fruits whereof the world groaneth under, and is no longer able to bear. For as the opposition unto the Lord Christ in these things by men of perverse minds, hath ruined their own souls, as having dashed themselves in pieces against this everlasting rock; so in conjunction with others' lust and interests of the carnal minds of men, it hath filled the world itself with blood and confusion.

The re-throning of the person, Spirit, grace, and authority of Christ in the hearts and consciences of men, is the only way whereby an end may be put unto these conflicts. But this is not to be expected in any degree of perfection amongst them who stumble at this stone of offence, though in the issue he will herein also send forth judgment unto victory, and all the meek of the earth shall follow after it. In the mean time, as those, unto whom he is thus a rock of offence, in his person, his Spirit, his grace, his office, and authority, are diligent under various pretences, and for divers ends, in all ways of opposition unto his glory; so it is the highest duty of them unto whom he is precious, whose principal design is to be found built on him as the sure foundation; as to hold the truth concerning him, his person, Spirit, grace, office, and authority, and to abound in all duties of faith, love, trust, honour, and delight in him; so also to declare his excellency, to plead the cause of his glory, to vindicate his honour, and to witness him the only rest and reward of the souls of men, as they are called and have opportunity.

This, and no other, is the design of the ensuing treatise, wherein as all things fall unspeakably short of the excellency and sublimity of the subject treated of, for no mind

can conceive, no tongue can express the real substantial glory of them ; so there is no doubt but that in all the parts of it, there is a reflection of failings and imperfections from the weakness of its author. But yet I must say with confidence, that in the whole, that eternal truth of God, concerning the mystery of his wisdom, love, grace, and power, in the person and mediation of Christ, with our duties towards himself therein, even the Father, Son, and Eternal Spirit, is pleaded and vindicated ; which shall never be shaken by the utmost endeavours of the gates of hell.

And in the acknowledgment of the truth concerning these things consists that faith in an especial manner, which was the life and glory of the primitive church, which they earnestly contended for, whereby they were victorious against all the troops of adversaries by whom it was assaulted. In giving testimony hereunto, they loved not their lives unto death, but poured out their blood like water, under all the pagan persecutions, which had no other design but to cast them down and separate them from this impregnable rock. In the defence of these truths did they conflict in prayers, studies, travels, and writings, against the swarms of seducers, by whom they were opposed. And for this cause I thought to have confirmed the principal passages of the ensuing discourse with some testimonies from the most ancient writers of the first ages of the church ; but I omitted that course, as fearing that the interposition of such passages might obstruct instead of promoting the edification of the common sort of readers, which I principally intended.

ΧΡΙΣΤΟΛΟΓΙΑ :

OR, A

DECLARATION

OF THE

GLORIOUS MYSTERY

OF THE

PERSON OF CHRIST, &c.

CHAP. I.

Peter's Confession, Matt. xvi. 16. The Substance and Excellency of that Confession.

OUR blessed Saviour, inquiring of his disciples their apprehensions concerning his person, and their faith in him, Simon Peter, as he was usually the most forward on all such occasions, through his peculiar endowments of faith and zeal, returns an answer in the name of them all, Matt. xvi. 16, "And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God."

This short, but illustrious confession of Peter, compriseth eminently the whole truth concerning the person and office of Christ. Of his person, in that although he was the Son of man, under which appellation he made his inquiry, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" Yet was he not only so, but the eternal Son of the living God. Of his office, that he was the Christ, he whom God had anointed to be the Saviour of the church, in the discharge of his kingly, priestly, and prophetic

power. And it is manifest, that all Divine truths have such a concatenation among themselves, and do all of them so centre in the person of Christ, as vested with his offices towards the church, that they are all virtually comprised in this confession.

This confession, therefore, as containing the sum and substance of that faith which they were called to give testimony unto, and concerning which their trial was approaching, was approved by our Saviour. And not only so, but eminent privileges were granted unto him that made it, and in him unto the whole church, that should live in the same faith and confession, ver. 17, 18; “And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

Two things doth our Saviour consider in the answer returned to his inquiry, 1. The faith of Peter in this confession, the faith of him that made it. 2. The nature and truth of the confession; both which are required in all the disciples of Christ; “for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation,” Rom. x. 10.

The first thing which he speaks unto is the faith of Peter, who made this confession; without this, no outward confession is of any use. That which gives glory unto God in any confession, and which gives us an interest in the truth confessed, is “the believing of the heart,” which is unto righteousness. With respect hereunto, the Lord Christ speaks, ver. 17, “And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.”

He commends and sets forth the faith of Peter:—
1. From its effect. 2. From its cause. Its effect was, that it made him blessed in whom it was. For it is not

only a blessed thing to believe and know Jesus Christ, as it is called *life eternal*, John xvii. 3; but it is that which gives an immediate interest in the blessed state of justification and acceptance with God, John i. 12. 2. The immediate cause of this faith is Divine revelation. It is not the effect of our own abilities, the best of which are but flesh and blood. That faith which renders them blessed in whom it is, is wrought in them by the power of God revealing Christ unto their souls.

2. He speaks of the confession itself, acquainting his disciples with the nature and use of it, which from the beginning he principally designed, ver. 18, "And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

It is not the person of Peter, who confessed Christ, but the person of Christ, whom Peter confessed, that is the rock on whom the church is built.

1. The variation of the expressions proves undeniably that our Saviour intended we should not understand the person of Peter to be the rock. He takes occasion from his name to declare what he designed, but no more. "And I say unto thee, thou art Peter." He had given him this name before, at his first calling him, John i. 42. Now he gives the reason of his doing so; namely, because of the illustrious confession that he should make of the rock of the church; as the name of God, under the Old Testament, was called on persons, and things, and places, because of some especial relation unto him. Wherefore the expression is varied on purpose to declare, that whatever be the signification of the name of Peter, yet the person so called was not the rock intended. The words are, *Συ εἶ Πέτρος, καὶ ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ Πέτρῳ*. Had he intended the person of Peter, he would have expressed it plainly, *Συ εἶ Πέτρος καὶ ἐπὶ σοὶ*; "Thou art a rock, and on thee will I build." At least the gender had not been altered, but he would have said, *Ἐπὶ τούτῳ τῷ Πέτρῳ*, which would have given some colour to this imagination.

2. If the church was built on the person of Peter, then when he died the church must utterly fail. For no building can possibly abide when its foundation is removed and taken away.

3. There is but one rock, but one foundation. There is no mention in the Scripture of two rocks of the church. And the rock and the foundation are the same: for the rock is that whereon the church is built, that is, the foundation. . But that the Lord Christ is this single rock and foundation of the church, we shall prove immediately.

4. Immediately after this declaration of our Saviour's purpose, to build his church on the rock, he reveals unto his disciples the way and manner how he would lay its foundation; namely, in his death and sufferings, ver. 21. And thereon this supposed rock, being a little left unto his own stability, shewed himself to be but a "reed shaken with the wind." For he was so far from putting himself under the weight of the building, that he attempted an obstruction of its foundation. He began to rebuke Christ himself, for mentioning his sufferings, wherein alone the foundation of the gospel church was to be laid, ver. 22. And hercon he received the severest rebuke that ever the Lord Jesus gave unto any of his disciples, ver. 23. And so it is known that afterwards, through surprisal and temptation, he did what lay in him to recall that confession which here he made, and whereon the church was to be built.

The substance of the great mystery, contained in the attestation given by our Saviour unto the confession of Peter, and the promise thereunto annexed, may be comprised in the ensuing assertions.

1. The person of Christ, the Son of the living God, as vested with his offices, whereunto he was called and anointed, is the foundation of the church, the *rock* whereon it is built.

¹ 2. The *power and policy of hell* will be always engaged in opposition to this foundation.

3. The *church which is built on this rock* shall never

be disjointed from it, or prevailed against by the opposition of the gates of hell. The two former of these I shall speak briefly unto, my principal design being a demonstration of a truth that ariseth from the consideration of them all.

The foundation of the church is two-fold. (1.) Real. (2.) Doctrinal: and in both ways Christ alone is the foundation. The *real* foundation of the church he is, by virtue of the mystical union of it unto him, with all the benefits whereof from thence, and thereby, it is made partaker. For thence alone hath it spiritual life, grace, mercy, perfection, and glory, Ephes. iv. 15, 16, Col. ii. 19. And he is the *doctrinal* foundation of it, in that the faith or doctrine concerning him and his offices, is that Divine truth which, in a peculiar manner, animates and constitutes the church of the New Testament, Ephes. ii. 19—22. Without the faith and confession hereof, no one person belongs unto that church.

That the Lord Christ is thus the foundation of the church, is testified unto, Isai. xxviii. 16; "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a Stone, a tried Stone, a precious Corner-stone, a sure Foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste." The interpretation and application of the last words of this promise by the apostle is, "He that believes on him shall not be ashamed or confounded," Rom. ix. 33, chap. x. 11, 1 Pet. ii. 6; that is, he shall be eternally saved; which it is the highest blasphemy to apply unto any other but Jesus Christ alone. He therefore is alone that foundation which God hath laid in and of the church. But this fundamental truth of Christ being the only foundation of the church, is so expressly determined by the apostle Saint Paul, as not to need any farther confirmation; 1 Cor. iii. 11, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

CHAP. II.

Opposition made unto the Church, as built on the Person of Christ.

There are in the words of our Saviour unto Peter, concerning the Foundation of the church, a promise of its preservation, and a prediction of the opposition that should be made thereunto. And accordingly, all things are come to pass, and are carrying on towards a complete accomplishment. For (that we may begin with the opposition foretold,) the power and policy of hell ever were, and ever will be, engaged in opposition unto the church built on this foundation; that is, the faith of it concerning his person, office, and grace; whereby it is built on him. This, as to what is past, concerneth the matter of fact; whereof therefore I must give a brief account; and then we shall examine what evidences we have of the same endeavour at present.

The "gates of hell," as all agree, are the power and policy of it; or the actings of satan, both as a *lion* and as a *serpent*, by rage and by subtilty. But whereas in these things he acts not visibly in his own person, but by his agents, he hath always had two sorts of them employed in his service. By the one he executes his *rage*, and by the other his *craft*; he animates the one as a lion, the other as a serpent. In the one he acts as the dragon, in the other as the "beast that had two horns, like a lamb, but speaks like a dragon." The first is the unbelieving world; the other, apostates and seducers of all sorts. Wherefore his work in this kind is of a double nature; the one an effect of his power and rage, acted by the world in persecution; the other of his policy and craft, acted by hereticks in seduction. In both he designs to separate the church from its foundation.

The opposition of the first sort he began against the person of Christ immediately in human nature. Fraud

he first attempted in his temptation, Matt. iv. but quickly found that that way he could make no approach unto him. "The prince of this world came, but had nothing in him." Wherefore he betook himself unto open force, and by all means possible sought his destruction; so also the more at any time the church is by faith and watchfulness secured against seduction, the more doth satan rage against it in open persecution. And for the example and comfort of the church, in its conformity to Christ, no means were left unattempted that might instigate and prepare the world for his ruin. Reproaches, scorn, false accusations by his suggestions, were heaped on him on every hand. Hereby, in the whole course of his ministry, "He endured the contradiction of sinners against himself," Heb. xii. 3. And there is herein blessed provision made for all those who by faith make use of his example. He calls them to take up his cross and follow him; and he hath shewed them what is in it by his own bearing of it. Contempt, reproach, despiteful usage, calumnies, false accusations, wresting his words, blaspheming his doctrine, reviling his person, all that he said and did, encompassed him all his days. And he hath assured his followers, that such, and no other, at least for the most part, shall be their lot in this world. And some in all ages, have an experience of it in an eminent manner. But have they any reason to complain? Why should the servant look for better measure than the Master met with? To be made like unto him in the worst of evils, for his sake, is the most honourable condition in this world: God help some to believe it. Hereby was way made for his death. But in the whole it was manifested how infinitely, in all his subtilty and malice, satan falls short of the contrivances of Divine wisdom and power. For all that he attained by effecting his death, in the *hour of darkness*, was but the *destruction of his own works*, with the ruin of his kingdom; and what yet remains to consummate his eternal misery he shall himself work out in his opposition to the church. His rest-

less malice will not suffer him to give over the pursuit until nothing remains to give him a full entrance into endless torments.

No sooner did the church of the New Testament begin to arise on this foundation, but the whole world of Jews and Gentiles set themselves with open force to destroy it. And all that they contended with the church about was their faith, and the confession of it, that "Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God." This foundation they would cast it from, or exterminate it out of the earth. What were the endeavours of the "gates of hell" in this kind, with what height of rage, with what bloody and inhuman cruelties they were exercised and executed, we have some obscure remembrance in the stories that remain from the martyrdom of Stephen unto the days of Constantine. But although there be enough remaining upon record to give us a view of the insatiable malice of the old murderer, and an astonishing representation of human nature degenerating into his image, in the perpetration of all horrid, inhuman cruelties, yet is it all as nothing in comparison of that prospect which the last day will give of them, when the earth shall disclose all the blood that it hath received, and the righteous Judge shall lay open all the contrivances for its effusion, with the rage and malice wherewith they were attended. The same rage continueth yet unallayed in its principles; and although God in many places, restrains it in his providence, by the circumstances of human affairs, yet as it hath the least advantage, as it finds any door open, it endeavours to act itself in lesser or higher degrees. But whatever dismal appearance of things there may be in the world, we need not fear the ruin of the church by the most bloody oppositions. Former experiences will give security against future events. It is built on the Rock, and those "gates of hell" shall not prevail against it.

The second way wherby satan attempted the same end, and yet continues so to do, was, by pernicious errors and heresies. For all the heresies wherewith the church

was assaulted for some centuries, were oppositions unto their faith in the person of Christ. I shall briefly reflect on the heads of this opposition, because they are now lifting up themselves again, though under new vizards and pretences. They were of three sorts.

First, that which introduced other doctrines and notions of Divine things, absolutely exclusive of the person and mediation of Christ. Such was that of the Gnosticks, begun, as it is supposed, by Simon the magician; a sort of people they were with whom the first churches, after the decease of the apostles, were exceedingly pestered, and the faith of many was overthrown. For instead of Christ, and God in him reconciling the world unto himself, and the obedience of faith thereon, according to the gospel, they introduced endless fables, genealogies, and conjugations of deities, which practically issued in this, that Christ was such an emanation of light and knowledge in them as made them perfect; that is, it took away all differences of good and evil, and gave them liberty to do what they pleased. This was the first way that satan attempted the faith of the church, namely, by substituting a *perfecting light and knowledge* in the room of the person of Christ; and, for aught I know, it may be one of the last ways whereby he will endeavour the accomplishment of the same design.

Secondly, satan attempted the same work by them who denied his Divine nature; that is, in effect denied him to be the Son of the living God, on the faith whereof the church is built. And these were of two sorts. (1.) Such as plainly and openly denied him to have any pre-existence unto his conception and birth of the holy virgin. Such were the Ebionites, Samosatians, and Photinians; for they all affirmed him to be a mere man. This attempt lay directly against the everlasting Rock, and would have substituted sand in the room of it: for no better is the best of human nature to make a foundation for the church, if not united unto the Divine. Many in those days followed those pernicious ways; yet the

foundation of God stood sure, nor was the church moved from it. But yet, after a revolution of so many ages, is the same endeavour again engaged in. The old enemy taking advantage of that prevalency of atheism and profaneness among those that are called Christians, doth again employ the same engine to overthrow the faith of the church, and that with more subtilty than formerly, in the Socinians. For their faith, or rather unbelief, concerning the person of Christ, is the same with those before-mentioned. (2.) There were such as opposed his Divine nature, under pretence of declaring it another way than the church did. So was it with the Arians, in whom the "gates of hell" seemed once to be near obtaining a prevalency. For almost the whole professing world was once surprised into that heresy. In words they acknowledged his Divine Person; but added, as a limitation of that acknowledgment, that the Divine nature which he had was originally created of God, and produced out of nothing; with a double blasphemy, denying him to be the true God, and making a God of a mere creature. But in all these attempts the opposition of the "gates of hell" unto the church, respected faith in the person of Christ as Son of the living God.

Thirdly: By some his human nature was opposed, for no stone did Satan leave unturned in the pursuit of his great design. And that which in all these things he aimed at was the substitution of a false Christ, in the room of him who in one person was both the Son of man, and the Son of the living God. And herein he infected the minds of men with endless imaginations. Some denied him to have any real human nature, but to have been a phantasm, an appearance, acted by Divine power; some that he was made of heavenly flesh, brought from above, and which, as some also affirmed, was a parcel of the Divine nature. Some affirmed that his body was not animated as ours are, by a rational soul, but was immediately acted by the power of the Divine Being, in the room of a soul. Some, that his body was of an ethereal nature, and was at length turned into the sun; with

many such diabolical delusions. And there yet want not attempts in these days, of various sorts, to destroy the verity of his human nature. The design of satan, in all these pernicious imaginations, is to break the alliance between Christ in his human nature and the church, whereon the salvation of it doth absolutely depend.

Fourthly: he raised a vehement opposition against the union of these two natures in one person. This he did in the Nestorian heresy, which greatly, and for a long time, pestered the church. The authors and promoters of this opinion granted the Lord Christ to have a Divine nature, to be the Son of the living God. They also acknowledged the truth of his human nature, that he was truly a man, even as we are. But the personal union between these two natures they denied. An union they said there was between them, but such as consisted only in love, power, and care. God did, as they imagined, eminently and powerfully manifest himself in the man Christ Jesus; but that the Son of God assumed our nature, this they would not acknowledge. And this pernicious imagination, though it seems to make concessions of truth, doth no less effectually subvert the foundation of the church than the former. For if the Divine and human nature of Christ do not constitute one individual Person, all that he did for us was only as a man, which would have been altogether insufficient for the salvation of the church; nor had God "redeemed it with his own blood." This seems to be the opinion of some amongst us at this day, about the Person of Christ. They acknowledge the Being of the Eternal Word, the Son of God; and they allow, in the like manner, the verity of his human nature, or own the man Christ Jesus: only they say, that the Eternal Word was in Him, and with Him in the same kind as it is with other believers; but in a supreme degree of manifestation and power. But though in these things there is a great endeavour to put a new colour on old imaginations, the design of satan is one and the same in them all, namely, to oppose the

building of the church upon its proper sole foundation. And these things shall be afterwards expressly spoken unto.

I intend no more in these instances but briefly to demonstrate, that the principal opposition of the "gates of hell" unto the church lay always to the building of it by faith on the Person of Christ.

It were easy also to demonstrate, that Mahometauism, which hath been so sore a stroke unto the Christian profession, is nothing but a combination of force and fraud, in opposition to the Person of Christ.

It is true, that satan, after all this, by another way, attacked the doctrine of the offices and grace of Christ with the worship of God in him. And this he carried so far as that it issued in a fatal antichristian apostasy; which is not of my present consideration. But we may proceed to what is of our own immediate concernment; for the same work with that before described is still carried on. The Person of Christ, the faith of the church concerning it, the relation of the church unto it, the building of the church on it, the life and preservation of the church thereby, are things that the "gates of hell" are engaged in an opposition unto. For,

1. It is known with what subtilty and urgency his Divine nature and Person are opposed by the Socinians. What an accession is made daily unto their incredulity! What inelination multitudes manifest towards their pernicious ways, are also evident unto all who have any concern in or for religion.

2. Many who deny not his Divine Person, yet seem to grow weary of any concern therein. A natural religion, or none at all, pleaseth them better than faith in God by Jesus Christ. That any thing more is necessary in religion, but what natural light will discover and conduct us in, with the moral duties of righteousness, there are too many that will not acknowledge. What is beyond the line of nature and reason is rejected as unintelligible mysteries or follies. The Person and grace of Christ are

supposed to breed all the disturbance in religion. Without them the common notions of the Divine Being and goodness will guide men sufficiently unto eternal blessedness.

3. There are some who have so ordered the frame of religion, that it is very uncertain whether they leave any place for the Person of Christ in it or not. For besides their denial of the hypostatical union of his nature, they ascribe all that unto a light within them, which God will effect only by Christ as a Mediator. What are the internal actings of their minds, as to faith and trust in him, I know not; but from their outward profession, he seems to be almost excluded.

4. There are not a few who pretend high unto religion and devotion, who declare no erroneous conceptions about the Person of Christ, but who yet manifest themselves not to have that regard unto him which the gospel prescribes and requires. Hence have we so many discourses published about practical holiness and duties of obedience, written with great elegance of style, and seriousness in argument, in which we can meet with little or nothing wherein Jesus Christ, his office, or his grace are concerned. Yea, it is strange if we do not meet with some reflections on those who judge them to be the life and centre of our religion. The things of Christ, beyond the example of his conversation on the earth, are of no use with such persons unto the promotion of piety and gospel-obedience.

That by these, and the like means, satan doth yet attempt the ruin of the church, as to its building on an everlasting Rock, falls under the observation of all who are concerned in its welfare. And whatever others may apprehend concerning this state of things, how any that love the Lord Jesus in sincerity, especially such as are called to declare and represent him unto men in the office of the ministry, can acquit themselves without giving their testimony against, and endeavouring to stop,

as much as lies in them, the progress of this prevailing declension from the only foundation of the church, I know not.

Some few things concerning the Person of Christ, with respect unto the confession of Peter, will be comprised in the ensuing discourse. And some things I must premise in general. As, (1.) The instances which I shall give concerning the *use and consideration of the Person of Christ* in the Christian religion, are but few, and those perhaps not the most signal which the greater spiritual wisdom of others might propose. And indeed who shall declare what are the chief instances of this incomprehensible effect of Divine wisdom? "What is his name, and what is his Son's name, if thou canst tell?" Prov. xxx. 4. See Isai. ix. 6. It is enough for us to stand in an holy admiration at the shore of this unsearchable ocean, and to gather up some parcels of that Divine treasure, wherewith the Scripture of truth is enriched.

(2.) I make nopretence of searching into the bottom of any part of this great "mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh." It is altogether unsearchable unto the line of the most enlightened minds in this life. What we shall farther comprehend of it in the other world, God only knows. We cannot in these things, by our utmost search, "find out the Almighty unto perfection." The prophets could not do so of old; nor can the angels themselves at present, who "desire to look into these things," I Pet. i. 10, 11, 12. Only I shall endeavour to represent unto the faith of them that believe, somewhat of that which the Scripture doth plainly reveal, evidencing in what sense the Person of Christ is the sole foundation of the church.

(3.) I shall not herein respect them immediately by whom the Divine Person of Christ is denied. But it is their conviction which I shall respect herein, who, under an outward confession of the truth, do either notionally or practically, either ignorantly or designedly, endeavour to weaken the faith of the church in its adherence unto this foundation. Howbeit, neither the one sort nor the

other have any place in my thoughts in comparion of the edification of those who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

CHAP. III.

The Person of Christ the most ineffable effect of Divine Wisdom and Goodness. Thence the next Cause of all true Religion. In what sense it is so.

The Person of Christ is the most glorious and ineffable effect of Divine Wisdom, grace, and power, and therefore is the next foundation of all acceptable religion. The Divine Being itself is the first foundation and object of all religion. It all depends on taking God to be our God, which is the first of his commands. For religion and the worship performed in it, is nothing but the due respect of rational creatures unto the Divine nature, and its infinite excellencies. It is the *glorifying God as God*, the way of expressing that respect being regulated by the revelation of his will. Yet the Divine Essence is not in itself the next and immediate cause of religious worship. But it is the *manifestation* of this Being and its excellencies wherewith the mind of rational creatures is immediately affected, and whereby it is obliged to give that worship which is due unto that Being, and necessary from our relation thereunto. Upon this manifestation, all creatures capable by an intelligent nature of a sense thereof, are indispensably obliged to give all honour and glory to God.

The way whereby alone this manifestation may be made is by outward acts and effects. For in itself the Divine nature is hid from all living, and dwelleth in that light whereunto no creature can approach. This therefore God first made by the creation of all things out of nothing. The creation of man himself, with the princi-

ples of a rational nature, a conscience attesting his subordination unto God, and of all other things declaring the glory of his wisdom, goodness, and power, was the immediate ground of all natural religion, and yet continues so to be. And the glory of it answers the means and ways of the manifestation of the Divine being, existence, excellencies, and properties. And where this manifestation is despised or neglected, there God himself is so; as the apostle discourseth at large, Rom. i. 18—22.

But of all the effects of the Divine excellencies, the constitution of the person of Christ as the foundation of the new creation, as the *mystery of godliness*, was the most ineffable and glorious. I speak not of his Divine person absolutely; but as incarnate, as he assumed our nature into personal subsistence with himself. His conception in the womb of the virgin was a miraculous operation of the Divine power. But the prevention of that nature from any subsistence of its own, by its assumption into personal union with the Son of God, in the first instance of its conception, is that which is above all miracles. A mystery it is, so far above the order of all creating or providential operations, that it wholly transcends the sphere of them that are most miraculous. Herein did God glorify all the properties of the Divine nature, acting in a way of infinite wisdom, grace, and condescension. The depths of the mystery hereof are open only unto him whose understanding is infinite. All other things were produced by an outward emanation of power from God: "He said, let there be light, and there was light." But this assumption of our nature into hypostatical union with the Son of God, this constitution of one and the same person in two natures so infinitely distinct, whereby the eternal was made in time, the infinite became finite, the immortal mortal, yet continuing eternal, infinite, immortal, is that singular expression of Divine wisdom, goodness, and power, wherein God will be admired and glorified unto all eternity. Herein was that change introduced into the whole first creation, whereby

the blessed angels were exalted, satan and his works ruined, mankind recovered from a dismal apostasy, all things made new, all things in heaven and earth reconciled and gathered under one head, and a revenue of eternal glory raised unto God, incomparably above what the first constitution of all things in the order of nature could yield unto him.

In the expression of this mystery the Scripture doth sometimes draw the veil over it, as that which we cannot look into. So in his conception of the virgin, with respect unto this union which accompanied it, it was told her, that "the power of the Highest should overshadow her," Luke i. 35. A work it was of the power of the Most High, but hid from the eyes of men in the nature of it; and therefore "that holy thing," which had no subsistence of its own, which should be born of her, should "be called the Son of God," becoming one person with him. Sometimes it expresseth the greatness of the mystery, and leaves it as an object of our admiration, 1 Tim. iii. 16, "Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh." A mystery it is, and that of those dimensions as no creature can comprehend. Sometimes it putteth things together, as that the distance of the two natures shall illustrate the glory of the one person, John i. 14, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." But what word was this? "That which was in the beginning, which was with God, which was God, by whom all things were made, and without whom was not any thing made that was made." This Word was made flesh; not by any change of his own nature; not by a transubstantiation of the Divine nature into the human; not by ceasing to be what he was, but by becoming what he was not, in taking our nature to be his own, whereby he "dwelt among us." This *glorious Word*, which is God, and described by his eternity and omnipotency in works of creation and providence, *was made flesh*, which expresseth the lowest condition of human nature; without controversy great is

this mystery of godliness. And in that state wherein he visibly appeared as made flesh, those who had eyes given them from above saw *his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father*. The eternal Word being made flesh, and manifested therein, they saw his glory, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father. What heart can conceive, what tongue can express, the least part of the glory of his Divine wisdom and grace? So also is it proposed unto us, Isaiah ix. 6, “Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be on his shoulders; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.” He is called in the first place *Wonderful*, and that deservedly, Prov. xxx. 4. That the mighty God should be a *Child born*, and the everlasting Father a *Son born unto us*, may well entitle him unto the name of *Wonderful*.

The glory of the same mystery is elsewhere testified unto. Heb. i. 1—3, “God hath spoken unto us by his Son, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, upholding all things by the word of his power, by himself purged our sins.” That he purged our sins by his death, and the oblation of himself therein unto God, is acknowledged. That this should be done by him, by whom the worlds were made, who is the essential brightness of the Divine glory, and the express image of the person of the Father therein, and who upholds, rules, sustains all things by the word of his power, whereby God purchased his church with his own blood, Acts xx. 28, is that wherein he will be admired unto eternity. See Phil. ii. 2, 6—9.

This is the glory of the Christian religion, the foundation that bears the superstructure. This is its life and soul, that wherein it differs from, and inconceivably excels whatever was in true religion before, or whatever any false religion pretended unto. Religion in its first institution, in the state of pure uncorrupted nature, was

orderly, beautiful, and glorious. Man being made in the image of God, was fit and able to glorify him as God. But whereas whatever perfection God had communicated unto our nature, he had not united it unto himself in a personal union, the fabric of it quickly fell unto the ground. Want of this foundation made it obnoxious unto ruin. God manifested herein, that no gracious relation between him and our nature could be stable and permanent, unless our nature was assumed into personal union with himself. This is the only rock and assured foundation of the relation of the church unto God, which now can never utterly fail.

There was true religion in the world after the fall, both before and after giving of the law; a religion built upon Divine revelation. And as for the outward glory of it, the administration, which it was brought into under the tabernacle and temple, was beyond what is represented in the institutions of the gospel. Yet is the Christian religion our evangelical profession, and the state of the church thereon, far more glorious, beautiful, and perfect, than that state of religion could attain. And as this is evident from hence, because God in his wisdom, grace, and love to the church, hath removed that state, and introduced this in the room thereof; so the apostle proves it in all considerable instances, in his epistle to the Hebrews, written for that purpose. There were two things before in religion: the promise, which was the life of it, and the institutions of worship under the law, which were the outward glory and beauty of it. And both these were nothing, or had nothing in them, but only as they represented what is of Christ, God manifested in the flesh. The promise was concerning him; and the institutions of worship did only represent him, and what related to him. So the apostle declares it, Col. ii. 17. Wherefore, as all the religion that was in the world after the fall was built on the promise of this work of God, in due time to be accomplished, so it is the actual performance of it which

is the foundation of the Christian religion, and which gives it the pre-eminence above all that went before it.

The faith of this mystery ennobles the mind wherein it is, transforming it into the image of God. Herein consists the excellency of faith above all other powers and acts of the soul, that it receives, assents unto, and rests in things in their own nature absolutely incomprehensible. It is *ελεγχῶν ἢ βλεπομένων*, Heb. xi. 1, "The evidence of things not seen;" that which makes evident as by demonstration, those things which are no way the object of sense, and which reason cannot comprehend. The more sublime and glorious, the more inaccessible unto sense and reason are the things which we believe, the more are we changed into the image of God in the exercise of faith upon them. Hence we find this most glorious effect of faith, the transformation of the mind into the likeness of God, no less real, evident, and eminent in many, whose rational abilities are weak in the eye of that wisdom which is of this world, than in those of the highest natural sagacity. For "God hath chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom," Jam. ii. 5. However they may be poor, and, as another apostle speaketh, "foolish, weak, base, and despised," 1 Cor. i. 27, 28, yet that faith which enables them to embrace Divine mysteries, renders them rich in the sight of God, in that it makes them like unto him.

But where this faith is, the greatness of the mysteries which it embraceth heightens its efficacy in all blessed effects upon the soul. Such is this constitution of the person of Christ, wherein all the glory of all the holy perfections of the Divine nature is manifested. So speaks the apostle, 2 Cor. iii. 18, "Beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory." This glory which we behold is the glory of the face of God in Jesus Christ, chap. iv. 6, or the glorious representation which is made

of him in the person of Christ. The glass wherein this glory is represented unto us, proposed unto our view and contemplation, is the gospel. And those who view it steadfastly are thereby "changed into the same image from glory to glory;" or are more and more renewed and transformed into the likeness of God so represented unto them.

That which shall at last perfectly effect our utmost conformity to God, and therein our eternal blessedness, is vision or sight. "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is," 1 John iii. 2. Here faith begins what sight shall perfect hereafter. But yet "we walk by faith, and not by sight," 2 Cor. v. 7. And although the life of faith and vision differ in degrees, yet have they both the same object and the same operations. The object of vision is the whole mystery of the Divine existence and will; and its operation is a perfect conformity to God, wherein our blessedness shall consist. Faith hath the same object and the same operations in its degree and measure. The great and incomprehensible mysteries of the Divine being, of the will and wisdom of God, are its proper objects, and its operation with respect unto us, is conformity unto him. And this it doth in a peculiar manner in the contemplation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; and herein we have our nearest approaches unto the life of vision, and the effects of it. For therein "beholding the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory;" which perfectly to consummate is the effect of sight in glory. The exercise of faith herein doth more raise and perfect the mind, more dispose it unto holy, heavenly affections, than any other duty whatever.

To be *nigh unto God*, and to be *like unto him*, are the same. To be always with him, and perfectly like him, according to the capacity of our nature, is to be eternally blessed. To live by faith in the contemplation of the glory of God in Christ, is that initiation into both, whereof we are capable in this world. The endeavours of some

to contemplate and report the glory of God in nature, in the works of creation and providence, in the things of the greater and lesser world, deserve their just commendation; and it is that which the Scripture in sundry places calls us unto. But for any there to abide, there to bound their designs, when they have a much more glorious object for their meditations, namely, *the glory of God in Christ*, is both to despise the wisdom of God in that revelation of himself, and to come short of that transforming efficacy of faith, whereby we are made like unto God. For hereunto alone doth it belong, and not to any knowledge of the most secret recesses of nature.

Moreover, this constitution of the person of Christ being the most admirable effect of Divine wisdom, grace, and power, is that alone which can bear the weight of the whole superstructure of the mystery of godliness; that wherein alone faith can find rest and peace. "Other foundation can no man lay save that is laid, which is Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. iii. 11. Rest and peace with God, is that which we seek after; "What shall we do to be saved?" In this inquiry the acts of the mediatory office of Christ are in the gospel first presented unto us, especially his oblation and intercession: through them is he able to *save unto the utmost* those that come to God by him. His blood alone could purge our consciences from dead works, who did offer himself unto God, through the eternal Spirit, Heb. ix. 14. And when the apostle, for our relief against the guilt of sin, calleth us unto the consideration of intercession and propitiation, he mindeth us peculiarly of his person by whom they are formed; 1 John ii. 1, 2, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins." And we may briefly consider the order of these things. 1. We suppose in this case conscience to be awakened unto a sense of sin and apostasy from God. These things are now generally looked on as of no great concernment: but when God fixeth an apprehension of his displeasure for them on the soul, if

it be before it is too late, it will cause men to look out for relief. 2. This relief is proposed in the gospel. And it is the death and mediation of Christ alone. By them peace with God must be obtained, or it will cease for ever. But. 3. When any person comes practically to know how great a thing it is for an apostate sinner to obtain the remission of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified, endless objections through the power of unbelief will arise unto his disquietment. Wherefore, 4. That which is principally suited to give him rest, peace, and satisfaction, and without which nothing else can so do, is the due consideration of this infinite effect of Divine wisdom and goodness in the constitution of the person of Christ. This, at first view, will reduce the mind unto that conclusion, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible." For what end cannot be effected hereby? What end cannot be accomplished that was designed in it? Is any thing too hard for God? Did God ever do any thing like this, or make use of any such means for any other end whatever? Against this no objection can arise. On this consideration of him, faith apprehends Christ to be as he is indeed, the power of God, and the wisdom of God unto the salvation of them that believe, and therein doth it find rest with peace.

CHAP. IV.

The Person of Christ the Foundation of all the Counsels of God.

Secondly, the person of Christ is the foundation of all the counsels of God, as to his own eternal glory in the vocation, sanctification, and salvation of the church. That which I intend is what the apostle expresseth, Eph. i. 9, 10; "Having made known the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself, that in the dispensation of the fulness of time he

might gather together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him." The mysteries of the will of God, according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in himself, are his counsels concerning his own eternal glory in the sanctification and salvation of the church here below, to be united unto that above. The absolute original hereof was in his own good pleasure. But it was all to be effected in Christ.

Thus it is said of him, with respect to his future incarnation and work of mediation, that "the Lord possessed him in the beginning of his ways, before his works of old, that he was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was," Prov. viii. 22, 23. The eternal personal existence of the Son of God, is supposed in these expressions. Without it, none of these things could be affirmed of him. But there is a regard in them, both unto his future incarnation, and the accomplishment of the counsels of God thereby. With respect thereto, "God possessed him in the beginning of his ways, and set him up from everlasting." God possessed him eternally as his essential wisdom, as he was always and is always in the bosom of the Father, in the mutual ineffable love of the Father and Son, in the bond of the Spirit. But he signally possessed him in the beginning of his ways, as his wisdom acting in the production of all his ways and works. The "beginning of God's ways before his works," are his counsels concerning them, even as our counsels are the beginning of our ways with respect unto future works. And he "set him up from everlasting," as the foundation of all the counsels of his will, in and by whom they were to be executed and accomplished.

So it is expressed, ver. 30, 31, "I was by him as one brought up with him, I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him, rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and my delights were with the sons of men." And it is added, that thus it was before "the foundation of the

world was laid, or the chiefest part of the dust of the earth was made," that is, man was created. Not only was the delight of the Father in him, but his delight was in the habitable parts of the earth, and among the sons of men, before the creation of the world. Wherefore the eternal prospect of the work he had to do for the children of men is intended herein. In and with him God laid the foundation of all his counsels concerning his love towards the children of men: and two things may be observed herein.

1. That the person of the Son was set up, or exalted herein. I was "set up, saith he, from everlasting." This cannot be spoken absolutely of the person of the Son himself; the Divine nature being not capable of being so set up. But there was a peculiar glory and honour, belonging unto the person of the Son, as designed by the Father, unto the execution of all the counsels of his will. Hence was that prayer of his upon the accomplishment of them; John xvii. 5, "And now, O Father, glorify me with thine ownself, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." To suppose that the Lord Jesus Christ prayeth in these words for such a real communication of the properties of the Divine nature unto the human, as should render it immense, omniscient, is to think that he prayed for the destruction and not the exaltation of it. For on that supposition it must necessarily lose all its own essential properties, and consequently its being. Nor doth he seem to pray only for the manifestation of his Divine nature, which was eclipsed in his exinanition or appearance in the form of a servant. There was no need to express this, by "the glory which he had with the Father before the world was;" for he had it not in any especial manner before the world was;" but equally from eternity and in every moment of time. Wherefore he had a peculiar glory of his own with the Father before the world was. And this was no other but that especial exaltation which he had when he was set up from ever-

lasting as the foundation of the counsels of God, for the salvation of the church. For the manifestation hereof he now prays ; and that the glory of his goodness, grace, and love in his peculiar undertaking of the execution of the counsels of God, might be made to appear. And this is the principal design of the gospel. It is the declaration as of the grace of God the Father, so of the love, grace, goodness, and compassion of the Son in undertaking the accomplishment of God's counsels in the salvation of the church. And hereby doth he hold up the pillars of the earth, or support this inferior creation, which otherwise, with the inhabitants of it, would by sin have been dissolved. And those by whom his eternal Divine pre-existence, antecedent unto his incarnation is denied, do what lies in them expressly to despoil him of all that glory which he had with the Father before the world was. So we have herein the whole of our design. "In the beginning of God's ways before his works of old ;" that is, in his eternal counsels with respect unto the children of men, or the sanctification and salvation of the church, the Lord possessed, enjoyed the Son as his eternal wisdom, in and with whom they were laid, in and by whom they were to be accomplished, wherein his delights were with the sons of men.

2. That there was an ineffable delight between the Father and the Son in this his setting up or exaltation. "I was," said he, "daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." It is not absolutely the mutual eternal delight of the Father and the Son, arising from the perfection of the same Divine excellencies in each person that is intended ; but respect is plainly had unto the counsels of God, concerning the salvation of mankind, by him who is his power and wisdom unto that end. In these counsels did God delight, or in the person of Christ, as his eternal wisdom in their contrivance, and as the means of their accomplishment in his future incarnation. Hence he so testifieth of him, "Behold my servant whom I uphold, my elect in whom my soul delighteth," Isa.

xlii. 1, as he also proclaims the same delight in him from heaven in the days of his flesh, Matt. iii. 17, chap. xvii. 5. He was the delight of God, as he in whom all his counsels for his own glory in the redemption and salvation of the church, were laid and founded. Isa. xlix. 3, "My servant in whom I will be glorified," that is, "by raising the tribes of Jacob, restoring the preserved of Israel, in being a light unto the Gentiles, and salvation of God unto the ends of the earth," v. 6.

God delights in the actual accomplishment of his works. He made not this world, nor any thing in it, for its own sake. Much less did he make this earth to be a theatre for men to act their lusts upon, the use which it is now put to and groans under. But he "made all things for himself," Prov. xvi. 4. He "made them for his pleasure," Rev. iv. 11, that is, not only by an act of sovereignty, but to his own delight and satisfaction. And a double testimony did he give hereunto with respect unto the works of creation. (1.) In the approbation which he gave of the whole upon its survey. "And God saw all that he had made, and behold it was good," Gen. i. 31. There was that impression of his Divine wisdom, power, and goodness upon the whole, as manifested his glory, wherein he was well pleased. For immediately thereon, all creatures capable of the apprehension of his glory, "sang forth his praise," Job xxxviii. 6, 7. (2.) In that he "rested from his works," or in them when they were finished, Gen. ii. 2. It was not a rest of weariness from the labour of his work, but a rest of complacency and delight in what he had wrought, that God entered into.

But the principal delight of God is in his eternal counsels. For all his delight in his works, is but in the effects of those Divine properties whose primitive and principal exercise was in the counsels themselves from whence they proceed. Especially is it so as to these counsels of the Father and the Son, respecting the redemption and salvation of the church, wherein they delight, and mutually rejoice in each other on their account. They are all

eternal acts of God's infinite wisdom, goodness, and love, a delight and complacency wherein is no small part of the Divine blessedness. These things are absolutely inconceivable unto us, and ineffable by us; we cannot find the Almighty out unto perfection. However certain it is from the notions we have of the Divine Being and excellencies, and from the revelation he hath made of himself, that God has an infinite delight in the eternal actings of his wisdom, goodness, and love, wherein, according to our weak and dark apprehensions of things, we may safely place no small portion of Divine blessedness.

But we must return to manifest in particular how all these counsels of God were laid in the person of Christ, to which end the things ensuing may be distinctly considered.

1. God made all things in the beginning exceeding good. The whole of his work was disposed into a perfect harmony, beauty, and order, suited unto that manifestation of his own glory which he designed therein. And as all things had their own individual existence, and operations suited unto their being, and capable of an end, a rest, or a blessedness, congruous unto their natures and operations; so in the various respects which they had to each other, they all tended unto that ultimate end, his eternal glory. For as in their beings and existence they were effects of infinite power, so were their mutual respects and ends disposed in infinite wisdom. And the eternal power and wisdom of God were glorified in them; the one in their production, the other in their disposal into their order and harmony. Man was a creature that God made, that by him he might receive the glory that he aimed at in and by the whole inanimate creation, both that below, which was for his use, and that above, which was for his contemplation. This was the end of our nature in its original constitution. Thereunto are we again restored in Christ.

2. God was pleased to permit the entrance of sin both in heaven above and in the earth beneath, whereby this whole order and harmony was disturbed. There are yet

characters of Divine power, wisdom, and goodness, remaining on the works of creation, and inseparable from their beings. But the primitive glory that was to redound unto God by them, especially as to all things here below, was from the obedience of man unto whom they were put in subjection. Their good estate depended on their subordination to him in a way of natural use, as his did on God in the way of moral obedience, Gen. i. 26—28, Psal. viii. 6—8. Man, as was said, is a creature which God made, that by him he might receive the glory that he aimed at, in and by the whole inanimate creation. This was the end of our nature in its original constitution. Thereunto are we again restored in Christ, Jam. i. 18. But the entrance of sin cast all this order into confusion, and brought the curse on all things here below. Hereby were they deprived of that estate wherein they were declared exceeding good, and cast into that of vanity under the burden whereof they groan, and will do so to the end, Gen. iii. 17, 18, Rom. viii. 20, 21.

3. God had from all eternity laid in provisions of counsels for the recovery of all things into a better estate than was lost by sin. This is the *αναψυξις*, the *αποκαταστασις παντων*, the *revivification*, the *restitution* of all things, Acts iii. 19, 21; the *ανακεφαλαιωσις*, or the *gathering* all things in heaven and earth under a new head in Christ Jesus, Ephes. i. 10. For although it may be, there is more of curiosity than of edification in a scrupulous inquiry into the method or order of God's eternal counsels, and the disposal of them into a subserviency one unto another; yet this is necessary from the infinite wisdom of God, that he is put unto no new counsels by any events in the works of creation. All things were disposed by him in those ways and methods, and that from eternity, which conduce unto, and certainly issue in that glory which is ultimately intended.

4. There were therefore eternal counsels of God, whereby he disposed all things into a new order, unto his own glory, in the sanctification and salvation of the

church. And of them two things may be considered. (1.) Their original. (2.) The design of their accomplishment.

(1.) Their first spring was in the Divine will and wisdom alone. No reason can be given of these counsels, but the will of God alone. Hence are they called or described by, the "good pleasure which he purposed in himself," Eph. i. 9. "The purpose of him who worketh all things according to the counsel of his will," ver. 11. "Who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been his counsellor, or who hath given first unto him, and it shall be recompensed to him again? For of him, and through him, and to him are all things," Rom. xi. 34—36. The incarnation of Christ, and his mediation thereon, were not the procuring cause of these eternal counsels of God; but the effects of them, as the Scripture constantly declares. But the design of their accomplishment was laid in the person of the Son alone. As he was the essential wisdom of God, all things were at first created by him. But upon a prospect of the ruin of all by sin, God would in and by him, as he was fore-ordained to be incarnate, restore all things. The whole counsel of God unto this end centred in him alone.

(2.) Thus, as all things were originally made and created by him, as he was the essential wisdom of God, so all things are renewed and recovered by him, as he is the provisional wisdom of God in and by his incarnation. Therefore are these things put together and compared unto his glory, Col. i. 15—19; "He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature. For by him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in the earth, visible and invisible; all things were created by him and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist; and he is the head of the body, the church, the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence." Two things, as the foundation of what is ascribed unto the Lord Christ in the ensuing discourse, are asserted,

ver. 15, 1. That "he is the image of the invisible God;"
 2. That he is the "first-born of every creature:" things seeming very distant in themselves, but gloriously united in his person.

1. "He is the image of the invisible God; or as it is elsewhere expressed, "He is in the form of God, his essential form, the brightness of the glory, and express image of the Father's person. And as he is the essential, the eternal image of the invisible God, his wisdom and power, the efficiency of the first creation, and its consistence being created, are ascribed unto him, ver. 16, 17, "By him were all things created that are in heaven and in earth, visible and invisible." And because of the great notions that were then in the world, especially among the Jews, of the greatness and glory of the invisible parts of the creation in heaven above, he mentions them in particular, under the most glorious titles that any could ascribe unto them; "whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers." All things were created by him and for him; the same expression that is used of God absolutely, Rom. xi. 36.

2. Again it is added, that he "is the first-born of every creature;" which principally respects the new creation, as it is declared, ver. 18, "He is the head of the body, the church, the beginning; the first-born from the dead, that in all things he might have the pre-eminence." For in him were all the counsels of God laid, for the recovery of all things unto himself, as he was to be incarnate. And the accomplishment of these counsels of God by him, the apostle describes at large in the ensuing verses. And these things are both joined in this place. As God the Father did nothing in the *first creation* but by him as his eternal wisdom, John i. 3, Heb. i. 2, Prov. viii. so he designed nothing in the *new creation* or restoration of all things, but in him as he was to be incarnate. Wherefore in his person were laid all the foundations of the counsels of God, for the sanctification and salvation of the church. Herein he is glorified, and that in a way

unspeakably exceeding all that glory which would have accrued unto him from the first creation, had all things abode in their primitive constitution.

His person therefore is the foundation of the church, the great mystery of godliness, or the religion we profess; the entire life and soul of all spiritual truth; in that all the counsels of the wisdom, grace, and goodness of God, for the redemption, vocation, sanctification, and salvation of the church, were all laid in him, and by him were all to be accomplished.

CHAP. V.

The Person of Christ the great Representative of God and his Will.

What may be known of God is his nature and existence, with the holy counsels of his will. A representation of them unto us, is the foundation of all religion, and the means of our conformity unto him. To know God, so as thereby to be made like unto him, is the chief end of man. This is done perfectly only in the person of Christ, all other means of it being subordinate thereto, and none of them of the same nature therewith. The end of the Word itself is to instruct us in the knowledge of God in Christ. That therefore which I should now demonstrate is, that “in the person and mediation of Christ, which are inseparable, there is made unto us a blessed representation of the glorious properties of the Divine nature, and of the holy counsels of God.” The first of these I shall speak unto in this chapter; the other in that which ensues, wherein we shall manifest how all Divine truths do centre in the person of Christ. And the consideration of sundry things is necessary to the explication hereof.

1. God in his own essence is absolutely incomprehensible. His nature being immense; and all his holy pro-

erties essentially infinite, no creature can perfectly comprehend them, or any of them. He must be infinite that can perfectly comprehend that which is infinite. Wherefore God is perfectly known unto himself only; but as for us, "how little a portion is heard of him?" Hence he is called the invisible God, and said to dwell in light inaccessible. The subsistence of his nature in three distinct persons, though it raises and ennobles faith in its revelation, yet it amazeth reason, which would trust to itself in the contemplation of it; whence men grow giddy who will own no other guide, and are carried out of the way of truth. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him," John i. 18, 1 Tim. vi. 16.

2. Therefore we can have no direct intuitive notions of the divine essence or its properties. "Such knowledge is too wonderful for us." Whatever is pleaded for an intellectual vision of the essence of God in the light of glory, yet none pretend unto a possibility of an immediate full comprehension of it. But in our present state God is to us as he was unto Moses, under all the external manifestations of his glory, *in thick darkness*, Exod. xx. 21. All the rational conceptions of the minds of men are swallowed up and lost, when they would exercise themselves directly on that which is absolutely immense, eternal, infinite.

This is declared in the answer given unto that request of Moses; "I beseech thee shew me thy glory," Exod. xxxiii. 18. Moses had heard a voice speaking unto him, but he that spake was in thick darkness, he saw him not. Glorious evidences he gave of his majestic presence, but no appearance was made of his essence or person. Hereon Moses desired, for the full satisfaction of his soul, (as the nearer any one is unto God, the more earnest will be his desire after the full fruition of him,) that he might have a sight of his glory, not of that created glory in the tokens of his presence and power which he had beheld, but of the uncreated glory of his essence and being.

Through a transport of love to God, he would have been in heaven whilst he was upon earth ; yea, desired more than heaven itself will afford, if he would have seen the essence of God with his bodily eyes. In answer hereto God tells him, “ that he could not see his face and live ; for none can have either bodily sight or direct intuition of the Divine Being. But this I will do, saith God, “ I will make my glory pass before thee, and thou shalt see my back parts,” Exod. xxxiii. 18—23, &c. This is all that God would grant, namely, such external representations of himself in the proclamation of his name, and created appearances of his glory, as we have of a man whose back parts only we behold as he passeth by us. But as to the being of God, and his subsistence in the trinity of persons, we have no direct intuition into them, much less comprehension of them.

3. It is evident, therefore, that our conceptions of God, and of the glorious properties of his nature, are both generated in us, and regulated by reflections of his glory on other things, and representations of his Divine excellencies in the effects of them. So the invisible things of God, even his eternal power and Godhead, are clearly seen, being manifested and understood by the things that are made,” Rom. i. 20. Yet must it be granted, that no mere creature, not the angels above, are able to receive upon them such characters of the Divine excellencies, as to be a complete satisfactory representation of the being and properties of God unto us. They are all finite and limited, and so cannot properly represent that which is infinite and immense. And this is the true reason why all worship or religious adoration of them is idolatry. Yet are there such effects of God’s glory in them, such impressions of Divine excellencies upon them, as we cannot comprehend nor search out unto perfection. How little do we conceive of the nature, glory, and power of angels ? So remote are we from an immediate comprehension of the uncreated glory of God, that we cannot fully apprehend the reflection of it on creatures in them-

selves finite and limited. Hence they thought of old, when they had seen an angel, that so much of the Divine perfections had been manifested unto them that thereon they must die, Judg. xiii. 21, 22. Howbeit they come infinitely short of making any complete representation of God, nor is it otherwise with any creature whatever.

4. Mankind seem to have always had a common apprehension, that there was need of a nearer and more full representation of God unto them than was made in any of the works of creation or providence. The heavens indeed declared his glory, and the firmament always shewed his handy-work. The invisible things of his eternal power and Godhead were continually made known by the things that were made. But men generally miscarried in the contemplation of them, as the apostle declares, Rom. i. For still they were influenced by a common presumption that there must be a nearer and more evident manifestation of God; that made by the works of creation and providence being not sufficient to guide them unto him. But in the pursuit hereof, they utterly ruined themselves. They would do what God had not done. By common consent they framed representations of God unto themselves; and were so besotted therein, that they utterly lost the benefit which they might have received by the manifestation of him in the works of the creation, and took up with most foolish imaginations. For whereas they might have learned from thence the being of God, his infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, namely, in the impressions and characters of them on the things that were made; in their own representations of him, they changed "the glory of the invisible God into an image made like unto corruptible man, and to birds and four-footed beasts, and creeping things," Rom. i. 23. Wherefore this common presumption that there was no way to attain a due sense of the Divine Being, but by some representation of it, though true in itself, yet by the craft of satan, became the occasion of all idolatry. Hence were all those appearances of their

gods, which satan deluded the Gentiles by; and hence were all the ways which they devised to bring God into human nature, or the likeness of it. \ Wherefore in all the revelations that ever God made of himself, his mind, and will, he always laid this practice of making representations of him under the most severe prohibition.

Wherefore it is granted that God hath placed many characters of his Divine excellencies upon his works of creation and providence; but none of these things ever did or could give such a representation of him, as wherein the souls of men might fully acquiesce, or obtain such conceptions of him as might enable them to worship him in a due manner. Wherefore,

5. A mere external doctrinal revelation of the Divine nature and properties, without any real representation of them, was not sufficient to the end of God in the manifestation of himself. This is done in the Scripture; but the whole Scripture proceeds on this supposition, that there is a real representation of the Divine nature unto us, which it declares and describes. And as there was such a notion on the minds of all men, that some representation of God, wherein he might be near unto them, was necessary, which arose from the consideration of the infinite distance between the Divine nature and their own; so, as to the event, God himself hath declared that in his own way such a manifestation was needful to that end of the manifestation of himself, which he designed. For,

6. All this is done in the person of Christ. He is the complete image and perfect representation of the Divine being and excellencies. I do not speak of it absolutely, but as God proposeth himself as the object of our faith, trust, and obedience. It is God, as the Father, who is so peculiarly represented in him and by him; as he says, "He that hath seen the Son, hath seen the Father also," John xiv. 9.

Unto such a *representation* two things are required. (1.) That all the properties of the Divine nature, the

knowledge whereof is necessary unto our present obedience and future blessedness, be expressed in it, and manifested unto us. (2.) That there be therein the *nearest approach* of the Divine nature made unto us whereof it is capable, and which we can receive. And both these are found in the person of Christ. In his person we consider both the constitution of it in the union of his natures, and the respect of it unto his work of mediation, which was the end of that constitution. And, (1.) Therein is there a blessed *representation* made unto us of all the holy properties of God; of his wisdom, his power, his goodness, grace, and love; his righteousness, truth, and holiness, his mercy and patience. As this is affirmed concerning them all in general, or the glory of God in them, which is seen and known only in the face of Christ; so it were easy to manifest the same concerning every one of them in particular. (2.) There is therein the most incomprehensible approach of the Divine nature made unto ours; such as all the imaginations of men did ever infinitely fall short of. In the assumption of our nature into personal union with himself, with the union which believers obtain with him thereon, being "one in the Father and the Son, as the Father is in the Son, and the Son in the Father," John xvii. 20, 21; there is the nearest approach of the Divine Being unto us, that the nature of things is capable of.

Col. i. 15, "He is the image of the invisible God." It was necessary that this invisible God should be so represented unto us by some image of him, that we might know him, and that therein he might be worshipped according to his own will. But this must be of his own contrivance, an effect of his own infinite wisdom. Hence, as he absolutely rejecteth all images and representations of him of men's devising, and declares that the honour that any should think would thereby redound unto him, was not given unto him, but unto the devil; so that which he hath provided himself, unto his own holy ends and purposes, is every way approved of him. For he

will have all men "honour the Son, even as they honour the Father," and so, as that "he who honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father," John v. 23. This image, therefore, is the person of Christ; "He is the image of the invisible God," John i. 1; "The Word was with God, and the Word was God." The Word was God, in the unity of the Divine essence; and the Word was with God in its distinct personal subsistence; the Word, that is, the person of the Son, as distinct from the Father. And in this respect he is the essential image of the Father, as he is called in this place, and that because he partakes of all the same Divine properties with the Father. In his incarnation the Son was made the representative image of God unto us, as he was in his person the essential image of the Father by eternal generation. The invisible God, whose nature and Divine excellencies our understandings can make no approach unto, doth in him represent, exhibit, or make present unto our faith and spiritual sense, both himself and all the glorious excellencies of his nature.

Wherefore our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, may be considered three ways: 1. Merely with respect unto his Divine nature. This is one and the same with that of the Father. In this respect the one is not the image of the other, for both are the same. 2. With respect unto his Divine person as the Son of the Father; the only begotten, eternal Son of God. Thus he receives as his personality, so all Divine excellencies from the Father; so he is the essential image of the Father's person. 3. As he took our nature upon him, in order to the work of his mediation; so he is the only representative image of God unto us; in whom alone we see, know, and learn all the Divine excellencies, so as to live unto God, and be directed to the enjoyment of him. All this himself instructs us in.

He reflects on the Pharisees as an effect of their blindness and ignorance, that they "had neither heard the voice of God at any time, nor seen his shape," John v. 37.

And in opposition hereunto, he tells his disciples, that "they had known the Father, and seen him," John xiv. 7. And the reason he gives thereof is, because "they that knew him knew the Father also." And when one of his disciples, not yet sufficiently instructed in this mystery, replied, "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us," ver. 9; his answer was, "Have I been so long time with you, and hast thou not known me? He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father," ver. 10.

Three things are required to the justification of this assertion. (1.) That the Father and he be of the same nature, have the same essence and being. For otherwise it would not follow that he who had "seen him had seen the Father also." This ground of it he declares in the next verse, "The Father is in me, and I am in the Father." Namely, because they were one in nature and essence. For the Divine nature being simply the same in them all, the Divine Persons are in each other by virtue of the oneness of that nature. (2.) That he be distinct from him. For otherwise there cannot be a seeing of the Father by the seeing of him. He is seen in the Son as represented by him as his image; the Word, the Son of the Father, as he was with God. The unity of nature, and the distinction of Persons, is the ground of that assertion of our Saviour, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father also." (3.) But, moreover, the Lord Christ hath a respect herein unto himself in his entire Person, as he was incarnate, and therein unto the discharge of his mediatory work. "Have I been so long time with you, and hast thou not known me?" Whilst he was with them, dwelt among them, conversed with them, he was the great Representative of the glory of God unto them. And notwithstanding this particular mistake, they did then "see his glory, the glory of the only Begotten of the Father," John i. 14. And in him was manifested the glory of the Father. "He is the image of the invisible God." In him God was, in him he dwelt, in him is he known, in him is he worshipped

according unto his own will ; in him is there a nearer approach made unto us by the Divine nature, than ever could enter into the heart of men to conceive. In the constitution of his Person of two natures, so infinitely distinct in themselves, and in the work it was designed unto, the wisdom, power, goodness, holiness, and faithfulness of God are manifested unto us. This is the one blessed image of the invisible God, wherein we may learn wherein we may contemplate and adore all his perfections.

The same truth is testified unto, Heb. i. 3, "God spake unto us in the Son, who is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." His Divine nature is here included, as that without which he could not have made a perfect representation of God unto us. For the apostle speaks of him as the Person by whom the "worlds were made," and who "upholdeth all things by the word of his power : " Yet doth he not speak of him absolutely as he was God, but also as he who "in himself purged our sins, and is sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high ;" that is, in his whole Person. Herein he is *απαυγασμα της δοξης*, the effulgency ; the splendency of Divine glory ; that wherein the Divine glory shines forth, in an evident manifestation of itself, unto us. And as a farther explication of the same mystery, it is added, that he is the character or "express image" of the Person of the Father. Such an impression of all the glorious properties of God is on him, as that thereby they become legible unto all that believe.

It may be said, that the Scripture itself is sufficient for this end of the declaration of God unto us, so that there is no need of any other representation of him ; and these things serve only to turn the minds of men from learning the will of God therein, to seek for all in the Person of Christ. But the true end of proposing these things is to draw men unto the diligent study of the Scripture, wherein alone they are revealed. And in its proper use, and unto its proper end, it is perfect, and most sufficient.

It is the Word of God; howbeit it is not the internal essential Word of God, but the external Word spoken by him. It is not, therefore, nor can be, the *image* of God, either essential or representative, but is the revelation and declaration of it to us, without which we can know nothing of it.

Christ is the image of the invisible God, the express image of the Person of the Father. And the principal end of the whole Scripture, especially of the gospel, is to declare him so to be, and how he is so. What God promised by his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son Jesus Christ, is fully declared in the gospel, Rom. i. 1—4. The gospel is the declaration of Christ as “the power of God, and the wisdom of God,” 1 Cor. i. 23, 24. Or an evident representation of God in his Person and mediation unto us, Gal. iii. 1. Wherefore three things are herein to be considered. 1. The real object of our faith in this matter. This is the Person of Christ, the Son of God incarnate, the representative image of the glory of God unto us, as in the testimonies insisted on. 2. The means of its revelation, whereby the knowledge of it is conveyed unto our minds. This is the gospel; compared unto a glass, because of the prospect which we have of the image of God therein. But without it, we can behold nothing of this image of God. 3. The internal light of the mind, in the saving illumination of the Holy Spirit enabling us by that means, and in the use of it, spiritually to behold and discern “the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

Through both these, in their several ways of operation, there proceedeth from the real object of our faith, Christ as the image of God, a transforming power, whereby the soul is changed into the “same image.” But we may yet a little farther contemplate these things, in some instances wherein the glory of God and our own duty are concerned.

1. The glory of God’s wisdom is exalted, and the pride of the imaginations of men is proportionably debased.

And in these two consists the real foundation of all religion in our souls.

2. There is a peculiar ground of the spiritual efficacy of this representation of God. The revelation that he hath made of himself, and of the glorious properties of his nature in the works of creation and providence, are in themselves clear, plain and manifest, Psal. xix. 1, 2, Rom. i. 21, 22. Those which are made in Christ are sublime and mysterious. Howbeit, the knowledge we have of him, as he is represented unto us in Christ, is far more clear, certain, steady, effectual and operative than any we can attain to in and by all other ways of revelation. The reason hereof is, not only because there is a more full and extensive revelation made of God, his counsels and his will, in Christ and the gospel, than in all the works of creation and providence; but because this revelation and representation of God is received by faith alone, and the other by reason only; and it is faith that is the principle of spiritual light and life in us. What is received thereby is operative and effectual unto all the ends of the life of God.

3 It is the highest degeneracy from the mystery of the Christian religion, for men to satisfy themselves in natural discoveries of the Divine Being and excellencies, without an acquaintance with that perfect representation of them which is made in the Person of Christ in the gospel. It is confessed, that there may be good use made of the evidence which reason gives, concerning the being and rule of God. But to rest herein, to esteem it the best and most perfect knowledge of God that we can attain, not to rise up unto the more full, perfect, and evident manifestation of himself that he hath made in Christ, is a declaration of our unbelief, and a virtual renunciation of the gospel. This is the spring of that declension unto a mere natural religion, which discovers itself in many, and usually ends in the express denial of the Divine person of Christ.

4. Because God is not *thus known*, it is that the know-

ledge of him is so barren and fruitless in the world. It were easy to produce, yea, endless to number the testimonies that might be produced out of heathen writers, given unto the being and existence of God, his authority, monarchy, and rule. Yet what were the effects of that knowledge which they had, besides that wretched idolatry wherein they were all immersed? As the apostle declares, Rom. i. it rescued them from no kind of wickedness and villany, as he there also manifests. So it is among many that are called Christians at this day. Great pretence there is unto the knowledge of God, yet did flagitious sins and wickedness scarce ever more abound among the heathens themselves. It is the knowledge of God in Christ alone that is effectual to work the soul unto a conformity unto him. Those alone who behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, are changed into the same image from glory to glory.

CHAP. VI.

Power and Efficacy communicated unto Christ for the Salvation of the Church.

It is by the exercise and discharge of the office of Christ, as the King, Priest, and Prophet of the church, that we are redeemed, sanctified, and saved. Thereby doth he immediately communicate all gospel benefits unto us, gives us an access unto God here by grace, and in glory hereafter: for he saves us as he is the Mediator between God and man. But hereon an inquiry may be made, whence it is that the acts and duties of this office of Christ should have such a power and efficacy? And this is his holy mysterious Person; from thence all power and efficacy is derived and transfused into his offices.

A truth this is of that importance, that the declaration of it is the principal design of one entire book of the Holy Scriptures, namely, the Epistle to the Hebrews. That

the glorious excellency of the Person of Christ doth enable him, in the discharge of his offices, to accomplish those ends which none other could, is the sum and substance of the doctrinal part of that discourse. Here therefore we must a little fix our meditations; and our interest calls us thereunto. For if it be so, it is evident that we can receive no good, no benefit by virtue of any office of Christ, nor any fruits of their exercise, without an actual respect of faith unto his Person. God gave of old both kings, priests, and prophets unto the church. He anointed them unto their offices, directed them in the discharge of them, was present with them in their work, and accepted of their duties. Yet by none of them, nor by all of them together, was the church supernaturally enlightened, internally ruled, or eternally saved; nor could it so be.

Two things were required unto the person of Christ, that his offices might be effectual unto the salvation of the church. And they are such as that their contrivance in the constitution of one and the same Person, no created wisdom could reach.

I. The first of these is, that he should have a nature provided for him, which originally was not his own. For in his Divine nature, singly considered, he had no such relation unto them for whom he was to discharge his offices, as was necessary to communicate the benefit of them, nor could he discharge their principal duties. God could not die, nor rise again, nor be exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour in his Divine nature. Nor was there that especial alliance between it and ours, as should give us an especial interest in what was done thereby. It was mankind in whose behalf he was to exercise these offices. He was not to bear them with respect unto the angels, and therefore took not their nature on him. But God prepared a body for him, that is, an human nature, Heb. x. 5. And this was absolutely necessary unto the discharge of his offices. For, (1.) Those acts of his offices, whereon the sanctification and salvation of the

church principally depend, could not be performed but in and by that nature. Therein alone could he yield obedience unto the law, that it "might be fulfilled in us," without which we could not stand in judgment before God. See Rom. viii. 3; x. 3, 4. Therein alone could he undergo the "curse of the law," or be "made a curse for us," that the blessing might come upon us, Gal. iii. 13, 14. It was necessary that as a priest he should have something of his own to offer unto God to make atonement for sin, Heb. viii. 3. The like may be said of his whole ministry on the earth, of all the effects of his incarnation. (2.) Herein that alliance between him and the church, which was necessary to entitle it unto the participation of the benefits of his mediation, depend. For hereby he became our Goel, the next of kin, unto whom belonged the right of redemption, and from whom alone we could claim relief in our lost condition. Wherefore, had he not been partaker of our nature, we could have received no benefit by any office he could have undertaken. This therefore was necessary unto the constitution of his Person with respect unto his offices. But,

II. There was yet more required thereto, to render his offices effectual. Not one of them could have been so, had he been no more than a man. 1. He could not have been the great and singular Prophet of the church, had he been a man only, though never so excellent and glorious, and that for these three reasons :

First: He was to be the Prophet of the whole catholic church; that is, of all the elect of God, in all ages and places, from the beginning of the world unto the end thereof. The church was never without a prophet; that is, one on whom it was incumbent to reveal unto it, and instruct it in the will of God; nor can be so unto the consummation of all things. This is Christ alone. For, (1.) From the beginning, from the giving of the first promise, the Son of God did in an especial manner undertake the care of the church, as to all the ends of the wisdom, will, and grace of God. And its instruction in

the will of God, its saving illumination and spiritual wisdom is of such importance, that without it none can be partaker of any other blessings whatever. In this instruction and illumination consists the discharge of the prophetic office of Christ. (2.) Upon the account of his susception of his office, even before his incarnation, considered as God, he is said to act in it so as to be sent of God unto his work, Mich. v. 2, "The Ruler of Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." *His goings forth* are not his *eternal generation*, which consists in one individual, eternal act of the Father. But it is the egress, the exercise of his power and care for the church; that is so expressed. These were from the beginning, the first foundation of the church, in answer to his everlasting counsels. So was he the Prophet of the church even before his incarnation, to instruct it, to communicate spiritual and saving light unto it. So he testified concerning himself to the Jews, "Before Abraham was, I am," John viii. 58. He was so before Abraham, as that the care of the church was then and always, from the beginning, on him: and he discharged this office four ways: 1. By personal appearances, in the shape of a man, as an indication of his future incarnation; and under those appearances instructing the church. So he appeared unto Abraham, to Jacob, to Moses, to Joshua. And those peculiar appearances of the person of the Son, for the instruction of believers, are a full demonstration that the care and work of it were committed unto him in a peculiar manner. 2. By the ministry of angels. Upon his undertaking to be the Mediator for the church with God, the angels were in a peculiar manner put into dependance on him, even as he became a new and immediate head unto the whole creation; and whatever instruction was thereby given unto the church in the mind and will of God, was immediately from him, as the great Prophet. 3. By sending his Holy Spirit to inspire, act, and guide the prophets by whom God would reveal himself. God spake unto them by the

“mouth of his holy prophets, from the beginning of the world,” Luke i. 70. But it was the Spirit of Christ that was in them, that spake by them, that revealed the things which concerned the salvation of the church, 1 Pet. i. 11, 12. 4. By the ministry of holy men, acted and moved by his Spirit. So he gave forth the word that was written for an everlasting rule of faith and obedience unto the church.

Thus the office and work of instructing the church were in his hands alone from the beginning, and thus were they by him discharged. This was not a work for him who was but a man. His human nature had no existence until the fulness of time, and therefore could effect nothing before. It is true we have under the gospel, many unspeakable advantages from the prophetic office of Christ, above what they enjoyed under the Old Testament. But he hath been the Prophet of the church in all ages : only he hath given out the knowledge of the mind of God in different degrees and measures ; that which was most perfect being, for many reasons, reserved unto the times of the gospel.

Secondly : The full comprehension of the mind and will of God, of the whole Divine counsel concerning the salvation of the church, could not at once reside in the mind of any mere creature. Yet was this necessary unto him who was to be the Prophet of the church ; that is, the Fountain of truth, life, and knowledge unto it. Hence is his name Wonderful, Counsellor, as he who was a participant of all the eternal counsels of God ; whereon in him, as incarnate, all the treasures of Divine wisdom and knowledge were hid, Col. ii. 3.

He says, “ that all that ever came before him were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not hear them,” John x. 8. This some of old impiously applied unto the prophets of the Old Testament ; whereas he intended it only of those false prophets, who pretended of themselves that they, some of them, were the Messiah, the great Shepherd of the sheep, whom his elect sheep would not attend unto.

But it is true that none who went before him, whether separately or jointly, had the knowledge of God, so as to declare him fully unto the church. It is the most fond and wicked imagination of the Socinians, invented to countenance their disbelief and hatred of his Divine Person, that, during the time of his flesh, "he was taken up into heaven, and there taught the doctrine of the gospel," as Mahomet feigned concerning himself and his Coran. The reason and foundation of his perfect knowledge of God, was his being the only begotten Son in the bosom of the Father; and not a fictitious rapture of his human nature. To this purpose have we his own testimony, John iii. 13; "And no man hath ascended up to heaven but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." The matter whereof he treats is the revelation of heavenly things.

Thirdly. The Spirit of God dwelling in him in all the fulness of his graces and gifts, gave him an understanding peculiar unto himself; as above that of all creatures, so beneath the essential omniscience of the Divine nature. Hence some things, as he was a man, he knew not, Mark xiii. 32. But he is the Prophet of the church in his whole entire Person, and revealed the counsel of God, as he was in heaven in the bosom of the Father. "Cursed be he that trusteth in man, that maketh flesh his arm," as to the revelations of the counsels of God. Here lies the safety, the glory of the church. How deplorable is the darkness of mankind in their ignorance of God and heavenly things! In what ways of vanity and misery have the generality of them wandered ever since our first apostasy from God? Nothing but hell is more full of horror and confusion than the minds and ways of men destitute of heavenly light. How miserably did those among them, who boasted themselves to be wise, wax foolish in their imaginations? He who is infinitely good and compassionate, did, from the beginning, give some relief in this woful state, by such parcels of Divine revelations as he thought meet to communicate unto them by

the prophets of old, such as they were able to receive. By them he set up "a light shining in a dark place," as the light of stars in the night. But it was the rising of the Sun of Righteousness alone that dispelled the darkness that was on the earth, the thick darkness that was on the people, bringing life and immortality to light by the gospel. The Divine person of the Son of God, in whom were all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, who is in the bosom of the Father, hath now made known all things unto the church, giving us the perfect idea and certainty of all sacred truth, and the full assurance of things invisible and eternal.

2. The same also is the state of things with respect unto his kingly office and power. No one act of his kingly office can be aright conceived or acknowledged, without a respect had unto his Divine Person. I shall instance only in two things in general.

(1.) The extent of his power and rule gives evidence hereunto. It is over the whole creation of God. "All power is given him in heaven and earth," Matt. xxviii. 18: "All things are put under his feet, he only excepted who put all things under him," 1 Cor. xv. 27. And he is made "head over all things unto the church," Ephes. i. 22. Not only those who are above the rule of external law, as the holy angels; and those who have cast off all such rule, as the devils themselves; but all things that in their own nature are not capable of obedience to an external law or rule, as the whole inanimate creation,—heaven, and earth, and the sea, with all things in them and under them," Phil. ii. 10, with the dead bodies of men, which he shall raise at the last day. For this power over the whole creation is not only a moral right to govern it; but it is also accompanied with virtue, force, or almighty power to act, order, and dispose of it at his pleasure. So is it described by the apostle, from the Psalmist, Heb. i. 10—12, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou

remainest, and they shall all wax old as doth a garment : and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed ; but thou art the same, and thy years fail not.” That power is required unto his kingly office whereby he created all things in the beginning, and shall change them all as a man folds up a vesture, in the end. Omnipotency, accompanied with cternity and immutability, are required hereunto. It is a vain imagination to suppose that this power can reside in a mere creature, however glorified and exalted. All essential, Divine properties are concurrent with it ; and inseparable from it. And where the properties of God are, there is the nature of God ; for his being and his properties are one and the same.

Again : to suppose that the Lord Christ, as the King and Head of the church, hath not an infinite, divine power, whereby he is able always to relieve, succour, save, and deliver it, if it were to be done by the alteration of the whole, or any part of God’s creation, so as that the fire should not burn, nor the water overwhelm them, nor men be able to retain their thoughts or ability one moment to afflict them ; and that their distresses are not always effects of his wisdom, and never from the defect of his power, is utterly to overthrow all faith, hope, and the whole of religion itself. Ascribe therefore unto the Lord Christ in the exercise of his kingly office, only a moral power, operative by rules and laws, with the help of external instruments ; deprive him of omnipresence and omniscience, with infinite Divine power to be acted at his pleasure in and over the whole creation, and you rase the foundation of all Christian faith and hope to the ground. There are no true believers who will part with their faith herein for the whole world ; namely, that the Lord Jesus Christ is able by his Divine power and presence immediately to aid, relieve, and deliver them in every moment of their surprisals, fears, and dangers, in every trial and duty they may be called unto, in every difficulty they have to conflict withal. And to

expect these things any otherwise but by virtue of his Divine nature, is wofully to deceive our own souls. For this is the work of God.

(2.) The rule of Christ, as King of the church, is internal and spiritual over the minds, souls, and consciences of all that believe. There is no one gracious acting of soul in any one believer at any time in the whole world, either in opposition to sin, or the performance of duty, but it is under the guidance of the kingly power of Christ. I suppose we have herein not only the common faith, but also the common experience of them all. They know that in their spiritual life it is he that liveth in them as the efficient cause of all its acts, and that without him they can do nothing. Unto him they have respect in every the most secret actings of grace, not only performed as *under his eye, but by his assistance*. On every occasion do they immediately, in the internal actings of their minds, look unto him, as one more present with their souls than they are with themselves; and have no thought of the least distance of his knowledge or power. And two things are required hereto: First, That he be *καρδιωσιωνης*, that he have an actual inspection into all the dispositions, thoughts, and internal actings of all believers in the whole world, every moment. Without this, he cannot bear that rule in their souls which we have described, nor can they act faith in him, as their occasions require. No man can live by faith on Christ, no man can depend on his sovereign power, who is not persuaded, that all the frames of his heart, all the secret groans and sighs of his spirit, all the inward labourings of his soul against sin, and after conformity to himself, are continually under his eye. Wherefore it is said that "all things are naked and open unto his eyes," Heb. iv. 13. And he says of himself, that he searcheth, that is, knoweth the hearts and reins of men, Rev. ii. 23. And if these things are not the peculiar properties of the Divine nature, I know nothing that may be so esteemed.

2. Secondly, There is required hereto an influence of

power into all the internal actings of the souls of believers ; an intimate efficacious operation with them in every duty, and under every temptation. These all of them expect and receive from him, as the King and Head of the church. This also is an effect of Divine and infinite power. And to deny these things unto the Lord Christ, is to rase the foundation of the Christian religion. Neither faith in him, nor love unto him, nor dependance on him, nor obedience unto his authority, can be preserved one moment, without a persuasion of his immediate inspection into the hearts, minds, and thoughts of all men, with a real influence into all the actings of the life of God in all them that believe. And the want of the faith hereof is that which hath disjoined the minds of many from adherence unto him ; and hath produced a lifeless carcass of the Christian religion, instead of the saving power thereof.

3. The same may be said concerning his sacerdotal office, and all the acts of it. It was in and by the human nature that he offered himself a sacrifice for us. He had somewhat of his own to offer, Heb. viii. 3. And to that end "a body was prepared for him," chap. x. 5. But it was not the work of a man by one offering, and that of himself, to expiate the sins of the whole church, and for ever to perfect them that are sanctified.

This is the sum of what we plead for. We can have no due consideration of the offices of Christ, can receive no benefit by them, nor perform any act of duty with respect unto them, or any of them, unless faith in his Divine person be actually exercised as the foundation of the whole. For that is it whence all their glory, power, and efficacy are derived. Whatever therefore we do with respect unto his rule, whatever we receive by the communication of his Spirit, whatever we learn from his word by the teaching of his Spirit, whatever benefit we expect and receive by his sacrifice and intercession on our behalf, our faith in them all, and concerning them all, is terminated on his Divine person. The church is

saved by his offices, because they are his. This is the substance of the testimony given concerning him, by God, even the Father, 1 John v. 10, 11, "This is the witness that God hath testified concerning his Son, that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." In him it was originally, and from him do we receive it in the discharge of his office; for this life is in the Son of God.

Hence it is that all those, by whom the Divine person of Christ is denied, are forced to give such a description of his offices, that it is utterly impossible the church should be saved by the discharge of them.

CHAP. VII.

Honour due to the Person of Christ; the Nature and Causes of it.

MANY other considerations, relating to the glory and honour of the person of Christ, may be taken from all the fundamental principles of religion. And our duty it is in them all, "to consider the Apostle and High-Priest of our profession, the Author and Finisher of our faith." I shall not insist on more, but proceed unto those principles which are immediately directive of our duty towards him; without diligent attendance whereunto we do but in vain bear the name of Christians. And the substance of what is designed may be included in the following assertion.

The glory, life, and power of the Christian religion, as seated in the souls of men, with all the acts and duties which properly belong thereto, and all the benefits we receive by it, with the whole of the honour and glory that arise to God thereby, have all of them their nature and reason, from their relation unto the person of Christ.

The respect which we have in all the acts of religion unto the person of Christ may be reduced unto these

four heads: 1. Honour. 2. Obedience. 3. Conformity. 4. The use we make of him, for attaining all graces and glory. And hereunto the whole of our religion, as it is Christian, may be reduced.

First, The person of Christ is the object of Divine honour and worship; and that upon the account of his Divine nature. It implies a contradiction, that any creature should, upon any account, be the proper object of Divine worship; unless the Divine essential excellencies be transfused into it, whereby it would cease to be a creature. For that worship is nothing but the ascription of Divine excellencies unto what is so worshipped. But the Lord Christ, in his whole entire person, is the Son of God incarnate, "God manifest in the flesh." His infinite condescension in the assumption of our nature, did no way divest him of his Divine essential excellencies. For a time they were shadowed thereby from the eyes of men; when he "made himself of no reputation," and took on him "the form of a servant." But he eternally and unchangeably continued "in the form of God, and thought it no robbery to be equal unto him," Phil. ii. 6, 7. He can no more really cease to be God, than God can cease to be. Wherefore his being clothed with our nature, derogates nothing from the true reason of Divine worship due unto him, but adds an effectual motive unto it. He is therefore the immediate object of all duties of religion, internal and external. And in the dispensation of God towards us, none of them can be performed in a due manner without a respect unto him.

This then in the first place is to be confirmed; namely, that all Divine honour is due unto the Son of God incarnate, that is, the person of Christ, John v. 23. It is the will of the Father, "That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father: he that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father that sent him." Some considerations on this Divine testimony will confirm our position. It is of the Son incarnate that the words are spoken; as all judgment was committed unto him by the Father, as he was sent by him, ver. 22; that is, of the whole person of

Christ in the exercise of his mediatory office. And with respect hereunto it is, that the mind of God is peculiarly revealed. The way whereby God manifesteth his will, that all men should thus *honour the Son*, as they honour the Father, is by committing all power, authority, and judgment unto him; ver. 20—22, “For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doth; and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.” Not that these things are the formal reason of the Divine honour which is to be given him; but they are reasons of it, in that they are evidences of his being the Son of God.

He is therefore to be honoured by us, according to the will of God, *καθως, in like manner as*, we honour the Father. 1. With the same honour; that is, Divine, sacred, religious, and supreme. To honour the Father with other honour is to dishonour him. When men design to give honour to God which is not truly Divine, it is idolatry. For this honour in truth is nothing but the ascription of all Divine excellencies unto him. Whereon when men ascribe unto him that which is not so, they fall into idolatry by the worship of their own imaginations. So was it with the Israelites when they thought to have given glory to God, by making a *golden calf*, whereon they proclaimed a feast unto Jehovah, Exod. xxxii. 5. And it so was with the heathens in all their images of God, and the glory which they designed to give him thereby, as the apostle declares, Rom. i. 23—25. This is one kind of idolatry, as the other is, the ascribing unto creatures any thing that is peculiar to God, any Divine excellency. And we do not honour God the Father with one kind of honour, and the Son with another. That were not to honour the Son, *καθως*, as we honour the Father, but in a way infinitely different from it.

2. In the same manner, with the same faith, love, reverence, and obedience in all things, in all acts and duties of religion whatever. This distinct honour is to be given unto the person of the Son by virtue of this command of the Father, though originally on the account of his oneness in nature with the Father. And our duty herein is pressed with the highest enforcement; "He that honours not the Son, honours not the Father. He who denieth the Son (herein) hath not the Father; but he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also," 1 John ii. 23. If we are wanting herein, whatever we pretend, we do not worship nor honour God at all. And there is reason to give this caution; reason to fear that this fundamental principle of our religion is, if not disbelieved, yet not much attended to in the world. Many who profess a respect unto the Divine Being, have little regard unto the person of the Son in all their religion. For although they may admit of a customary interposition of his name in their religious worship; yet the same distinct veneration of him as of the Father, they seem not to understand, or to be exercised in. Howbeit, all the acceptance of our persons and duties with God depends on this one condition, "that we honour the Son even as we honour the Father." To honour the Son as we ought to honour the Father, is that which makes us Christians, and which nothing else will.

This honour of the person of Christ may be considered in the duties of it, and in the principle, life, or spring of these duties. The duties whereby we ascribe and express Divine honour unto Christ, may be reduced unto two heads. Adoration, and invocation.

(1.) Adoration is "the prostration of soul before him as God, in the acknowledgment of his Divine excellencies and the ascription of them unto him." It is expressed in the Old Testament by השתחוה, that is, *humbly to bow down* ourselves or our souls unto God. The LXX render it constantly by προσκυνεω; which is the word used in the New Testament unto the same purpose. The

Latins expressed it usually by *adoro*. And those words, though of other derivations, are of the same signification with that in the Hebrew. And they do all of them include some external sign of inward reverence, or a readiness thereunto. And these external signs are of two sorts, viz. such as are natural and occasional; and such as are solemn or instituted.

Of the first sort are the lifting up of our eyes and hands towards heaven upon our thoughts of him; and sometimes the casting down of our whole persons before him, which deep thoughts with reverence will produce. Outward instituted signs of this internal adoration are all the ordinances of evangelical worship. In and by them do we solemnly profess and express our inward veneration of him. This adoration is due continually to the person of Christ, and that as in the exercise of the office of mediation. It is due unto him from the whole rational creation of God. So is it given in charge unto the angels above. For when he brought the first-begotten into the world, he said, *προσκυνησατωσαν αυτω παντες αγγελοι Θεου*, (the same as *לו כל אלהים השתחוה*, *worship him all ye gods*, Psalm xcvi. 7;) *let all the angels of God worship him*, adore him, bow down before him, Heb. i. 6. The design of the whole chapter being to express the Divine honour that is due unto the person of Christ, with the grounds thereof. This is the command given also unto the church, "He is thy Lord, and worship thou him," Psalm xlv. 11. A glorious representation hereof, whether in the church above, or in that militant here on earth, is given us, Rev. v. 6—14, "And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. And when he had taken the book, the four living creatures and four and twenty elders fell down before

the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. And hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures, and the elders, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands. Saying, with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying, Blessing, honour, glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever! And the four living creatures said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever." The especial object of Divine adoration, the motives to it, and the nature of it, or what it consisteth in, are here declared.

First, The object of it is Christ, distinctly from the Father, and jointly with him. And he is proposed, both as having fulfilled the work of his mediation in his incarnation and oblation; as a Lamb slain: and in his glorious exaltation in the midst of the throne of God. The principal thing that the heathen of old observed concerning the Christian religion was, that in it praises were sung to Christ as unto God.

Secondly, The motives unto this adoration are the unspeakable benefits which we receive by his mediation; "Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us unto God." Hereon the same glory, the same honour is ascribed unto him as unto God the Father;

“Blessing, honour, glory, and power,” be unto him that sits on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

Thirdly, The nature of his adoration is described to consist in three things. 1. Solemn prostration. And “the four living creatures said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.” 2. In the ascription of all Divine honour and glory, as it is at large expressed, ver. 11—13. 3. In the way of expressing this adoration which is by their praises; “they sung a new song;” that is, of praise, for so are all those Psalms which have that title of a new song. And in these things, namely, solemn prostration of soul in the acknowledgment of Divine excellencies, ascriptions of glory and honour with praise, doth religious adoration consist. And they belong not unto the great holy society of them who worship above and here below, whose hearts are not always ready unto this solemn adoration of the Lamb, and who are not on all occasions exercised therein. And this adoration of Christ doth differ from the adoration of God absolutely considered, and of God as the Father, not in its nature, but merely on the account of its especial motives. The principal motive unto the adoration of God absolutely considered, is the work of creation, the manifestation of his glory therein, with all the effects of his power and goodness thereon ensuing. So it is declared, Rev. iv. 8—11, “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.” And the principal motive to the adoration of God as the Father, is that eternal love, grace, and goodness, of which he is the fountain in a peculiar manner, Eph. i. 4, 5. But the great motive unto the adoration of Christ is the work of redemption, Rev. v. 12, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.” The reason whereof is given, ver. 9, 10, “For thou wast slain, and hast

redeemed us unto God by thy blood, and hast made us unto God kings and priests." The adoration is the same, ver. 13, "Blessing, honour, glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for evermore!" But the immediate motives of it are different, as its objects are distinct. Herein no small part of the life of the Christian religion doth consist. The humbling of our souls before the Lord Christ from an apprehension of his Divine excellencies, the ascription of glory, honour, praise, with thanksgiving unto him, on the great motive of the work of redemption with the blessed effects thereof, are things wherein the life of faith is continually exercised. Nor can we have any evidence of an interest in that blessedness, which consists in the eternal assignation of all glory unto him in heaven, if we are not exercised to this worship of him on earth.

(2.) Invocation is the second general branch of Divine honour, of that honour which is due and paid unto the Son as unto the Father. This is the first exercise of Divine faith, the breath of the spiritual life. And it consisteth in two things. First, an ascription of all Divine excellencies unto him whom we invoke. This is essential unto prayer, which without it is but vain babbling. Whoever cometh unto God hereby, must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Secondly, there is in it also a representation of our wills, affections, and desires to him on whom we call, with an expectation of being heard and relieved, by virtue of his Divine excellencies. This is the proper acting of faith with respect unto ourselves; and hereby it is our duty to give honour unto the person of Christ. When he himself died in the flesh, he committed his departing soul by solemn invocation into the hands of his Father, Psal. xxxi. 5, Luke xxiii. 46, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit." And to evidence that it is the will of God that we should honour the Son as we honour the Father, even as the Son himself in his human nature, who is our example, honoured the Father; he, who first

died in the faith of the gospel, bequeathed his departing soul into the hands of Jesus Christ by solemn invocation, Acts vii. 59, They stoned Stephen, *επικαλυμενον*, solemnly “*invocating and saying*, Lord Jesus receive my spirit.” And having by faith and prayer, left his own soul safe in the hand of the Lord Jesus, he adds one petition more unto him, wherewith he died, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge,” ver. 60. Herein did he give Divine honour unto Christ in the especial invocation of his name, in the highest instances that can be conceived. In his first request, wherein he committed his departing soul into his hands, he ascribed unto him Divine omniscience, omnipresence, love, and power. And in the latter for his enemies, Divine authority and mercy to be exercised in the pardon of sin. In his example is the rule established, for the especial invocation of Christ for the effects of Divine power and mercy. Hence the apostle describeth the church, or believers, and distinguisheth it, or them, from all others, by the discharge of this duty, 1 Cor. i. 2, “With all that call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours.” To call on the name of the Lord Jesus expresseth solemn invocation in the way of religious worship. The Jews did call on the name of God. All others in their way called on the names of their gods. This is that whereby the church is distinguished from them all; “It calls on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” He requires that as we “believe on God,” that is, the Father, so we should “believe on him also,” and therein honour the Son as we honour the Father, John xiv. 1. But the apostle treating of the nature and efficacy of this invocation, affirms, that we “cannot call on him in whom we have not believed,” Rom. x. 14. Whence it follows on the contrary, that he, on whom we are bound to believe, on him it is our duty to call. So the whole Scripture is closed with a prayer of the church unto the Lord Christ, expressing their faith in him; “Even so, come Lord Jesus,” Rev. xxii. 20. There is not any one reason of prayer, not any one motive to it, nor any con-

sideration of its use or efficacy, but renders this peculiar invocation of Christ a necessary duty. Two things in general are required to render the duty of invocation lawful and useful. First, that it have a proper object: Secondly, that it have prevalent motives to it. These in concurrence are the ground of all religious worship in general, and of prayer in particular. So are they laid down as the foundation of all religion, Exod. xx. 2, 3, "I am the Lord thy God," that is the proper object of all religious worship, "which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage," which being typically representative of all Divine benefits, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, is the grand motive thereto. The want of both these in all mere creatures, saints, and angels, make the invocation of them not only useless, but idolatrous. But they both eminently concur in the person of Christ. All the perfections of the Divine nature are in him, whence he is the proper object of religious invocation. On this account, when he acted in and towards the church as the great Angel of the covenant, God instructed the people unto all religious observance of him, and obedience unto him, Exod. xxiii. 21, "Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not, for he will not pardon your transgressions, for my name is in him." Because the name of God was in him, that is, the Divine nature with sovereign authority to punish or pardon sin, therefore was all religious obedience due unto him. And no motives are wanting hereunto. All that the Lord Christ hath done for us, and all the principles of love, grace, compassion, and power, from whence what he hath so done did proceed, are of this nature. And they are accompanied with the encouragement of his relation unto us, and charge concerning us. Take away this duty, and the peculiar advantage of the Christian religion is destroyed.

Wherefore it being our duty to invoke the name of Christ in a particular manner, we may consider on what occasions, and in what seasons this peculiar invocation of

Christ is necessary for us, and most acceptable unto him.

1. Times of great distresses in conscience through temptations and desertions, are seasons requiring an application unto Christ by especial invocation. Persons in such conditions, when their souls, as the Psalmist speaks, "are overwhelmed in them," are continually solicitous about compassion and deliverance. Some relief, some refreshment they often find in compassion from them who either have been in the same condition themselves, or by Scripture-light do know the terror of the Lord. When their complaints are despised, and their troubles ascribed unto other causes than what they are really sensible of and feel within themselves, as is commonly done by physicians of no value, it is an aggravation of their distress. And they greatly value every sincere endeavour for relief, either by counsel or prayer. In this state the Lord Christ in the gospel is proposed, as he alone who is able to relieve them. In that himself hath suffered being tempted, he is touched with a feeling of men's infirmities, and knows how to have compassion on them. And he alone is able to succour and deliver them. "He is able to succour them that are tempted," Heb. ii. 18. Hereon are they drawn, constrained, encouraged to make application unto him by prayer, that he would deal with them according to his compassion and power. This is a season rendering the discharge of this duty necessary. And hereby have innumerable souls found consolation, refreshment, and deliverance.

2. Times of gracious discoveries either of the glory of Christ himself, or of his love unto us, are seasons that call for this duty. The glory of Christ in his person and offices is always the same. And the revelation that is made of it in the Scripture varieth not. But as to our perception of it, whereby our hearts are affected with it in an especial manner, there are apparent seasons of it, which no believers are unacquainted with. Sometimes such a sense of it is attained under the dispensation of the word, wherein, as Christ, on the one hand, "is set

forth evidently crucified before our eyes, so on the other, he is gloriously exalted. Sometimes it is so in prayer, in meditation, in contemplation of him. As an ability was given to the bodily sight of Stephen, to see, upon the opening of the heavens, "the glory of God, and Jesus standing at his right hand," Acts vii. 56, 57; so he opens the vail sometimes, and gives a clear affecting discovery unto the souls of believers. And in such seasons are they drawn forth unto invocation and praise. This is our duty, this will be our wisdom, upon affecting discoveries of the glory of Christ, to apply ourselves unto him by invocation or praise; and thereby will the refreshment and advantage of them abide upon our minds. So is it also as to his love. The love of Christ is always the same and equal unto the church. Howbeit there are peculiar seasons of the manifestation of it unto the souls of believers. So it is when it is witnessed unto them, or shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost. This sense of the love of Christ, and the effect of it in communion with him, by prayer and praises, is divinely set forth in the book of Canticles. The church therein is represented as the spouse of Christ, and as a faithful spouse she is always either solicitous about his love, or rejoicing in it. And when she hath attained a sense of it, she aboundeth in invocation, admiration, and praise. So doth the church of the New Testament upon an apprehension of his love, and the unspeakable fruits of it. "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen," Rev. i. 5, 6. This therefore is another season that calls for this duty.

3. Times of persecution for his name's sake, are another season rendering this peculiar invocation of Christ both comely and necessary. Two things will befall the minds of believers in such a season. First, their thoughts will be greatly exercised about him, and conversant with him. They cannot but continually think on him for whom they

suffer. For, what he is in himself, what he hath done for them, and what account of all things is to be given unto him, continually present themselves unto their minds. Wildernesses, prisons, and dungeons have been filled with thoughts of Christ and his love. And many in former and latter ages have given an account of their holy intercourse with the Lord Christ under their restraints and sufferings. Secondly, such persons have deep and fixed apprehensions of the especial concern which the Lord Christ hath in them as to their present condition; as also of his power to support them, or to work out their deliverance. They know and consider, "That in all their afflictions, he is afflicted," suffers in all their sufferings, is persecuted in all their persecutions. That in them all he is full of love, pity, and unspeakable compassion towards them; that his grace is sufficient for them, that his power shall be perfected in their weakness, to carry them through all their sufferings to his and their own glory. In these circumstances, it is impossible for them who are under the conduct of his Spirit, not to make especial applications continually unto him, for those aids of grace, for those pledges of love and mercy, for those supplies of consolation and spiritual refreshments which their condition calls for. Wherefore in this state, the invocation of Christ is the refuge of them who truly believe in him. So it was unto all the holy martyrs of old, and in latter ages. This doctrine and duty is not for them who are at ease. The afflicted, the tempted, the persecuted, the spiritually disconsolate will prize it, and be found in the practice of it. The refreshment which they find therein, is a sufficient balance against the weight of all outward calamities, enabling them to rejoice under them with "joy unspeakable and full of glory."

4. When we have a due apprehension of any grace in Christ Jesus, and withal a deep sense of our own want of it; it is a season for especial application unto him by prayer for the increase of it. Nor can there be any more effectual way to draw supplies of grace from him, to draw

water from the wells of salvation. When in an holy admiration of, and fervent love unto any grace as eminently exercised in and by him, with a sense of our own want of the same grace, we ask it of him in faith, he will not deny it. So the disciples, upon the prescription of a difficult duty unto the due performance of which a good measure of faith was required; out of a sense of the fulness of him, and their own defect in that grace, immediately pray unto him, saying, "Lord, increase our faith," Luke xvii. 5. The same is the case with respect to any temptation that may befall us, wherewith he was exercised, and over which he prevailed.

5. The time of death whether natural, or violent for his sake, is a season of the same nature. So Stephen recommended his departing soul into his hands with solemn prayer; "Lord Jesus," said he, "receive my spirit." To the same purpose have been the prayers of many of his faithful martyrs in the flames and under the sword. In the same manner doth the faith of innumerable holy souls work in the midst of their death-bed groans. And the more we have been in the exercise of faith on him in our lives, the more ready will we be in the approaches of death, to have recourse to him in a peculiar manner. And other instances of a like nature may be given unto the same purpose.

CHAP. VIII.

The Principle of assigning Divine Honour to the Person of Christ; which is Faith in Him.

The principle of assigning Divine honour to Christ in both the branches of it, is faith in him. And this hath been the foundation of all acceptable religion in the world since the entrance of sin.

1. The first promise, Gen. iii. 15, was revealed, as containing the only means of delivery from that apostasy

from God, with all the effects of it, under which our first parents and all their posterity were cast by sin. The destruction of satan and his work by a Saviour and Deliverer, was prepared and provided for in it. This is the very foundation of the faith of the church, and if it be denied, nothing of the dispensation of God towards it from the beginning can be understood. The whole doctrine and story of the Old Testament must be rejected as useless, and no foundation be left in the truth of God, for the introduction of the New.

2. It was the person of Christ, his incarnation and mediation, that were promised under the name of the seed of the woman, and the work he should do in bruising the head of the serpent, with the way whereby he should do it, in suffering, by his power. The accomplishment hereof was in God's sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, in the fulness of time, made under the law, or by his manifestation in the flesh to destroy the works of the devil. So is this promise interpreted, Gal. iii. 10, chap. iv. 4, Heb. ii. 14—16, 1 John iii. 8.

3. This promise was confirmed, and the way of deliverance declared in the institution of expiatory sacrifices. God by them declared from the beginning, that without shedding of blood there was no remission; that atonement for sin was to be made by substitution and satisfaction. With respect unto them the Lord Christ was called the Lamb of God, even as he took away the sins of the world by the sacrifice of himself, John i. 29. For we "were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot," 1 Pet. i. 19. Wherein the Holy Spirit refers unto the institution and nature of sacrifices from the beginning. And because of the representatation thereof in all the former sacrifices, is he said to be "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," Rev. xiii. 8. All expiatory sacrifices were from the beginning types and representations of the sacrifice of Christ, whereon all their use, efficacy, and benefit among men, all their acceptance

with God did depend. Remove this consideration from them, and they were as irrational a service, as unbecoming the Divine nature, as any thing that reasonable creatures could fix upon.

4. Our first parents and all their holy posterity believed this promise, as the only way of their deliverance from the curse and state of sin, and were thereon justified before God. I confess we have not infallible assurance of any who did so in particular, but those who are mentioned by name in Scripture, as Abel, Enoch, Noah, and some others. But to question it concerning others also, as of our first parents themselves, is foolish and impious.

5. The declaration of this promise before the giving of the law, with the nature and ends of it, as also the use of sacrifices whereby it was confirmed, was committed unto the ordinary ministers of our first parents and their godly posterity, and the extraordinary ministry of the prophets whom God raised up among them. For God spake of our redemption by Christ, by "the mouth of his holy prophets from the beginning of the world," Luke i. 70. No greater duty could be incumbent on them by the light of nature and the express revelation of the will of God, than that they should in their several capacities, communicate the knowledge of this promise unto all in whom they were concerned.

6. All the promises that God gave afterwards unto the church under the Old Testament, before and after giving the law, all the covenants that he entered into with particular persons, or the whole congregation of believers, were all of them declarations and confirmations of this first promise, or the way of salvation by the mediation of his Son, becoming the seed of the woman to bruise the head of the serpent, and to work out the deliverance of mankind. As most of these promises were expressly concerning him, so [all of them in the counsel of God were confirmed in him, 2 Cor. i. 20. And as there are depths in the Old Testament concerning him which we cannot fathom; and things innumerable spoken of him

which we conceive not ; so the principal design of the whole is the declaration of him and his grace.

7. Those who voluntarily through the contempt of God and Divine grace, fell off from the knowledge and faith of this promise, whether at once and by choice, or gradually through the love of sin, were in no better condition than those have been, or would be, who have so fallen off, or should so apostatise from the Christian religion.

8. From these considerations, which are all of them unquestionable principles, two things are evident. (1.) That there was no way of the justification and salvation of sinners, revealed and proposed from the foundation of the world, but only by Jesus Christ, as declared in the first promise. (2.) That there was no way for the participation of the benefits of that promise, or of his work of mediation, but by faith in him as so promised. Faith in him was therefore required from the foundation of the world ; that is, from the entrance of sin. And how this faith respected his person, hath been before declared. Now faith in him as promised for the works and ends of his mediation, and faith in him as actually exhibited, and as having accomplished his work, are essentially the same, and differ only with respect unto the economy of times which God disposed at his pleasure. Hence the efficacy of his mediation was the same unto them who then so believed, as it is now unto us. But yet it is acknowledged, that as to the clearness and fulness of the revelation of the mystery of the wisdom and grace of God in him ; as to the constitution of his person in his incarnation, and therein the determination of the individual person promised from the beginning, through the actual accomplishment of the work for which he was promised : faith in him, as the foundation of that Divine honour which it is our duty to give unto him, is far more evidently revealed and required in the gospel, or under the New Testament, than it was under the Old. The respect of faith now, unto Christ, is that which renders

it truly evangelical. To believe in him, to believe on his name, is that especial duty which is now required of us.

Wherefore the ground of the actual assignation of Divine honour to the person of Christ in both branches of it, adoration and invocation, is faith in him. So he said unto the blind man whose eyes he opened, "Believest thou on the Son of God?" John ix. 35. "And he said, Lord, I believe, and he worshipped him," ver. 38. All Divine worship, or adoration, is a fruit of faith. So also is invocation; for "how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed," Rom. x. 14. Him, in whom we believe, we ought to adore and invoke. For these are the principal ways whereby Divine faith doth exert itself. And so to adore, or invoke any, in whom we ought not to believe, is idolatry. This faith, therefore, in the person of Christ is our duty. Yea such a duty it is, that our eternal condition doth more peculiarly depend on the performance of it, than on any duty whatever. For constantly under those terms it is prescribed unto us. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him," John iii. 36. Wherefore the nature and exercise of this faith must be inquired into. For, 1. There is a faith which is exercised towards those by whom the mind and will of God is revealed. So it is said of the Israelites, "They believed the Lord and Moses," Exod. xiv. 31. That is, that he was sent of God, that it was the word and will of God which he revealed unto them. So 2 Chron. xx. 20, "Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established, believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper." It was not the persons of the prophets, but their message that was the object of the faith required. It was to believe what they said, as from God, not to believe in them, as if they were God. But it is the person of Christ which is the first and principal object of that faith wherewith we are required to believe in him; and so to do, is not only to assent to the

doctrine revealed by him, but also to place our trust and confidence in him, for mercy, relief, and protection; for righteousness, life, and salvation; for a blessed resurrection and eternal reward. This I shall, 1. manifest from some few of those multiplied testimonies wherein this is declared; and 2. proceed to declare the ground, nature, and exercise of this faith itself.

1. As to the testimonies confirming this truth, it must be observed of them all in general, that whenever faith is required towards our Lord Jesus Christ, it is still called believing in him, or on his name, according as faith in God absolutely is every where expressed. Some few may be briefly insisted on. John xiv. 1, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." The distinction made between God and him, limits the name of God unto the person of the Father. Faith is required in them both, and that distinctly; "ye believe in God, believe also in me." And it is the same faith, of the same kind, to be exercised in the same way that is required, as is plain in the words. They will not admit of a double faith, of one sort in God, and of another in Christ. Wherefore as faith Divine is fixed on, and terminated in the person of the Father, so it is likewise distinctly in and on the person of the Son; and it was to evidence his Divine nature unto them, which was the ground of their faith, that he gave this command unto his disciples. This he farther testifies, ver. 9, 10, 11. And as to the exercise of this faith, it respected the relief of their souls under troubles, fears, and disconsolations. "Let not your heart be troubled," ye believe in God, believe also in me. To believe in him, unto the relief of our souls against troubles, is not to assent merely unto the doctrine of the gospel, but also to place our trust and confidence in him for such supplies of grace, for such an exercise of his Divine power, as that whereby we may be supported and delivered. And we have herein the whole of what we plead for; Divine faith acted distinctly in, and terminated on the person of Christ, and that with respect unto supplies of grace and mercy

from him, in a way of Divine power. So he speaks unto Martha, John xi. 25—27, “He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die: believest thou this?” Whereunto she answers, “Yea, Lord, I believe that thou art Christ, the Son of God.” His person was the object of her faith, and her belief in him comprised a trust for all spiritual and eternal mercies. I shall add one more, wherein not only the thing itself, but the especial ground of it is declared, Gal. ii. 20, “The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” That faith he asserts which is the spring of our spiritual life; that life unto God which we lead in the flesh, or whilst we are in the body, not yet admitted unto sight and enjoyment. Of this faith the Son of God is both the author and the object, the latter whereof is here principally intended. And this is evident from the reason and motive of it, which are expressed. This faith I live by, am in the continual exercise of, because “he loved me, and gave himself for me.” For this is that which doth powerfully influence our hearts to fix our faith on him. And that person who so loved us, is the same in whom we believe. If his person was the seat of his own love, it is the object of our faith; and this faith is not only our duty, but our life. He that hath it not, is dead in the sight of God.

This faith in the Person of Christ, which is the foundation of all that Divine honour in sacred adoration and invocation which is assigned unto him, may be considered two ways. First, as it respects his Person absolutely: Secondly, as he is considered in the office of mediation.

First: Faith is placed absolutely and ultimately on the Person of Christ, even as on the Person of the Father. “He counts it no robbery herein to be equal with the Father.” And the reason hereof is, because the Divine nature itself is the proper and immediate object of this faith, and all the acts of it. This being one and the same

in the Person of the Father, and of the Son, as also of the Holy Spirit, two things do follow thereon. First, That each Person is equally the object of our faith, because equally participant of that nature which is the object of it. Secondly, That in acting faith on, and ascribing therewith Divine honour unto any one Person, the others are not excluded; yea, they are included therein. For by reason of the mutual in-being of the Divine Persons in the unity of the same nature, the object of all spiritual worship is undivided. Hence are those expressions of the Scriptures; "He that hath seen the Son, hath seen the Father; he that honoureth the Son, honoureth the Father, for he and the Father are one."

And to clear our present design, three things may be observed from hence, namely, That the Divine nature, with all its essential properties, is the only ground of Divine faith. As, 1. That the Lord Christ is not the absolute and ultimate object of our faith, but under this consideration, of his being partaker of the nature of God, and equal unto him. Without this, to place our faith in him would be robbery and sacrilege; as is all the pretended faith of them who believe not his Divine Person. 2. There is no derogation from the glory of the Father, nor from that of the Holy Spirit, by the especial actings of faith on the Person of Christ. For all Divine honour is given solely unto the Divine nature. And this being absolutely the same in each Person; in the honouring of one, they are all equally honoured. He that honoureth the Son, he therein honoureth the Father also. 3. Hence it appears what is that especial acting of faith on the Person of Christ which we intend, and which in the Scripture is given in charge unto us, as indispensably necessary to our salvation. It implies (1.) That his Divine nature is the proper object of this faith, on the consideration whereof alone it is fixed on him. If you ask a reason why I believe on the Son of God; if you intend what cause I have for it? I answer, It is because of what he hath done for me: so doth the apostle, Gal. ii. 20. But if you intend, What is

the warrant whereon I thus believe in him? I say, it is only this, That he "is over all God blessed for ever:" and were it not so, I could not believe in him. For to believe in any, is to expect from him that to be done for me, which none but God can do. (2.) That the entire Person of Christ, as God and man, is the immediate object of our faith herein. The Divine nature is the reason of it, but his Divine Person is the object of it. In placing our faith on him, we consider him as God and man in one and the same Person. We believe in him because he is God; but we believe in him as he is God and man in one person. And this consideration of the person of Christ, namely, as he is God and man, in our acting faith on him, is that which renders it peculiar, and limits it unto his person, because he only is so; the Father is not, nor the Holy Spirit. That faith which hath the person of God and man for its object, is peculiarly placed on Christ. (3.) The motives unto this distinct acting of faith on his person, are always to be considered as those also which render this faith peculiar. For the things which Christ hath done for us, which are the motives of our faith in him, were peculiar to him alone. Such are all the works of his mediation, with all the fruits of them, whereof we are made partakers.

Hence two things are evident. 1st. That faith which we place on the person of Christ, is equally placed on the Father and the Holy Spirit, with respect unto that nature which is the cause of it. But it is peculiarly fixed on Christ, with respect to his person as God and man, and the motives unto it, in the acts and benefits of his mediation. 2dly: All of Christ is considered and glorified in this acting of faith on him. His Divine nature as the cause of it, his entire person, God and man, as its proper object; and the benefits of his mediation as the especial motives thereunto. This faith in the person of Christ is the spring and foundation of our spiritual life. We live by the faith of the Son of God. By the actings hereof is it preserved, increased, and strengthened. "For he is

our life," Col. iii. 4. And all supplies of it are derived from him by faith in him. We receive the forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified "by the faith that is in him," Acts xxvi. 18. Hereby "do we abide in him," without which we can do nothing, John xv. 5. Hereby is our peace with God maintained. "For he is our peace," Eph. ii. 14. And in him we have peace according to his promise, John xvi. 33. All strength for the mortification of sin, for the conquest of temptations, all our growth in grace, depend on this faith in him.

Secondly: Faith is acted on Christ as Mediator between God and man. So it is expressed, 1 Pet. i. 21, "Who by him do believe in God that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God." And this faith towards Christ is not contrary to that before described, nor inconsistent with it, though it be distinct from it. To deny the person of Christ to fall under this double consideration, of a Divine Person absolutely, wherein he is "over all God blessed for ever," and as "manifested in the flesh," exercising the office of Mediator between God and man, is to renounce the gospel. And according to the variety of these respects, so are the actings of faith various; some on him absolutely on the motives of his mediation; some on him as Mediator only. And how necessary this variety is unto the life, support, and comfort of believers, they all know, in some measure, who are so. Sometimes faith considers him as on the throne; sometimes as standing at the right hand of God; sometimes as over all, God blessed for ever; sometimes as the Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. No comfortable refreshing thoughts of God, no warrantable or acceptable boldness in an approach and access to him, can any one entertain or receive, but in this exercise of faith on Christ as the Mediator between God and man. And if in the practice of religion, this faith on God through him, be not the principle whereby the whole is

animated and guided, Christianity is renounced, and the vain cloud of natural religion embraced in the room of it. Not a *verbal* mention of him, but the real intention of the heart to come unto God by him is required of us ; and in that all expectation of acceptance with God, as to our persons or duties is contained.

CHAP. IX.

Obedience unto Christ, the Nature and Causes of it.

All holy obedience, both internal and external, is that which we proposed as the second part of our religious regard unto the person of Christ. His great injunction unto his disciples is, That they keep his commandments ; without which none are so.

The law under the Old Testament, taken generally, had two parts. 1. The moral preceptive part of it. 2. The institutions of worship appointed for that season. These are jointly and distinctly called the law. 1. In respect unto the first of these, the Lord Christ gave no new law, nor was the old abrogated by him. All is included in that summary of it, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself." Nothing can be the duty of men but what is required by the love of God and our neighbour. Wherefore no additions were made unto the preceptive part of the law by our Saviour, nor counsels given by him for the performance of more than it required. In this regard the gospel is no new law, only the duties of the moral and eternal law are plainly declared in the doctrine of it, enforced in its motives, and directed as to their manner and end. Nor in this sense did the Lord Christ ever declare himself to be a new law-giver ; yea, he declares the contrary, that he came to confirm the old, Matt. v. 17. 2. The law may be considered as containing the institutions of worship, which were given in Horeb by Moses, with other statutes

and judgments. It was in this sense abolished by Christ. For the things themselves were appointed, but unto the "time of reformation." And thereon, as the supreme Lord and Law-giver of the gospel church, he gave a new law of worship, consisting in several institutions and ordinances of worship thereunto belonging. Obedience unto the Lord Christ may be considered with respect unto both these; the moral law which he confirmed, and the law of evangelical worship which he appointed.

Here observe, first: Obedience unto Christ doth not consist merely in doing the things which he requireth. So far the church under the Old Testament was obliged to yield obedience unto Moses. All obedience unto Christ proceeds from an express subjection of our souls and consciences unto him.

Secondly: No religious obedience could be due unto Christ directly, by the command of the moral law, were he not God by nature also. The foundation of all the obedience required therein is, "I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt have no others gods before me." This contains the reason of all religious obedience. And all religious obedience unto any, who is not God by nature, is idolatry.

Thirdly: There is a peculiar respect unto him in all moral obedience as Mediator. (1.) In that by the supreme authority over the church wherewith he was vested, he hath confirmed all the commands of the moral law, giving them new enforcements; whence he calls them, *his commands*. And as the church of Israel was not obliged to obedience unto the moral law absolutely considered, but as it was given unto them *peculiarly* in the hand of a mediator, that is, of Moses; no more is the evangelical church obliged by the original authority of that law, but as it is confirmed unto us in the hand of our Mediator. This renders all our moral obedience evangelical. For there is no duty of it but we are obliged to perform it in faith through Christ, on the motives of the love of God in him, of the benefits of his mediation, and

the grace we receive by him ; whatever is otherwise done by us is not acceptable unto God. They do therefore, for the most part, deceive themselves and others who talk so loudly about moral duties. If the obligation they are under to obey them, be only the original power of the moral law, or the law of our creation, and they are performed in the strength of that law, they are no way accepted of God. But if they intend the duties which the moral law requireth, proceeding from, and performed by faith in Christ, upon the grounds of the love of God in him, and grace received from him, then are they duties purely evangelical. And although the law hath never lost, nor ever can lose its original power of obliging us unto universal obedience, as we are reasonable creatures, yet is our obedience unto it as Christians, as believers, immediately influenced by its confirmation unto the evangelical church in the hand of our Mediator. For, (2.) God hath given unto the Lord Christ all power in his name to require this obedience from all that receive the gospel. Others are left under the original authority of the law, either as implanted in their natures at their first creation, as are the gentiles, or as delivered by Moses, and written in tables of stone, as it was with the Jews, Rom. ii. 12, 13, 14. But as to them that are called unto the faith of the gospel, the authority of Christ doth immediately affect their minds and consciences.

All things are yet more plain with respect unto institutions of Divine worship. The appointment of all Divine ordinances under the New Testament, was his especial province and work, as the Son and Lord over his own house. And obedience unto him, in the observance of them, is that which he gives in especial charge unto all his disciples, Matt. xxviii. 18—20. And it is nothing but a loss of that subjection of soul and conscience unto him, which is indispensably required of all believers, that hath set the minds of so many at liberty to do and observe in Divine worship what they please, without any regard unto his institutions. It is otherwise with respect unto moral

duties. For the things of the moral law have an obligation on our consciences antecedent unto the enforcement of them by the authority of Christ. But as to things of the latter sort, our consciences can no way be affected with a sense of them, but by the sole and immediate authority of Christ himself. If a sense hereof be lost in our minds, we shall not abide in the observance of his commands.

That which doth enliven and animate this obedience is love. This himself makes the foundation of all that is acceptable unto him. "If," saith he, "ye love me, keep my commandments," John xiv. 15. As he distinguisheth between love and obedience, so he asserts the former as the foundation of the latter. He accepts of no obedience unto his commands that doth not proceed from love unto his person. That is no love which is not fruitful in obedience, and that is no obedience which proceeds not from love. So he expresseth on both sides; "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and he that loveth me not, keepeth not my sayings," ver. 23, 24. In the Old Testament the love of God was the life and substance of all obedience. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, thy mind, and strength," was the sum of the law. This includes in it all obedience, and where it is genuine, will produce all the fruits of it. And where it was not, no multiplication of duties was accepted with him.

That the person of Christ is the especial object of this Divine love, which is the fire that kindles the sacrifice of our obedience unto him, is that alone which at present I design to demonstrate. But some things are to be premised to the confirmation of our assertion.

1. It is granted, that there may be a false pretence of love unto Christ. And, as this pretence is ruinous unto the souls of them in whom it is, so it oftentimes renders them prejudicial and troublesome unto others.

2. As there is a false pretence of love unto Christ, so there is, or may be, a false love unto him also. The

persons in whom it is, may in some measure be sincere, and yet their love unto Christ may not be pure, nor sincere, such as answers the principles and rules of the gospel. And, as many deceive others, so some deceive themselves in this matter. They may think that they love Christ, but indeed do not so. And this I shall manifest in some instances. (1.) That love is not sincere which proceedeth not from, which is not a fruit of faith. Those who do not first really believe on Christ can never sincerely love him. It is faith alone that worketh by love towards Christ and all his saints. If therefore any do not believe with that faith which unites them unto Christ, which purifies the heart, and is effectual in duties of obedience; whatever they may persuade themselves concerning love unto Christ, it is but a vain delusion. (2.) That love is not true which ariseth from false ideas and representations of Christ. Men may draw images in their minds of what they fancy, and then dote upon them. So some think of Christ only as a glorious person exalted in heaven, without farther apprehensions of his natures and offices. Shall we think that they love Christ, by whom his Divine nature is denied? Or those who disbelieve the reality of his human nature? Or those by whom the union of both in the same person is rejected? There cannot be true love unto a false Christ.

These things being premised, we assert, that there is in all believers a religious love unto the person of Christ, distinct from their obedience to his commands, that is, it is distinct from all other commands; but is also itself commanded and required of us.

That there is in the church such a love unto the person of Christ, the Scripture testifies both in the precepts it gives for it, and the examples of it. And all those who truly believe cannot apprehend that they understand any thing of faith, or the love of Christ, or themselves, by whom it is called in question. If therefore I should enlarge on this subject, a great part of the doctrine of the Scriptures from first to last must be represented, and a transcript of

the hearts of believers wherein this love is seated, be made. And there is no subject that I could more willingly enlarge upon. But I must at present contract myself. Two things only I shall demonstrate. 1. That the person of Christ is the object of Divine love. 2. What is the nature of that love in us; and what are the grounds of it in them that believe.

The person of Christ is the principal object of the love of God, and of the whole creation participant of his image. The reason why I thus extend the assertion will appear in the declaration of it. 1. No small part of the eternal blessedness of God consisteth in the mutual love of the Father and the Son, by the Spirit. As he is the only-begotten of the Father, he is the complete object of the whole love of the Father. The Father loves, and cannot but love his own nature and essential image in him. He is love eternally and necessarily in this love of the Son; and all other workings of love are but acts of his will, whereby somewhat of it is outwardly expressed. And all love in the creation was introduced from this fountain, to give a shadow and resemblance of it.

Again, he is the peculiar object of the love of the Father, as he is incarnate, as he hath taken on him, and hath now discharged the work of mediation, or continues in the discharge of it; that is, the person of Christ, as God-man, is the peculiar object of the Divine love of the Father. So he declares himself in the prospect of his future incarnation. "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth," Isaiah xlii. 1. And the testimony hereof he renewed from heaven afterwards, Matt. iii. 17, "Lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." And our love unto Christ being the only outward expression and representation of this love of the Father unto him, therein consists the principal part of our renovation in his image. Wherever this is wanting, whatever there may be besides, there is nothing of the image of God. He that loves not Jesus Christ, let him,

be anathema maranatha ; for he is unlike God, his carnal mind is enmity against God.

2. The clear revelation of the person of Christ, so as to render him the direct object of our love, is one of the most eminent privileges of the New Testament. And it is variously attested in precepts, promises, instances, and solemn approbations. Wherever he supposeth or requireth this love in any of his disciples, it is not only as their duty, as that which they were obliged unto by the precepts of the gospel, but as that without which no other duty whatever is accepted by him. "If," saith he, "ye love me, keep my commandments," John xiv. 15. He so requires love unto himself, as not to expect or approve of any obedience unto his commands without it. It is a great and blessed duty to "feed the sheep and lambs of Christ:" yet will not he accept of it unless it proceeds out of love. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Feed my lambs," John xxi. 15—17 Three times did he repeat the same words to him who had failed in his love towards him by denying him thrice. Without this love unto him, he requires of none to feed his sheep, nor will accept of what they pretend to do therein. It were a blessed thing, if a due apprehension hereof did always abide with them that are called unto that work.

3. Hereunto doth he annex those blessed promises which comprise the whole of our peace, safety, and consolation in this world. "He (saith he,) that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and manifest myself unto him," John xiv. 21 and 23, "My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." What heart can conceive, what tongue can express the glory of these promises, or the least part of the grace that is contained in them? Who can conceive aright of the Divine condescension, love, and graces that are expressed in them? How little a portion is it that we know of God in these things? But if we value them not, if we labour not for an experience of them, according unto our measure, we have

neither lot nor portion in the gospel. The presence and abode of God with us as a Father manifesting himself to be such unto us, in the infallible pledges and assurances of our adoption; the presence of Christ with us, revealing himself unto us with all those ineffable mercies where-with these things are accompanied, are all contained in them. And these promises are peculiarly given unto them that love the person of Christ, and in the exercise of love towards him.

CHAP. X.

The Nature, Operations and Causes of Divine Love, as it respects the Person of Christ.

THAT we may the better understand that love unto the person of Christ which we plead for, some things must be premised concerning the nature of Divine love in general. God hath endowed our nature with a faculty of fixing our love upon himself. Many can understand nothing of love, but the adherence of their minds to things visible, capable of a present natural enjoyment. For things unseen, especially such as are eternal and infinite, they suppose they have a veneration; but how they should love them, they cannot understand. And the apostle doth grant that there is a greater difficulty in loving things that cannot be seen, than in loving those which are always visibly present unto us, 1 John iv. 20. Howbeit, this Divine love hath a more fixed prevalency in the minds of men, than any other kind of love whatever. For,

1. The principal end why God endued our natures with that great and ruling affection, that hath the most eminent interest in our souls, was that it might be fixed on himself, that it might be the instrument of our adherence unto him. At our first creation, love was the very soul and quickening principle of the life of God, and on our

adherence unto him thereby, the continuance of our relation unto him, depended. The law, rule, and measure of it was, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and all thy soul." For this end did God create this affection in us. Not only our persons in their nature and being, but in all their powers and faculties, were prepared unto this end, of living unto God, and coming unto the enjoyment of him. And all their exercise on created objects was to be directed unto this end. Wherefore the placing of our love on any thing before God, or above him, is a formal expression of our apostasy from him.

2. Divine excellencies are a proper adequate object of our love. The will indeed can adhere unto nothing in love, but what the understanding apprehends. But it is not necessary that the understanding fully comprehend the whole nature of that which the will doth so adhere to. Where a discovery is made by the mind of real goodness and amiableness, the will can close with its affections. And these are apprehended as absolutely perfect in the Divine nature and holy properties of it. Whereas, therefore, not only that which is the proper object of love is in the Divine excellencies, but it is there only perfectly and absolutely, without the mixture of any thing that should give it an alloy, they are the most suitable object of our love. There is no greater discovery of the depravation of our natures, and degeneracy of our wills, than that whereas we are so prone to the love of other things, it is so hard to raise our hearts unto the love of God. Were it not for that depravation, he would always appear as the only suitable and satisfactory object of our affections.

3. The especial object of love is the Divine goodness. "How great is his goodness, how great is his beauty!" Zech. ix. 17. Nothing is amiable, or a proper object of love, but what is good, and as it is so. Hence Divine goodness, which is infinite, hath an absolutely perfect amiableness accompanying it. Because his goodness is inexpressible, his beauty is so. "How great is his good-

ness, how great is his beauty!" Hence are we called to "give thanks unto the Lord, and to rejoice in him," which are the effects of love, "because he is good," Psalm cvi. 1, cxxxvi. 1. Neither is Divine goodness the especial object of our love as absolutely considered. But we have a respect unto it, as comprehensive of all that grace and bounty, which give us the best relief in our present condition, and an eternal reward. Infinite goodness exerting itself in all that grace and bounty which are needful to our relief and blessedness, is the proper object of our love. Whereas, therefore, this is done only in Christ, there can be no true love of the Divine goodness, but in and through him alone. The goodness of God as a Creator, Preserver, and Rewarder, was a sufficient, yea, the adequate object of all love antecedently to the entrance of sin and misery. In God under those considerations might the soul of man find full satisfaction as to its present and future blessedness. But since the passing of sin, misery, and death upon us, our love can find no amiableness in any goodness, no rest in any but in that grace and mercy by Christ, which we stand in need of, for our present recovery and future reward. Nor doth God require of us that we should love him otherwise but as he is "in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." So the apostle fully declares it. "In this was manifest the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him: herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us: God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him," 1 John iv. 9—16. *God is love*, of a nature infinitely good and gracious, so as to be the only object of all Divine love. But this love can no way be known, or be so manifested unto us, that we may and ought to love him, but by his love in Christ, his sending of him, and loving us in him. Before this, without this, we do not,

we cannot love God. For "herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." This is the cause, the spring, and fountain of all our love unto him. They are but empty notions and imaginations, which some speculative persons please themselves with, about love unto the Divine goodness absolutely considered. For however infinitely amiable it may be in itself, it is not so really unto them, it is not suited unto their state, without the consideration of the communications of it in Christ.

4. These things being premised, we may consider the especial nature of this Divine love, although I acknowledge the least part of what believers experience can be expressed, at least by me. Some few things I shall mention, which may give us a shadow of it, but not the express image of the thing itself.

(1.) Desire of union and enjoyment is the first vital act of this love. The soul, upon the discovery of the excellencies of God, earnestly desires to be united unto them, to be brought near unto that enjoyment of them whereof it is capable, and wherein alone it can find rest and satisfaction. This is essential unto all love; it unites the mind unto its object, and rests not but in enjoyment. God's love unto us ariseth out of the overflowing of his own immense goodness, whereof he will communicate the fruits and effects unto us. God is love, and herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his only-begotten Son. Yet doth this love of God tend to the bringing us unto him, not that he may enjoy us, but that he may be enjoyed by us. Love in general unites the mind unto the object, the person loving unto the thing or person beloved. So it is expressed in an instance of human love, namely, that of Jonathan to David, "his soul was knit to the soul of David, and he loved him as his own soul," 1 Sam. xviii. 1. Love had so effectually united them, as that the soul of David was as his own. Hence are those expressions of this Divine love, by *cleaving unto God, following hard after him,*

thirsting, panting after him, with the like intimations of the most earnest endeavours of our nature after union and enjoyment. When the soul hath a view by faith (which nothing else can give it,) of the goodness of God as manifested in Christ, that is, of the essential excellencies of his nature as exerting themselves in him, it reacheth after him with its most earnest embraces, and is restless until it comes unto perfect fruition.

(2.) It is a love of assimilation. It contains in it a desire and intense endeavour to be like God, according to our capacity. The soul sees all goodness, and consequently all that is amiable in God, the want of all which it finds in itself. The fruition of this goodness is that which it longs for as its utmost end, and conformity to it as the means thereof. Love is the principle that actually assimilates and conforms us to God, as faith is the principle which originally disposeth thereunto. In our renovation in the image of God, the transforming power is seated in faith, but it acts by love. Love, proceeding from faith, gradually changeth the soul into the likeness of God. To labour after conformity to God by outward actions only, is to make an image of the living God out of the stock of a dead tree. It is from this vital principle that we are not forced into it as by engines, but naturally grow up into the likeness of God. For, when it is duly affected with the excellencies of God in Christ, it excites all the affections to a delight in them. And, where the soul acts constantly in the affections, it will produce assimilation unto the object of them. To love God is the only way and means to be like unto him.

(3.) It is a love of complacency, and therein of benevolence. Upon that view which we have by faith of the Divine goodness, our souls approve of all that is in God, applaud, adore, and acquiesce in it. Hence two great duties arise, and hereon do they depend. First, Joyful ascriptions of glory and honour unto God. All praise and thanksgiving, all blessing unto him, because of his excellencies and perfections, arise from our satisfactory

complacency in them. "The righteous rejoice in the Lord, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness," Psalm xcvi. 12. They are so pleased at the remembrance of God's holiness, that it causeth them to break forth in praises. Praise is nothing but an outward expression of the inward complacency of our hearts in the Divine perfections. And, Secondly, love herein acts itself by benevolence, or the constant inclination of the mind to all things, wherein the glory of God is concerned. It wills all things wherein the name of God may be sanctified, his praises made glorious, and his will done in earth as it is in heaven.

(4.) This Divine love is a love of friendship. The communion which we have with God therein is so intimate and accompanied with such spiritual boldness, as gives it that denomination. So Abraham was called the friend of God, Isaiah xli. 8, Jam. ii. 23. And because of that mutual trust which is between friends, "the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant," Psalm xxv. 14. For, as our Saviour teacheth us, servants, that is, those who are so, and no more, "know not what their Lord doth;" he rules them, commands them, or requires obedience from them. But as to his secret, his design and purpose, his counsel and love, they know nothing of it. But saith he unto his disciples, "I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you," John xv. 15. The same love of friendship is expressed by that intimate converse with, and especial residence that is between God and believers; God dwelleth in them, and they dwell in God. "If a man," saith the Lord Christ, "love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him," John xiv. 23. And, "if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come unto him, and sup with him, and he with me," Rev. iii. 20. These are not an empty sound of words, there is substance under them, there is truth in them. Those

whose hearts are duly exercised in the love of God, have experience of the refreshing approaches both of the Father and of the Son unto their souls, in the communications of their love, and pledges of their abode with them.

These things have I premised concerning the nature of Divine love, that we may the better apprehend what we understand by it in the application of it to the person of Christ. For,

1. The formal object of this love is the essential properties of the Divine nature, its infinite goodness in particular. Wherever these are, there is the object and reason of this love. But they are all of them in the person of the Son, no less than in the person of the Father. As therefore we love the Father on this account, so are we to love the Son also. But,

2. The person of Christ is to be considered as he was incarnate, and this takes nothing off from the reason of this love, but only makes an addition to the motives of it. This indeed for a season veiled the loveliness of his Divine excellencies, and so turned aside the eyes of many from him. For when he took on him "the form of a servant, and made himself of no reputation," he had, unto them who looked on him with carnal eyes, "neither form nor comeliness," that he should be desired or beloved. Howbeit the entire person of Christ, God and man, is the object of this Divine love, in all acts of it. That single effect of infinite wisdom and grace in the union of the Divine and human natures, in the Son of God, renders him the object of this love in a peculiar manner. The way whereby we may attain this peculiar love, and the motives to it, shall close these considerations. A due consideration of the person of Christ, is the proper foundation of this love. He is so proposed unto us in the Scripture, that we may believe in him, and love him. To this end is he represented as "altogether lovely," and the especial glories of his person are delineated, yea, drawn to the life in the holy records of the Old and New

Testaments. Therein, as in a glass, do we behold the glory of Christ, who is the image of the invisible God, and have our souls filled with transforming affections unto him. The whole book of Canticles is nothing but a mystical declaration of the mutual love between Christ and the church. And it is expressed by all such ways and means as may represent it intense, fervent, and exceeding all other love whatever. The mutual intercourse on this ground of love between Christ and the church, is the life and soul of the whole creation. There is more glory under the eye of God, in the sighs, groans, and mourning of poor souls filled with the love of Christ, after the enjoyment of him according to his promises, in their fervent prayers for his manifestation of himself unto them, in the unspeakable joys which they have in his gracious visits and embraces of his love, than in the thrones and diadems of all the monarchs on the earth. Nor will they themselves part with the ineffable satisfactions which they have in these things, for all that this world can do for them, or unto them. These things have not only rendered prisons and dungeons more desirable unto them than the most goodly palaces, but have made them really places of such refreshment as men seek in vain to extract out of all the comforts this world can afford. This is the foundation of our love unto Christ, namely, the revelation of him in the Scripture as altogether lovely. The discovery that is made therein of the glorious excellencies and endowments of his person, of his love, his goodness and grace, of his worth and work, is that which engageth the affections of believers to him. We do not therefore in these things "follow cunningly devised fables:" we do not indulge our own imaginations; they are not unaccountable raptures which are pretended unto; nor such an artificial concatenation of thoughts as some ignorant of these things boast they can give an account of. Our love to Christ ariseth alone from the revelation that is made of him in the Scripture, is generated, regulated, measured, and is to be judged thereby.

CHAP. XI.

Motives unto the Love of Christ.

The motives unto this love of Christ is the last thing on this head that I shall speak to. When God required of the church the first and highest act of religion, the sole foundation of all others, namely, to take him as their God; to own, believe, and trust in him alone as such, which is wholly due unto him for what he is, without any other consideration whatever; yet he thought meet to add a motive unto the performance of that duty from what he had done for them, Exod. xx. 1, 2. The sense of the first command is, that we should take him alone for our God; for he is so, and there is no other. But in the prescription of this duty to the church, he reminds them of the benefits which they had received from him, in "his bringing them out of the house of bondage." God, in his wisdom and grace, ordereth all the reasons of our duty, so that all the rational powers of our souls may be exercised therein. Wherefore he not only proposes himself unto us, nor is Christ merely proposed as the proper object of our affections, but he calls us also to consider all those things that may satisfy us that it is the most reasonable and advantageous course for us to fix our affections on him. And these considerations are taken from all that he hath done for us, with the reasons and grounds why he did it. We love him principally for what he is; but immediately for what he hath done. What he hath done for us is first proposed unto us, and is that which our souls are first affected with. For they are originally acted in all things by a sense of the want which they have, and a desire of the blessedness which they have not. This directs them to what he hath done for sinners; but that leads to the consideration of what he is in himself. And when our love is fixed on him, then all those things wherewith, from a sense of our

wants and desires, we were first affected, become motives to confirm and increase that love. This is the constant method of the Scripture ; it first proposeth unto us what the Lord Christ hath done for us, especially in his oblation and intercession, with the benefits which we receive thereby. Hereby it leads us unto his person, and presseth the consideration of all other things to engage our love to him.

The motives to the love of Christ are so great, so many, so diffused through the whole dispensation of God, that they can by no hand be fully expressed. The studying them, and improvement of them, is among the principal duties of our whole lives. What I shall offer is the reduction of them unto these two heads : 1. The acts of Christ, which is the substance of them : And, 2. The spring and fountain of those acts, which is the life of them.

1. In general, they are all the acts of his mediatory office, with all the fruits of them whereof we are made partakers. There is not any thing that he did or doth, in the discharge of his mediatory office, from his incarnation in the womb of the blessed virgin, to his present intercession in heaven, but is an effectual motive to the love of him. Whatever he did or doth towards us in the name of God, as the King and Prophet of the church, whatever he did or doth with God for us as our High-priest, it all speaks this language in the hearts of them that believe : " O love the Lord Jesus in sincerity ! " The consideration of what Christ thus did and doth for us, is inseparable from that of the benefits which we receive thereby. A due mixture of both these, of what he did for us, and what we obtain thereby, compriseth the substance of these motives, " Who loved me, and gave himself for me. Who loved us, and washed us in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God. For thou wast slain, and hast bought us unto God with thy blood. " And both these are of a transcendent nature, requiring our love to be so also. Who is able to comprehend the glory of the Son of God in the assumption of our nature,

in what he did and suffered therein? And for us, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor can it enter into the heart of man to conceive, what we receive thereby. The least benefit, and that obtained by the least expense of trouble or charge, deserveth love, and leaveth the brand of a crime where it is not so entertained. What then do the greatest deserve, and those procured by the greatest expense; even the price of the blood of the Son of God? If we have any faith concerning these things, it will produce love, as that love will obedience. Whatever we profess concerning them, it springs from tradition and opinion, and not from faith, if it engage not our souls to the love of him.

He is no Christian, who lives not much in meditation on the mediation of Christ, and the especial acts of it. Some may more abound in that work than others. Some may be more able than others to dispose their thoughts concerning them into method and order. Some may be more diligent than others in the observation of times for the solemn performance of this duty. Some may be able to rise to higher and clearer apprehensions of them than others. But as for those, the bent of whose minds doth not lie towards them, whose hearts are not, on all occasions, retreating to the remembrance of them, who embrace not all opportunities to call them over as they are able; on what grounds can they be esteemed Christians? How do they live by faith in the Son of God? Are the great things of the gospel, of the mediation of Christ, proposed unto us as those which we may think of when we have nothing else to do, that we may meditate upon, or neglect at our pleasure, as those wherein our concernment is so small, that they must give place unto all other occasions? Nay, if our minds are not filled with these things; if Christ doth not dwell plentifully in our hearts by faith; if our souls are not possessed with them, and in their whole inward frame so cast into this mould as to be led by a natural complacency unto a converse with them, we are strangers unto the life of

faith. And if we are thus conversant about these things, they will engage our hearts in the love of the person of Christ. To suppose the contrary, is indeed to deny the truth of them all, and to turn the gospel into a fable. Take one instance from among the rest; namely, his death. Hath he the heart of a Christian, who doth not solemnly think, and often meditate on the death of his Saviour, who doth not derive his life from it? Who can look into the gospel and not fix on those lines which either immediately and directly, or through some other paths of Divine grace and wisdom, lead him thereto? And can any have believing thoughts concerning the death of Christ, and not have his heart affected with ardent love to his person? Christ in the gospel "is evidently set forth, crucified before us." Can any by the eye of faith look on this bleeding, dying Redeemer, and suppose love unto his person to be nothing but the work of fancy? They know the contrary, who always bear about in the body "the dying of the Lord Jesus;" as the apostle speaks, 2 Cor. iv. 10. As his whole name, in all that he did, is an ointment poured forth, for which the virgins love him, Cant. i. 3; so this precious perfume of his death is that wherewith their hearts are ravished in a peculiar manner. Again; as there can be no faith in Christ where there is no love unto him, on the account of his mediatory acts, so where it is not, the want of it casteth persons under the highest guilt of ingratitude. The highest aggravation of the sin of angels was their ingratitude unto their Maker. For whereas they were stated in the highest excellency, pre-eminence and dignity, that he thought good to communicate unto any creatures, they were unthankful for what they had so received from undeserved goodness, and so cast themselves into everlasting ruin. But yet the sins of men in their ingratitude towards Christ, is attended with an aggravation above that of the angels. For although the angels were originally instated in that dignity, yet were they not redeemed from misery as we are. What then

will be the condition of them whose hearts are not so affected with the mediation of Christ, and fruits of it, as to engage the best of their affections to him? The gospel itself will be a savour of death unto such ungrateful wretches.

2. That which the Scripture principally insisteth on as the motive of our love to Christ, is his love unto us, which was the principle of his mediatory actings in our behalf. Love is that jewel of human nature which commands a valuation wherever it is found. Let other circumstances be what they will, whatever distances between persons may be made by them, yet real love, where it is evidenced so to be, is not despised by any such as degenerate into profligate brutality. If it can produce no outward effects advantageous to them that are beloved, yet it commands a respect, and some return in its own kind. But when this love doth also abound in effects troublesome and chargeable in them in whom it is, and highly beneficial unto them on whom it is placed, if there be any such affection left in the nature of any man, it will prevail to a reciprocal love. And all these things are found in the love of Christ to that degree, as nothing parallel can be found in the whole creation. I shall briefly speak of it under two general heads.

(1.) The sole spring of all the mediatory actings of Christ was his own mere love. It is true, he undertook this work principally with respect to the glory of God, and out of love unto him. But with respect to us, his only motive was his abundant overflowing love. And this is especially remembered in that instance wherein it carried him through the greatest difficulties, namely, in his death and the oblation of himself on our behalf, Gal. ii. 20, Ephes. v. 2, 25, 26; 1 John iii. 16, Rev. i. 5, 6. This alone inclined the Son of God to undertake the glorious work of our redemption, and carried him through the death and dread which he underwent in the accomplishment of it. Should I engage in the consideration of this love of Christ, which was the means of conveying all

the effects of Divine wisdom and grace unto the church, that glass in which God chose to represent himself and all his goodness unto believers ; that spirit of life in the wheels of all the motions of the person of Christ in the redemption of the church, unto the glory of God, his own and that of his redeemed also ; that mirror wherein the holy angels and blessed saints shall for ever contemplate the Divine excellencies ; I must now begin a discourse much larger than that which I have passed through.

(2.) This love of Christ unto the church is singular in all those qualifications which create reciprocal affections. There can be no love amongst men but will derive something from that disorder which is in their affections. But the love of Christ is absolutely free from any alloy. And it is absolutely undeserved. Nothing can be found amongst men that can represent its freedom from any desert on our part. The most candid love amongst us is when we love another for his excellency and usefulness, though we have no singular benefit of them ourselves. But not the least of these things were found in them on whom he set his love, until they were wrought in them as effects of that love which he set upon them. Men sometimes may rise to such an high degree in love, as that they will even die for another ; but then it must be on a superlative esteem which they have of his worth and merit. It may be, saith the apostle, treating of the love of Christ, and of God in him, " That for a good man even one would dare to die," Rom. v. 7. It must be for a good man ; one who is justly esteemed a publick good to mankind ; one whose benignity is ready to exercise loving-kindness on all occasions ; peradventure some would even dare to die for such a man. This is the height of what love among men can rise unto. But the Lord Jesus placed his love on us ; that love from whence he died for us, when we were sinners and ungodly ; that is, every thing which might render us unamiable and undeserving. Though we were as deformed as sin could

render us, and more deeply indebted than the whole creation could pay, yet did he fix his love upon us to free us from that condition, and to render us meet for the most intimate society with himself. Never was there love which had such effects, which cost him so dear in whom it was, and proved so advantageous unto them on whom it was placed. In the pursuit of it he underwent every thing that is evil in his own person, and we receive every thing that is good in the favour of God, and eternal blessedness. On the account of these things the apostle ascribeth a constraining power unto the love of Christ, 2 Cor. v. 14. And if it constraineth us unto any return to him, it doth so to that of love in the first place. For no suitable return can be made for love but love, at least not without it. As love cannot be purchased, "for if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned," Cant. viii. 7; so if a man would give all the world for a requital of love, without love, it would be despised. To fancy that all the love of Christ unto us consists in the precepts and promises of the gospel, and all our love unto him in the observance of his commands, without a real love in him unto our persons, like that of a husband unto a wife, Eph. v. 25, 26, or an holy affection in our hearts to his person,—is to overthrow the whole power of religion, to despoil it of its life and soul, leaving nothing but the carcass of it. This love unto Christ, and unto God in him, because of his love unto us, is the principal instance of Divine love, the touchstone of its reality and sincerity. Whatever men may boast of their affectionate endearments unto the Divine goodness, if it be not founded in a sense of this love of Christ and the love of God in him, they are but empty notions, and their deceived hearts feed upon ashes. It is in Christ alone that God is declared to be love, without an apprehension whereof none can love him. In him alone, that infinite goodness which is the peculiar object of Divine love, is truly represented unto us. And on him doth the saving communication of all the

effects of it depend. And an infinite condescension is it in the holy God so to express his "glory in the face of Jesus Christ," or to propose himself as the object of our love in and through him. For considering our weakness, as to an immediate comprehension of the infinite excellencies of the Divine nature, or to bear the rays of his resplendent glory, seeing none can "see his face and live," it is the most adorable effect of Divine wisdom and grace that we are admitted unto the contemplation of them in the person of Jesus Christ.

CHAP. XII.

Conformity to Christ, and following his Example.

The third thing proposed to declare the use of the person of Christ, is that conformity which is required of us unto him. This is the great design of all believers. Every one of them hath the idea of Christ in his mind; in the eye of faith, as it is represented unto him in the glass of the gospel. *Κατοπτριζόμενοι την δόξαν Κυρίου,* 2 Cor. iii. 18, "We behold his glory in a glass," which implants the image of it on our minds. And hereby the mind is "transformed into the same image;" made like unto Christ so represented unto us. Hence every true believer hath an habitual inclination and desire to be like Christ. And it were easy to demonstrate that where this is not, there is neither faith nor love. Faith will cast the soul into the form of the thing believed, Rom. vi. 17: and all sincere love worketh an assimilation. Wherefore, the best evidence of the life of God in any soul, of the sincerity of faith, love, and obedience, is an internal cordial endeavour, operative on all occasions, of a conformity to Jesus Christ.

There are two parts of the duty proposed. 1. The first respects the internal grace and holiness of the human

nature of Christ. 2. The other his example in duties of obedience; and both of them belong to a true disciple.

1. Internal conformity to his habitual grace and holiness, is the fundamental design of a Christian life. I shall lay down the grounds of this design, the nature of it, and the means of its pursuit. God, in the human nature of Christ, did perfectly renew that image of his which we lost in Adam, with an addition of many glorious endowments which Adam was not made partaker of. God did not renew it in his nature, as though he had ever been destitute of it, as it is with the same nature in all other persons. For he derived not his nature from Adam in the same way that we do; nor was he ever in Adam as the publick representative of our nature, as we were. But our nature in him had the image of God implanted in it, which was lost and separated from the same nature in all other instances.

2. One end of God in filling the human nature of Christ with all grace, in implanting his glorious image upon it, was, that he might in him propose an example of what he would by the same grace renew us unto. The fulness of grace was necessary to the human nature of Christ, from its union with the Son of God. For whereas therein the "fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily," it became an "holy thing," Luke i. 35. It was also necessary to him, as to his own obedience in the flesh, wherein he fulfilled all righteousness. And it was so unto the discharge of the office he undertook: "For such an High-Priest became us who was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners," Heb. vii. 26. Howbeit, the infinite wisdom of God had this farther design in it, namely, that he might be the pattern of the renovation of the image of God in us, and of the glory that doth ensue thereon. Wherefore the fulness of grace was bestowed on the human nature of Christ, and the image of God gloriously implanted thereon, that it might be the example of what the church was through him to be made partaker of. That which God intends for us, in the internal

communication of his grace, and in the use of all the ordinances of the church is, that we may come unto the "measure of the stature of the fulness which is in Christ," Ephes. iv. 13. There is a fulness of all grace in Christ. Hereunto are we to be brought, according to the measure that is designed unto every one of us.

3. This image of God in Christ is represented unto us in the gospel. Being lost from our nature, it was utterly impossible we should have any just comprehension of it. There could be no steady notion of the image of God until it was exemplified in the human nature of Christ. And thereon, without the knowledge of him, the wisest of men have taken those things to render men most like unto God which were averse unto him. But being perfectly exemplified in Christ, it is now plainly represented unto us in the gospel. Therein "with open face we behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, and are changed into the same image," 2 Cor. iii. 18. The vail being taken away from Divine revelations by the doctrine of the gospel, and from our hearts by the Lord the Spirit, we behold the image of God in Christ, with open face, which is the principal means of our being transformed into it.

4. It is therefore evident, that the life of God in us consists in conformity unto Christ; nor is the Holy Spirit as the efficient cause of it given us for any other end but to unite us to him, and make us like him. Wherefore the original gospel-duty, which animates and rectifies all others, is the design of a conformity to Christ in all the gracious principles and qualifications of his holy soul, wherein the image of God in him consisted. There was a notion even among the philosophers, that the principal endeavour of a wise man was to be like unto God. But in the improvement of it the best of them fell into foolish and proud imaginations. Howbeit the notion itself was the best relic of our natural perfections. And those who have not a design to be like unto God, are every way like the devil. Wherefore it was an infinite condescension of

the wisdom and grace of God gloriously to implant that image of his, to which we are to seek a conformity, on the human nature of Christ, and then so fully to represent and propose it unto us in the revelation of the gospel. The infinite perfections of God, considered absolutely in themselves, are accompanied with such an incomprehensible glory, that it is hard to conceive how they can be the objects of our imitation. But the representation that is made of them in Christ, as "the image of the invisible God," is so suited to the renewed faculties of our souls, that the mind can dwell on the contemplation of them, and be thereby transformed into the same image.

I shall briefly shew, (1.) What is required hereunto : and (2.) What is to be done for the attaining that end.

(1.) A spiritual light, to discern the beauty, glory, and amiableness of grace in Christ, is required hereunto. We can have no real design of conformity unto him, unless we have their eyes who "saw his glory, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," John i. 14. Nor is it enough that we seem to discern the glory of his person, unless we see a beauty and excellency in every grace that is in him. "Learn of me," saith he, "for I am meek and lowly in heart," Matt. xi. 29. If we are not able to discern an excellency in meekness and lowliness in heart, (things generally despised) how shall we sincerely endeavour after a conformity to Christ in them? The like may be said of all other his gracious qualifications. His zeal, his patience, his self-denial, his readiness for the cross, his love to his enemies, his benignity to all mankind, his faith and fervency in prayer, his love to God, his compassion towards the souls of men, his unweariedness in doing good, his purity, his universal holiness ; unless we have a spiritual light to discern the glory and amiableness of them all as they were in him, we speak in vain of any design for conformity to him. And this we have not, unless God shine into our hearts, to give us the knowledge of his glory, in the face of Jesus Christ, It is, I say, a foolish

thing to talk of the imitation of Christ, whilst we discern not that there is an excellency in the things wherein we ought to be like him.

(2.) Love unto them so discovered, is required to the same end. No soul can have a design of pursuing a conformity unto Christ, but he, who so loves the graces that were in him, as to esteem a participation of them to be the greatest advantage that can be in this world. It is the "savour of his good ointments for which the virgins love him," cleave unto him, and endeavour to be like him. He, who admires the glory of Christ as filled with these graces, as he was "fairer than the children of men," unto whom nothing is so desirable as to have the same mind that was in Christ, he is prepared to press after conformity to him. And unto such a soul the representation of all these excellencies in the person of Christ, is the great incentive, motive, and guide to all internal obedience unto God.

We are to labour for this conformity, 1. By an opposition to all sin in the root, principle, and most secret springs of it. He did no sin, neither was there any guile found in his mouth. "He was holy, harmless, undefiled." He was the Lamb of God, "without spot or blemish." Wherefore to be freed from all sin is the first general part of an endeavour for conformity to Christ. He who groaneth not in himself after it, who doth not loathe every thing of sin, and himself for it, who doth not labour after its absolute and universal extirpation, hath no sincere desire of conformity to Christ. He who endeavours to be like him, must "purify himself, even as he is pure." Thoughts of the purity of Christ, in his absolute freedom from the least tincture of sin, will not suffer a believer to be negligent at any time, for the endeavouring the utter ruin of that which makes him unlike him. And it is a blessed advantage to faith in the work of the mortification of sin, that we have such a pattern continually before us. 2. A continual growth in every grace, is the other general part of this duty. In

the exercise of his own fulness of grace, both in moral duties of obedience, and the especial duties of his office, did the glory of Christ on the earth consist. Wherefore to abound in the exercise of every grace, to grow in the root, and thrive in the fruit of them, is to be conformed to the image of the Son of God.

One or two general instances wherein he was most eminently our example, shall close this discourse.

(1.) His meekness, lowliness of mind, condescension unto all sorts of persons; his love and kindness to mankind, his readiness to do good to all, with patience and forbearance, are continually set before us in his example. I place them all under one head, as proceeding all from the same spring of Divine goodness. With respect unto them, it is required that "the same mind be in us that was in Jesus Christ," Phil. ii. 5; and that we "walk in love, as he also loved us," Ephes. v. 2. In these things was he the great representative of the Divine goodness to us. In the acting of these graces on all occasions did he manifest the nature of God from whom he came. And this was one end of his exhibition in the flesh. Sin had filled the world with a representation of the devil and his nature, in mutual hatred, strife, variance, envy, wrath, pride, fierceness, and rage against one another. The instances of a contrary frame were obscure and weak in the best of the saints of old. But in our Lord Jesus, the light of the glory of God herein first shone upon the world. In the exercise of these graces in which he most abounded, because the sins, weaknesses, and infirmities of men gave continual occasion thereto, did he represent the Divine nature, as love, as infinitely good, benign, merciful, and patient, as delighting in the exercise of these its holy properties. In them was the Lord Christ our example in an especial manner. And they in vain pretend to be his disciples, who endeavour not to order the whole course of their lives in conformity to him in these things. One Christian who is meek, humble, kind, patient, and useful unto all, that condescends to the igno-

rance, weaknesses, and infirmities of others, that passeth by provocations, injuries, contempt, with patience, and with silence, unless where the glory of God calls for a just vindication; that pitieth all sorts of men in their failings and miscarriages, who is free from jealousies and evil surmises, that loveth what is good in all men, and all men even wherein they are not good, nor do good, doth more express the virtues of Christ, than thousands can do with the most magnificent works of piety or charity where this frame is wanting. For men to pretend to follow the example of Christ, and in the mean time to be proud, wrathful, envious, bitterly zealous, calling for fire from heaven to destroy men, or fetching it themselves from hell, is to cry, Hail unto him, and to crucify him afresh.

(2.) Self-denial, readiness for the cross, with patience in sufferings, are the second sort of things which he calls all his disciples to follow his example in. It is the fundamental law of his gospel, that if any one will be his disciple, he must "deny himself, take up his cross, and follow him. Christ hath suffered for us, leaving as an example, that we should follow his steps who when he was reviled, reviled not again, when he suffered, he threatened not," 1 Pet. ii. 21—23. Hence we are called to look unto Jesus, "the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame." For we are to "consider him, who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, that we faint not," Heb. xii. 2, 3. Blessed be God for this example; for the glory of the condescension, patience, faith, and endurance of Jesus Christ in the extremity of all sorts of sufferings. This hath been the pole-star of the church in all its storms, the guide, the comfort, support, and encouragement of all those holy souls, who in their several generations, have in various degrees undergone "persecution for righteousness' sake," and yet continueth so to be unto them who are in the same condition,

The last thing proposed concerning the person of Christ, was the use of it to believers, in the whole of their relation to God and duty towards him. And the things belonging thereto may be reduced to these general heads.

1. Their sanctification, which consisteth in these four things : (1.) The mortification of sin. (2.) The renovation of our natures. (3.) Assistancess in actual obedience. (4.) In temptations and trials.

2. Their justification, with its concomitants and consequents. As, (1.) Adoption. (2.) Peace. (3.) Consolation and joy in life and death. (4.) Spiritual gifts unto the edification of themselves and others. (5.) A blessed resurrection. (6.) Eternal glory.

But this argument cannot be handled as it doth deserve without an entire discourse concerning the life of faith, which my present design will not admit of.

CHAP. XIII.

An humble Inquiry into, and Prospect of the infinite Wisdom of God, in the Constitution of the Person of Christ, and the Way of Salvation thereby.

The depths of Divine wisdom in this glorious work are hid from the eyes of all living. "God alone understandeth the way thereof; and he knoweth the place thereof." Yet is it so glorious in its effects, that "destruction and death say, We have heard the fame of it with our ears." The fame and report of this Divine wisdom reach even unto hell. Those who eternally perish shall hear a fame of this wisdom in the glorious effects of it towards the blessed souls above. These depths we may admire and adore, but we cannot comprehend: "For who hath known the mind of the Lord herein, or with whom took he counsel?" This alone is left unto us in the way of duty, that in the effects of them we should

contemplate their excellency, so as to give glory to God, and live in an holy admiration of his wisdom and grace.

Some things in general are to be premised to our present inquiry.

1. We can have no due prospect of the wisdom of God in any of his works, much less in this of "sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh," unless we consider also the other holy properties of the Divine nature. Such are his holiness, righteousness, goodness, and grace.

There are three excellencies of the Divine nature principally to be considered in all the external works of God. (1.) His goodness. This is the eternal fountain of all Divine communications. Whatever is good to any creature, is an emanation from Divine goodness. (2.) Wisdom, which is the directive power of the Divine nature. Hereby God guides, orders, and directs all things to his own glory. (3.) Power, which is the effective excellency of the Divine nature, accomplishing what wisdom doth design and order. Whereas wisdom, therefore, is that holy excellency of the Divine Being, wherein God designs, and whereby he effects the glory of all the other properties of his nature, we cannot trace the paths of it in any work of God, unless we know the concernment of those other properties in that work. For that which wisdom principally designs, is the glorification of them. And unto this end almighty power always accompanies the directive infinite wisdom. What infinite goodness will communicate, that infinite wisdom designs, contrives, and directs to the glory of God; and what wisdom so designs, infinite power effects.

2. We can have no apprehensions of the other properties of the Divine nature in this great mystery of godliness, without the consideration of that state of our own wherein they are so concerned. That which was designed unto the eternal glory of God in this great work of the incarnation of his Son, was the redemption of mankind, or the recovery and salvation of the church. The whole

Scripture constantly assigneth this sole end of that effect of Divine goodness and wisdom, yea asserts it as the only foundation of the gospel, John iii. 16. Wherefore unto a due contemplation of Divine wisdom in it, it is necessary we should consider what is the nature of sin, especially of that first sin, wherein our original apostasy from God did consist; what was the condition of mankind thereon; what is the concernment of the holy God therein. What way was suited unto our recovery, that God might be glorified. Without a previous consideration of these things we can have no due conceptions of the wisdom of God in this glorious work. Wherefore I shall so far speak of them, that if it be the will of God, the minds of those who read and consider them, may be opened and prepared to give admittance unto some rays of that Divine wisdom, whose full light we are not able in this world to behold.

The first thing we are to consider is, the nature of our sin and apostasy from God. For from thence we must learn the concernment of the Divine excellencies of God in this work. And there are three things that were eminent therein.

1. A reflection on the holiness and wisdom of God, in the rejection of his image. He had newly made man in his own image. And this work he so expresseth as to intimate a peculiar effect of Divine wisdom in it, whereby it was distinguished from all other external works of creation whatever, Gen. i. 26, 27. "And God said, let us make man in our own image, after our likeness; so God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him." No where is there such an emphasis of expression concerning any work of God. And sundry things are represented as peculiar therein; especially, 1st. That the word of consultation and that of execution are distinct, whereas in all other works of creation, the word of determination and execution was the same. When he created light, which seems the beauty and glory of the whole creation, he only said, "Let there be light,

and there was light," Gen. i. 3. So was it with all other things. But when he comes unto the creation of man, another process is proposed. These several words are distinct, not in time, but in nature. God said, "Let us make man in our image and likeness;" and thereon it is added distinctly, as the execution of that antecedent counsel: "So God made man in his own image." This puts a signal eminency on this work of God. 2dly, A distinct peculiar concernment of all the persons of the Holy Trinity in their consultation and operation. In this great work Divine goodness exerted itself eminently in the person of the Father; the eternal fountain, as of the Divine nature, so of all Divine operations: Divine wisdom acted peculiarly in the person of the Son, the eternal wisdom of the Father: and Divine power wrought effectually in the Person of the Holy Spirit; who is the immediate actor of all Divine operations. Thus God made man in his own image, that is, in such rectitude of nature as represented his righteousness and holiness in such a state and condition, as had a reflection on it of his power and rule. The former was the substance of it, the latter a necessary consequent.

Three things God designed in this communication of his image, which were his principal ends in the creation of all things. And therefore was Divine wisdom more eminently exerted therein, than in all the other works of this inferior creation. The first was, that he might therein make a representation of his holiness and righteousness among his creatures. This was not done in any other of them. Characters they had on them of his goodness, wisdom, and power. In these things "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work." His eternal power and Godhead are manifest in the things that are made. But none of them, not the whole fabric of heaven and earth, with all their glorious ornaments, were able to receive any impressions of his holiness and righteousness, of any of the moral perfections of his nature. Yet in the demon-

stration and representation of these things doth the glory of God principally consist. Wherefore he would have an image and representation of them in the creation here below. And this he will always have so long as he will be worshipped by any of his creatures.

The second was, that it might be a means of rendering actual glory unto him from all other parts of the creation. Without this, which is as the animating life of the whole, the other creatures are but as a dead thing. They were as a well-tuned instrument, which gives no sound, unless there be a skilful hand to move it. What is light if there be no eye to see it? or what is music if there be no ear to hear it? How glorious soever any of the works of creation appear from impressions of Divine power, wisdom, and goodness on them, yet without this image of God in man, there was nothing here below to understand God in them, to glorify God by them. This alone is that whereby in a way of admiration, obedience, and praise, we were enabled to render God the glory which he designed from those works of his power.

The third was, that it might be a means to bring man unto that eternal enjoyment of himself, which he was designed for. For this was to be done in a way of obedience: "Do this and live," was that rule which the nature of God and man, with their mutual relation, did require. But we were made meet for this obedience, and enabled to perform it only by virtue of this image of God. It was a power to live unto God in obedience, that we might come to the enjoyment of him in glory. Evident it is, that these were the principal ends of God in the creation of all things. Wherefore this constitution of our nature, and the furnishment of it with the image of God, was the most eminent effect of infinite wisdom in all the outward works of the Divine nature.

2. By apostasy from God, man voluntarily rejected and defaced this blessed representation of the righteousness and holiness of God, this great effect of his goodness and wisdom, in its tendency to his eternal glory, and our

enjoyment of him. No greater dishonour could be done unto him, than in casting contempt on his counsel. For as his holiness, which was represented in that image was despoiled, so we did what lay in us to defeat the contrivance of his wisdom. This will be evident by reflecting on the ends of it. For,

(1.) Hereon there remained nothing in all the creation here below whereby any representation might be made of God's holiness and righteousness. How could it be done, this image being lost out of the world? The brute and inanimate part of the creation, however stupendously great in its matter, and glorious in its outward form, was no way capable of it. The nature of man under the loss of this image, gives rather an image of satan than of God. Hence, instead of goodness, love, righteousness, holiness, peace, which would have been effects of this image of God, and representatives of his nature, the whole world by the nature of man, is filled with envy, malice, revenge, cruelty, oppression. He that would learn the Divine nature, from the representation that is made of it, in the present aetings of the nature of man, will be gradually led unto the devil, instead of God. Wherefore no greater indignity could be offered to Divine wisdom and holiness, than there was in this rejection of the image of God.

(2.) There was no way left whereby glory might redound to God from the remainder of the creation here below. For the nature of man alone was designed to be the means of it, by virtue of the image of God implanted on it. Wherefore man by sin did not only draw off himself from that relation to God wherein he was made, but drew off the whole creation here below with himself into an uselessness to his glory. And upon the entrance of sin, before the cure of our apostasy was actually accomplished, the generality of mankind divided the creatures into two sorts; those above, or the heavenly bodies, and those below. Those of the first sort they worshipped as their gods; and those of the other sort they abused unto their lusts. Wherefore God was every way dishonoured

in and by them all ; nor was there any glory given him on their account. What some attempted to do of that nature, in a wisdom of their own, ended in folly, and a renewed dishonour of God.

(3.) Man hereby lost all power of attaining that end for which he was made, namely, the eternal enjoyment of God. But that which was the malignity and poison of this sin, was the contempt that was cast on the holiness of God, whose representation, and all its express characters, were utterly despised and rejected therein. Herein then lay the concernment of the holiness or righteousness of God in this sin of our nature. Unless some reparation be made for the indignity cast upon it, unless there be some way whereby it may be more eminently exalted in the nature of man, than it was debased and despised in the same nature ; it was righteous with God, that mankind should perish in that condition whereinto it was cast by sin. It was not therefore consistent with the glory of God, that mankind should be restored, unless his holiness were more exalted in the same nature, than ever it was depressed or despised thereby. The demonstration of its glory in any other nature, as in that of angels, would not serve unto this end.

We must now a little return to what we before laid down. Wisdom being the directive power of all Divine operations, and the end of all those operations being the glory of God himself, or the demonstration of the excellencies of his nature, it was incumbent thereon to provide for the glory of Divine holiness in an exaltation answerable to the attempt for its debasement. Without the consideration hereof we can have no due prospect of infinite wisdom in this great work of our redemption.

3. Sin brought disorder and disturbance into the whole rule and government of God. It was necessary, from the infinite wisdom of God, that all things should be made in perfect order and harmony, all in a direct subordination to his glory. There could have been no original defect in the natural or moral order of things, but it must have

proceeded from a defect in wisdom. For the disposal of all things in their proper order belonged to the contrivance thereof. And the harmony of all things among themselves, with their mutual relations, in a regular tendency to their proper end, whereby though every individual being hath a peculiar end of its own, yet all their actings tend to one common end of them all, is the principal effect of wisdom. And thus was it at the beginning; when God himself beheld the universe, and lo it was exceeding good. All things being thus created, it belonged to the nature of God to be the rector and disposer of them all. Wherefore it concerned both the wisdom and righteousness of God to take care that either all things should be preserved in the state wherein they were created, and no disorder suffered to enter into the kingdom of God, or that in a way suited to them, his glory should be established. But sin actually brought disorder into the kingdom of God. Hence he who looked on them in their first constitution, affirmed them to be exceeding good, immediately on the entrance of sin, pronounced a curse on the whole earth. To suffer this disorder to continue unrectified, was not consistent with the wisdom and righteousness of God. It would make the kingdom of God to be like that of satan, full of darkness and confusion. Nothing is more necessary unto the good of the universe, than the preservation of the honour of God in his government. And this could no otherwise be done, but by the infliction of a punishment proportionable to the sin. Justice must be answered and complied with herein, in a way suited unto the glory of God; and to provide that in nothing it should be eclipsed or diminished, was incumbent on infinite wisdom. That must direct all things anew to the glory of the righteousness of God, or there is no recovery of mankind. And in our inquiry after the impressions of Divine wisdom, on the great means of our restoration, this provision made for the righteousness of God in his government of all, is greatly to be attended unto.

‡. Man by sin put himself into the power of the devil,

God's greatest adversary. The devil had newly by apostasy from his first condition, cast himself under the eternal displeasure of God. God had righteously purposed in himself not to contrive any way for his deliverance. He on the other side was become obdurate in his malice and hatred of God, designing his dishonour with the utmost of his remaining abilities. In this state of things, man voluntarily leaves the rule of God, and puts himself into the power of the devil. Herein did God's adversary seem for a season to triumph, as if he had defeated the design of his goodness, wisdom, and power. So he would have continued to do, if no way had been provided for his disappointment. This therefore belonged to the Divine wisdom, namely, that the glory of God should not suffer any diminution hereby. All this, and inconceivably more, being contained in the sin of our apostasy from God; it must needs follow, that the condition of all mankind became thereby inexpressibly evil. As we had done all the moral evil which our nature was able to act, so it was meet we should receive all the penal evil which our nature was able to undergo. And it all issued in death temporal and eternal inflicted from the wrath of God. This is the first thing to be considered in the footsteps of Divine wisdom in our deliverance by the incarnation of the Son of God. Without due conceptions of the nature of this sin and apostasy, of the provocation given unto God thereby, of the injury attempted to be done unto all his properties, of his concernment in their reparation, with the unspeakable misery that mankind was fallen into, we cannot have the least view of the glorious actings of Divine wisdom in our deliverance by Christ.

Now it was impossible that man, thus deeply fallen, should restore or recover himself. Wherefore we must in the next place inquire what is necessary unto such a restoration, on the account of that concernment of the Divine excellencies in the sin and apostasy of man, which we have stated before. For hereby we may obtain an insight into the glory of that wisdom whereby it was con-

trived and effected. And the things following, among others, may be observed.

(1.) It was required that there should be an obedience yielded unto God, bringing more glory unto him, than dishonour did accrue from the disobedience of man. The original law of personal righteousness was not given primarily that men might suffer for its transgression, but that God might be glorified in its accomplishment. If this be not done, it is impossible that men should be restored unto the glory of God. If the law be not fulfilled by obedience, man must suffer evermore for his disobedience, or God must lose the manifestation of his holiness therein. Besides, God had represented his holiness in that image of it which was implanted on our nature, and which was the principle producing obedience. This also was rejected by sin, and therein the holiness of God despised. If this were not restored in our nature, and that with advantages above what it had in its first communication, we could not be recovered unto the glory of God.

(2.) It was necessary that the disorder brought into the rule and government of God by sin should be rectified. This could no otherwise be done but by the infliction of that punishment, which in the unalterable rule of Divine justice was due thereto. The dismissal of sin on any other terms, would leave the rule of God under unspeakable dishonour. For where is the righteousness of government, if the highest sin that our nature was capable of, and which brought confusion on the whole creation below, should for ever go unpunished? The first express intimation that God gave of his righteousness in the government of mankind, was his threatening a punishment equal to the demerit of disobedience, if man should fall into it. "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die." If he revoke and disannul this sentence, how shall the glory of his righteousness in the rule of all be made known? But how this punishment should be undergone, which consisted in man's eternal ruin, and yet man be eternally saved, was a work for Divine wisdom to con-

trive. This therefore was necessary to the honour of God's righteousness, as he is the supreme Governor and Judge of all the earth.

(3.) It was necessary that satan should be despoiled of his advantage and power over mankind unto the glory of God. For he was not to be left to triumph in his success. And inasmuch as man was on his part rightfully given up to him, his deliverance was not to be wrought by an act of absolute dominion, but in a way of justice and lawful judgment. Without these things the recovery of mankind to the enjoyment of God was utterly impossible on the account of the concernment of his Divine perfections in our apostasy.

How all this might be effected ; how the glory of the holiness and righteousness of God in his law and rule, and in the primitive constitution of our nature, might be repaired ; how his goodness might be manifested and exalted in the reparation of mankind, was left to the contrivance of infinite wisdom. From the eternal springs thereof must this work arise, or cease for ever. To trace some of the footsteps of Divine wisdom herein, from the revelation of it by its effects, is that which lieth before us. And sundry things appear to have been necessary hereunto. As,

1. That all the things required in order to our restoration should be wrought in our own nature, in the nature that had sinned, and which was to be restored. On supposition, I say, of the salvation of our nature, no satisfaction could be made unto the glory of God for the sin of that nature, but in the nature itself that sinned. For whereas God gave the law unto man as an effect of his wisdom and holiness, which he transgressed in his disobedience, wherein could the glory of them be exalted if the same law were fulfilled by a nature of another kind, suppose that of angels ? For notwithstanding any such obedience, yet the law might be unsuited unto the nature of man. Wherefore there would be a veil drawn over the glory of God, in giving the law unto man, if it were

not fulfilled in the same nature. Nor can there be any such relation between the obedience and sufferings of one nature, in the stead and for the disobedience of another, as that glory might ensue unto the wisdom, holiness, and justice of God, in the deliverance of that other nature thereon. What then was required unto our deliverance? Why, saith he, "Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he himself took part of the same," ver. 14. It was human nature (here expressed by flesh and blood) that was to be delivered, and therefore it was human nature wherein this deliverance was to be wrought. No otherwise could our ruin be retrieved, nor our deliverance from sin effected which came by man, but by man, by one of the same nature with us. This therefore in the first place became the wisdom of God, that the work of deliverance should be wrought in our own nature, in the nature that had sinned.

2. That part of human nature, whereby this work was to be effected was to be derived from the common root of the same nature, in our first parents. It would not suffice, that God should create a man out of the dust of the earth. For there would be no alliance between him and us, so as that we should be any way concerned in what he did or suffered. Hence it is that the genealogy of Christ is given us in the gospel, not only from Abraham, to declare the faithfulness of God in the promise that he should be of his seed, but from Adam also, to manifest his relation to the common stock of our nature, and to all mankind therein. The first discovery of the wisdom of God herein, was in that primitive revelation, that the deliverer should be of the seed of the woman, Gen. iii. 15. No other but he who was so, could break the serpent's head, or destroy the work of the devil, so as that we might be delivered and restored. He was not only to be partaker of our nature, but he was so to be by being the seed of the woman, Gal. iv. 4. He was not to be created out of nothing, nor to be made of the dust of the earth, but so made of a woman, as that thereby he might receive our nature from

the common root of it. Thus he “ who sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one, Hcb. ii. 11, ἐξ ἐνος, that is, *φραμαρ*®, *of the same mass, of one nature and blood*; whence he is not ashamed to call them brethren. This also was to be brought forth from the treasures of infinite wisdom.

3. This nature of ours, wherein the work of our recovery is to be wrought, was not to be so derived from the original stock of our kind, as to bring with it the same taint of sin, and the same guilt, as accompanied every other. For as the apostle speaks, such a high priest became us, (and as an high priest was he to accomplish this work) “ as was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners.” For if this nature in him were defiled, if it were under a deprivation of the image of God, it could do nothing that should be acceptable unto him. And if it were subject to guilt on its own account, it could make no satisfaction for the sin of others. Here therefore again occurs a difficulty which nothing but Divine wisdom could expedite.

To take a little farther view hereof, we must consider on what grounds these things, (spiritual defilement and guilt,) adhere to our nature as they are in all our persons. And the first of these is, that our entire nature was in Adam as our head and representative. Hence his sin became the sin of us all. In him we all sinned; all did so who were in him as their common representative when he sinned. Hereby we became liable to the wrath of God for the common sin of our nature. And the other is, that we derive our nature from Adam by the way of natural generation. By that means alone is the nature of our first parents as defiled communicated to us: for by this means do we appertain unto the stock, as it was degenerate and corrupt. Wherefore that part of our nature whereby this great work was to be wrought, must, as unto its substance, be derived from our first parents, yet so as never to have been in Adam as a common representative; nor to be derived from him by natural

generation. The bringing forth of our nature in such an instance, wherein it should relate no less really to the first Adam than we do ourselves, whereby there is the strictest alliance of nature between him and us, yet so as not in the least to participate of the guilt of the first sin, nor of the defilement of our nature thereby, must be an effect of infinite wisdom. And this, as we know, was done in the person of Christ. For his human nature was never in Adam as his representative. For he derived it only from and after the first promise, when Adam ceased to be a common person. Nor did it proceed from him by natural generation, the only means of the derivation of its deprivation. For it was an holy thing created in the womb of the virgin by the power of the Most High. "O the depths of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"

It was necessary therefore on all these considerations, that he by whom the work of our recovery was to be wrought, should be a man, partaker of the nature that sinned, yet free from all sin. And this did Divine wisdom contrive and accomplish in the human nature of Jesus Christ.

But yet, in the second place, on all the considerations before mentioned, it is no less evident, that this work could not be wrought by him, who was no more than a mere man, and who had no nature but ours. There was no one act which he was to perform in order to our deliverance, but did require a Divine power. Herein lies that great mystery of godliness, whereunto a continual opposition hath been made by the gates of hell. But, whereas it belongs unto the foundation of our faith, we must confirm the truth of it. And two things are to be spoken to.

First, We are to give in rational evidences that the recovery of mankind was not to be effected by any one who was a mere man, and no more; he must be God also.

Secondly, we must inquire into the suitableness to Divine wisdom, in the redemption of the church by Jesus Christ,

who was God and man in one person. And thereon give a description of the person of Christ, which suiteth all the ends of infinite wisdom. The first of these falls under sundry plain demonstrations.

(1.) That human nature might be restored, or any portion of mankind eternally saved, it was necessary that an obedience should be yielded to God, which should bring more glory unto his holiness, than there was dishonour reflected on it by the disobedience of us all. But such an obedience could never be yielded to God by any mere creature whatever. He who undertook this work must have somewhat that was Divine and infinite to put an infinite value on his obedience; that is, he must be God.

(2.) The obedience of a mere man could have no influence at all on the recovery of mankind. For whatever it were, it would be all due from him for himself, and so could only profit himself. There is no mere creature, but is obliged for himself unto all the obedience to God that he is capable of. Yea, universal obedience, in all possible instances, is so absolutely necessary to him, that the voluntary omission of it, in any one instance, would be ruinous to his own soul. Wherefore no such obedience could be accepted as any kind of compensation for the disobedience of others. He then that performs this obedience, must be one who was not originally obliged thereto on his own account. And this must be a Divine person and none other; for every mere creature is so obliged.

(3.) The people to be redeemed, and brought unto glory, were great and innumerable; "a great multitude which no man can number," Rev. vii. 9. The sins which they were to be ransomed and justified from, were next unto absolutely infinite. They wholly surpass the comprehension of any created understanding. And in every one of them there was something infinite, as committed against an infinite majesty. The miseries which heron all these persons were obnoxious unto, were infinite, because eternal; or all that evil, which our nature is capable to suffer, was by them all eternally to be under-

gone. By all these persons, in all these sins, there was an inroad made on the rule and government of God, an affront given to his justice in the violation of his law. Nor could any of them be delivered from the consequents hereof, without a satisfaction made to the justice of God. To assert the contrary, is to suppose that it is all one to him whether he be obeyed or disobeyed by his creatures. And this is all one as to deny his very being ; seeing it opposeth the glory of his essential properties. But, on the other hand, whoever doth truly and sincerely believe in the Divine person of Christ, namely, that he was God and man in one person, and as such acted in the whole work of mediation, cannot shut his eyes against the glorious light of this truth, that what he did and suffered must have an intrinsic worth, out-balanceing all the evil in the sins of mankind ; that more honour and glory acerued unto God by his obedience, than dishonour by the disobedience of Adam and all his posterity.

(4.) If man be recovered, he must be restored to the same state wherein he was placed before the fall. To restore him with any diminution of honour and blessedness, was not suited unto Divine wisdom and bounty. Yea, seeing it was the infinite goodness and merey of God which was to restore him, it seems agreeable to the Divine excellencies, that he should be brought into a better condition than that which he had lost. But before the fall man was not subject unto any but unto God alone. But if he were redeemed by one who was a mere creature, he could not be restored unto this state and dignity. For, on all grounds of right and equity, he must owe all service and obedience to him by whom he was redeemed. For when we are “bought with a price, we are not our own,” as the apostle affirms, 1 Cor, vi. 19, 20. We are therefore his who hath bought us, and him are we bound to serve in our souls and bodies which are his. Accordingly, in the purchase of us, the Lord Christ became our absolute Lord. It would follow, therefore, that if we were redeemed by a mere creature, into the

service of a mere creature, we should be recovered. And so they believe who affirm the Lord Christ to be a man, and no more. But on this supposition we are so far from an advancement in state by our restoration, that we do not recover what we were first instated in. For it belonged thereunto, that we should owe religious service and obedience unto him alone who was God over all blessed for ever. And they bring all confusion into the Christian religion, who make a mere creature the object of our faith, love, adoration, invocation, and all sacred worship. But, in our present restoration, we are made subject anew, as to religious service, to God alone. Therefore the holy angels, the head of the creation, openly disclaim any such veneration from us, because they are only the fellow-servants of them that have the testimony of Jesus. Nor hath God put the world to come, the gospel state of the church into subjection unto angels, or any creature, but only unto the Son, who is Lord over his own house, even he that made all things, who is God, Heb. iii. 4—6.

On these suppositions, which are full of light and evidence, infinite wisdom did interpose to glorify all the other excellencies of God, in such a way as might solve all difficulties, and satisfy all the ends of God's glory, in the redemption of mankind.

Man, by sin, had cast the most inconceivable dishonour on the righteousness, holiness, goodness, and rule of God, and had brought himself into the guilt of eternal ruin. In this state it became the wisdom and goodness of God, neither to suffer the whole race of mankind to come short eternally of that enjoyment of himself for which it was created, nor yet to deliver any one of them, without retrieving the honour of his righteousness, holiness, and rule, from the diminution that was made of it by sin. As this could no way be done, but by a full satisfaction to justice, and an obedience to the law, yielding more honour to the holiness and righteousness of God, than they could lose by the sin and dis-

obedience of man; so this satisfaction must be made, and this obedience be yielded by the same nature that sinned, whereby alone the residue of mankind could be interested in the benefits of that obedience and satisfaction. Yet was it necessary hereto, that the nature wherein all this was to be performed, though derived from the same common stock with that whereof we are partakers, should be absolutely free from the contagion and guilt which with it are communicated to us from the common stock. Unless it were so there could be no undertaking in it for others, it would not be able to answer for itself. But yet, on all these suppositions, no mere human nature could possibly yield that obedience to God, or make that satisfaction for sin, whereon the deliverance of others might ensue, to the glory of the holiness, righteousness, and rule of God.

In this state of things did infinite wisdom interpose, in that glorious contrivance of the person of Christ, or the Divine nature, the eternal Son of God, and of ours in the same individual person. Otherwise this work could not have been accomplished; at least, all other ways are hidden from the eyes of all living, no created understanding being able to apprehend any other way whereby it might so have been unto the eternal glory of God. This therefore is such an effect of Divine wisdom, as will be the object of holy adoration to eternity.

CHAP. XIV.

The Exaltation of Christ; with his present State in Glory, during the Continuation of his mediatory Office.

THE apostle, describing the great mystery of godliness, "God manifest in the flesh;" by several degrees of ascent he carrieth it within the veil, and leaves it there in glory, 1 Tim. iii. 16. God was manifest in the flesh, and received up into glory. This assumption of our Lord Jesus

Christ into glory, is a principal article of the faith of the church. This also we must therefore consider in our meditations on the person of Christ.

That which I especially intend, is his present state in heaven, in the discharge of his mediatory office before the consummation of all things. Hereon doth the glory of God, and the especial concernment of the church at present depend. For, at the end of this dispensation, he shall give up the kingdom unto God, even the Father, or cease from the administration of his mediatory office and power.

All things fell by sin into an enmity to God. The removal of this enmity, and the destruction of all enemies, is the work that God committed to his Son, in his incarnation and mediation, Eph. i. 10. This he was variously to accomplish in the administration of all his offices. The enmity between God and us immediately he removed by the blood of his cross, whereby he made peace, Eph. ii. 14—16. Which peace he continues and preserves by intercession, Heb. vii. 26, 1 John ii. 2. The enemies themselves of the church's eternal welfare, namely, sin, death, the world, satan, and hell, he subdues by his power. In the gradual accomplishment of this work; according as the church is brought forth in successive generations, he is to continue unto the consummation of all things. Until then, the whole church will not be saved, and therefore his work will not be finished. He will not cease his work whilst there is one of his elect to be saved, or one enemy to be subdued. He shall not faint nor give over until he hath sent forth judgment unto victory.

For the discharge of this work he hath a sovereign power over all things in heaven and earth committed unto him. And so absolutely is it vested in him, that upon the ceasing of the exercise of it, he himself is said to be made subject unto God. It is true, that the Lord Christ, in his human nature, is always less than, or inferior to God, even the Father. In that sense he is in subjection

unto him now in heaven. But yet he hath an actual exercise of Divine power, wherein he is absolute and supreme. When this ceaseth, he shall be subject unto the Father in that nature, and only so. Wherefore when this work is perfectly fulfilled, then shall all the mediatory actings of Christ cease for evermore. For God will then have completely finished the whole design of his wisdom and grace, in the constitution of his person and offices, and have raised up and finished the whole fabric of eternal glory. Then will God be all in all. In his own immense nature and blessedness he shall not only be all essentially and causally, but in all also; he shall immediately be all in and to us.

This state of things, when God shall immediately be all in all, we can have no just comprehension of in this life. Some refreshing notions of it may be framed from those apprehensions of the Divine perfections which reason can attain to; and their suitableness to yield eternal blessedness in that enjoyment of them whereof our nature is capable. Howbeit, of these things in particular the Scripture is silent; however, it testifies our eternal reward to consist in the enjoyment of God.

The consideration of the present state of Christ in heaven may be reduced unto three heads. First, The glorification of his human nature. Secondly, His mediatory exaltation; or the especial glory of his person as Mediator. Thirdly, The discharge of his office in this state of things; which is what at present I shall principally inquire into.

And, 1. There is that wherein the glory of the human nature of Christ differeth from that which any of the saints are partakers of. And this is;

(1.) The eternal subsistence of that nature of his in the person of the Son of God. As this belongs unto its dignity and honour, so it doth also unto its inherent glory. This is and shall be eternally peculiar unto him, in distinction from, and exaltation above the whole creation of God, angels, and men. This is that wherein the

glory of the human nature of Christ doth essentially differ from that of any other creature whatever. And hereon other things depend. For,

(2.) Hence the union of the human nature of Christ to God, and the communications of God unto it, are of another kind than those of the blessed saints. In this world, believers are united unto God by faith. It is by faith that we cleave unto him with purpose of heart. In heaven it shall be by love. Ardent love, with delight, complacency, and joy, from a clear apprehension of God's infinite goodness and beauty now made present unto us, now enjoyed by us, shall be the principle of our eternal adherence unto him, and union with him. His communications unto us here are by an external efficiency of power. He communicates of himself unto us in the effects of his goodness, grace, and mercy, by the operations of his Spirit in us. Of the same kind will all the communications of the Divine nature be unto us unto all eternity. It will be by what he worketh in us by his Spirit and power. There is no other way of the emanation of virtue from God unto any creature. But these things in Christ are of another nature: this union of his human nature unto God is immediate in the person; but the way of the communications of the Divine nature unto the human, is what we cannot comprehend. There is nothing equal to it, nothing like it in all the works of God. As it is a creature, it must subsist in eternal dependance on God; neither hath it any thing but what it receives from him. For this belongs essentially unto the Divine nature, to be the eternal spring of all being and goodness. Nor can Omnipotency itself exalt a creature into any such condition, that it should not always and in all things depend absolutely on the Divine Being. But as to the way of the communications between the Divine and human nature in the personal union, we know it not.

(3.) Hence the human nature of Christ in his Divine person, and together with it, is the object of Divine adoration and worship, Rev. v. 13. All creatures what-

ever do for ever ascribe "blessing, honour, glory, and power unto the Lamb," in the same manner as unto him who sits on the throne. But no other creature either is, or can be exalted into such a condition of glory, as to the object of any Divine worship, from the meanest creature which is capable of the performance of it.

(4.) The glory that God designed to accomplish in and by him, is now made evident unto all the holy ones that are about the throne. The great design of the wisdom and grace of God from eternity, was to manifest all the holy properties of his nature in and by Jesus Christ. And this is that wherein he acquiesces, with which he is well pleased.

In heaven this is conspicuously and gloriously manifest unto all the blessed ones that are before the throne of God. They do not behold it by faith in various degrees of light, as we do here below; but they behold, openly and plainly, the whole glory of God; all the characters of it illustriously manifesting themselves in him, in what he is, in what he hath done, in what he doth. Divine wisdom, grace, goodness, love, power, all shine forth in him under the contemplation of all his saints, in whom he is admired. And in the vision hereof will consist no small part of our eternal blessedness.

2. The glory of the human nature of Christ differs from that of the saints after the resurrection, in things which concern the degrees of it; for,

(1.) The glory of his body is the pattern they shall be conformed unto, Phil. iii. 21, "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." Our bodies were made vile by the entrance of sin. Thence they became brothers to the worms, and sisters unto corruption. To death and the grave, with rottenness and corruption therein, they are designed. At the resurrection they shall be new-fashioned and moulded. Not only all the disadvantage they received by the entrance of sin shall be

removed, but many additions of glorious qualifications, which they had not in their primitive constitution, shall be added to them. And this shall be done by the almighty power of Christ; whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself. But of this state, whereinto we shall be changed by the power of Christ, his own body is a pattern and example. A similitude of it is all that we shall attain. And that which is the exemplar in any state, is the rule and standard unto all others. Such is the glory of Christ; ours consists in conformity thereto; which gives him the pre-eminence.

(2.) As the state of his body is more glorious than ours shall be, so will that of his soul appear to be more excellent than what we are capable of. For that fulness of the Spirit without measure, and of all grace, which his nature was capacitated for by virtue of the hypostatical union, doth shine forth in all excellency and glory. The grace that was in Christ in this world, is the same with that which is in him now in heaven. The nature of it was not changed, but is only brought into a more glorious exercise. And all his graces are now made manifest, the veil being taken from them, and light communicated to discern them. And although the grace which is in believers be of the same nature with that which is in Christ Jesus, and shall be changed into glory, after the likeness of his, yet is it, and always shall be, incomprehensibly short of what dwells in him. And herein also doth his glory excel that of all other creatures whatever. But we must draw a veil over what remains. For it doth not yet appear what we ourselves shall be. Much less is it evident what are, and what will be the glories of the Head above all the members; even then when we shall "be made like unto him."

The second thing to be considered in the present state of Christ, is his mediatory exaltation. And two things with respect thereunto may be inquired into. 1. The way of his entrance into that state above. 2. The state itself, with the glory of it.

1. The way of the entrance into the exercise of his mediatory office in heaven is expressed, 1 Tim. iii. 16, "He was received into glory." And he "entered into glory," Luke xxiv. 26. This assumption and entrance into glory was upon his ascension described, Acts i. 9—11. He was taken up into heaven by an act of Divine power; and he went into heaven in his own choice and will, as that which he was exalted to. And this ascension of Christ in his human nature into heaven is a fundamental article of the faith of the church.

It falls under a double consideration. 1. It was triumphant, as he was a king. 2. It was gracious, as he was a priest. His ascension as to change of place, from earth to heaven, and as to the outward manner of it, was one and the same, and at once accomplished. But as to the end of it, which is the exercise of all his offices, it had various respects, various prefigurations, and is distinctly proposed unto us.

1. In his ascension, as it was triumphant, three things may be considered.

(1.) The manner of it, it was openly triumphant and glorious. So is it described, Eph. iv. 8, "He ascended up on high; he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." And respect is had unto the prefiguration of it, at the giving of the law, Psal. lxxviii. 17, 18, where the glory of it is more fully expressed; "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels; the Lord is among them as in Sinai, in the holy place. Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive," &c. The most glorious appearance of God upon the earth under the Old Testament, was that on mount Sinai. And as his presence was there attended with all his glorious angels; so when, upon the finishing of that work, he returned into heaven, it was in the way of triumph, with all that royal attendance. And this prefigured the ascent of Christ into heaven. He ascended triumphantly after he had given the law, as a figure of his triumphant ascent after he had fulfilled it. Having then "spoiled princi-

palities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them," Col. ii. 15. So he led captivity captive, or all the adverse powers in triumph at his chariot wheels. I deny not that his "leading captivity captive," principally respects his spiritual conquest over Satan. Yet whereas he is also said to "spoil principalities and powers, making a shew of them openly;" I no way doubt that Satan, the head of the apostasy, and the chief princes of darkness, were led openly in sight of all the holy angels, as conquered captives. This is that which is so emphatically expressed, Psal. xlvii. throughout. The cause of all triumphant rejoicing therein declared, is, that God was "gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of a trumpet," ver. 5, which is nothing but the glorious ascent of Christ into heaven, said to be accompanied with shouts, and the sound of a trumpet; the expressions of triumphant rejoicing, because of the glorious acclamations that were made thereon by all the attendants of the throne of God.

(2.) The place whither he thus ascended is "on high." "He ascended up on high," Eph. iv. 8; that is, heaven. He went into heaven, Acts i. 11. And the "heavens must receive him," ch. iii. 21. Not these heavens which we behold: for in his ascension he passed through them, Heb. iv. 14, and is made higher than they, ch. vii. 26; but into the place of the residence of God in glory and majesty, Heb. i. 3; viii. 1; xii. 2. There, on "the throne of God," Rev. iii. 21; "On the right hand of the majesty on high," he sits down in the full possession of all power and authority. This is the palace of this King of saints and nations. There is his royal eternal throne, Heb. i. 8. And many crowns are on his head, Rev. xix. 12; or, all dignity and honour.

(3.) The end for which he thus triumphantly ascended into heaven is two-fold. First, the destruction of all his enemies in their remaining powers. He rules them "with a rod of iron," and in his due time will dash them in pieces as a potter's vessel. For "he must reign until all

his enemies are made his footstool." Although at present, for the most part, they despise his authority, yet they are all absolutely in his power, and shall fall under his eternal displeasure. Secondly, the preservation and rule of his church, both as to that internal state of the souls of them that believe, and the external order of the church in its worship and obedience, and its preservation under all oppositions and persecutions in this world. There is in each of these such a continual exercise of Divine wisdom, power, and care, the effects of them are so great and marvellous, and the fruits of them so abundant unto the glory of God, that the world would not contain the books that might be written of them; but to handle them distinctly is not our present design.

2. His ascension may be considered as gracious; as the ascent of an high-priest. And herein the things before-mentioned are of a distinct consideration.

(1.) As to the manner of it, and the design of it, he gives an account of them himself, John xx. 17. His design herein was not the taking on him the exercise of his power, but the acting with God on the behalf of his disciples. "I go," saith he, "to my Father, and your Father, to my God, and your God;" not his God and Father with respect unto eternal generation, but as he was their God and Father also. And he was so, as he was their God and Father in the same covenant with himself, wherein he was to procure of God all good things for them. Through the blood of this everlasting covenant, namely, his own blood, whereby this covenant was established, and all the good things of it secured unto the church, he was "brought again from the dead," that he might live ever to communicate them unto the church, Heb: xiii. 20, 21. With this design in his ascension, and the effects of it, did he often comfort the hearts of his disciples, when they were ready to faint on the apprehensions of his leaving them here below, John xiv. 1, 2, ch. xvi. 5, 6, 7: and this was typified by the ascent of the high-priest, unto the temple of old. The temple was

situated on an hill, high and steep, so that there was no approach unto it but by stairs. Hence, in their wars, it was looked on as a most impregnable fortress. And the solemn ascent of the high-priest into it on the day of expiation, had a resemblance of this ascent of Christ into heaven. For after he had offered the sacrifice in the outward court, and made atonement for sin, he entered into the most holy place, a type of heaven itself, as the apostle declares, Heb. ix. 24; of heaven, as it was the place whereinto our High-Priest was to enter. And it was a joyful ascent, though not triumphant. All the psalms from the 120th to the 134th inclusively, whose titles are שִׁירֵי הַמַּעֲלוֹת, *songs of degrees*, or rather ascents or risings, being generally songs of praise, were sung to God at the resting-places of that ascent. Especially was this represented on the day of jubilee. The proclamation of the jubilee was on the same day that the high-priest entered into the most holy place; and at the same time; namely, on the "tenth day of the seventh month," Lev. xvi. 29; ch. xxv. 9. Then did the trumpet sound throughout the land, the whole church; and liberty was proclaimed unto all servants, captives, and such as had sold their possessions, that they might return to them again. This being a great type of the ascent of our High-priest into his sanctuary, when he "proclaimed the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified," Isai. lxi. 2, 3. For in this ascension of Christ, proclamation was made in the gospel, of mercy, pardon, peace, joy, and everlasting refreshments, unto all that were distressed by sin, with a communication of righteousness unto them, to the eternal glory of God. Such was the entrance of our High-priest into heaven, with acclamations of joy and praise unto God!

(2.) The place whereinto he thus entered was the sanctuary above, the "tabernacle not made with hands," Heb. viii. 2. It was into heaven itself, not absolutely, but as it is the temple of God, as the throne of grace and mercy-seat are in it.

(3.) The end why the Lord Christ thus ascended, and thus entered into the holy place, was "to appear in the presence of God for us," and to "make intercession for all that came unto God by him," Heb. vii. 26, 27; ix. 24, 25. It may be added, that when he thus left this world and ascended, the great promise he made to his disciples, as they were to be preachers of the gospel, and in them to all that should succeed them in that office, was, that he would send the Holy Spirit unto them, to teach and guide them, to lead them into all truth; to declare unto them the mysteries of love, for the use of the whole church. This he promised to do, and did in the discharge of his prophetic office. And although his giving gifts unto men was an act of his kingly power, yet it was for the end of his prophetic office.

From what hath been spoken, it is evident that the Lord Christ ascended into heaven, or was received up into glory, with this design, namely, to exercise his office of mediation in the behalf of the church until the end should be. As this was his grace, that when he was "rich, for our sakes he became poor;" so when he was made rich again for his own sake, he lays forth all the riches of his glory and power on our behalf.

3. The glory of the state whereinto Christ thus entered, is the next thing to be considered. For "he is sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." And as his ascension, with the ends of it, were twofold, so was his glory that ensued. For his present mediatory state consists either in the glory of his power, or in the glory of his love; his glory as a King, or his glory as a Priest. For the first of these, or his royal glory, in sovereign power and authority over the whole creation of God, all in heaven and earth, persons and things, angels and men,

good and bad, alive and dead; all things spiritual and eternal, grace, gifts, and glory; his right and power to dispose of all things according to his will, I have declared it elsewhere. His glory as a Priest will be manifested in what doth ensue.

CHAP. XV.

The Exercise of the mediatory Office of Christ in Heaven.

The third and last thing we proposed to consider is the discharge of his mediatory office in behalf of the church; especially as he continueth to be a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle which God hath fixed and not man.

All Christians acknowledge that his present state is a state of the highest glory, of exaltation above the whole creation of God, above every name that is or can be named; and hereon they esteem their own honour and safety to depend. Neither do they doubt of his power, but take it for granted that he can do whatever he pleaseth; which is the ground of their placing all their confidence in him. But we must shew, moreover, that his present state is a state of office, work, and duty. He leads not in heaven a life of mere glory and blessedness, but a life of office, love, and care also. He lives as the Mediator of the church, as the King, Priest, and Prophet thereof. Hereon do our present safety, and our eternal salvation depend. Without the continual actings of the office, power, and care of Christ, the church could not be preserved one moment.

Thus he is at once represented in all his offices, Rev. v. 6, "And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four living creatures, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth." The whole representation of the glory of God, with all his

holy attendants, is here called his throne, whence Christ is said to be in the midst of it. And this he is in his kingly glory ; with respect also whereunto he is said to have “ seven horns,” or perfect power for the accomplishment of his will, and with respect unto his sacerdotal office, he is represented as a “ Lamb that had been slain ;” it being his oblation that is continually effectual for the church. For as the “ Lamb of God,” in the offering of himself, he takes away the sins of the world. And as a Prophet, he is said to have “ seven eyes,” which are the “ seven spirits of God ;” or a perfect fulness of all spiritual light and wisdom, with power for the communication of gifts and grace to the church.

The nature of these offices of Christ I have declared elsewhere. I now no farther consider them than as they relate to the present state of Christ in heaven. And because it would be too long to treat of them all distinctly, I shall confine myself to his priestly office. With respect thereto, the things ensuing may be observed :

1. The Lord Christ entered into heaven, the place of the residence of the glory of God, as into a temple, a tabernacle, a place of sacred worship. He did so as the High-Priest of the church, Heb. ix. 24, “ He is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.” He is entered into heaven as it was figured by the tabernacle of old, which was the place of all sacred and solemn worship. And therefore is he said to enter into it “ through the vail,” Heb. vi. 19, 20 ; x. 19, 20 ; which was the way of entrance into the holy place, both in the tabernacle and temple.

2. In this temple, this sanctuary, the Lord Christ continueth gloriously to minister before the throne of grace, in the discharge of his office. As the high-priest went into the most holy place to minister for the church unto God, before the ark and mercy-seat, which were types of the throne of grace ; so doth our High-priest act for us in the real presence of God. He did not enter into the most

holy place only to reside there in a way of glory, but to give God all that glory, honour, and worship which he will receive from the church. And we may consider both. What this work is, and how it is performed.

As to the former, First, In general ; herein Christ exerciseth all his love, compassion, and care towards the church and every member of it. This are we frequently called to the consideration of, as the foundation of all our consolation, the fountain of all our obedience. Thoughts hereof are the relief of believers in all their distresses and temptations ; and the effects of it, are all their supplies of grace enabling them to persevere in their obedience. He appears for them as the great representative of the church, to transact all their affairs with God. And that for three ends : 1. To make effectual the atonement that he hath made for sin, by the continual representation of it, and of himself as a “Lamb that hath been slain.” He procures the application of the benefits of it in reconciliation and peace with God, unto their souls. Hence are all believers sprinkled and washed with his blood in all generations ; in the application of the virtue of it to them, as shed for them. 2. To undertake their protection, and to plead their cause against all the accusations of satan. He yet accuseth and chargeth them before God. But Christ is their advocate at the throne of grace. 3. To intercede for them ; as to the communication of all grace and glory, all supplies of the Spirit, the accomplishment of all the promises. This is the work of Christ in heaven. In these things, as the high-priest of the church, doth he continue to administer his mediatory office. And herein is he attended with the songs of all the holy ones that are in the presence of God, giving glory to God by him.

Secondly, as to the manner of this glorious administration, sundry things are to be considered.

1. That this transaction of things in heaven, being in the temple of God, and before the throne of grace, is a

solcmm instituted worship at present, which shall cease at the end of the world. Religious worship it is ; or that whereby all the saints above give glory to God. And it is instituted worship, in that it is God's especial appointment in and by Christ the Mediator. And believers at present have by faith an admission into communion with this church above in all its Divine worship. " For we are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels ; to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven ; and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect ; and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel," Heb. xii. 22—24. O that my soul might abide in this exercise of faith ; that I might yet enjoy a clearer prospect of this glory, and inspection into the beauty and order of this blessed assembly ! How inconceivable is the representation that God here makes of the glory of his wisdom, love, and mercy in Christ ! How excellent is the manifestation of the glory of Christ in his person and offices, the glory given him by the Father ! How little a portion do we know, or can experience of the refreshing communications of Divine love to all the members of this assembly ; or of that unchangeable delight in beholding the glory of Christ, and of God in him ; of that ardency of affections wherewith they cleave unto him, and that continual exultation of spirit, whereby they triumph in the praises of God ! To enter into this assembly by faith ; to join with it in the praises of " him that sits on the throne, and the Lamb for evermore ;" to labour after a frame of heart in holy affections, in some correspondency with that which is in the saints above, is the duty, and ought to be the design of the church of believers here below. So much as we are farthered herein by our present ordinances, so much advantage have we by them, and no more. A constant view of this glory

will cast contempt on all the desirable things of this world, and deliver our minds from any dreadful apprehensions of what is most terrible therein.

2. This heavenly worship in the sanctuary above, administered by the High-priest over the house of God, is conspicuously glorious. The glory of God, that is, the manifestation of it, is the great end of it. The manifestation of the glory of God consists in the effects of his infinite wisdom, goodness, and power; declaratively, in the express acknowledgment of it with praise. Herein therefore doth the solemn worship of God in the sanctuary above consist; setting aside only the immediate actings of Christ in his intercession. It is a glorious express acknowledgment of the wisdom, love, goodness, and power of God, in the redemption, sanctification, and salvation of the church by Jesus Christ, with a continual ascription of all Divine honour to him. For the manner of its performance, our present light into it, is but obscure. Some things have an evidence in them. As,

(1.) That there is nothing carnal in it, or suited to the imaginations of men. In the thoughts of heaven, most persons are apt to frame images in their minds of such things as they suppose they could be delighted with. But they are far remote from the worship of this holy assembly. The worship of the gospel, which is spiritually glorious, makes a nearer approach to it, than that of the temple which was outwardly so. (2.) It is not merely mental; or transacted only in the silent thoughts of each individual person. For as we have shewed, it is the worship of a church assembly wherein they have all communion and join in the performance of it. We know not well the manner of communication between angels and the spirits of just men made perfect. It is expressed in the Scripture by voices, postures, and gestures; which although they are not of the same nature as absolutely ours are, yet are they really significant of the things they would express, and a means of mutual communication. Yea, I know not how far God may give them the use of words,

whereby to express his praise. But the manner of it is such whereby the whole assembly above jointly celebrate the praises of God. And the glory hereof consists in three things :

First, The blessed and beautiful order of all things in that sanctuary. Job describes the grave beneath to be " a place without any order, and where the light is as darkness," chap. x. 22. All above is order and light ; every person and thing in its proper place and exercise. (1.) Heaven itself is a temple, a sanctuary, made so by the especial presence of God, and the ministration of Christ in the tabernacle of his human nature. (2.) God is on the throne of grace ; gloriously exalted on the account of his grace, and for the dispensation of it. To the saints above he is on the throne of grace, in that they are in the full enjoyment of the effects of his grace, and give glory to him on the account thereof. He is so also with respect to the church below, in the continual communications of grace and mercy through Christ. (3.) The Lord Christ in his human nature is before the throne, acting his mediatory office in behalf of the church. (4.) All the holy angels in the various orders and degrees of their ministration, are about the throne continually. So, (5.) Are the spirits of just men made perfect, in the various measures of light and glory. And these things were obscurely represented in the order of the church at its first erection in the wilderness ; for the ordinances of God among them were patterns or figures of heavenly things, Heb. ix. 23. 1. In the midst was the tabernacle or sanctuary which represented the sanctuary or temple above. 2. In the most holy place were the ark and mercy-seat, representatives of the throne of grace. 3. The ministry of the high-priest, a type of the ministry of Christ. 4. The Levites who attended on the high-priest, did represent the ministry of angels, attending on Christ in the discharge of his office. And, 5. Round about them were the tribes in their order.

Secondly, In the full, clear apprehensions which all

the blessed ones have of the glory of God in Christ, of the work and effects of his wisdom and grace towards mankind. These are the foundations of Divine worship. And because our conceptions about them are obscure and inevident, our worship is weak and imperfect also. But all is open unto the saints above. We are in the dust, the blood, the noise of the battle; they are victoriously at peace, and have a perfect view of what they have passed through, and what they have attained. They are come to the springs of life and light, and are filled with admiration of the grace of God in themselves and one another. What they see in God, and in Jesus Christ, what they have experience of in themselves, what they know and learn from others, are all of them inconceivable and inexpressible. It is well for us, if we have so much experience of these things, as to see a real glory in the fulness and perfection of them. The apprehensions by sight, without mixture of unsteadiness or darkness, without the allay of fears or temptations, with an ineffable sense of the things themselves on their hearts, are the springs of the holy worship which is in heaven.

Thirdly, In the glorious manner of the performance of it. Now whereas it ariseth from sight and present enjoyment, it must consist in a continual ascription of glory and praise unto God; and so it is described in the Scripture. And how little a portion of the glory of these things is it, that we can apprehend!

3. In this solemn assembly before the throne of grace, the Lord Jesus Christ, the great high-priest, doth represent and render acceptable unto God, the worship of the church here below. So it is expressed, Rev. viii. 3, 4. "And an angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer, and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne; and the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up unto God out of the angel's hand." It is a representation of the high-priest burning

incense on the golden altar on the day of atonement, when he entered into the most holy place. For that altar was placed just at the entrance of it, directly before the ark and mercy-seat, representing the throne of God. This angel therefore is our high-priest; none else could approach that altar, or offer incense on it, the smoke whereof was to enter into the most holy place. And the prayers of all saints is an expression of the whole worship of the church. And this is represented before the throne of God by this high-priest. And it is not said that their prayers came unto the throne of God, but the "smoke of the incense out of the hand of the angel" did so. For it is the incense of the intercession of Christ alone that gives them their acceptance with God. Without this, none of our prayers, praises, or thanksgivings would ever have access to the throne of grace. Blessed be God for this relief, under the consideration of the weakness and imperfection of them. Wherefore in him and by him alone do we present all our desires, and prayers, and whole worship to God. And herein, in all our worship do we ourselves "enter into the most holy place," Heb. x. 19. We do it not merely by faith, but by this especial exercise of it, in putting our prayers into the hand of this high-priest.

There are three things in all our worship that would hinder its access to God, and acceptance with him. The first is the iniquity that cleaves unto it; secondly, the weakness or imperfection what at best is in it; and thirdly, the unworthiness of the persons by whom it is performed. With reference unto these things, the law could never perfect the consciences of them that came to God by the sacrifices of it. But there are three things in the sacerdotal ministration of Christ, that take them all away. And they are, First, The influence of his oblation. Secondly, The efficacy of his intercession; and, Thirdly, The dignity of his person. Through the first of these he takes away all the iniquity of our holy things; as Aaron did typically of old, by virtue of the plate of gold, with

the name of God (a figure of Christ) on his forehead, **Exod. xxviii. 36—38.** He hath made atonement for them in the blood of his oblation, and they appear not in the presence of God. Through the second, or efficacy of his intercession, he gives acceptance to our prayers and worship. For this is that incense whose smoke comes up with the prayers of all saints to the throne of God. Through the third, or the dignity of his person, wherein he appears as the representative of his whole mystical body, he takes away from our consciences that sense of our own vileness and unworthiness, which would not suffer us to approach with boldness to the throne of grace. In these things consists the worship of all believers, without which as it would not be acceptable to God, so we could have neither peace nor consolation in it ourselves.

4. Herein hath the church that is triumphant, communion with that which is yet militant. The assembly above have not lost their concern for the church here below. As we rejoice in their glory, safety, and happiness, who have passed through the storms and tempests, the temptations, sufferings, and dangers of this life; so are they full of affection towards their brethren exercised with the same temptations, difficulties, and dangers which they have passed through, with earnest desires for their deliverance and safety. Wherefore when they behold the Lord Jesus Christ, as the great high-priest over the house of God, presenting their prayers, with all their holy worship unto God, rendering them acceptable by the incense of his own intercession, it fills them with satisfaction, and continually excites them to assign praise, and glory, and honour unto him. This is the state of the saints above, with respect to the church here below. This is all which may be herein ascribed to them, and this may safely be so. In these things consists their communion with the church here below. A love they have to it, from their union with it in the same mystical body, **Ephes. i. 10.** A sense they have of its condition from the experience they had of it in the days of their flesh. A great concern

they have for the glory of God in them, and a fervent desire of their eternal salvation. They know that without them they shall not be absolutely made perfect in their whole persons, Rev. vi. 11. In this state of things, they continually behold the Lord Jesus Christ presenting their prayers before the throne of grace, making intercession for them, appearing to plead their cause against all their adversaries, transacting all their affairs in the presence of God, taking care of their salvation. This continually fills them with an holy satisfaction, and is a great part of the subject matter of their incessant praises.

5. There is herein a full manifestation of the wisdom of God, in all the institutions of the tabernacle and temple of old. Herein the vail is fully taken off, and that obscure representation of heavenly things is brought forth to light and glory. It is true, this is done to a great degree in the dispensation of the gospel. By the coming of Christ in the flesh, and the discharge of his mediatory office in this world, the substance of what they did prefigure is accomplished. And in the revelation of the gospel, the nature and end of them is declared. Howbeit they extend their signification also to things within the vail, or the discharge of the priestly office of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, Heb. ix. 24. Wherefore as we have not yet a perfection of light to understand the depth of the mysteries contained in them; so themselves also were not absolutely fulfilled until the Lord Christ discharged his office in the most holy place. This is the glory of the pattern which God shewed unto Moses in the mount, and made conspicuous and evident unto all. Therein especially do the saints of the Old Testament, who were exercised all their days in those typical institutions, whose design they could not comprehend, see the manifold wisdom and goodness of God in them all.

6. All that the Lord Christ receives of the Father on the account of this mediation, he is endowed with sovereign power to execute and accomplish. Therefore is he said, as a priest, to be "made higher than the heavens,"

and as a priest “to sit down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,” Heb. viii. 2. This glorious power doth not immediately belong to him on the account of his sacerdotal office, but it is that qualification of his person which is necessary to the effectual discharge of it. Hence it is said of him, that he should “bear the glory, and sit and rule upon his throne,” and should be “a priest upon his throne,” Zech. vi. 13. A throne properly belongs unto Christ, with respect unto his kingly office. Howbeit the power belonging to his throne being necessary to the effectual discharge of his priestly office, as he sits and rules on his throne, so it is said that he is a priest on his throne also.

This is one instance of the present state of Christ in heaven, and of the work which he doth there perform, and the only instance I shall insist upon. He was made a priest “after the power of an endless life,” the life which he now leads in heaven, and lives for ever to make intercession for us. He was dead, but is alive, and lives for evermore, and hath the keys of hell and death, all power over the enemies of his church. God is on a throne of grace; Christ is the high-priest, so on his right hand in glory and power, as yet to be before the throne in the virtue of his sacerdotal office, with the whole concernment of the church in his hand, transacting all things with God for his people: all the holy angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, encompassing the throne with continual praises unto God, even the Father, and him, on the account of the work of infinite wisdom and grace in his incarnation, mediation, and salvation of the church thereby; himself continuing to manage the cause of the whole church before God, presenting all their prayers and services unto him, perfumed with his own intercession, is that resemblance of heaven and its present glory, which the Scripture offers unto us. But, alas, how weak, how dark, how low, are our conceptions of these heavenly things! we see yet as through a glass darkly, and know but in part. The time is approaching when we

shall see these things with open face, and “know even as we are known.” The best improvement we can make of this prospect, whilst faith supplies the place of sight, is to be stirred up thereby unto holy longings after participation in this glory, and constant diligence in that holy obedience whereby we may arrive thereto.

I shall close this discourse with a little review of somewhat that passed before. From the consideration of that place of the apostle, that at the end, “Christ shall give up the kingdom unto the Father,” I declared that all the state of things which we have described, shall then cease, and all things issue in the immediate enjoyment of God himself. I would extend this no farther than as to what concerneth the exercise of Christ’s mediatory office with respect to the church here below, and the enemies of it. But there are some things which belong to this state, which shall continue to all eternity : as,

1. I believe the person of Christ, in and by his human nature, shall be for ever the immediate head of the whole glorified creation. God having gathered all things to an head in him, the knot of that collection shall never be dissolved. We shall never lose our relation to him, nor he his to us.

2. I therefore believe, he shall be the means of communication between God and his glorified saints for ever. What are, what will be the glorious communications of God unto his saints for ever, in life, light, power, joy, rest, and ineffable satisfaction, I shall not now inquire. But this I say, they shall be all made through the person of the Son, and the human nature therein. That tabernacle shall never be folded up, never be laid aside as useless. And if it be said, that I cannot declare the manner of the eternal communication of God to his saints in glory by Christ ; I shall only say, that I cannot declare the manner of his communications of himself in grace by Christ, to the souls of men in this world, and yet I believe it. How much more must we satisfy ourselves with the evidence of faith alone in those things, which as

yet, are more incomprehensible. And our adherence to God by love and delight, shall always be through Christ. For God will be conceived of to eternity, according to the manifestation that he hath made of himself in him. This shall not be by faith with respect to the actual exercise of the mediation of Christ, as now we cleave to God; but it shall be by all satisfying love to God, as he hath manifested himself, and will manifest himself in Christ.

3. The person of Christ, and therein his human nature, shall be the eternal object of Divine glory, praise, and worship. The life of glory is not a mere state of contemplation. Vision is the principle of it, as faith is of the life of grace. Love is the great vital acting of that principle, in adherence to God with eternal delight. But this is active in it also. It shall be exercised in the continual ascription of glory, praise, and honour to God, and the glorious exercise of all sorts of grace therein; hereof the Lamb, the person of Christ, is the eternal object, with that of the Father and the Spirit; and the human nature in the Son admitted into the communion of the same eternal glory.

OF
COMMUNION

WITH

GOD THE FATHER, SON, AND HOLY GHOST.

OF
COMMUNION WITH GOD, &c.



PART I.



CHAP. I.

That Believers have Communion with God. Of the Nature of Communion in general.

IN the first epistle of John, chap. i. ver. 3, the apostle assures them to whom he wrote, that the fellowship of believers is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And this he doth with such an unusual kind of expression as bears the force of an asseveration.

The outward appearances and condition of the saints in those days being very mean and contemptible, their leaders being accounted as the filth of this world, and as the off-scouring of all things, the inviting others to fellowship with them, and a participation of the precious things which they enjoyed, seems to have been exposed to many contrary reasonings and objections. What benefit was there in communion with them? Was it any thing else but to be sharers in troubles, reproaches, all manner of evils?

To prevent, or remove these and the like exceptions, the apostle gives them, to whom he wrote, to know, and that with some earnestness of expression, that, notwithstanding all the disadvantages their fellowship lay under, yet in truth it was, and would be found to be, very honourable, glorious, and desirable: for “truly,” saith he, “our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” This being asserted by the apostle, we may boldly follow him with our affirmation, viz. *That the saints of God have communion with him.*

By nature, since the entrance of sin, no man hath any communion with God. He is light, we are darkness; and what communion hath light with darkness? He is life, we are dead; he is love, we are enmity; and what agreement can there be between us? Men in such a condition, having neither Christ, nor hope, nor God in the world; “being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that was in them.” Now, “two cannot walk together unless they be agreed.” Whilst there is this distance between God and man, there is no walking together for them in any fellowship or communion. Our first interest in God was so lost by sin that there was left to us (in ourselves) no possibility of a recovery. As we had deprived ourselves of all power for a return, so God had not revealed any way of access unto himself. Not any work that God had made, not any attribute that he had revealed, could give the least light into such a dispensation.

The manifestation of grace and pardoning mercy, which is the only door of entrance into any such communion, is not committed unto any but unto him alone in whom it is, by whom that grace and mercy was purchased, through whom it is dispensed, who reveals it from the bosom of the Father. Hence this communion with God is not in express terms mentioned in the Old Testament. The thing itself is found there; but the clear light of it, and the boldness of faith in it, is discovered in the gospel, and by the Spirit administered therein. By that Spirit we

have this liberty. Abraham was the friend of God; David a man after his own heart; Enoch walked with him; all enjoying this communion for the substance of it: but the way into the holiest was not yet made manifest, whilst the first tabernacle was standing, Heb. ix. 8. Though they had communion with God, yet they had not a *boldness* and confidence in that communion. This follows the entrance of our High-Priest into the most holy place, Heb. iv. 16; x. 19. The vail also was upon them, that they had not *freedom* and liberty in their access to God, 2 Cor. iii. 15, 16, &c. But now in Christ we have "boldness and access with confidence to God." This boldness and access with confidence the saints of old were not acquainted with. By Jesus Christ alone then, on all considerations, is this distance taken away; "He hath consecrated for us a new and living way," (the old being quite shut up,) "through the vail, that is to say his flesh," Heb. x. 20; and "through him we have an access by one Spirit unto the Father," Eph. ii. 18, "We, who sometimes were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ, for he is our peace." Upon this new foundation, by this new and living way, are sinners admitted to communion with God. And truly for sinners to have fellowship with the infinitely holy God is an astonishing dispensation. To speak a little of it in general, communion relates to things and persons. A joint participation in any thing whatever, good or evil, duty or enjoyment, nature or actions, gives this denomination. A common interest in the same nature gives all men a fellowship or communion therein. Of the elect it is said, Heb. ii. 14, "These children partook of," or had fellowship with the rest of the world, "in flesh and blood;" the same common nature with the rest of mankind. There is also a communion as to state and condition, whether it be good or evil; and this either in things internal and spiritual, such as the communion of saints among themselves, or in respect of outward things; so was it with

Christ and the two thieves, as to one condition. Our communion with God is not comprised in any of these kinds; of some of them it is exclusive. The infinite disparity between God and man made the great philosopher conclude, That there could be no friendship between them. Some distance in the persons holding friendship he could allow, but that between God and man, in his apprehension, left no place for it. Another says, indeed, That there is "*communitas homini eum Deo,*" a certain "*fellowship between God and man.* But the general intercourse of Providence is all he apprehended. Some arose to higher expressions, but they understood nothing whereof they spake. This knowledge is hid in Christ. It is too wonderful for nature, as sinful and corrupted. Terror and apprehensions of death at the presence of God, is all that it guides unto. But we have, as was said, a new foundation, with a new discovery of this privilege.

Our communion with God consisteth in his communication of himself to us, with our return unto him of that which he requireth and accepteth, flowing from that union which in Jesus Christ we have with him. And it is twofold; 1. perfect and complete, in the full fruition of his glory, and total giving up ourselves to him, resting in him as our utmost end, which we shall enjoy when we see him as he is: 2. initial and incomplete, in the first fruits and dawning of that perfection which we have here in grace.

It is of that mutual communication in giving and receiving, after a most holy and spiritual manner, which is between God and the saints, while they walk together in a covenant of peace, ratified in the blood of Jesus, whereof we are to treat. And this we shall do, if God permit. In the mean time, praying the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath of the riches of his grace recovered us from a state of enmity, into a condition of communion and fellowship with himself, that both he that writes, and they that read the words of this

mercy, may have such a taste of his sweetness and excellencies therein, as to be stirred up to a farther longing after the fulness of his salvation, and the eternal fruition of him in glory.

CHAP. II.

That the Saints have this Communion distinctly, with the Father, Son, and Spirit.

That the saints have communion with God has been declared. The manner how this communion is carried on, and the matter wherein it doth consist, comes next under consideration. For the first, in respect of the distinct persons of the godhead, with whom they have this fellowship, it is either distinct and peculiar, or else, obtained and exercised jointly, and common. That the saints have distinct communion with the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit; that is, distinctly with the Father, and distinctly with the Son, and distinctly with the Holy Spirit; and in what this distinct communion doth consist, must in the first place be made manifest.

1 John v. 7, the apostle tells us, "There are three that bear witness in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit." In heaven they are, and bear witness to us. And what is it they bear witness to? Unto the Sonship of Christ, and salvation of believers through his blood. Of the carrying on of that, both by blood and water, justification and sanctification, is he there treating. Now how do they bear witness hereto? Even as three, as three distinct witnesses. When God witnesseth concerning our salvation, surely it is incumbent on us to receive his testimony. And as he beareth witness, so are we to receive it. Now this is done distinctly. The Father beareth witness, the Son beareth witness, and the Holy Spirit beareth witness; for they are three distinct witnesses. So then are we to receive their several testi-

monies ; and in doing so we have communion with them severally ; for in this giving and receiving testimony consists no small part of our fellowship with God.

1 Cor. xii. 4—6, the apostle, speaking of the distribution of gifts and graces unto the saints, ascribes them distinctly in respect of their communication unto the distinct Persons. “There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.” The one and self-same Spirit is the Holy Ghost, ver. 12 : “And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord ;” the same Lord Jesus, ver. 3 : “And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God,” &c. even the Father, Ephes. iv. 6. So graces and gifts are bestowed, and so are they received. And not only in the emanation of grace from God, and the *illapses* of the Spirit on us, but also in all our approaches to God, is the same distinction observed : For “through Christ we have an access by one Spirit unto the Father,” Eph. ii. 18. The persons being herein considered as engaged distinctly in the accomplishment of the will of God.

Sometimes indeed there is express mention made only of the Father and the Son, 1 John i. 3 ; “Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.” The particle *and* is both distinguishing and uniting. Also, John xiv. 23, “If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” It is in this communion, wherein Father and Son do make their abode with the soul. Sometimes the Son only is spoken of, 1 Cor. i. 9, “God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” And Rev. iii. 20, “If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” Sometimes the Spirit alone is mentioned, 2 Cor. xiii. 14, “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all.” This distinct communion then of the saints with the Father, Son, and Spirit, is very

plain in the Scripture, but yet it may admit of farther demonstration.

The way, then, on the part of the saints, whereby in Christ they enjoy communion with God, includes all the spiritual actings and outgoings of their souls in those graces and ways wherein both the moral and instituted worship of God doth consist. Faith, love, trust, joy, are the natural or moral worship of God, whereby those in whom they are have communion with him. Now these are either immediately acted on God, and not tied to any outward means, or else they are drawn forth in solemn prayer and praise, according to that way which he hath appointed. That the Scripture doth distinctly assign all these unto the Father, Son, and Spirit; manifesting that the saints do, in all of them, respect each Person respectively, is that I shall farther declare by particular instances.

1. For the Father: Faith, love, obedience are distinctly yielded by the saints to him, and he is petuliarly manifested in those ways as acting towards them, which should stir them up thereto. He beareth witness of his Son, 1 John v. 9, "This is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son." In his bearing witness, he is an object of belief. When he gives testimony, he is to be received in it by faith. And this is affirmed, ver. 10, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." To believe on the Son of God in this place, is to receive the Lord Christ as the Son, the Son given unto us for all the ends of the Father's love, upon the Father's testimony: and therefore therein is faith immediately acted on the Father. The like also is said of love, 1 John ii. 15; "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." That is, the love which we bear to him, not that which we receive from him. The Father is here placed as the object of our love, in opposition to the world, which takes up our affections. The Father denotes the object, not the efficient cause of the

love inquired after. And this love of him as a Father is that which he calls his honour, Mal. i. 6.

Farther, these graces, as acted in prayer and praise, and as clothed with instituted worship, are peculiarly directed unto him. We call on the Father, 1 Pet. i. 17; Eph. iii. 14, 15, "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." Bowing the knee comprizeth the whole worship of God, both that which is moral, and those peculiar ways of carrying it on which are appointed. Isai. xlv. 23, "Unto me," saith the Lord, "every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear:" which, ver. 24, 25, he declareth to consist in their acknowledging of him for "righteousness and strength." The workings then of the Spirit of grace in that duty are distinctly directed to the Father as such, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore the same apostle doth in another place expressly distinguish the Father and the Son in directing his supplications, 1 Thess. iii. 11, "God himself, even our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you." The like precedent also have you of thanksgiving, Eph. i. 3, 4, "Blessed be the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." I shall not add those very many places wherein the several particulars that concur to that whole Divine worship, wherein the saints do hold communion with God, are distinctly directed to the Person of the Father.

2. It is so also in reference to the Son, John xiv. 1, "You believe in God," saith Christ, "believe also in me." Believe also, act faith distinctly on me; faith Divine, supernatural; that faith whereby you believe in God, that is, the Father. Yea, the distinct affixing of faith, affiancing, and confidence on the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as the Son of God, is most frequently pressed. "He that believeth on him is not condemned, John iii. 18. He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life," ver. 36. The foundation of the whole is laid, John v. 23: "That all

men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father ; he that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which sent him." For love, I shall only add that solemn apostolical benediction, Eph. vi. 24, " Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." That is, with Divine love, the love of religious worship ; which is the only incorrupt love of the Lord Jesus.

Further, that faith, hope, and love, in all manner of obedience and appointed worship, are peculiarly due from the saints, and distinctly directed unto the Son, is abundantly manifested from that solemn doxology, Rev. i. 5, 6, " Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." Which yet is set forth with more glory, chap. v. 8, " The four living creatures, and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints : " and, ver. 13, 14, " Every creature which is in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I, saying, Blessing, honour, glory, and power be unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." The Father and the Son, he that sits upon the throne, and the Lamb, are held out jointly, yet distinctly, as the adequate object of all Divine worship and honour, for ever and ever. And therefore Stephen, in his solemn dying invocation, fixeth his faith and hope distinctly on him, Acts vii. 59, 60, " Lord Jesus, receive my spirit ; and, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge !" for he knew that the Son of man had power to forgive sins also. And this worship of the Lord Jesus, the apostle makes the discriminating character of the saints, 1 Cor. i. 2, " With all (saith he,) that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours ; " that is, with all the saints of God. And invocation generally comprises the whole worship of God.

This then is the due of our Mediator, as God, as the Son.

3. Thus also it is in reference to the Holy Spirit. The great sin of unbelief is still described as an opposition to, and a resisting of that Holy Spirit. And you have distinct mention of the love of the Spirit, Rom. xv. 30. The apostle also peculiarly directs his supplication to him in that solemn benediction, 2 Cor. xiii. 14, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you." All such benedictions are originally supplications. He is likewise entitled unto all instituted worship, from the appointment of the administration of baptism in his name, Matt. xxviii. 18.

Now of the things which have been delivered, this is the sum. There is no grace whereby our souls go forth unto God, no act of Divine worship yielded unto him, no duty or obedience performed, but they are distinctly directed unto Father, Son, and Spirit. But by these, and such ways as these, do we hold communion with God: and therefore we have that communion distinctly.

4. This also may further appear, if we consider how distinctly the persons of the Deity are revealed to act in the communication of those good things, wherein the saints have communion with God. As all the spiritual ascendings of their souls are assigned unto them respectively, so all the internal communications of God to them are held out in such a distribution, as points at distinct fountains. Now this is declared two ways.

(1.) When the same thing is at the same time ascribed jointly and yet distinctly to all the persons in the Deity. So are grace and peace, Rev. i. 4, 5, "Grace be unto you, and peace from him, which is, and which was, and which is to come, and from the seven spirits which are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness." The seven spirits before the throne are the Holy Spirit of God, considered as the fountain of every perfect gift and dispensation. All are here joined.

together, and yet all mentioned as distinguished in their communication of grace and peace unto the saints.

(2.) When the same thing is attributed severally unto each person. There is indeed no gracious influence from above of light, life, love, or grace upon our hearts, but proceedeth in such a dispensation. I shall give only one instance, which is very comprehensive; and this is teaching. The teaching of God is the real communication of every particular emanation from himself unto the saints. That promise, "They shall be all taught of God," enwraps in itself the whole mystery of grace, as to its actual dispensation unto us, so far as we may be made real possessors of it. Now this is assigned, 1. Unto the Father. The accomplishment of that promise is peculiarly referred to him. John vi. 45, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore who hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me." This teaching, whereby we are translated from death unto life, brought unto Christ, unto a participation of life and love in him, is of and from the Father. Him we hear, of him we learn, by him we are brought unto union and communion with the Lord Jesus. This is his drawing us, his begetting us anew of his own will, by his own Spirit. In which work he employs the ministers of the gospel, Acts xxvi. 18.

2. Unto the Son. The Father proclaims him from heaven to be the great Teacher, in that solemn charge to hear him, which came once and again from the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son, hear him." The whole of his prophetic, and no small part of his kingly office consists in this teaching. Herein is he said to draw men unto him, as the Father is said to do in his teaching, John xii. 32, which he doth with such efficacy, that the dead hear his voice and live. The teaching of the Son is a life-giving teaching; an effectual influence of light, whereby he shines into darkness; a communication of life, quickening the dead; an opening of blind eyes, and changing of hard hearts; a pouring out of the Spirit,

with all the fruits thereof. Hence he claims it as his privilege to be the sole Master, Matt. xxiii. 10, "One is your Master, which is Christ." 3. To the Spirit. John xiv. 26, "The Comforter, he shall teach you all things;" and "the anointing which you have received," saith the apostle, "abideth in you, and you need not that any man teach you, but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie; and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him," 1 John ii. 27. That teaching unction, which is truth itself, is only the Holy Spirit of God, so that he teacheth also; being given unto us, "that we may know the things that are freely given to us of God," 1 Cor. ii. 12.

It remaineth only to intimate wherein this distinction lies, and what is the ground thereof. Now this is that the Father doth it by the way of original authority; the Son by the way of communicating from a purchased treasury; the Holy Spirit, by the way of immediate efficacy. (1.) The Father communicateth all grace by the way of original authority. "He quickeneth whom he will," John v. 21: "Of his own will begat he us," Jam. i. 18. Life-giving power is, in respect of original authority, invested in the Father by the way of eminency; and therefore, in sending the quickening Spirit, Christ is said to do it from the Father, or the Father himself to do it. "But the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send," John xiv. 26. "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send from the Father," John xv. 26. Though he be always said himself to send on another account, John xvi. 7. (2.) The Son, by the way of taking out of a purchased treasury. "Of his fulness do we all receive, and grace for grace," John i. 16. And whence is this fulness? "It pleased the Father that in him all fulness should dwell," Col. i. 19. And upon what account he hath the dispensation of that fulness to him committed, you may see, Phil. ii. 8—11. "When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper

in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied : by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities," Isaiah liii. 10, 11. And with this fulness he hath also authority for the communication of it, John v. 25, 26, Matt. xxviii. 18. (3.) The Spirit doth it by the way of immediate efficacy, Rom. viii. 11, "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." Here are all three comprized, with their distinct concurrence unto our quickening. Here is the Father's authoritative quickening, "He raised Christ from the dead, and he shall quicken you:" and the Son's mediatory quickening, for it is done in the death of Christ: and the Spirit's immediate efficacy, he shall do it "by the Spirit that dwelleth in you."

CHÂP. III.

Of the distinct Communion which Believers have with the Father.

HAVING proved that there is a distinct communion in respect of the Father, Son, and Spirit; it remains that it be farther cleared wherein the saints peculiarly hold this communion with the several Persons; which also I shall do after the premising some observations necessary to be previously considered. And they are these that follow.

1. When I assign any thing as peculiar, wherein we distinctly hold communion with any person, I do not exclude the other persons from communion with the soul in the very same thing. Only this I say, principally, immediately, and by the way of eminency, we have such a communion with some one person; and therein with the others, secondarily, and by way of consequence on that foundation.

2. There is a concurrence of the operations of the

whole Deity in that dispensation, wherein each person concurs to the work of our salvation, unto every act of our communion with each person. Look by what act soever we hold communion with any person, there is an influence from every person to the putting forth of that act. As suppose it to be the act of faith. It is bestowed on us by the Father: "It is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God," Eph. ii. 8. It is the Father that revealeth the gospel, and Christ therein, Matt. xi. 25. And it is purchased for us by the Son: "It is given unto you for Christ's sake to believe on him," Phil. i. 29. In him are we blessed with spiritual blessings, Eph. i. 3. He bestows on us, and increaseth faith in us, Luke xvii. 5. And it is wrought in us by the Spirit: he administers that exceeding greatness of his power which he exerciseth towards them that believe, "according to the working of his mighty power; which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him up from the dead," Eph. i. 19, 20, Rom. viii. 11.

3. When I assign any particular thing wherein we hold communion with any person, I do not do it exclusively unto other mediums of communion; but only by the way of inducing a special and eminent instance, for the manifestation of the former general assertion. Otherwise there is no grace or duty wherein we have not communion with God in the way described. In every thing, wherein we are made partakers of the Divine nature, there is a communication between God and us. So near are we unto him in Christ.

These observations premised, I come now to declare what it is, wherein peculiarly the saints have communion with the Father: and this is love. Free, undeserved, and eternal love. This the Father peculiarly fixes upon the saints. This they are immediately to eye in him, to receive of him, and to make such returns thereof as he is delighted with. This is the great discovery of the gospel. For, whereas the Father, as the fountain of the Deity, is not known any other way but as full of indig-

nation against sin, nor can the sons of men have any other thoughts of him. Here he is now revealed peculiarly as love, the manifestation whereof is the peculiar work of the gospel, Titus iii. 4.

(1.) 1 John iv. 8, "God is love." That the name of God is here taken personally, and for the person of the Father, not essentially, is evident from ver. 9, where he is distinguished from his only-begotten Son, whom he sends into the world. Now, saith he, the Father is love, that is, not only of an infinitely gracious and loving nature, but also one that eminently and peculiarly dispenseth himself unto us in free love. The apostle sets it forth in the following verses; this is love, ver. 9. This is that which I would have you take notice of in him, that he displays love unto you, in sending his only-begotten Son into the world, that you might live through him. So also, ver. 10, "He loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." And that this is peculiarly to be eyed in him, the Holy Ghost plainly declares, in making it antecedent to the sending of Christ, and all mercies and benefits by him received. This love, I say, is antecedent to the purchase of Christ, although the whole fruit thereof be made ours thereby.

(2.) So in that distribution made by the apostle in his solemn parting benediction, 2 Cor. xiii. 13, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with you." Ascribing sundry things to the distinct persons, it is love that he peculiarly assigns to the Father. And the fellowship of the Spirit is mentioned with the grace of Christ, and the love of God, because it is by the Spirit alone that we have fellowship with Christ in grace, and with the Father in love.

(3.) John xvi. 26, 27, saith our Saviour, "I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you; for the Father himself loveth you:" but how is this, that our Saviour saith, chap. xv. 16, "I say not that I will pray the Father for you," when he saith plainly, "I will pray

the Father for you?" The disciples, with all the gracious words of their Master, were fully convinced of his tender affection; as also, that he would not forget them, when bodily he was gone from them; but now all their thoughts are concerning the Father, what respect he had towards them. Saith our Saviour, take no care of that, nay, impose not upon me, the procuring the Father's love for you, but know that this is his peculiar respect towards you, "He himself loves you." It is true indeed, (and I told you,) that "I will pray the Father to send you the Spirit, the Comforter," and with him all the gracious fruits of his love; but yet, in the point of love itself, there is no need of any intercession for that, for the Father himself loves you; be satisfied of that, that you may be no more troubled about it.

(4.) Nay, whercas there is a twofold Divine love, a love of good pleasure, and a love of friendship and approbation, they are both peculiarly assigned to the Father in an eminent manner: the former, John iii. 16, "God so loved the world, that he sent," &c. that is, with the love of his purpose and good pleasure, his determinate will of doing good. This is distinctly ascribed to him, being laid down as the cause of his sending his Son. So Rom. ix. 11, 12, Eph. i. 4, 5, 2 Thess. ii. 13, 14, 1 John iv. 8, 9. And John xiv. 23, there is mention of that other kind of love whereof we speak. "If any man love me," saith Christ, "he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." The love of friendship and approbation is here eminently ascribed to him; says Christ, "we will come," even Father and Son, to such a one, and dwell with him, that is, by the Spirit; but yet he would have us take notice, that in point of love, the Father hath a peculiar prerogative; "My Father will love him."

(5.) Yea, and as this love is peculiarly to be eyed in him, so it is the fountain of all following gracious dispensations. Thus the apostle sets it forth, Titus iii. 4,

“After that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared.” It is of the Father of whom he speaks; for, ver. 6, he tells us, that he “sheds that love upon us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.” And this love he makes the hinge upon which the great alteration of the saints doth turn: for, saith he, ver. 3, “We ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.” All out of order, and vile, whence then is our recovery? The whole rise of it is from this love of God, flowing out by the ways there described. For “when the kindness and love of God appeared,” that is, in the fruits of it, then did this alteration ensue. To secure us hereof, there is not any thing that hath a loving and tender nature, which God hath not compared himself to.

I shall not need to add any more proofs; this is that which is demonstrated. There is love in the person of the Father peculiarly to the saints, wherein he doth hold communion with them. Now to complete this communion with the Father in love, two things are required of believers. That they receive it of him: and that they make suitable return to him.

(1.) That they receive it. Communion consists in giving and receiving. Until the love of the Father be received, we have no communion with him therein. How then is this love of the Father to be received, so as to hold fellowship with him? I answer, by faith. The receiving of it is the believing it. It is true, there is not an immediate acting of faith upon the Father, but by the Son. “He is the way, the truth, and the life, no man cometh unto the Father but by him,” John xiv. 6. He is “the merciful High-Priest over the house of God,” by whom we have access to the throne of grace. But when through Christ we have an access unto the Father, we then behold his glory also, and see his love. We are then to eye it, to believe, to receive it, as in him;

the issues and fruits thereof being through Christ alone. Though there be no light for us, but in the beams, yet we may by the beams see the sun, which is the fountain of it. Though all our refreshment actually lie in the streams, yet by them we are led up to the fountain. Would believers exercise themselves herein, they would find it a matter of no small spiritual improvement in their walking with God.

Many dark and disturbing thoughts are apt to arise in this matter. Few can carry up their hearts to this height to rest their souls in the love of the Father; they live below it, in the troublesome region of hopes and fears, storms, and clouds. All here is serene and quiet. But how to attain to this they know not. This is the will of God, that he should be always eyed as benign, kind, tender, loving; and that peculiarly as the Father, as the great Fountain of all gracious communications. This is that which Christ came to reveal, even God as a Father, John i. 18. That name which he declares to those who are given him out of the world, John xvii. 6. And this is that which he effectually leads us to by himself, as he is the only way of going to God as a Father, John xiv. 5, 6, that is, as love. And by doing so he gives us the rest which he promiseth. For the love of the Father is the only rest of the soul. It is true, we do not this in the first instant of believing. We believe in God through Christ, 1 Pet. i. 21. Faith seeks out rest for the soul. This is presented to it by Christ, the Mediator, as the only procuring cause. Here it abides not, but by Christ it hath an access to the Father, Eph. ii. 18, into his love, finds out that he is love, as having a design of love towards us, all cause of anger being taken away. The soul being thus by faith, through Christ, brought into the bosom of God, into a spiritual perception and sense of his love, there reposes itself. And this is the first thing the saints do in their communion with the Father.

(2.) For that suitable return which is required, this

also chiefly consisteth in love. God loves that he may be beloved. When he comes to command the return of his love, he says, "My son, give me thy heart." This is the return that he demandeth. When the soul sees God in his dispensation of love, to be infinitely lovely, and loving, rests upon and delights in him as such, then hath it communion with him in love. This is love, that God loves us first, and then we love him again.

That this communion with the Father in love may be made the more clear, I shall shew, 1. Wherein this love of God to us, and our love to him agree: and 2. Wherein they differ.

1. They agree in two things.

(1.) That they are each a love of rest and complacency. The love of God is so, Zeph. iii. 17, "The Lord, thy God in the midst of thee is mighty: he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy, he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing." Both these things are here assigned unto God in his love; rest and delight. "He rejoiceth with singing," as one that is fully satisfied in that object he hath fixed his love on. Here are two words used to express the delight and joy that God hath in his love; *ישוש* and *יגיל*. The first denotes the inward affection; and to set out the intenseness hereof, it is said, he shall do it, *בשמחה*, in gladness; to have joy of heart in gladness, is the highest expression of delight in love. The latter word denotes the outward demonstrations of it: *αγαλλομαι* seems to be formed of it. It is to exult in outward demonstrations of internal delight and joy. To leap as men overcome with some joyful surprisal. And therefore God is said to do this, *ברנה*, with a joyful sound, or singing. To rejoice with gladness of heart, to exult with singing, argues the greatest delight and complacency possible.

The return that the saints make to him, holds some analogy with his love in this; for it is a love also of rest and delight. "Return to thy rest, O my soul," says

David, Psalm cxvi. 7. He makes God his rest; that is, the object in whom his soul doth rest, without seeking further for a more desirable object: "Whom have I," saith he, "in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee," Psalm lxxiii. 25. Thus the soul gathers in itself from all its wanderings, from all other beloveds, to rest in God alone, to satiate and content itself in him, choosing the Father for his present and eternal rest. And this also with delight. "Thy loving-kindness," saith the Psalmist, "is better than life, therefore will I praise thee," Psalm lxiii. 3. *Than life*, מִחַיִּים, *before lives*. I will not deny, but life in a single consideration sometimes is so expressed; but always emphatically; so that the whole life, with all the concerns of it, are thereby intended. Supposing himself in the jaws of death, dropping into the grave, through innumerable troubles, yet he found more sweetness in God, than in a long life, under its best and most noble considerations.

(2.) The mutual love of God and the saints agree in this, that the way of communicating the fruits of these loves, is only in Christ. The Father communicates no love to us but through Christ: and we make no return of love to him but through Christ. He is the treasure wherein the Father disposeth all the riches of his grace; and he is the priest, into whose hands we put all the offerings, that we return unto the Father.

The Father loves us, and "blesseth us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ," Eph. i. 3, 4. From this love he sheds, or pours out the Holy Spirit richly upon us, through Jesus Christ our Saviour, Titus iii. 6. In the pouring out of his love, there is not one drop falls apart from the Lord Christ. The holy anointing oil was all poured on the head of Aaron, Psalm cxxxiii. 2, and thence went down to the skirts of his clothing. Love is first poured out on Christ; and from him it drops as the dew of Hermon upon the souls of his

saints. Though the love of the Father's good pleasure have its foundation in his mere grace, yet its accomplishment is only in Christ. All the fruits of it are first given to him; and it is in him only that they are dispensed to us. So that though the saints see an infinite ocean of love in the bosom of the Father, yet they are not to look for one drop from him, but what comes through Christ.

Our returns also are all in him and by him. And well it is with us that it is so. What lame and blind sacrifices should we otherwise present to God? He bears the iniquities of our offerings, and he adds incense unto our prayers. Our love is fixed on the Father, but it is conveyed to him through the Son of his love. He is the only way for our graces, as well as our persons to go to God; through him passeth all our desire, our delight, our complacency, our obedience. In these two things there is some resemblance between that mutual love of the Father, and the saints.

2. There are sundry things wherein they differ.

(1.) The love of God is a love of bounty, our love to him is a love of duty. The love of the Father is such a love as carries him out to do good and great things for us. His love lies at the bottom of all dispensations towards us. And we scarce any where find any mention of it, but it is held out as the cause and fountain of some free gift flowing from it. He loves us, and sends his Son to die for us; he loves us, and blesseth us with all spiritual blessings; he loves us, and chastiseth us. A love like that of the heavens to the earth, when being full of rain, they pour forth showers to make it fruitful; as the sea communicates his waters to the rivers by the way of bounty out of his own fulness; they return unto it only what they receive from it.

Our love unto God is a love of duty: the love of a child. His love descends upon us in bounty and fruitfulness; our love ascends unto him in duty and thankfulness. He adds to us by his love, we nothing to him by ours. It is indeed made up of these four things.

1. Rest, 2. Delight, 3. Reverence, 4. Obedience. By these do we hold communion with the Father in his love.

(2.) They differ in this, the love of the Father to us is an antecedent love, our love to him is a consequent love. The love of the Father to us is an antecedent love, and that in two respects. 1. It is antecedent in respect of our love, 1 John iv. 10, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us first." His love goes before ours. The father loves the child, when the child knows not the father; much less loves him. Yea, we are by nature, Rom. i. 30, haters of God. He is, in his own nature, a lover of men; and surely all mutual love, between him and us must begin on his part. 2. In respect of all other causes of love whatever. It goes not only before our love, but also any thing in us that is lovely. Rom. v. 8, "God commendeth his love towards us, in that whilst we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Not only his love, but the eminent fruit thereof, is exercised towards us as sinners. The very mention of that removes all causes, all moving occasions of love whatever. Yet as such, have we the commendation of the Father's love unto us by a most signal testimony. Not only when we have done no good, but when we are in our blood, doth he love us. Not because we are better than others; but because himself is infinitely good.

Now our love is consequential in both these regards: 1. In respect of the love of God. Never did creature turn his affections towards God, if the heart of God were not first set upon him. 2. In respect of sufficient causes of love. God must be revealed unto us as lovely and desirable, as a suitable object to the soul to set up its rest upon, before we can bear any love unto him. The saints, in this sense, do not love God for nothing, but for that excellency, loveliness, and desirableness that is in him.

CHAP. IV

Inferences from the former Doctrine.

HAVING thus discovered the nature of that communion which we have with the Father, it remaineth that we give some exhortations to it, and directions in it.

First, Then this is a duty wherein Christians are but little exercised, namely, in holding communion with the Father in love. Unacquaintedness with our mercies, our privileges, is our sin, as well as our trouble. We hearken not to the voice of the Spirit, which is given us, that we may know the things that are freely bestowed on us of God. This makes us go heavily, when we might rejoice; and to be weak, where we might be strong in the Lord. How few of the saints are experimentally acquainted with this privilege! Let us then,

1. Eye the Father as love; look on him as one most kind and tender. Let us look on him by faith, as one that hath had thoughts of kindness towards us from everlasting. It is a misapprehension of God, that makes any run from him, who have the least breathing wrought in them after him. They that know thee will put their trust in thee. Man cannot abide with God in spiritual meditations. God loseth souls' company by their want of this insight into his love. They fix their thoughts only on his terrible majesty, and so their spirits are not endeared. Would a soul continually eye his tenderness and compassion, his thoughts of kindness that have been from of old, it could not bear an hour's absence from him; whereas now perhaps it cannot watch with him one hour. Let then this be the saints' first notion of the Father, as one full of free love towards them. Let their hearts and thoughts be filled with breaking through all discouragements that lie in the way. To raise them hereunto, let them consider,

(1.) Whose love it is? It is the love of him who is in

himself all-sufficient, infinitely satiated with himself and his own glorious excellencies. Who hath no need to go forth with his love unto others, nor to seek an object of it without himself. There might be rest with delight and complacency to eternity. He had his Son also, his eternal wisdom, to rejoice and delight himself in from all eternity, Prov. viii. 30. This might take up and satiate the whole delight of the Father: but he will love his saints also. And it is a love wherein he seeks not his own satisfaction only, but our good also. The love of a God, the love of a Father, whose proper outgoings are kindness and bounty.

(2.) What kind of love it is? And it is, 1. Eternal. It was fixed on us before the foundation of the world; before we were, or had done the least good; then were his thoughts upon us, then was his delight in us. It was from eternity that he laid in his own bosom a design to effect our happiness. The very thoughts of this is enough to make all that is within us like the babe in the womb of Elizabeth to leap for joy. A sense of it cannot but prostrate our souls to the lowest abasement of an humble, holy reverence, and make us rejoice before him with trembling. 2. Free. He loves us because he will; there was, there is nothing in us for which we should be beloved. Did we deserve his love, it must go less in its valuation. Things of due debt are seldom the matter of thankfulness; but this is merely of grace. Let, I say, the soul frequently eye the love of the Father, and that under these considerations. 1. So eye it as to receive it; unless this be added, all is in vain as to any communion with God. We do not hold communion with him in any thing until it be received by faith. This then is that which I would provoke the saints to, even to believe this love of God for themselves; believe that such is the heart of the Father towards them, accept of his witness herein. His love is not ours until it be so received. Continually then exercise faith on God, as love to thee, as embracing thee with free love. 2. Let it have its

proper efficacy upon thy heart, in returns of love to him again. So shall we walk in the light of God's countenance, and hold holy communion with our Father all the day long. Let us not deal unkindly with him, and return him slighting for his good will. Let there not be such an heart in us as to deal so unthankfully with our God.

Now to further us in this duty, and constant practice of it, I shall add one or two considerations.

1. It is exceeding acceptable to God even our Father, that we should thus hold communion with him in his love; that he may be received into our souls, as one full of love, tenderness, and kindness towards us. Flesh and blood is apt to have hard thoughts of him; to think he is always angry, yea, implacable: that it is not for poor creatures to draw nigh to him; that nothing in the world is more desirable than never to come into his presence: "I knew thou wast an austere man," saith the evil servant in the gospel. Now there is not any thing more grievous to the Lord than such thoughts as these. It is exceeding grievous to the Spirit of God, to be so slandered by those he dearly loves. How doth he expostulate this with Sion? "What iniquity have you seen in me?" saith he; "have I been a wilderness unto you, or a land of darkness? Sion hath said, the Lord hath forgotten me, and my God hath forsaken me." The Lord hath taken nothing worse at the hands of his than such hard thoughts of him, knowing full well what fruit this bitter root is like to bear; what alienation of heart, what drawings back, what unbelief? How unwilling is a child to come into the presence of an angry father? Consider then this in the first place. Receiving of the Father as he holds out love to the soul, is exceeding acceptable unto him.

2. This will be exceeding effectual to endear thy soul unto God, to cause thee to delight in him, and to make thy abode with him. Many saints have no greater burden in their lives than that their hearts do not constantly delight in God; that there is still an indisposedness of

spirit to close walking with him. What is at the bottom of this distemper? It is their unskilfulness in this duty, even of holding communion with the Father in love. So much as we see of the love of God, so much shall we delight in him, and no more. Every other discovery of God without this, will but make the soul flee from him. But if the heart be once much taken up with this, the eminency of the Father's love, it cannot choose but be overpowered, conquered, and endeared unto him. Sit down a little at the fountain, and you will quickly have a further discovery of the sweetness of the streams. You who have run from him will not be able, after a while, to keep at a distance for a moment.

To make some farther improvement of this truth. It will discover unto us the eminency and privilege of the saints of God. What low thoughts soever the sons of men may have of them, they have meat to eat that the world knows not of; they have close communion and fellowship with the Father; they deal with him in the interchange of love. Men are generally esteemed according to the company they keep. It is an honour to stand in the presence of princes, though but as servants. What honour then have all the saints, to stand with boldness in the presence of the Father, there to enjoy his bosom-love? Whilst others have their fellowship with Satan, and their own lusts, "whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things;" they have this sweet communion with the Father.

Moreover, what a safe and sweet retreat is here for the saints, in all the scorns, reproaches, scandals, misrepresentations which they undergo in the world. When a child is abused abroad in the streets by strangers, he runs with speed to the bosom of his father; there he makes his complaint, and is comforted. In all the hard censures which we meet with in the streets of the world, we may run to our Father and be comforted. "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you," saith the Lord, Isai. lxvi. 13. So that the soul may say,

If I have hatred in the world, I will go where I am sure of love: though all others are hard to me, yet my Father is tender, and full of compassion: I will go to him, and satisfy myself in him. Here I am accounted vile, frowned on, and rejected; but I have honour and love with him, whose kindness is better than life itself. There I shall have all things in the fountain which others have but in the drops: there is in my Father's love every thing desirable: there is the sweetness of all mercies, and that fully and durably.

Evidently, then, real Christians are least understood of any men in the world. If they say, Come and have fellowship with us, are not men ready to say, Why, what are you? A sorry company of seditious, factious persons. Be it known unto you, that we despise your fellowship; when we intend to leave fellowship with all honest men, then will we come to you. But, alas! how are men mistaken? "Truly, their fellowship is with the Father." Let men think of it as they please, they have close, spiritual, heavenly refreshings in the mutual communication of love with the Father himself. How they are generally misconceived, the apostle declares, 2 Cor. vi. 8, 9, 10: "As deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing all things." And as it is thus in general, so in no one thing more than this, that they are looked on as poor, low, despicable persons; when indeed they are the only great and noble personages in the world. Consider the company they keep, it is with the Father, who is so glorious; the merchandize they trade in, it is love: what so precious? "Doubtless they are the excellent on the earth," Psal. xvi. 3.

Now then if these things are so, What manner of men ought we to be, in all manner of holy conversation? Even our God is a consuming fire. What communion is there between light and darkness? Shall sin and lust dwell in

those thoughts which receive and carry out love from and to the Father? Holiness becometh his presence for ever. An unclean spirit cannot draw nigh unto him; an unholy heart can make no abode with him. A lewd person will not desire to hold fellowship with a sober man; and will a man of vain and foolish imaginations hold communion with the most holy God? There is not any consideration of this love but it is a powerful motive to holiness. "Ephraim says, What have I to do any more with idols?" when in God he finds salvation. Communion with the Father is wholly inconsistent with loose walking. "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth," 1 John i. 6. He that saith, "I know him," I have communion with him, "and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him," ch. ii. 4. The specious and glorious pretence made to an acquaintance with the Father, without holiness and obedience to his commandments, serves only to prove the pretenders to be liars. The love of the world and of the Father dwell not together.

And if this be so, how many that go under the name of Christians, come short of the truth of it? How unacquainted are the generality with the mystery of this communion? Do not many very evidently hold communion with their lusts and with the world, and yet would be thought to have a portion among them that are sanctified? They have neither *new name* nor *white stone*, and yet would be called the people of the Most High. May it not be said of many of them, rather that God is not in all their thoughts, than that they have communion with him? The Lord open the eyes of men, that they may see and know that walking with God is a matter not of form, but of power.

END OF VOL. X.

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