

THE SERMONS
AND OTHER
PRACTICAL WORKS

OF THE LATE
REVEREND RALPH ERSKINE, A.M.,
DUNFERMLINE,

CONSISTING OF
ABOVE ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY SERMONS,
BESIDES POETICAL PIECES.

ALSO,
FOURTEEN SERMONS ON PRAYER.

TO WHICH IS PREFIXED,
AN ACCOUNT OF THE AUTHOR'S LIFE AND WRITINGS.

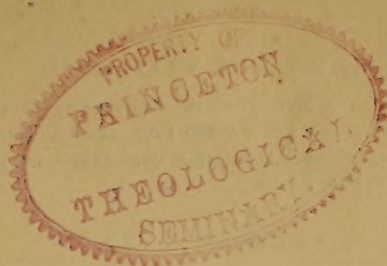
"By these he, being dead, yet speaketh."—HEB. xi. 4.

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RALPH ERSKINE'S SERMONS.

SERMON I.¹

THE SWORD OF JUSTICE AWAKENED AGAINST GOD'S FELLOW.

"Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts."—ZECH. xiii. 7.

THIS text, sirs, is a very wonderful one, as ever a poor mortal man preached upon; for in it there is a cloud, a black cloud, a cloud of divine wrath and vengeance, a bloody cloud, the cloud of Christ's bloody passion, which we are to celebrate the memorials of this day; but, like the cloud that led Israel in the wilderness, though it had a black side towards Christ, yet it has a bright and light side towards all the Israel of God; for this cloud of blood distils in a sweet shower of blessings unto poor sinners: there is a light in this cloud wherein we may see God, in Christ, reconciling the world to himself.

This verse presents us with a clear prediction of the sufferings of Christ; and the disposition of his disciples thereupon: "Smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered; and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones:" which our Lord expressly applies to himself, and his disciples, Mat. xxvi. 31—Mark xiv. 27. So that we need not stand to inquire, of whom the prophet here, or rather, of whom God here speaks; for the words of our text are the words of God the Father, giving orders and commission to the sword of his justice, to awake against his Son, when he had undertaken to become our surety. More particularly in the words you may notice these three things:—

(1) This was an Action-sermon, preached immediately before the celebration of the Lord's Supper at Dunfermline, July 3d, 1720.

1. A solemn call and summons given to God's vengeance, or vindictive justice, to rendezvous its forces, and march forth in battle array, in all circumstances of terror : "Awake, O sword."

2. The party against whom this dreadful battle is proclaimed, this terrible sword is brandished; must it not be against sinners? nay, but the sinner's surety : "against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow;" not against the sheep, but the shepherd; not against a shepherd simply, but against my shepherd; not against mankind, but a man; not against a man simply, a mere man, but "the man that is my fellow;" mine equal.

3. By whose orders, or at whose instance this summons to the bloody battle is given; why, it is the Lord of Hosts that says it : it is he that gives the commission, and orders the sword to be drawn.

Now, the summons is very awful, "Awake, O sword, against him;" if he will be a surety, he must be a sacrifice; if he will be a sacrifice he must be slain : for, without shedding of blood there is no remission." It is not a charge to a rod to correct him but to a sword to slay him; for "Messiah the Prince must be cut off, though not for himself," Dan ix. 26. It is not the sword of war to which he gives this charge, that he may die in the bed of honour; but the sword of justice, that he may die as a criminal upon an ignominious tree. This sword must awake against him; it must not rest, cannot be quiet nor satisfied, till it be drunk in his heart's blood. It is not called upon to awake and fright him, but to awake and smite him. Not with a lazy, drowsy blow, but an awakened one; even a horrible, terrible blow.

The party against whom the sword is called to awake is very glorious; the description of him here is very magnificent; "Awake against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow;" described in his office, MY Shepherd; in his person, God-man, MY Fellow. Men thrust him through as a foolish shepherd, and God thrust him through as the good shepherd, as his own shepherd, the shepherd of his own flock, that he might purchase the flock of God with his own blood. As mediator he is God's shepherd, who undertook to feed the flock, and to lay down his life for his sheep : and against the man that is my fellow; or, the man my fellow; the man who is God as well as man, who thought it no robbery to be equal with God.

Finally, the party giving these orders to incensed justice to awake against him is as wonderful; the Lord of Hosts; that

JEHOVAH that has all the hosts of heaven, earth, and hell at his call ; the Lord of hosts ; that is, JEHOVAH, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God, essentially considered, giving a commission to infinite justice to awake against the second Person of the Godhead, considered as Surety and Mediator, God-man.

Now, from the words thus shortly opened, we might observe many doctrines, but I confine myself to this one namely :—

OBSER. That by special orders from JEHOVAH, the great God of Hosts, the man Christ, his Shepherd and Fellow, did fall a sacrifice to the awakened sword of infinite justice. “Awake O sword.”

When nothing among the creatures could be found to deliver the soul of the sinner, from going down to the pit, God himself found a ransom ; he found an atonement, Job xxxiii 24, by setting forth Christ to be the propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness,—that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus, Rom. iii. 25, 26. We sinful creatures, both ministers and people, should all have fallen a sacrifice to the sword of God's wrath and vengeance for ever, because of our sins ; but behold he finds a ransom ; he sets forth Christ to be the propitiation. Whenever he is set forth, the sword falls upon him, and awakes against him who was the shepherd, that the sheep might escape.

I might here premise many useful particulars pre-supposed in this doctrine, namely, That it supposes a covenant of works broken, and so justice enraged against men : a covenant of redemption made ; a counsel of peace between JEHOVAH and Christ, for man's relief : and, which I reckon much the same with the former, a covenant of grace established in Christ ; he engaging to fulfil the condition of the covenant of works, which we had broken ; to obey the law, which we had transgressed ; to satisfy the justice, which we had offended, to bear the wrath, which we had incurred ; whereupon the sword of the Lord awakes against him, and all the squadrons of enraged fury march forth against him, with infinite horror and terror ; “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd.”—But omitting all that might be supposed, and pre-supposed to this doctrine, I shall endeavour to confine myself as closely as possible to the several parts of the text and doctrine, by prosecuting it in the following method ; namely :—

- I. To inquire into the Character of the person against whom this sword doth awake.
- II. The Nature and quality of this sword that did awake against him.
- III. How this sword did awake against him ; by shewing what may be imported in this expression, "Awake, O sword."
- IV. What special hand the Lord JEHOVAH, the Lord of Hosts, had in ordering or calling of this sword to awake against this glorious person.
- V. The Reasons of the doctrine, why the Lord of Hosts ordered the sword of justice to awake against his Shepherd, and the man that is his Fellow.
- VI. Draw some Inferences for the application of the whole, in a suitableness to the work of the day.

I. Who is this that the sword of justice must awake against ? The character of the person is very great and glorious, in the words of our text, "My shepherd, the man that is my fellow ;" that is, in short, God-man Mediator ; for, being here described in his person and office, I shall touch a little at both in the following order :—

1. His divine nature, as God's fellow. 2. His human nature, "the man that is my fellow." 3. The conjunction of both these in one person, "The man that is my fellow." 4. His mediatorial office, my shepherd."

1st, Consider this account we have of his divine nature ; "My FELLOW, saith the Lord of hosts." Let Arians and Socinians blaspheme this wonderful person, here is an article of our creed, that Christ is God's fellow, God's equal, "Who being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God ;" and therefore he himself says, John x. 30. "I and my father are one." But here consider, 1. Wherein he is God's fellow : and, 2. Why, as our Redeemer, it behoved him to be God's fellow.

1. Wherein, or in what respect is he God's fellow ? I answer, He is God's fellow, not as he is Mediator, taking upon him the form of a servant, and becoming the Father's servant in the work of our redemption ; but he is God's fellow in these six respects.

(1.) He is God's fellow in point of nature and essence ; Christ is God essentially, as well as the Father, and the Holy Ghost, though personally distinct from both ; for, neither the Father nor the Holy Ghost were incarnate, or took on our nature, but Christ

the second person of the glorious Trinity : who, though personally distinct yet is essentially one with the Father and Spirit, John i. 1—"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God : " And it is sure there is but one God, Deut. vi. 4—"Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is ONE Lord, one JEHOVAH." 1. Cor. viii. 4—"In Christ our Redeemer dwells all the fullness of the godhead bodily." Col. ii. 9—"There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one," 1 John v. 7, and in the last verse of that chapter, "We know that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding to know him that is true ; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ : this is the true God, and eternal life."

(2.) He is God's fellow in point of property ; even in all his essential properties, which is much the same with the former. Is God omnipotent ? so is Christ ; he is the wonderful council, the mighty God. Is God omnipresent ? so is Christ ; "Lo I am with you always, to the end of the world." Is God omniscient ? so is Christ ; "Thou that knowest all things, knowest that I love thee," says Peter. Is God unchangeable ? so is Christ ; "The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Is God eternal ? so is Christ ; "Before Abraham was, I am : " He is the King eternal, immortal, the only wise God, He is God's fellow in all these respects.

(3) He is God's fellow in point of will and consent ; what the Father wills, Christ wills ; hence it was his meat and drink to do his Father's will, who sent him ; "I delight to do thy will, O my God." It is true, as man, he had a will distinct from his will as God, and so diverse from the Father's will ; though yet this did act still in subordination to the will of God : hence when the bitter cup is put to his mouth, he prays. "O my Father, if it be thy will, let this cup pass from me : nevertheless not my will, but thine be done : " yet, as God, his will is one and the same with the Father's will.

(4) He is God's fellow in point of work : John v. 17. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."—Christ's works are not only like unto the Father's but the same in substance, as flowing from one and the same essence and power ; for, "What things soever the Father doth, these also doth the Son likewise," John v. 19. He acts not as an instrument subordinate ; but, as there is an unity in the work, so also in the manner of it ; by the same power, wisdom,

liberty, and authority ; only the order of operation being observed : and we find all the works proper to God, ascribed to Christ ; as creation, " All things were made by him : " Preservation, " Upholding all things by the word of his power : " Redemption : the donation of the Spirit ; raising himself from the dead ; the institution of ordinances and officers in his church ; and the judging the world : in all these he is God's fellow.

(5) He is God's fellow in point of honour and worship : all men are to honour the Son, even as they honour the Father ; they are to believe in him, " Ye believe in God, believe also in me," John xiv. 1. ; they are to hope and trust in him, " Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way. If once his wrath begin to burn, blessed are all they that trust in him."

(6) He is God's fellow in point of happiness and felicity, Rom. ix. 5—" Of whom concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever, Amen." As he was blessed and happy from all eternity in his Father's bosom, being ever by him, and brought up with him, and being daily his delight ; rejoicing always before him, and rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights with the sons of men, Prov. viii. 30, 31. ; So he ever was and will be blessed with him. It is true, there was a time when the Son of God was humbled ; when this God, blessed for ever, became a curse for us ; but notwithstanding, his essential glory was never diminished ; as God, he was as happy and blessed on the cross, and in the grave, as ever he was.—Well, thus, as God, is he every way God's fellow. O ! how fearfully was he humbled ! God's fellow, and yet a babe, a servant, a sufferer, a sacrifice to the awakened sword of justice. The governor of all becomes a subject : should an emperor become a fly, it would not be such a humiliation. O ! how sadly was the world mistaken about Christ, that took him to be a base fellow, a pitiful fellow ! but little did they know that he was God's fellow. O ! how glorious is the love of Christ to sinners ! God's fellow receiving the stroke of the sword of divine justice in their room.

2. Why he behaved to be God's fellow that was our Redeemer ? It was necessary that our Redeemer should be God's fellow.

(1.) In regard of Merit : his obedience to the death could not be sufficient to satisfy the law and the lawgiver ; to be a full ransom, and a full price of redemption, if it had not been truly and properly meritorious ; and this it could not be, if he had not been God's equal

as well as man. Our sins were an infinite evil, and God's justice required infinite satisfaction: now, there could be no satisfaction of infinite value, but by a person of infinite value; and there is no such person but God: and therefore our Redeemer must be God's equal, otherwise he should not give the satisfaction required.

(2.) In regard to power; our Redeemer must be such an one as could go through all the difficulties that lay in the way of redemption, triumphing over all opposition from God, men, and devils, from heaven, earth, and hell. The weakest of these were too strong for human nature; therefore that our Redeemer might overcome death, bind the strong man, break down the gates of hell, cut in sunder the bar of sin, he must be God as well as man, even God's equal, God's fellow. And that he might be able for the application, as well as the impetration of man's redemption, not only able to save to the uttermost, all them that come to God through him, but able to draw poor stubborn souls to himself, by his own power, and make them willing.

(3.) Our Redeemer must be God's fellow in regard of the dignity of the work: his honour and dignity, in being a Redeemer and a Mediator between God and men, was too great for any creature, supposing any creature had been able for it; this crown of glory was not fitting for any mere creature's head. An office of dignity, on an unworthy person is most unsuitable: this dignity was so great, that even Christ himself, though God's equal, might not take it upon him, till he was called to it of God, Heb. v. 4, 5.

(4.) Our Redeemer must be God's fellow, in regard of the covenant of grace, which was the ground work and foundation of all: since our Redeemer was to make a covenant with God for us, it was necessary that he should be with God at the making of it, and know the depths of God's counsel in it, and perfectly know for whom he was to satisfy, and upon what condition. Now, this covenant being as ancient as eternity; and seeing God should have our Redeemer by him, to conclude the covenant and bargain with him, who of all the creatures were capable of this? who, of all the creatures, have known the mind of the Lord, and being his counsellor have taught him? God might have said to all the creatures, as to Job, in another case, Job xxxviii. 4,—“Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?” Where were you when the plot of redemption was laid? when the names of my redeemed ones were put in the book of life? But our Redeemer was then by him, Prov.

viii. 30. He becomes our everlasting Father ; begetting us, with the Father in the womb of eternal election.

(5.) Our Redeemer must be God's fellow in regard of the place he was to have in the covenant, with respect to God : who among all mere creatures was fit to have all power in heaven and in earth committed to him ? Power to bequeath such blessings as peace, pardon, reconciliation, justification, and eternal life ; power by his blood to confirm and establish all the promises of the covenant ? Christ Jesus did, through the eternal Spirit (that is, his godhead,) offer up himself, without spot to God ; and then the apostle infers, for this cause, he is the Mediator of the New Testament : yea, Christ was to be Surety of this Testament : surety for God to us, to make out all the blessings and promises of the covenant to us ; and surety for us to God, to satisfy law and justice in our room ; what creature was able to do this ? or if any creature should be supposed to be able, was it fit that God should put such a trust in any creature ? No.

(6.) Our Redeemer must be God's fellow in regard of the place he was to have with respect to us : our Redeemer must be the object of our faith and love ; what creature in heaven or in earth, could be a sufficient prop and foundation for our faith ? Had any mere creature undertaken to be our Redeemer, we could never fully have depended upon him, but would always been afraid he had miscarried : therefore it was requisite to quiet our fears, that our Redeemer should be God's fellow ; see Isa. xxxv. 3, " He is God, therefore fear not : " our hearts could never have been at full rest otherwise. I remember, when Israel were going through the wilderness, they were to meet with much opposition ; God promises to send an angel with them ; it is said, " All the people mourned for these evil tidings," that God himself would not go up ; yea, Moses himself was fearful of the mismanagement of a mere angel ; therefore says Moses. " If thou go not with us, carry us not up hence," Exod. xxxiii. 2, 3, 4, 15. And again, ver. 12, " Thou hast not let me know whom thou wilt send " ? They thought his sending of an angel was as good as his sending none at all. Thus, you see, people's fears would never be quieted by the government of an angel, though one of them was able to destroy a whole host in one night : even so, our hearts could never be at rest, though God sent an angel for our deliverance ! therefore God sent his own Son, his Fellow, that he might fully trust him, and depend upon him ; that we might place all our satis-

faction in him, as a full portion, so as to seek no further.—Thus you see, he is God's fellow ; and why, as our Redeemer, he behoved to be so.

2dly, Consider the account we have of his Human Nature, "The MAN that is my Fellow." Here I would shew you, 1.—What kind of a man Christ became. 2. Why our Redeemer behoved to be a Man.

1. What kind of a man he became ? Why, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us : Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh.—He took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham." More particularly,

(1) He was a poor man ; a man very poor and mean in outward respects : poor in his birth ; he was not born of a queen, nor laid in a palace ; but born of a poor virgin, and laid in a manger : He was poor in his life ; several people ministered to him of their substance : yea, "The foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, but the Son of man had not where to lay his head. Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor." Let not poor people quarrel at their lot ; Christ, God's equal, was a poor man.

(2.) He was a distressed man ; "A man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs : " a man of the same infirmities with us, except sinful ones : "In all things it behoved him to be like unto his brethren ; that he might be a merciful and faithful high-priest," Heb. ii. 17. ; and, "He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin," Heb. iii. 15. He was hungry, thirsty, weary, tempted, afflicted, and every way distressed. Let no distressed person think it strange that they are so, since God's fellow was a distressed man.

(3.) He was a true man ; he had a true body and a reasonable soul : his body was nailed to the tree ; they pierced his hands and his feet : his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. As man he went through all the ages of men ; first he was conceived ; then he was a babe ; next a youth ; and at last, came to the perfect stature of a man. But,

(4.) He was a good man, an holy man ; immaculate was the conception of the holy child Jesus : we come defiled into the world, but Christ brought no sin into the world with him ; and all the devils could not make him sin ; for, "The prince of this world could find nothing in him," either of original or actual sin : "He was made sin for us, who knew no sin ; but was holy, harmless, un-

defiled, and separate from sinners." Never was there such an holy man upon earth ; see Heb. v. 7, " He was heard, in that he feared ; or, he was heard for his piety and holiness." Since Adam fell never was there a man but this, that was heard and accepted of God for his own piety and holiness.

(5) He was a wise man, the wisest man that ever was : Solomon was very wise, but behold, a wiser than Solomon is here. He answered the learned doctors, to their amazement, when he was twelve years old : Yea, all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers, Luke ii. 47. And sometimes asked questions to which no man was able to answer a word, nor durst ask him any more questions, Matth. xxii. 46, and no wonder, for he was the power of God, and the wisdom of God ; and in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge : and hence he revealed the glorious truths that were before concealed. He was a wise man, indeed. Yet,

(6.) He was a mortal man as we are, and he actually died as we must ; he was put to a painful and shameful death ; and his cursed death, which yet we may call his blessed death, we are to commemorate this day. This man fell a sacrifice to the awakened sword of infinite justice ; the shepherd was smitten and slain, for he was a mortal man ; " if it be lawful to call him a man," as Josephus, a Jew, said. For,

In a word, he is a wonderful man ; to all eternity his name shall be called wonderful, Isa. ix. 6. This wonderful man is our peace-maker with God ; " This man shall be THE peace when the Assyrian cometh into our land." This wonderful man is our only covert from the furious storm of divine wrath : " A man shall be an hiding-place from the storm, and a covert from the tempest." But,

2. Why must our Redeemer be a man ? Why, for the following reasons.

(1.) He must be a man in regard to the transaction between the Father and the Son. Not only was God's truth engaged in the promise, that the seed of the woman should be sent ; that to us a child should be born, to us a Son given, and that a virgin should bring forth a son, and call his name Immanuel, God with us, God in our nature ; and not only was God, in his infinite wisdom, resolved in the weakness of our nature, to perfect his own strength, and get the greater glory ; and that as " By one man's disobedience, many were made sinners ; so by the obedience of one, many should be

made righteous." But also, it being agreed between the Father and the Son, in the covenant of redemption, or grace, that the Son should offer up a sacrifice for us ; it was also agreed that there must be somewhat to offer, Heb. viii. 3. Somewhat of greater value than all the world ; for nothing could be a sufficient sacrifice for the expiation of sin. If Christ had not been man, he could have had nothing to offer up as a sacrifice to God ; God himself provided a sacrifice, as he did a ram in the room of Isaac : " Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not ; a body hast thou prepared me." This body, this sacrifice, was provided in the counsel of peace ; and being thus provided, Christ comes cheerfully to offer it, " Lo, I come ; I delight to do thy will, O my God."

(2.) He must be a man in regard of us ; he would not have redeemed us, if according to the law, the right of redemption had not belonged to him as our kinsman, Lev. xxv. 25 ; and being man, he is fit to communicate to us the things of God in such a way, as we are capable to receive. If God should appear to us immediately in his terrible glory, we should be afraid of him, as Israel were, and run away from him ; and hide ourselves, as Adam did : yea, thus we have a merciful high priest, that is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. As man he had experience of our afflictions ; are we sorrowful ? so was he—" sorrowful, even unto death : " are we grieved ? he was acquainted with grief : are we in poverty ? so was he : are we smitten ? so was he : are we deserted ? so was he ; having a natural sibness to us, being bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh.

(3.) He must be a man in regard of justice : justice required that the same nature that sinned should be punished for sin, and make satisfaction for sin. God said, " The soul that sinneth shall die : " now, die we must, either in our own persons, or in our surety in our own nature. If any angel had fulfilled the law, what had that been to us ? if any angel had suffered God's wrath, what had that been to us, to man ? Though God allowed the change, or commutation of persons, yet not the commutation of natures ; the same nature that sinned must suffer.

(4.) He must be a man in respect of the devil ; the devil conquered man, and man must conquer the devil : Satan must be foiled by the same nature that was foiled by him ; " The seed of the woman must bruise the head of the serpent. For this cause, therefore, the Son of God was manifested in our flesh, that he might destroy the works of the devil."

(5.) He must be a man in regard of sin, which must be cured by the contrary antidote. Our sin was pride, Gen. iii. 5: being but men we desired to be gods; therefore the cure is by humility, wherefore God becomes man. Man broke the law, and man must keep the law: by our sin we transgressed the boundaries of God's law; Christ, therefore, is made of a woman, made under the law. Sin defaced the glory of God, therefore he who is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, becomes of no reputation; and comes in the form of a servant. Sin is a Deicide, striking at the being of God, seeking his life; therefore he that had a life equal with God's, laid down his life, for the satisfaction of this wrong. "Awake, O sword, against the man that is my Fellow."

(6.) He must be a man in regard of passability or sufferings; "Without suffering or shedding of blood, there was no remission." He that will save us then must die for us, and shed his blood for us; which he could not do, had he been merely God; "For God is a Spirit." He becomes man, that he may be in case to enter the lists with justice: justice could not get at him with one stroke: but as soon as he was man, then, "Awake, O sword, against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts." But why could not the sword of justice awake against him till he was man? Why, as God, sin could not get hold of him; and so justice could not get a hit of him for sin: the law could not challenge him; the curse could not reach him: but whenever he becomes man, our surety, then they all flee about him; and compass him about like bulls of Bashan. As he becomes a man for us, he becomes sin for us; and then he lay open to the curse; and justice took him by the throat; the sword awaked. When Christ saw the dreadful sword of wrath, that was to be thrust through his heart, indeed it put the man to his knees, "Father, let this cup pass from me;" the human nature trembled, and swate great drops of blood, in his proleptic agony: However, the man was God as well as man; and therefore he wrestled through. This might lead me,

3dly, To shew you the need of his being both God and man in one person: "The man God's Fellow." The cause of God and the cause of man is referred to Christ; therefore he partakes of both natures, that he may be faithful to God, and merciful to man: a fit Mediator between God and man, to lay his hand upon both parties, while he partakes of both natures.—Our Redeemer must be both

subject to the law, and fulfil the law meritoriously : now, if he had not been man, he could not be subject to the law ; and if he had not been God, he could not have merited by fulfilling the law : but now, being God-man by his obedience, he hath magnified the law and made it honourable.—Our Redeemer was to give his soul an offering for sin : now, if he had not been man, he could not have had a soul to offer ; if he had not been God, his soul could not have upheld itself ; but must have died when his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death : but now, his divine nature did support his human body, and his human soul, under the weight of that burden which would have crushed a world of men and angels.—Our Redeemer must both suffer and satisfy : now, if he had not been man, he could not have suffered ; and if he had not been God, he could not have given satisfaction by his sufferings ; but, being God-man, his sufferings are dignified with infinite value and virtue.—Our Redeemer must both die for us, and conquer death : now, if he had not been man, he could not have died ; and if he had not been God, he could not have destroyed death, conquered death : but now, “He is declared to be the Son of God with power, by his resurrection from the dead.” There is the man that is God’s fellow. But, now,

4thly, Consider the account we have of his mediatory office, “My shepherd.” Here you may a little view, 1. How he comes to be called a shepherd. And, 2. How the Lord of hosts comes to call him his shepherd ; “My shepherd.”

1. Then, how is he called a shepherd. This will appear by noticing a few scriptures wherein he is so designed. He is called the shepherd of Israel, Psalm lxxx. 1. He is called the shepherd of souls, 1 Pet. ii. 25.—“You were like sheep gone astray, but you are returned to the shepherd of and bishop of your souls.” He is called the good shepherd, John x. 11.—“I am the good shepherd.” O but it sets him well to commend himself!—“I am the good shepherd ; the good shepherd gives his life for his sheep.” He is called the great shepherd, Heb. xiii. 20.—“Now, the God of peace that brought again from the dead that great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect,” &c. He is called the chief shepherd, 1 Pet. v. 4.—“When the chief shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.” He has all the qualities of a good and a great shepherd. Does a shepherd take care to provide for his flock and feed

them? so does Christ; "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He feeds his flock like a shepherd," Isa. xl. 11. He feeds them with the bread of life. Does a shepherd water his flock? so does Christ; he gives them not only meat for their nourishment, but drink for the refreshment of his weary flock; even the water of life, that flows from below the throne, through the conduit of the gospel; by which I understand the Spirit, that well of water springing up to everlasting life; and the influences of his grace, by which he strengthens, purifies, and comforts his people.—Does a shepherd lead his flock to convenient pastures? so does Christ; "Give ear, O shepherd of Israel, thou that ledest Joseph like a flock." He leads them to green pastures, and beside the still waters of gospel-ordinances and promises; and these pastures are sweeter to them than honey or the honey-comb.—Does the shepherd hear his distressed flock? so does Christ; his name is, "JEHOVAH-ROPHI, I am the Lord that healeth thee." Is there any here that are poor diseased sheep, plagued with atheism, unbelief, enmity, and pride? plagued with a backsliding heart? what think you of that shepherd that says,—"I will heal your blacksidings, and love you freely." Does the shepherd seek out the lost sheep till he finds it? so does Christ; "He came to seek and to save that which was lost." Does the shepherd take special care of the poor tender sheep, that is so far behind that it can hardly follow the flock? so does Christ; "He gathers the lambs in his arms, carries them in his bosom, and gently leads those that are with young."—Does the shepherd prevent the straying of the sheep, and bring back such as go astray? so does Christ; he prevents their total apostasy, according to his covenant, Jer. xxxii. 40.—"I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me." Hence comes it, that his sheep never go back into perdition, Psalm xxxvii. 24.—"Though he fall, he shall not utterly be cast down; for the Lord upholds him with his hand." Hence comes their recoveries after falls, because this shepherd gathers and brings back his straying sheep. See a sweet scripture to this purpose, Ezek. xxxiv. 11, 12, 13, 16. 23. compared particularly with verse 16. As this may be a sweet word to poor sheep, that have nothing, and see they have nothing; no good, no grace, no faith, no love, no repentance, no good qualifications of their own, nothing to recommend them to God, but their want and necessity; and to the weak sheep, that finds

he can do nothing, he cannot pray, cannot believe, cannot mourn, cannot communicate, and therefore sees an absolute need of Christ to be their righteousness and strength; so it may be an awakening word to the fat and strong sheep; these that are fat and full in themselves, and think they are increased with goods, and stand in need of nothing; they have a good heart to God; they are not so ill, they think, as some persons; and those that are strong, they think they can pray, and hear, and believe, and communicate well enough; what should hinder them? whereas the poor and weak will be fed with mercy; the fat and the strong, will be fed with judgment. Let the poor weak sheep, though sensible of great strayings, yet conceive hope; this shepherd seeks that which was lost, and brings again that which was driven away. Was you driven away with a cheek-wind; driven away by the devil; driven away from your shepherd by temptation and powerful corruption? Why, yet he brings again that which was driven away.—Does a shepherd defend his flock from troubles, and such as would make a prey of them? so does Christ; when grievous wolves, whether in church or state, would destroy the poor sheep, whether in their persons or principles; yet upon all the glory there shall be a defence: and no weapon formed against them shall prosper: for, “There is no enchantment against Jacob, nor divination against Israel.”—Does a shepherd know all the sheep of his flock, by his own mark upon them? so does Christ; The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his.” As his sheep hear and know his voice from the voice of a stranger, so he knows them and calls his own sheep by name, John x. 3. But,

2. How does the Lord of hosts come to call him HIS shepherd? “Awake, O sword, against MY shepherd.” Why, he is God the Father’s shepherd in several respects; which I touch at only in a word.

(1.) He is God’s shepherd, because God made him so; he has the Father’s commission for this effect, John vi. 27.—“Him hath God the Father sealed.”—Christ was appointed and authorized; he was elected for this effect; “Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth.” He transacted with him for this effect; “I have made a covenant with my chosen.” He formally called him to this employment, and set him up to be a shepherd, Ezek. xxxiv. 23.—“I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them; he shall be their shepherd.” He qualified

him for this work, by a supereminent unction; "I have put my spirit upon him, and he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles."

(2.) He is God's shepherd, because God gave him the sheep, John xvii. 6. "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me:" thine they were by election, and thou gavest them me, to be redeemed by me. This donation of the sheep to Christ is begun in election, and accomplished in effectual vocation; "All that the Father hath given me, shall come to me."

(3.) He is God's shepherd, because God recommends all his sheep to his special care, John vi. 39.—"This is the Father's will, which has sent me, that of all which he has given me, I should lose nothing." God has given him the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost ends of the earth for his possession. All whom he chose to be the objects of his special love, he lodges as a trust in the hands of Christ: he gave him the charge of the sheep, and his instructions are, not only to lose none, no not the least of them, the weakest of them; but to lose nothing, and as he will lose none, no person; so he will lose nothing, no part of the person; neither soul nor body.

(4.) He is God's shepherd: Why? God appointed him to lay down his life for his sheep, John x. 18.—"I lay down my life for my sheep; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again: this commandment have I received of my Father." Christ suffered death, not only voluntarily, but in a way of subjection to his Father, that so the merit of his death might be every way full and acceptable to the Father. And so again,

(5.) He is God's shepherd, because God approves of his undertaking and work, as his shepherd, and loves him for this very reason, John x. 17. He approves of his doing and dying: his soul is delighted in his shepherd; "Mine elect in whom my soul delighteth." He openly declares his affection in him. "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake."

(6.) In a word he is God's shepherd, because God the Father and Christ are equally concerned in keeping the sheep, John x. 27—30. The Father does so intrust Christ with the sheep, as yet he casts not off the care of them; they are in the Father's hands as well as Christ's: "He and his Father are one;" though personally distinct, yet essentially one. The man that is God's fellow, in this has fellowship with the Father, that the Father's sheep are his

sheep ; and his sheep are the Father's sheep : and they are equally concerned and engaged in keeping the sheep ; only Christ as mediator, is engaged for them as the Father's servant and commissioner ; My shepherd.—Now, thus much concerning the character of the person whom the sword of the Lord of Hosts must awake against : and, O if we had a view, by a saving faith, of this glorious one, God's shepherd, the man that is his fellow, God-man mediator, we could say no less than that he is white and ruddy, the chief among ten thousands. The white and red of his infinitely fair face would charm and allure us. Now,

II. The second thing, what for a sword must awake against this man ? Why, in general, it is the sword of God's awful justice ; which is metamorphically called a sword, because of its terrible piercing, wounding, killing nature. Now the strokes of this sword, are either mediate or immediate. 1. Mediate, by the hands of men ; particularly the sword of the civil magistrate : Or, 2. Immediate, by the hands of God himself, without the intervention of such outward means. Now, the sword of justice, that awaked against Christ, and smote the shepherd, is to be considered in both these respects ; for his suffering, as our surety, by the stroke of justice's sword, was both external upon his body, and internal upon his soul.

(1.) There was his external sufferings in his body : and herein justice did strike more mediately by the hand of man, and especially in his severest bodily sufferings, justice did employ and make use of the sword of the civil magistrate. Magistrates have the sword of civil power and authority put into their hands, and they ought not to bear the sword in vain : they are a power which God has ordained, and armed with the sword for the punishment of malefactors ; though this be the right use of the magistrate's sword, yet sometimes the magistrate makes unjust use of it ; as in this case, when the civil government, Herod, Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together against the holy child Jesus, Acts iv. 27. But whatever injustice was therein, on man's part, yet on God's part, impartial justice did therein act, while it did thereby bring about the death and sufferings of the surety, which the hand and counsel of God determined before to be done, Acts iv. 26.

(2.) There were his internal sufferings in his soul ; and herein justice did strike more immediately ; for, " It pleased the Lord to

bruise him, and to make his soul an offering for sin," Isa. liii. 10. Thus the sword of justice was such as pierced both his soul and body. This two-edged sword was edged with the violence of earth, and with the fury of heaven; it was edged with the curse of the law, and with the wrath of God. But more particularly, what for a sword is this? O rouse up your ears and hearts to hear and consider what for a sword it was that awaked the man that is God's fellow!

1. It is a broad sword; so broad that it covers all mankind, and hangs over all Christless sinners, who would all have fallen a sacrifice to it, unless Christ had come between them and it. When this sword did awake against Christ, he found it as broad as the curse denounced against mankind, upon the back of our fall in Adam, which you may read, that you may the better understand what the man that is God's fellow underwent, when he substitute himself in our room, and undertook to suffer the punishment due for our sins, the curse pronounced against Adam, and in him against all his posterity, and which, in all the parts of it, lighted upon Christ; you read of it generally, Gen. ii. 17,—“In the day thou eatest, thou shalt surely die; or, dying, thou shalt die; and more particularly, Gen. iii. 17, 18, 19,—“Cursed is the ground for thy sake, in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground, for out of it was thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.” Where you see the curse has three parts. 1. The frailties and infirmities that human nature was subject to after the fall. 2. The calamities incident to man's life; “Thou shalt eat thy meat with the sweat of thy brows: thorns and thistles shall the ground bring forth.” 3. Death; “Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return:” which has in it the death of the soul as well as the body. Here is an abridgment of all the curses of the Bible; and this broad sword must awake against the man that is God's fellow, and our surety, for this curse in all its parts seized upon him.

(1.) The first was the frailties and infirmities of human nature, a part of the curse: this seized upon Christ at his incarnation; for his body was of the dust like ours, subject to the like infirmities with ours; he took not on him our nature in its prime and glory, but after broken and shattered with the fall, Rom. viii. 3,—“He

came in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh."

(2.) As to the calamities and miseries that attended man's life, this part of the curse seized on him also; he eat his bread with the sweat of his brows, when he followed the calling of an handicraftsman; and after he entered into his public ministry, he travelled from place to place, watched whole nights in prayer; and thus might be said truly to eat his bread with the sweat of his brows. As for other calamities never one met with more; the world denied him a lodging; the fig-tree denied him figs; he was blasphemed by his enemies, betrayed by one of his disciples, and forsaken by them all.

(3.) As for the death threatened in the curse; why dying, he died indeed; for the sword did run through his body and soul at once, when he endured the curse, and despised the shame; his body was sore tortured, and his soul was sore amazed, and very heavy, Mark xiv. 33. His bodily sufferings were extremely great, as you may see from the evangelists; and yet as nothing in comparison of his soul-sufferings, while he endured the wrath of God immediately upon his soul.—Here was a broad sword indeed, as broad and extensive as all the curses of the law, all the wrath that the elect deserved for their sin; for God designed not to pass one of their sins, without a satisfaction made to justice, but to sue the cautioner for them all: O but he needed a broad back that could bear the shock of such a broad sword! Well, so he had; for he was God as well as man; "Awake, O sword! against the man, my fellow."

2. It is a long sword: if we may so call it, infinite in length, from the point to the hilt of the sword; it is as long as eternity; and this makes the punishment of the damned eternal, because the sword of divine wrath, that pierces them, is so long, that it never can reach to the hilt, in such finite worms as they are. The duration of the wrath and the curse is eternal: because the sinner, being a mere creature, cannot at one shock meet with the infinite wrath of God, and satisfy justice at once; therefore God supports the poor damned creature for ever under wrath; because it cannot, being finite, satisfy infinite justice: but one shepherd, being God-man, the man God's fellow; and therefore being of infinite worth and value, of infinite strength and power, was able to satisfy justice, and bear all at once, that which the elect could never have borne. Yet he met with the essentials of that which sin deserves, viz. death and the

curse ; the hiding of his Father's face, and the suspending and keeping back of that consolation, which, by virtue of the personal union, flowed from the Godhead to the manhood ; and also, hath the actual sense and feeling of the wrath of God ; the awakened sword of the justice of God actually smiting him : so that, though men wondered how he could be dead so soon, not knowing what strokes to infinite justice he met with ; yet these strokes lighting upon the like of him, the man God's fellow, was equivalent to the eternal punishments and torments of the damned.

3. It is a bloody and insatiable sword : this sword of justice was not satisfied with the blood of Sodom and Gomorrah ; it was not satisfied with the blood of the old world ; it was not satisfied with the blood of bulls, goats, and all the legal sacrifices of old ; yea, the blood of the whole creation cannot give it satisfaction, though it were bathed therein ; without the shedding of more blood, better blood, there is no remission, no satisfaction to justice, no real satisfaction with God ; no salvation of the sinner ; therefore, "Awake, O sword, against the man that is my fellow ;" till it be drunk with the blood of this man, it never gets a satisfying draught of blood. Well then, says this man, "Lo, I come !" let justice take a full draught of my blood : well, "Awake, O sword !" let the blood of this man, my fellow, be shed ; shed at his circumcision, shed in the garden, shed in his being crowned with thorns, shed in his being scourged, shed in his crucifying ; well, thus the blood of God's fellow was shed. What say you now, O sword of justice, are you pleased ? Are you satisfied with blood ? Yes, I have got my fill of blood ; "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased : " I am pleased and satisfied to the full with his obedience to the death ; I have got all the satisfaction I wanted from my shepherd, and I have no more to demand of him, or his sheep either. O glory to God, that ever this bloody and insatiable sword did awake against one that could give it blood enough, satisfaction enough ; and yet,

4. It is a dreadful, terrible, flaming, and devouring sword : so it is represented, Gen. iii. 24, where it is said "Cherubims were placed, and a flaming sword, which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life." The least flame of this sword of justice is enough to burn up the whole creation ; and, O ! how terrible will this sword be for ever to them that live and die in a Christless state ! The dreadfulness of this sword is nowhere to be seen so lively as in its awaking against the man that was God's fellow : his human

nature trembled at the sight of it ; John xii. 27—Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say ?” He saw the dreadful storm coming, the black cloud arising, and so much wrath in it, that he knew not how to express himself, Matth. xxvi. 38, and Mark xiv. 34. There he cries out, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.” We never hear of one groan from Christ for all his bloody sufferings ; when crowned with thorns, scourged, and laid on the cross ; “As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth :” but on the first entrance of his soul sufferings, he fell a lamenting, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful :” the original words are most emphatic, “He was begirt with sorrow ;” he was plunged over head and ears in the wrath of God : all the faculties and powers of his soul were begirt with sorrow ; “He began to be sore amazed,” Mark xiv. 33. The word signifies the greatest extremity of amazement, and such as makes a man’s hair stand, and his flesh creep ; and it is added, “He was very heavy :” if we consult the derivation of the word, it signifies, a sinking of spirit ; his heart was like wax melted at the sight of that terrible wrath. But the evangelist Luke has yet a stronger expression, Luke xxi. 44,—“Being in an agony, his sweat was, as it were, great drops of blood, falling to the ground :” “Being in an agony, engaged in a combat,” as the Greek word signifies : he had before combated with principalities and powers in the wilderness ; but now he is combating with the Father’s wrath. He was in agony, and swate great drops of blood : all sweats arise from weakness and pressures of nature ; therefore a dying sweat is a cold sweat ; but never one, but Christ, swate a bloody sweat ; and great drops of blood, in such abundance, that it came through his garments, and fell to the ground : and this was all but the first onset, a little skirmish before the main battle ; for the main fight was to be on Mount Calvary, after they nailed him to the cross ; then, on a sudden, the curtain of heaven is drawn, the sun loses his light ; he was now combating with all the powers of hell and darkness, and therefore the field he was to fight in was dark. The punishment of loss and sense both was due to us for sin, he therefore suffered both : the punishment of loss, for all comfort now fails Christ ; angels appeared before strengthening him ; but now not an angel dares peep out of heaven for his comfort ; yea, now his God fails him, in respect of his comfortable presence : formerly his heart failed him, in some respects, but now his God ; which makes him cry out, “My God, my God, why hast thou for-

saken me?" Never was there such a cry in heaven or earth, before or since; yea, now he suffered the punishment of sense also due to us; for now all the wrath of God was poured down immediately upon his soul: all the sluices of divine fury were opened, and all the waves and billows of his vengeance passed over him. "Darkness was over all the earth:" all things hushed into silence, that Christ might, without interruption, grapple with his Father's wrath, until he cried, "It is finished, and gave up the ghost."—What think you of this dreadful sword that awaked against our surety, the man God's fellow, when he was to expiate our sins?

5. It is a bright sword, a clear, a glittering sword: there is no spot of rust or stain upon this sword; no; the sword is spotless. Justice, holy justice: there is no unrighteousness with God. As there is no drop of unrighteousness in the cup of the damned, who are all damned by an act of holy justice; so there was no drop of injustice in the cup of wrath, which Christ, as surety, drank up to the bottom. Christ had said of old, "Lo! I come:" I come to be cautioner, and enter myself in the room of poor sinners, to pay their debt: justice, indeed, could not have required our debt of him, if he had not undertaken it; but having entered himself cautioner for our debt, he became liable to the payment of it: hence, when Christ saw the sword, and was crying, "Father, save me from this hour," he immediately corrected himself with a BUT; "BUT for this cause came I unto this hour," John xii. 27. And in the beginning of the twenty-second Psalm, which you know is one of the most clear prophecies of Christ's sufferings, after he had cried out, ver. 1.—"My God, my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" Which is not the expression of any quarrelling complaint or discouragement, but of sinless nature, when arraigned before the tribunal of God, affected with the horror of divine wrath, and not being able easily to endure that there should be a cloud between God and him; I say, after these words he adds ver. 3.—"But thou art holy." He cannot complain of injustice: Thou art just and holy in exacting all the debt at my hand, which I became surety for; I have all the sins of the elect to answer for; and therefore I justify thee, O Father, in giving me this stroke of thy awakened sword: "Thou art holy: Thou art clear when Thou judgest."—It is a clear, bright, spotless, and holy sword.

6. It is a Living sword: do you think that God is speaking to a piece of cold iron, when he says, "Awake, O sword?" Nay, this

sword is God himself, the living God: God's justice is God himself, a just God. Of this living sword you read, Heb. x. 31,—“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” They that fall into hell, they fall into the hands of the living God; and there they are an everlasting sacrifice to this ever-living sword. Christ when he came to satisfy justice, he fell into the hands of this living God; and if he had not been God's equal, God's fellow, he could never have got out of his hands again. If this sword be a living sword, even the living God, O but it must be a great and strong sword, as the sword of God is called, Isa. xxvii. 1. It takes the strength of God to wield it; and so he does here, “Awake, O sword.” It takes the strength of God to bear the blow of it, and so it is here; “Awake, against the man that is my fellow.” One blow of it given to the angels and seraphims, would have brought them all down from the battlements of heaven to the bottom of hell. “Awake O sword;” God is here speaking to himself; as if he had said, Let me arise in my armour of vengeance and fury, and fall upon my shepherd, the man that is my fellow: it is a living sword that can awake itself.—Thus you see what for a sword it is that awakes against Christ. O to see and believe this truth this day!

III. The third thing was to shew, in what manner this sword did awake against Christ, and what is imported in the phrase, “Awake, O sword.” How the sword did awake against Christ has been partly declared already in the account of the sword itself: however it may a little further appear, in the support of this wonderful call, “Awake, O sword,” &c.

1. “It imports, as if the sword had been sleeping, and now must awake against him: Christ having no sin of his own to answer for, the sword of justice had nothing to lay to his charge; and so was sleeping, as it were, with respect to him, having nothing to say against him, being the infinitely holy God, in himself, until once he made the bargain with his Father, to become our surety and cautioner; and whenever he became sin for us, and took on him our debt, then justice had a right to pursue him; and therefore, “Awake, O sword.”

2. “Awake, O sword,” it imports, that not only while the counsel of peace was held between the Father and the Son, did justice delay the execution, though Christ was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, in the decree and counsel of God, but that after this glorious transaction, the sword designed against the Son of God, had long slumbered; the sword had slumbered above

four thousand years after Adam's fall; the Lamb was not slain all that time, but only in dark typical representations of his death; but now, he must be actually slain; therefore, "Awake, O sword." God was now speaking of the day of Christ, the gospel-day in the first verse of the chapter, where our text lies, saying, "In that day, there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin, and for uncleanness." Now how shall this fountain be opened? Why, the sword of justice must pierce the side and the heart of the Son of God, and so open a fountain of cleansing blood; therefore, when the decree breaks forth, he says, "Awake, O sword."

3. "Awake, O sword;" it imports, that the sword of justice did not rashly smite the man that is God's fellow: a man in his sleep, or half-sleeping, may give a rash unadvised stroke to his fellow; but before God gave the stroke to the man that is his fellow, he did awake his justice, as it were, out of sleep, and proceeded upon the maturest deliberation: "Awake, O sword." It was no unadvised stroke that Christ got by the sword of justice; it was the fruit of a glorious transaction; neither did the sword strike him without a warrant, by particular orders from the judge of all: It was warranted to brandish itself against him; "Awake, O sword."

4. It imports, that justice was lively and vigorous in executing the vengeance due upon our surety for our sin: Justice did not give him a sleepy, lazy, drowsy blow: but a strong, lively, awakened blow: as it is said, in another case, Isa. lii. 9—"Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the Lord;" so, Awake, O sword, put on strength. Well, justice arises, as it were, like one out of sleep, puts on its clothes of vengeance, and armour of power, rallies its forces, goes forth with warlike robes, and attacks the man that is God's fellow with all its force; and acts, like itself, with impartial equity, without sparing our surety, because of his quality, Rom. viii. 32,— "God spared not his own Son: Awake, O sword."

5. "Awake, O sword," it imports the great concern and earnestness that was in God's heart to have his justice satisfied: O sword: "Awake, O sword." God speaks here with affectionate concern: 'O sword! O justice! thou must be honoured, glorified, and satisfied, one way or other; and seeing I have proposed to my eternal Son to bear the stroke of vengeance in the room of elect sinners; and seeing he has undertaken it, my very heart is set upon the

accomplishment of this glorious work ; my justice is one of the pearls of my crown ; I will not shew mercy to the detriment of my justice. A sacrifice I must have, a sacrifice I will have ; therefore, "Awake, O sword."

6. I think it imports, not only God's concern to have his justice satisfied this way, but his great delight in the satisfaction ; "Awake, O sword, against the man that is my fellow." With what infinite pleasure and satisfaction does the sword of justice give the bloody stroke to this glorious person ? "It pleased the Lord to bruise him and put him to grief," Isa. liii. 10. Why, how is this consistent with the ineffable love he had to his eternally beloved ? Yes, most consistent : for the Father loved the Son in dying, and for dying ; John x. 17,— "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again." He loved his Son for this very act of obedience which he yielded to him : Christ's obedience to the death was the highest and most acceptable worship and service to God, that ever was, or ever will be ; it is a sacrifice of such a sweet smell that it drowned the stink of all the sins of an elect world ; a sacrifice more pleasing to God than all their sins were displeasing : and therefore, with infinite pleasure and satisfaction, he says, "Awake, O sword." This leads me to

IV. The fourth thing proposed, What special hand JEHOVAH the Lord of hosts had in making this awful sword to awake against this glorious person ? "Awake, O sword,—saith the Lord of hosts." It was the Lord of hosts, the eternal Father of this eternal Son, that mustered the hosts of vengeance against him, and had the main and principal hand in Christ's sufferings, which we are to commemorate this day. JEHOVAH's hand was supreme in this business ; and that in these four respects.

1. It was JEHOVAH, the Lord of hosts, that determined all beforehand, and agreed with his Son for that effect. It was concluded in the counsel of God what he should suffer, what should be the price that JEHOVAH would have, and the sacrifice he would accept of from his hands. It was not the Jews, nor the scribes and Pharisees, nor Pilate, but principally it was the Lord's doing, and the accomplishment of his eternal counsel, Acts iv. 27, 28,— "Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were gathered together, to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done." In all they were doing they did nothing,

but what was carved out before in the eternal counsel of God : and therefore says Peter, Acts ii. 23,—“ Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, you have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.”

2. As he, the great JEHOVAH, the Lord of hosts, determined, that the sword should awake against him, so he prepared the subject capable to receive the stroke of justice's sword ; Heb. x. 5. “ A body hast thou prepared me.” He gave him a nature, a soul and body capable of suffering : the stroke of justice fell only upon the man Christ, upon his human nature ; though the dignity of his divine person, did infinitely enhance the merit of his sufferings ; yet his divine person, his divine nature was never reached, nor reachable, by the sword of justice ; the eternal word was untangible and incapable of suffering, till the word was made flesh. Now, this flesh, this human nature, he prepared.

3. It was JEHOVAH, the Lord of hosts, that ordered and over-ruled all his sufferings, when it came to the execution of his ancient decree. He who governs all the counsels, thoughts, and actions of men, did, in a special manner, govern and over-rule the sufferings of the mediator. Though wicked men were following their own designs, and were stirred and acted by the devil, who is said to have put it into the heart of Judas to betray Christ ; yet God had the ordering of all, who should betray him ; what death he should die ; how he should be pierced ; and yet not a bone of him broken.

4. It was JEHOVAH, the Lord of hosts, that had an active hand in reaching the stroke to Christ : he was the chief party that pursued Christ with the sword of justice in his hand : “ It pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to grief.” It was he that was exacting the elect's debt of him ; and therefore Christ looked over Pilate and Herod, and all the wicked instruments used in this work, as of no consideration in this matter ; he looked over them to the Lord JEHOVAH his Father, and says to the chief of them, Pilate, (that cowardly, self-condemned judge) “ Thou couldst have no power over me, except it were given thee from above.” It was this interest that his Father had in his sufferings that made him say, John xviii. 11 —“ The cup which my Father hath given me shall I not drink it ?” His Father pursued him as a cautioner in our room ; and to his Father he cries when the sword is running through his heart ; “ My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?” He spared not his own Son, when he cried, but would have him drink out the bitter

cup to the bottom : "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts ; smite the shepherd." The message comes from him, and he gave the sword a charge, and orders it to smite him ; it was this more than the whips, the thorns, the nails, the spear, that made him cry out. Another and a higher hand brought his soul to more bitterness, than all the sufferings he endured from men.—Thus his soul was crucified more than his body ; and his heart had sharper nails to pierce it than his hands and feet.

V. The fifth thing, viz.—The reasons of the doctrine ; Why the Lord of hosts ordered the sword of justice to awake against his shepherd, the man that is his fellow ? Surely it was necessary, that the sword should awake against him, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things ?" says our Lord himself, Luke xxiv. 26. However innocent he was in himself ; yet our sins, which were laid upon him, deserved to be thus treated ; and therefore he, as our surety, who had the guilt of the world lying upon him, says, Psal. lxxix. 5 —"O God, thou knowest my foolishness : and my wickedness is not hid from thee." These are the words of Christ, of whom David was a type. He had enough of sin imputatively ; and our sins had never been expiated, our judge never atoned, our souls never saved, our state never secured, justice never satisfied, the bond never cancelled, if the sword had not awaked against him. Ought he not then to have suffered the stroke of the sword ? Yea, he gave his oath for it to his Father from eternity ; and all the promises, prophecies, types, and sacrifices of old pointed out this. God was ready to come down with fury in his heart, and red-hot thunderbolts in his hand, to sink all mankind to hell : and ought not Christ to suffer and interpose ? Yea, glory to God that he did. But more particularly,

1. The Lord of hosts the Rector of the universe, designed by this method to rectify what was out of course, by the sin of man, and to bring all things to rights. By the fall, the universal frame suffered a convulsion : the covenant of works was broken ; the devil was reigning, and raging in the earth ; and all the honour of God's workmanship, in the first creation, was like to be lost. Now, the supreme Rector comes with the sword of justice to rectify these disorders, by drenching his sword in the blood of his eternal Son. Was the covenant of works broken ? Behold here is the condition of it

fulfilled, by his active and passive obedience; yea, both the two covenants of works and of grace, were at once fulfilled in his obedience to the death: this is the proper condition of each of these covenants.—Was the devil reigning and raging on the earth? Behold! by this blow of justice's sword, given to Christ, the devil and all our spiritual enemies are destroyed;" "For this cause was the Son of God manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil." Hence, when Christ is lifted up upon the cross, receiving the stroke of justice's sword, it is said, "Now is the judgment of this world; now is the prince of this world cast out, John xii. 31. By death he destroyed him that had the power of death; that is, the devil." By the bruise of his heel, his human nature, he broke the serpent's head and his power.—Again, was all the honour and beauty of God's workmanship like to be lost? Behold, the man that is God's fellow sustaining the stroke of JEHOVAH's sword, restores all; Psalm lxix. 4.—"Then restored I that which I took not away." What was taken away? why, the devil, Adam, and Eve took away the glory due to God, the obedience due to the law, and the happiness that belonged to man in his first creation. Well, says Christ, it is much to bring them all back again; but I will do it, though I took them not away. I will restore to man his happiness; he has lost the favour of God, I will restore it, in justification; he has lost the image of God, I will restore it in regeneration; he has lost the fellowship of God, I will restore it, being God's Fellow: I will bring them to fellowship with God, by sustaining the stroke of the sword which they should have sustained for ever. I will restore to the law its due obedience; yea, I will magnify the law and make it honourable, by my obedience to it, in so much that the Lord of Hosts shall be well pleased for my righteousness sake; and so I will restore to God the honour and glory that he lost by the sin of man. And this leads to a

2. Reason, why the Lord of Hosts made the sword of justice to awake and smite his Shepherd, the man that is his Fellow? Why that thus he might get all his divine attributes glorified in the highest. "Glory to God in the highest," was the song of angels when he appeared in our nature, to receive this awful stroke, God's honour was not more impaired and embezzled by the sin of man, than it was restored and repaired by the death of Christ. If all mankind, and all the angels with them, had fallen a sacrifice to the sword of divine justice, it could not have repaired the honour of God

for one sin : though they had all been offered up in one whole burnt-offering, it could not have satisfied infinite justice ; yea, though they had all been damned in hell, to all eternity, justice could never have got full satisfaction. But here is justice glorified to the highest ; “ By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified ; ” and at the same time vindicated the spotless holiness and righteousness of God, that it may be known that God is holy and just, who will needs avenge sin in his own Son, the holy and innocent cautioner, when he interposes in the sinner's room. This is the declared design of God's awakening the sword of justice against Christ ; Rom. iii. 25,—Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation for sin, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.” If God had exacted the satisfaction of the sinners themselves, by sending them to hell, it might have declared his justice and righteousness much but here it is more gloriously declared, and glorified to the highest ; for, if we consider Christ in himself, and the elect in themselves, his death and sufferings are more than if all the elect had suffered eternally in hell. Here is mercy also and free grace glorified to the highest, while the sinner is liberated and not put to pay the debt in his own person. Here is divine power glorified to the highest ; in the crucifying Christ, whom the power of God supported under that load of wrath that would have crushed ten thousand worlds. Here is wisdom glorified to the highest ; “ The manifold wisdom of God,” that there should be two natures, yet but one person ; that mercy should be fully magnified, and yet justice fully satisfied ; that sin should be punished, and yet the sinner unpunished : that the sinner should escape, and yet God should take vengeance upon sin. O the wisdom of God in a mystery !

3. Reason why the Lord of hosts ordered the sword of justice to awake and smite the Shepherd, the man that is his Fellow ; it was even for the honour of the Shepherd, and the glory of the man his fellow. God designed that for his suffering of death, he should be crowned with glory and honour, Heb. ii. 9. That for his humbling himself, and becoming obedient to the death, he should be highly exalted above all, and have a name above every name, Phil. ii. 9. That for drinking of the brook in the way, he should lift up his head ; that after he had drunk of the brook of divine wrath in our room, he should lift up his head above all principalities and powers, and have all power in heaven and earth given to him,

and a number of elect to praise him for ever. O it is a wonderful thing to think, what he gave, and what he got! What gave he? His body, his soul, his blood, his life: What got he? Even some of the black, ugly race of Adam to embrace him? he makes his soul an offering for sin, and then he sees his seed, he sees the travail of his soul, and is satisfied. He thinks all his pains well bestowed, when he gets his bride in his arms. O here is love! behold incarnate love! bleeding love! dying love! Shall not this glorious lover be exalted of God for ever, and exalted by all the Redeemed with the highest praises, for opening his breast to receive the wound of the awakened sword of justice! yea, more, the song will be, "Worthy, worthy is the Lamb that was slain. Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." And this leads to the

4. And last reason, why the sword of justice was ordered to awake and smite the shepherd, the man that is God's fellow, viz. That a fountain of blood might be opened for the benefit of the sheep. The shepherd was smitten with the sword of justice, that the stroke might open a fountain for the watering of the sheep; Zech. xiii. 1,—“There shall be a fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness.” A fountain for watering and washing of the sheep. And how is it to be opened? even with the sword of justice; “Awake, O sword, against the man, my fellow.” Now, the shepherd's blood, shed by the sword of justice, is for the benefit of the sheep many ways: Why?

(1.) It is a peace-speaking blood; it speaks better things than the blood of Abel: It speaks peace and reconciliation with God, which is founded upon the blood of Christ: this is the wine that cheers the heart of God and man. The justice of God took a drink of this blood till it was cheered and satisfied: and when the soul of the sinner gets a drink of this blood, O but this red wine rejoices his heart.

(2.) It is heart cleansing blood; the blood of the shepherd, shed by the sword of justice, is for the washing of the sheep; “The blood of Christ cleanses from all sin.” It cleanses meritoriously from the guilt of sin, in justification; it cleanses efficaciously from the filth of sin, in sanctification: it cleanses ONLY; for no means, no duties, no tears, no prayers, no sermon, no sacrament, no ordinances, no communion-table, will cleanse you from sin, but only the blood of Christ. It cleanses infallibly; for all the devils in hell, and all

the evils in the heart, shall not be able to mar the efficacy of this blood, if it be sprinkled on you by the hand of the Spirit. The whole company that are standing about the throne, have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

(3.) This blood, which the sword of justice draws from the shepherd, is healing blood; for the healing of his sheep: "By his stripes we are healed." Were your diseases never so desperate, here is a healing medicine for them: it can heal the hardness of the heart; "They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn." It can heal the barren soil of the heart, and turn it to a fertile ground, Hos. xiv. 6,—"From me is thy fruit found:" from my spirit, as the efficient: and from my blood, as the procuring cause.

(4.) It is a sweet-smelling blood; it has a sweet-smelling savour in the nostrils of the Lord of hosts; and perfumes the prayers and duties of the believer; "We are accepted *ONLY* in the beloved." Our persons, our prayers, our preaching, our communicating, would all stink, unless they be dipt in the blood of the Lamb.

(5.) This blood of the surety, shed by the sword of justice, is bliss purchasing blood; and one of the grand blessings purchased is the Holy Ghost: the Spirit is one of the greatest instances of the love of God in Christ. Whenever Adam sinned, the Holy Spirit left him, and the unclean spirit came in his room; but when the second Adam came, he brought the Spirit of God again with him: "I have put my spirit upon him; and he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." And, O what is the world without the Spirit of God? What is a man, a minister, a sacrament, a city, a nation, without the spirit of God? What makes matters so far wrong in a land, but that there is so little of the spirit with ministers and people? There is no life where the quickening spirit comes not: O sirs, we will have dead preaching, dead hearing, dead communicating, lifeless work this day, if the purchased Spirit do not come! When he comes, life comes with him. "Can these dry bones live?" Can these dead, formal, lifeless, unbelieving, hypocritical, and carnal hearts live? Yea, undoubtedly they can, if the spirit blow: O let your hearts cry, "Come, O north-wind! blow, thou south: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." Cry for the purchased and promised spirit, that we may live, and be lively in our work this day.

(6.) This blood has purchased all spiritual blessings: It has

purchased pardon of sin: "We have redemption through his blood even the remission of sin." It has purchased recovery after falls, and freedom from total apostasy to all that believe; "I will heal their backslidings. Though he fall, he shall not utterly be cast down; for the Lord upholds him with his hand," Psal. xxxvii. 24, Good news to believers, say you, he has purchased all good for them; but not to the like of me; such an unbelieving impenitent sinner as me. If that be your thought, man, it is an ignorant blunder; I tell you better news, this blood of Christ, shed by the sword of justice, has purchased faith to the faithless; repentance to the impenitent; grace to the graceless; and nothing did he purchase to any but as guilty sinners, destitute of all good. Here is a good market for you that have no good, no grace: others that are increased with goods, and think that they have a good heart to God, good desires and inclinations, and hope thereupon for God's favour, may be doing with their old covenant of works, where they and their money shall perish: but for you that are poor, guilty, filthy, perishing sinners, destitute of all good in yourselves, here is good news to you: here is grace, free grace, full grace, rich grace, all grace; grace to justify the guilty, grace to sanctify the filthy, grace to strengthen the weak, grace to supply the needy. You that want grace may come here and get it; you that have grace, may come here and get more; this blood has purchased all grace, and the purchaser stands ready to communicate it: for he has no other thing to do with his mediatorial grace, but to give it out to sinners, to men, to rebels: "He has received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that God the Lord might dwell among them." O the noble purchase of this blood! It has purchased freedom from the law, both from the curse and command of the covenant of works, in so much that the believer is neither under the mandate, nor the sanction of the law, as a covenant of works: by the obedience of Christ to the command of that covenant they are made righteous, Rom. xv. 19. Who also hath redeemed them from the curse of the law, being made a curse for them, Gal. iii. 13. The believer indeed is under stronger obligations to obey the law, as it is a rule of life and holiness, than ever Adam was in a state of innocency; but as it is a covenant of works, and condition of life, he has not a farthing of debt to pay to it, if the righteousness of Christ be complete and full: yea, this makes the law of God his delight, when he attains to the faith of this, that he has nothing to do with it as it is a covenant.

In a word, by this blood, shed by the sword of justice, there is a purchase made of access to God. The Son of Man was lifted up upon the cross, to open the gates of heaven, which our sin had shut; he rent the vail from top to bottom, and we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. The sword awakened against the Son, that he might bring us to the Father, 1 Peter iii. 18,—“Christ has once suffered for sin; the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.” We are at a distance from God, lying peaceably in the devil’s arms; but they that were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. All the sermons, all the means in the world, will not bring us near to God; the means by which he draws men to himself, is just by his blood and righteousness: “When I am lifted up,” says Christ, “I will draw all men after me.” Well, he was lifted up upon the cross, where he received the blow of God’s awakened sword; he was lifted up into heaven, to his Father’s right hand, and he is lifted up upon the pole of this gospel; and, as he said, “I will draw all men after me?” O say, Amen, Lord, let this be a drawing day.

VI. The Sixth thing was the application. Now, many, very many things might be deduced from this doctrine, by way of application. I shall at this time offer you but a few general inferences, and refer the rest to be accommodated more particularly to the rest of the work of the day, as the Lord shall please to guide and direct. Well, is it so, that, by special orders from JEHOVAH, the Lord of hosts, the man Christ, his Shepherd and his fellow, did fall a sacrifice to the awakened sword of infinite justice? Is it so as you have heard? Then we may see and behold,

1. The infinite malignity of sin, and the dreadful demerit thereof. Did it overflow the old world with a deluge of water? did it consume Sodom and Gomorrah with a storm of fire and brimstone? did it cast angels and men that are under it into Tophet, “The place whereof is fire and much wood, which the breath of the Lord doth kindle;” so as the smoke of their torments ascend for ever and ever? In all this may the demerit of sin be seen; but much more here in Christ, a sacrifice to the awakened sword of divine vengeance. Go to Golgotha, and see the man that is God’s fellow, drinking up the cup of his Father’s indignation! suffering unto blood! suffering unto death! for, “God spared him not,” being now in the room of sinners: behold the earth trembling

under the mighty load of this terrible wrath ! for there was a great earthquake, while the sword of God's wrath was running through the man that was his fellow ; the heavens grew dark when this awful spectacle was exposed ; the sun was eclipsed, contrary to the common rules of nature, which made an heathen philosopher cry out, " That either the frame of nature was dissolving, or the God of nature suffering." And what shall we that profess to be Christians say to these things ? what shall we that are sinners say concerning that abominable, evil, sin, which wrought this bloody tragedy ? It was sin, and our sin too ; for he was wounded for OUR iniquities ; the Lord laid on him the iniquities of US all, Isa. liii. 6. O ! how heavy did the man that is God's fellow find the weight of sin to be, when it pressed him to the ground, and made him sweat great drops of blood ! when the sword of wrath, which he sustained in our room was above his head.

2. Hence behold both the goodness and severity of God : his goodness, in finding out this way of satisfaction to his own justice, and wounding his own Son, that sinners, for whom he was surety, might not be wounded eternally : and the severity and justice of God, in exacting such a full satisfaction, that though all the elect had been satisfying eternally in hell, justice had not been made to shine so splendidly and gloriously. O if we could think and speak aright of this wonderful mystery ! O wonder that we are not more affected with it ! that we, miserable wretched sinners, should have been pursued eternally by justice, and could do nothing to avert the stroke of it ; and that such a great and glorious person, as the man, God's fellow, should interpose himself ; and hereupon the Father should spare the poor sinful enemies, and make way for them to escape, by diverting of his justice from pursuing them, and by making it take hold of the Son of his bosom : exacting the debt severely from him ! O wonder that the Lord should pass by the enemies, and satisfy himself upon his own Son !

3. Hence behold the wonderful concurrence of the glorious persons of the blessed Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to carry on the work of our redemption : for here is the Lord of Hosts, **JEHOVAH**, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, One God, essentially considered, prosecuting the work of redemption ; and saying, with respect to Christ, the second person of the Godhead, considered as he became man and mediator, " Awake, O sword, against the man that is my fellow." Not that God the Father delighted in the

suffering, as such, of his innocent Son; for, "he afflicts not willingly even the children of men:" but considering the end and the effect that was to follow, the seed that he should beget to eternal life, and the captives whom he was to redeem; in this respect, "It pleased the Lord to bruise him;" when he might have suffered all mankind to lie still in their forlorn condition, it pleased him to give his life a ransom for many. Here the whole Trinity is in concert, each person to perform his own part: wherein all the bright perfections of the divine nature do gloriously conspire. O! how does God commend his love to us, in that whilst we were yet sinners, Christ died for us? Rom. v. 8. And, O how he loved us, who washed us from our sins in his own blood? Rev. i. 5. Again,

4. Behold herein the holy sovereignty of God, that over-rules all the actions of men, even those wherein they have a most sensible hand, and are most inexcusable. Though Judas that betrayed, Pilate that condemned, the innocent Son of God, acted most sinfully; yet the Lord himself had an active over-ruling hand in carrying on his own designs. What Judas and Pilate did, was not by guess, but just the execution of God's ancient decree: how pure and spotless is God in venting and manifesting his grace, holiness, and justice, when men are venting their corruption, impiety, and injustice! Here is the principal diamond in JEHOVAH'S crown, that he is able, not only to govern all the natural second causes that are in the world, in their several courses and actions, and order them to his own glory; but even devils, wicked men, and hypocrites, their most corrupt and abominable actions, and make them invariably subservient to the promoting of his own holy ends and purposes, and yet be free of their sin: for which they shall count to him: and as it was no excuse to the crucifiers of the Son of God, that they did what before was decreed of God; so it shall be no excuse to any man in a sinful course, that God has a hand in every thing that really comes to pass, who is yet just and holy in all. This may also stay our hearts, when the devil and his instruments are, as it were, running mad, that they can do no more than what God permits; nay, some way compassionates them to do: no sword of men, or devils, can do any execution, unless God says, "Awake, O sword."

5. In this text and doctrine we may see and behold what a gloriously well qualified Redeemer we have; he is God's shepherd, the man his fellow; behold what interest he has in God! and that

both by nature, being God's fellow ; and by covenant, being God's shepherd : behold what interest he has in us ; and that also both by nature being man ; and by covenant, by virtue of the covenant of grace, being our shepherd by God's appointment and constitution. O how fit is he, who is the essential wisdom of the Father, to reveal the counsel of God's love from eternity ! How fit is he, who is the middle person of the Godhead, to be the mediator and midsmen ! How fit is he who is the eternal Son of God, to bring many sons and daughters to glory ! The eternal Word that made the world, also to redeem the world ! How fit as God-man ; being man, to pay man's debt ; as God to give it a value ; man, to deal with man ; and God, to deal with God ! What an able saviour must he be, who is God's fellow ! able to save to the uttermost ? Help is laid upon one that is mighty indeed ! What a willing saviour must he be, who is God's fellow ! He could not have been forced to suffer, nor dragged to the work, if he had not been willing : nay, with cheerful willingness he flew as it were, upon the point of the sword : " Lo, I come." What a sufficient ransom has he given, since he is God's fellow ! O this price of redemption cannot be over-valued ! What a well-furnished saviour is he, to give life to whom he will. God's fellow, the party offended dying to conciliate friendship with the party offending ! O what a gift is Christ, when God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son : his fellow, his equal ! It is more than heaven, and earth, and the whole universe ! O how sure and permanent must this redemption be, that is managed by the Lord of hosts, and his fellow ! What a sure and sweet way to the Father, is the man Christ, since he is God's fellow ! Think not strange that he was able to triumph over all enemies, to outwit the old serpent, to rise again from the grave, to conquer hell, and purchase heaven ; for the man was God fellow. How highly is our nature advanced in Christ ! though not changed into the divine, yet personally united thereto : Christ has not lost his dignity, by becoming man ; he is the man God's fellow. O what a well-qualified and glorious Redeemer is he ! by the Lord of hosts himself, who had made him his shepherd ! " The Lord is my shepherd," says the believer ; and he is my shepherd, says JEHOVAH, though in different respects ; I have made him the shepherd of my sheep. O if God's shepherd be your shepherd, poor soul ; if your heart be pleased with the choice that he has made of a shepherd ; and God's elect be your elect, God's choice your choice, happy, thrice happy

were it for you, that ever you was born. O that a flock of sheep were gathered to him to-day !

6. We may hence see the terrible state of unbelievers and Christless sinners, on the one hand ; and the comfortable state of believers on the other.

(1.) On the one hand, I say, we may here see the dreadful state of unbelievers, and the damning nature of unbelief. The sword of divine justice, the sword of God's wrath, is hanging over the head of all those who come not under the cover of the blood of Christ, that was shed by this awful sword. It is a lofty, but a terrible word you have in Duet. xxxii. 40. 41.—“ I lift up my hand to heaven and say, I live for ever ; if I whet my glittering sword, and my hand take hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and a reward to them that hate me ; I will make mine arrows drunk with blood.” The sword of God's vengeance must be drunk either with the blood of the sinner, or the blood of the surety, in the sinner's room. Now, they who, through unbelief, despise and reject Christ, the sacrifice to justice, which God has provided, they must themselves be a sacrifice thereto : see how fearfully this is set forth, Heb. x. 27, 28, 29, 31,—“ If we sin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth ;” that is to say, if we wilfully and finally reject Christ ; if we live and die in unbelief, refusing the remedy that God has provided, notwithstanding it is made known to us in the glorious gospel, there is no remedy for us but perishing ; “ There remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.” O sinner, there is not a day you hear a sermon, and hear Christ offered, but if you slight him, you go away with a new load of guilt ; hence the hell of professors shall be the greatest and the hottest places in hell : the like of Corazen and Bethsaida, the like of Dunfermline, and the places about, where Christ is preached, shall go to the centre of hell, when others shall not have so hot a hell. This sin of unbelief is worse than the murdering of Christ ; for they knew not that he was the Lord of glory : but this sin wilfully rejects him, while you know he is the Lord of glory. The sin of unbelief, what a dreadful thing is it ! The man makes God most true, a liar, like the devil ! and refuses to let God have the honour of a full satisfaction to justice ; will not let God get satisfaction for all his sins, as he might have in the sacrifice of his Son. O unbelief, unbelief ! for a man to have continued all his days, from his infancy, under

the drop of the word and calls of the spirit and the bride, saying, come, come to Christ, and yet the man lives and dies never hearkening.

(2.) On the other hand, here we may see the comfortable state of believers in Christ, and the saving nature of true justifying faith. The believer cannot but be safe and happy ; for the stroke of the sword of justice has fallen by him, and has lighted upon his surety, his shepherd : the death of the shepherd is the life of the sheep. Though the sheep may be scattered, and scattered with fatherly chastisements ; yet the shepherd being smitten with the sword of vindictive justice, no stroke of judicial wrath shall ever fall upon them : for Christ has borne their griefs, and carried their sorrows, and by his stripes they are healed : and all that look to him by faith shall be healed, and saved in like manner. The object of justifying faith is the man God's Fellow, falling a sacrifice to the sword of divine justice. Though you should believe all the Bible, the whole divine revelation, except this point, Christ set forth to be a propitiation in blood, you have no justifying faith ; the doctrine of the blood of God, of a crucified Christ, this only is the healing balsam to the bleeding wounds of the sinner, that has any sense of sin, or fear of wrath. Talk of the law to such a man, it is just as if you should bring a murderer to see the ghost of the man he had killed : O, says he, that is the law that I have broken, and so he is racked and tormented, lest the sword of wrath avenge the quarrel of the broken law upon him ; but let him see a Christ dying on a cross, with the sword of wrath running through his heart, a Christ hanging between heaven and earth in his room, and all the debt of the elect upon his shoulders, here is a full cordial to a fainting soul : here is the act of justifying faith, the beholding of this sacrifice, and acquiescing in it as the price of redemption ; relying on the precious blood that was drawn by that awful sword, and laying the stress of our salvation upon it : that is a laying stress where God laid it, a coming under the covert of the blood of the man that is God's fellow, as a screen from the law and justice. Here is a noble foundation for faith ; we may even dare to approach a provoked God, an angry Deity, the God who is a consuming fire, and a flaming sword ; why, here is blood, worthy blood, to quench the fire ; the man that is God's fellow bleeding and dying in our nature. We may well say with Luther " Lord, keep me from a mere God, an absolute God : a God not in Christ, not reconciled by the death of Christ."

But here is the atonement and propitiation : and therefore faith may come boldly to the throne of grace.

7. Hence also we may see the malignity of an anti-christian spirit ; not only that of papists, who bring in their works of merit upon the field of justification before God, as if any thing could please a dreadful God, besides the blood of his fellow, but also all others that are enemies to the cross of Christ ; enemies to the glorious gospel of a crucified Christ.—Here the Socinian spirit is condemned as anti-christian, who say, “ That God was never alienate from man ; and that God, out of his mere bounty, without any intervening satisfaction, pardons sin :” But if so, why would ever there be such a sound as, “ Awake, O sword, against the man that is my fellow ?” Why would there have been an atonement, if it was not to avert the wrath revealed from heaven against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men ? In vain did the sword awake and smite the shepherd, if without shedding of blood there was remission. Here, also, the Libertine, and Latitudinarian spirit is condemned. O ! what ignorant sottish fools are they, who make a mock at sin, which being imputed to the Lord Jesus, made him sweat and bleed in the anguish of his soul ! O what madness are they guilty of, who prefer the satisfaction of their brutish lusts, to the salvation of their precious souls, the redemption whereof is so precious, that it ceaseth for ever, unless the blood of God be shed for it !—Here also the Armenian spirit is condemned, and every legal spirit, under whatsoever denomination, who make faith or any act or part of it, or any thing else whatsoever, besides the blood of Christ, to be our righteousness before God ; such doctrine darkens grace, encroaches upon the prerogative of the Lord our righteousness, and is contrary to the very nature of faith, which is a passing from, and disclaiming all other foundations, and a running to, and pleading upon the blood of Christ, shed by the awakened sword of justice. The doctrine of our text exposes the malignity of a legal spirit, which is so natural to men, and rages so much at this day : as if men, by their terms and conditions on their part, could pacify a God of terrible majesty, whom yet nothing will appease, but the blood of the man that is his fellow : surely they know not the perfection of God's holiness, the terror of his justice, the severity of his tribunal, the spirituality and extent of his law, nor yet their own corruption, weakness, and wickedness by nature, who will dare to make anything the ground and condition of their acceptance with God, but the doing and

dying, the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. Some make faith, others repentance, and new obedience, the strict and proper condition of the new covenant ; but if we will not shut our eyes, we may see that Christ's obedience, suffering, and satisfaction, is the only proper and strict, so called, condition thereof : the parties of the covenant of grace are God and Christ ; Christ answering for all the elect therein : now, the condition of the covenant must be a condition performable and fulfilled by one of the parties, to wit, Christ : and the condition is, That he, in his obedience to the death, become a sacrifice to the sword of divine justice ; and upon this condition all spiritual and eternal blessings are promised to the elect ; faith, repentance, and all good are promised upon this ground ; for, says God, upon his making his soul an offering for sin, " He shall see his seed : " they shall get the good things promised ; faith, love, knowledge, fear, and obedience, which are all the fruits of this grand condition of the covenant : faith is indeed of absolute necessity, and the only means whereby we come to be justified : " It is by faith, that it may be by grace ; " that is, faith renounces itself and all other graces and good things, in point of acceptance with God, and looks for it only in the righteousness of Christ, which alone covers our iniquities, and makes us to be accepted of God : Not by works of righteousness that we do, nor by faith as a work, or as the fulfilling of a condition, upon which, being performed by us, or wrought of God in us, we may plead for God's making out his part of the covenant ; O no : our only plea before God is this object of faith ; the bloody sacrifice, made by the sword of justice upon the man that is God's fellow ; even that our Lord Jesus has paid our debt, by fulfilling the law in our room, and satisfying for the breaches thereof. As faith is necessary, seeing without faith it is impossible to please God ; so is repentance necessary ; " For, except we repent, we shall all likewise perish : " holiness is necessary, " For without holiness no man shall see God : " they are necessary as qualities of the covenanted purchased and promised blessings of the covenant. None actually in the covenant, are without them ; and so all that are without them will perish and die in their sins : but let our souls detest the bringing in these, or any thing else, in conjunction with Christ, and his blood and righteousness, so as thereupon to look for any benefit, favour, or acceptance with God ; but let us look for all holiness, as well as happiness, only in through Jesus Christ, and upon the account of his giving himself a sacrifice to the awakened sword of justice. And so I come to the

8. And last inference, that I name at the time, namely, Hence we may see, What is the great duty of all who hear this gospel, namely, to embrace the man that is God's fellow, to flock in to this shepherd, and come to him as the sacrifice and propitiation in his blood, in whom the sword of divine justice has got satisfaction. Let me then exhort you, in the name of the Lord, to this duty before I close. I may afterwards speak to different sorts of persons, and I may afterwards tell you whom I call to the communion-table, but at present I am calling you all to come to Christ. If you think of communicating, in God's name, stand aback from his table, if you will not come to his Christ; and whether you be thinking of communicating or not, man, woman, young or old that hear me, I charge, you, in JEHOVAH's name, so hear the word of salvation, and apply it particularly to your own souls, whoever you be. It is so, that the sword of the Lord of Hosts is bathed in the blood of the shepherd, the man that is God's fellow, then, as you would not fall a sacrifice to this sword of God's wrath for ever, O close with the man that is God's fellow, as he that fell a sacrifice to this sword in your room. Have you no apprehension of the wrath of God and of your dreadful condition by nature, wherein you are lying bound to be a sacrifice to the wrath of God, the Lord's hand being stretched out to lay on the stroke, and the wrath of God abiding on you, liable to the law's sentence, which is the curse of God, and the vengeance of his awakened sword, until once you get the man that is God's fellow put in your room? All that the gospel aims at is this, that you would seek to change rooms with Christ: guilty sinners, here is the way to get your debt paid, your judge pleased, justice satisfied, God atoned, sin expiated, and everlasting peace and reconciliation between God and you made up. The sword of the Lord of hosts is hanging over you heads, crying, vengeance, vengeance upon the guilty sinner; This is the sad and certain tidings of the law, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things, written in the book of the law to do them." But behold the man that is God's shepherd and fellow; the curse of the law, the vengeance of God, the sword of JEHOVAH, has lighted upon him that it might not fall upon you: there is the glad news and good tidings of the gospel. Is there not here a suitable object, and a sufficient foundation of faith, that Christ is set forth of God to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare the righteousness of God, that he might be just, and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus?—Now,

unworthy, wretched, guilty, filthy, bloody sinner, will you take a worthy match ; the man that is God's fellow ? " Will you go with this man ? " Will you take him in his garments rolled in his own blood, when the sword of justice did awake against him and smote him to death ? The great God of hosts was in sad earnest, when he gave his shepherd, his glorious fellow the bloody blow ; and now he is in earnest in his call, swearing, by a solemn oath, " As he lives, that he takes no delight in the death of sinners ; " and delaring by his drawing forth the heart-blood of the man that is his fellow, that he is willing to save you upon the account of this sacrifice that his justice has got : only welcome the news as a faithful saying, and worthy of all acception ; and put in for a share of the benefits of this sacrifice, for it is the best, and the last, that ever you will hear of ; and if it be slighted, " There remains no more sacrifice for sin." As the eternal God is willing, so his eternal Son is both able and willing to save you ; and if he had not been so, he would never had sustained the stroke of avenging justice in the room of sinners, who is that good shepherd that laid down his life for the sheep. When he was smitten, by the sword of justice, he willingly undertook and underwent it ; he longed for the bloody baptism, and was straitened till it was accomplished. When he was smitten by the hands of men, " He hid not his face from shame and spitting, but was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth : " He never quarrelled or complained because it was for our cause. Would he not quarrel with those that smote him ? and will he quarrel with a poor sinner that desires to come to him, and to plead the benefit of his satisfaction ? No, no ! he will rest in his love, Zeph. iii. 17 : or, as the word signifies, " He will be silent, or dumb in his love ; " he will not upbraid you for your falls, nor quarrel you for your former misdemeanours : he will be more content with your recovery, than ever he was discontent with your apostasy : he will be more pleased with your coming to him, than ever he was displeased with your sins, and departures against him. Come then, by the love and goodwill of God in Christ, by the blood and bowels of the Lord Jesus Christ, I adjure and entreat you not to exclude yourselves, by unbelief, from all the benefits of this sacrifice, that Christ offered of himself to the sword of divine wrath, but accept of this propitiation, and lay your poor guilty souls under the covert of the blood of this man that is God's fellow : behold ! God brings near this blood of

Jesus to you, even to you, that are the most hardened sinners in all this house : Isa. xlv. 12, 13,—“ Harken unto me, ye stout-hearted and far from righteousness ; behold, I bring near my righteousness.” Christ and his blood and righteousness is so near to you, that you may lay hold on him, and touch the hem of his garments, and be whole. In the name of God, I proclaim the access that you have all to come to Christ, and to look unto, and depend upon him for salvation : “ Look unto him, all ye ends of the earth, and be ye saved.” I am warranted to preach this Gospel to every creature : there is no rational creature within these walls, that stands in need of salvation, but you have it, unless you wilfully reject it : “ Whosoever will, let him come.” Will you tell me, dare you say but you stand in need of Christ to come in between you and the sword of the Lord of hosts ? Is the sword, the awakened sword of God’s wrath and vengeance a light matter ? are you content to bear the lashes of it, in your own persons through all eternity ? If not, then you will be content to change rooms with Christ ? content that he be made sin for you, and that you be made the righteousness of God in him ? 2 Cor. v. 21. Content that all your sin and guilt be laid upon him, and that all his merit and righteousness be imputed unto you ? If you be not pleased with this sweet bargain, what in all the world will you do with your sin and guilt ? Can you answer well enough for it at God’s tribunal ? What will you do with all your plagues and maladies ? Can you heal them yourselves ? What will you do with all the curses and threatenings of God’s law when grim death will stare you broad in the face, and when the last fetch of your breath shall summon you to come and answer before the just tribunal of God ? What will you do with the flaming sword of wrath, that hangs above, hovers over your head, and will light upon you fearfully, as sure as God lives, unless you be pleased with this bargain, that Christ bear all the weight of your salvation, and all the weight of God’s wrath for you ? God seeks no more, and he seeks no less than this. You will say, who would not be pleased with this bargain ? Alas ! Are there not many here that are not pleased ? Will you think that there must be some other things to please and appease God ; may be you think you should have some good qualifications to please him ; that your hearing, reading, praying, communicating, will please him ; your tears, good motions, and affections will please him ; if you think so, you do not think honourably of God. Will any of these things appease the awful Judge,

and ward off the avenging blow, when he says, "Awake, O sword!" No, no. If you be not pleased with the man that is God's fellow, and him alone to be your surety, his blood alone to be your covert from the sword of wrath, God cannot be pleased with you, though you should weep an ocean of tears, give all that you have to the poor, and give your body to be burnt; you both lose your soul and all your labour to the bargain. The question is, are you content that Christ alone answer for you? that he alone stand between you and the sword? If you think to put anything else along with Christ, to stand between you and the sword, it is but a rotten rag, and the flaming sword will burn through it, and get at you with its devouring vengeance. Christ alone then must have the whole stress of your salvation laid on him: are you content? will you have salvation freely, through the blood of Jesus?

The glorious gospel is much clouded at this day, with legal terms, conditions, and qualifications. If my doctrine were upon condition that you did so and so; that you believe, and repent, and mourn, and pray, and obey, and the like, then you shall have the favour of God; I dare not for my life say, that that is the gospel: but the gospel I desire to preach, is, will you have a Christ to work faith, repentance, love, and all good in you, and to stand between you and the sword of divine wrath? Here there is no room for you to object, that you are not qualified, because you are such an hardened unhumbléd, blind, and stupid wretch: for the question is not, will you remove these evils, and then come to Christ? but, will you have a Christ to remove them for you? It is because you are plagued with these diseases that I call you to come to the physician, that he may heal them. Are you qualified for hell and damnation? and have you much mischief and misery about you? Why, there needs be no better qualifications for you to come to Christ: we would indeed have some good qualifications in these whom we invite to the communion-table; they should be humbled, believing, penitent people; because it is presupposed that they have come to Christ, and received some good out of his hand: but when I call you to come to Christ, and seek no good qualifications of you at all, prior to your coming to him, but that you come with all your black and hellish qualifications, that he may take them away, and put some good qualifications upon you; so that, whatever bad things be about you, it should rather be an argument for your coming, than an hindrance of your coming to him; for

never, never will you get your ills mended, till you come to him to do it for you.

But neither is there any room for you here to object, that your guilt is so great, and God's justice is so terrible, that you have no hope; for what am I telling you all this time, but that the terrible sword of justice is satisfied and appeased, to the full, with the blood of the man that is God's fellow? Here is the way that God himself hath laid down for getting satisfaction; and there is no other way; though you man, woman, had the guilt of all the world lying on your back, all that is required of you is just this, to be heartily pleased and content that God gets satisfaction for all your sins in this way; and if you be, the sword shall be put up in the scabbard, and never reach you: God will get his justice satisfied more gloriously this way upon you, than though he should damn you in hell to eternity.

Come, come then, before I close; away with all your objections, and let God be glorified, to the highest, in your embracing this way of salvation to your souls, and this way of satisfaction to justice. Behold! once for all, I make you the richest offer that ever was heard tell of; in the name of the Lord of hosts I offer you the man that is God's fellow, to be a complete saviour to you, to stand between you and the sword of divine wrath, and to be the burden-bearer for you; to bear the weight of all the curses of the law, the weight of all God's wrath, the weight of all your salvation for you; and to do all your work in you and for you. O soul, am I not offering a suitable and worthy match to you? He is a man indeed, but a wonderful man, the man that is God's fellow: What say you? "Will you go with this man?" Will you match with this man? It is true, I am unworthy to offer the like of him; for the latchet of his shoe no man nor angel is worthy to unloose: but, as I said, it was in the name of the Lord of hosts that I was making the offer: So I tell you again, it is the great JEHOVAH that is offering his Son to you this day; and it becomes such a glorious God to make such a glorious offer; and it becomes no vile sinner here to refuse the offer: for, be what you will, I again offer, in the name of the Lord of hosts, the man that is his fellow. Are you a child of wrath? I offer him as a saviour to redeem you, and deliver you from the wrath to come. Are you a poor bankrupt? I offer him who is the heir of all things, and has unsearchable riches to pay all your debt. Are you a poor ignorant creature? I offer you him as

made of God unto you wisdom. Are you guilty? I offer him as made unto you righteousness. Are you polluted? I offer him to you, as made unto you sanctification. Are you miserable and forlorn? I offer him to you, as made of God unto you complete redemption. Are you hard-hearted? I offer him in that promise, "I will take away the heart of stone." Are you content that he break your hard heart, according to his promise? Come then, put your hard heart in his hands. Are you a wretched backslider, that has backsliden an hundred times, a thousand times more than an hundred? I offer him in that promise, "I will heal your backslidings." Are your corruptions strong and prevalent? I offer him in that promise, "I will subdue your iniquities." Are you pleased that he do so? Are you afraid, that you revolt more and more? I offer him in that promise, "I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes. I will put my fear in your heart, and you shall not depart from me." Are you afraid you was never elected? Meddle not with that secret; but according to the revealed will of God, I offer God's chief elect to you, in whom his soul is well pleased; and if your heart go in to the offer, and you make him your elect too, by choosing him, then your election is sure. Are you afraid you have sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost? I tell you, that as your fear of that says you was never guilty of it, so I offer the man that is God's fellow: and if you be content to have him, you shall never be guilty of it. Are you full of enmity against God? I offer him as a saviour that can kill your enmity: do you consent that he do so? Are you an impenitent creature, destitute of repentance? I offer him as a Prince and a Saviour, exalted to give repentance and remission of sin. Do you consent? Have you received him formerly? I offer him anew, that you may receive him again, and take a more large armful of him than ever. Have you never received him to this day? I offer him, after all the slights you have given him, to be now received and believed in. Are you unable to believe in him? have you no power to close with the offer? why, I offer him to you as the author of faith, to work it in you powerfully. Do you consent that he put forth his power for this effect? what shall I say? Are you willing to believe? Though that be the greatest let and impediment of all; Behold, I offer the man that is God's fellow, as a saviour by power, as well as by price, to work in you both to will and to do. Are you content that he put forth his power to break

your enemy, and make you willing? God knows it is neither in you to will nor to do, and that you have neither will nor power of your own; and faith lies not in bringing forth some great things by your own power, but in employing the power of God to work all your works in you and for you. Behold then, the power of God is in your offer, while the man that is God's fellow is offered: the strength of God is offered; "Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me;" and seeing the strength of God is offered, Oh! give it employment, saying, in your heart, O come, come powerful arm of JEHOVAH, and make me go in to its call. The gospel call and offer uses to be the channel of almighty power and grace.

Now what in all the world have you to object more? Why, have you so many objections more, as you think all the ministers of earth cannot answer them? I offer you the man that is God's fellow to answer them all: are you content that he take all the work, and get all the glory? If you consent to this, he seeks no more of you. Are you a captive to the sword of God's justice? I offer you the man that is God's fellow, in whose bowels the sword was bathed: and now the flaming sword that guarded the way of the tree of life is taken away, and here is the tree of life full of the apples of grace, glory, and eternal salvation: and the branches of the tree are hanging down among your hands, in the midst of the church of Dunfermline. O take, and eat, and live for ever. What say you now? I allude to the words of Jephthah, Judges xi. 9,—“I fight for you and prevail, shall I be your head?” O yes, yes, say they; so says Christ to you, If I satisfy justice for you; if I quench the flames of that fiery sword, and drown all your enemies in the red sea of my blood, shall I be your head? Shall he be your head, man? Shall he be your head, woman? Does your hearts say, Yes, yes? Does your hearts say, Amen, amen? Yea, say you, I think my heart says, Amen, to the blessed offer, and that I would willingly and cheerfully consent: but my heart is deceitful, and I know not if my consent be of a true sort, or only a temporary flash, a presumptuous confidence that will vanish: well, if that be your objection, come, I offer you the man that is God's fellow, who can answer that among the rest, and can say to your soul, “Fear not, for I am thy God; I am thy salvation.” Are you content to take him for this end, to discover the defect of your faith, and to work in you the faith of his elect? Can you say, That it is not in your faith, but in

Christ himself, that you are seeking salvation? Can you say, Whatever be wrong about me or about my faith, yet I see there is nothing wrong about Christ, and I would have him to right all that is wrong about me? Can you say, However I be in the dark about my faith, and whatever sort of faith it is that I have, yet sometimes I have found my unbelief, and that I could no more believe, than I could move the earth from its centre; but yet the joyful sound of gospel grace has touched my heart; and made me take up so much glory and excellency to be in Christ that I think all the world nothing, in comparison of him; and I think my heart's desire is, O to have him for my prophet, to take away the darkness of my mind: for my priest, to take away the guilt of my sins; and for my king, to take away the power of my lusts. Is your heart saying "Gladly would I have him; gladly would I have him, that I may thus be blessed in him, and that his name may be glorified in me?" Are these the breathings of your soul? Then, upon my peril, I undertake to be the happy messenger, and tell you, in the name of the Lord, that whatever you think of your faith, and of yourselves, as the blackest monsters of sin and guilt that ever were out of hell; yet you have the faith of God's elect, and you are married and matched with the man that is God's fellow: yea, the Lord of Hosts is your father and friend, reconciled in him, so as there is no fear of the sword of justice with respect to you. You are the sheep, and it awakened in all its fury and vengeance against the shepherd, that the sheep might escape; and in testimony thereof, he invites you to commemorate this bloody sacrifice in the sacrament of the supper, where you shall see the sword bathed in his heart's blood in your room, and hear the Lord of hosts giving his solemn orders, for that effect, that he might be smitten, and you spared, saying, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man that is my fellow."

THE END OF THE SERMON.

DISCOURSE BEFORE THE SERVICE OF THE TABLES.

Now, we are to proceed to the great work of the day, and that I may accommodate my former purpose to my present work, you may remember the doctrine I am upon is, "That by special orders from

JEHOVAH, the great God of hosts, the man Christ, his shepherd and fellow, did fall a sacrifice to the awakened sword of infinite justice, in the room of the sheep."

There are some general inferences I have drawn from this doctrine; and now there are these four more particular inferences may be drawn from it, with a more immediate reference and relation to the great sealing ordinance we have before us.

1. Hence we may see what is the nature and end of this sacrament.

2. Hence we may see who they are that stand debarred and excluded from meddling with the sacred symbols of the body and blood of Christ.

3. Hence we may see the character of these who have a right to approach, and are invited of God to it.

4. Hence we may see in what manner believers are to approach, and come to a communion table.

Now, a word to each of these, and then we shall proceed to the work.

1. Then, the doctrine I am upon, may give us some insight into the nature and end of this sacrament. Why, it is just a celebrating the memorial of the death of the man that is God's fellow, when, as the glorious shepherd, he yielded himself a sacrifice to the awakened sword of justice, in the room of the sheep. In this sacrament, Christ is set forth evidently crucified among us, and therein we may hear the Lord of hosts saying, "Awake, O sword! against my shepherd, against the man that is my fellow; smite the shepherd." This sacrament is appointed to be a commemorative sign of the death of Christ; "As often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you shew forth the Lord's death till he come. Do this in remembrance of me; of ME, who became a sacrifice to the sword of justice; by which sacrifice all spiritual blessings, peace, pardon, reconciliation with God, grace, glory, and all good things, are purchased. The sword of justice having bathed itself, to satisfaction, in the blood of this sacrifice, the sacrament of the supper is a feast upon the sacrifice, 2 Cor. v. 7,—“Even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast.” This is the feast of fat things, of wines on the lees well refined. Upon the body and blood of Christ, represented by the elements of bread and wine, which is just a feeding upon, and viewing by faith, the value and virtue of the sacrifice for satisfying God, for expiating sin, for

vanquishing hell, and for purchasing heaven, and all the means that lead unto it; as also, for sealing the covenant of grace, and all the promises of it, which are yea and amen in Jesus Christ, the testament being ratified and confirmed by the death of the Testator, Heb. ix. 16. But again,

2. From this doctrine we may see who they are that stand debarred and excluded from meddling with these sacred symbols of the body and blood of Christ in this sacrament; namely, in general, all unbelievers, who, never having seen their wicked state, as liable to the stroke of divine wrath, because of their sin and guilt, had not fled under the covert of the blood of the shepherd, of the blood of the man that is God's fellow, who was smitten in the room of the sheep. What have these to do with the sign, who never apprehended the thing signified, namely, the propitiation of the blood of Christ? And therefore, in the great and awful name and authority of the great and glorious JEHOVAH, I solemnly debar and excommunicate, from the table of the Lord, all who never found themselves in any measure pursued by the avenger of blood, the sword of the Lord of hosts, and never have fled for refuge to the blood of Christ, the man that is God's fellow, to stand between them and the avenging sword of justice; those that will not come to Christ, let them not dare to come to his table, nor come to abuse the symbols of his blood; who, by unbelief, trample his blood under their feet, and will not make use of it as the sacrifice to satisfy justice in their room. But, that it may appear more distinctly, whom I here debar, in the name of the Lord, I shall tell you who they are, that never made any saving use of the blood of Christ, the man that is God's fellow, but slight and neglect this sacrifice and offering for sin, which he has made of himself to the sword of justice, and so stand debarred and excommunicated from the table of the Lord.

(1.) All these who think to make their peace with God, without minding the necessity of any thing intervening between him and them; not knowing that peace with God must be founded upon the blood of the man that is his fellow. Some are utterly careless how their peace be made, or whether it be made or not, they hope for it, and think to come at it, but they cannot tell how; and are careless to know the way. Others presume, and think God loves them, because they love themselves; and though they know they have sin, they think God will not be so ill-natured as to reckon with them; they think God loves them, but they cannot give a

ground for it. Others think that God is merciful, and therefore they conclude they will be pardoned and accepted; because a merciful man sometimes seeks no satisfaction, so they think much more will a merciful God seek none; not knowing, that though God be merciful, he will not show mercy to the prejudice of his justice. But the thought of these people is upon the matter, that they would have obtained mercy though mercy had never become a sacrifice to the sword of justice, without respect to the mediation of the man that is God's fellow.—These therefore I debar in God's great name, from the table of the Lord.

(2.) Another sort, who despise the sacrifice made to the sword of justice, is, all those who take the legal way of making their peace with God. Not as if they thought to appear before God without sin and holiness, as the covenant of works requires; but who think, that if they sin, they will make amends; and that either by something Negative, that they have not done, or something Positive, that they have done; or some internal qualification, that they rest upon. Some think to make amends to God by something Negative; that they have not been so ill as other people; and if they go to hell, they think few will go to heaven; and if they were to die, they think they care not, they have done no person any injury; they have carried very harmlessly, like the Pharisee, "God, I thank thee, I am not like other men; I am no drunkard, or adulterer, or oppressor, or swearer;" and when they see any profane persons, they are puffed up with a good opinion of themselves, because they are not so profane as they; these I debar, in the name of the Lord. Others think to make amends to God by something positive; they do many good duties, like the same Pharisee, that boasted, "I fast twice a-week, I give tithes of all that I possess;" if any duty be performed, or any good be done by them, their fingers are ready to stick to it; they rest there, and hope God will be pleased and pacified on this account: these I debar, in the name of the Lord. Others, upon this same head, think to make amends by some internal qualifications, that they rest upon: if at any time they have liberty, and motions of affection in prayer, stirrings of convictions in hearing; and joys of heart like the stony-ground hearers; any sorrow of heart, or sadness for sin, these they think will do their turn, and they think they need no other sacrifice to God, but a broken heart; sadly mistaking the nature of a true evangelical brokenness of spirit. It is certain, both from scripture

and experience, that many hundreds of professors dash and perish on this stumbling-block ; “ They call themselves of the holy city ; yea, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel,” Isa. xlviii. 2. “ They seek him daily, and delight to know his ways ; yea, delight in approaching to God,” Isa. lviii. 2. Expectation of happiness, grounded upon some weak performance, and some internal motions and qualifications, do cut the throat of many civil and discreet men, that are not grossly profane. All these, therefore, that make any of these things the ground of their hope of peace with God, I debar and excommunicate from the table of the Lord, as being strangers to the true ground of peace, the man that is God’s fellow, becoming a sacrifice to the sword of justice.

(3.) Another sort, who make no right use of this sacrifice offered to the sword of justice, are these, who, though they make use of Christ, as the object of their worship, yet make not use of his blood as the ground of their justification and peace with God ; as if they would not altogether neglect Christ, and yet they neglect his offering, and would make use of himself, but not of his sacrifice ; like the man that came to him, saying, “ Good master, what shall I do, that I may inherit eternal life ?” He was going upon the ground of his own righteousness ; so some, they may come to Christ to desire his help to enable them to do duty, that by doing thereof they may work out their own salvation ; and be helped this way to make their peace with God : thus, by grace, sought and received from him, they hope to be their own Saviour and peace-maker, with God ; and so were never brought to ground the making of their peace with God, upon Christ’s sacrifice and offering alone. These, therefore, I also debar from his holy table.

(4.) A fourth sort, that never made right use of this sacrifice to justice’s sword, and propitiation in the blood of Christ, are all these, who never got such a view of the love of God, in this sacrifice, as to kill the love of sin in them and to bring down the reigning power of sin ; for the great end of Christ’s sufferings was to bring us to God ; the great end of his giving himself a sacrifice to the sword of justice, was to redeem us from all iniquity ; and to purchase to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. And hence they are yet strangers to Christ, who never felt any measure of the virtue of this sacrifice, in sanctifying, purifying, and making them study holiness. And therefore I debar from this table, all impenitent sinners and breakers of God’s commandments ; all whose names are in that

black catalogue, Mat. xv. 19; Rom. i. 27—32; all whose names are in that black list, Gal. v. 19—21; and all whose names are in these black rolls, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10; Rev. xxii 15. All atheists that practically deny the being of God, in their lives and conversations; and ignorant persons, that know not the principles of religion and the nature of this ordinance; and profane persons who mock at sacred things, neglect public ordinances, on week-days or Sabbath-days, and neglect family worship, and secret prayer.—All profane swearers, whether by God, or the devil, or faith, or conscience, or whatsoever is more than yea and nay.—All sabbath-breakers, who put no difference between that and other days.—All that are unfaithful in their relative stations; as magistrates or subjects, masters or servants, parents or children.—All murderers, and those who give way to the killing sins of malice, passion, revenge; and the self-murdering sins of drunkenness, gluttony, and tippling.—All whoremongers, adulterers, fornicators, Sodomites, and unclean persons, who never mortified the deeds of the body.—All thieves, oppressors, and cheats, that study to over-reach their neighbour in their dealings.—All false witnesses and liars, that make no conscience of speaking the truth; perjured persons, that make no bonds of unlawful oaths; covenant-breakers, and such as are enemies to a covenanted work of reformation in these lands.—All covetous persons, whose hearts are glued to the world.—In a word, I debar all formalists, and hypocrites, and legalists; all that never saw and bewailed their heart plagues of atheism, enmity, pride, hypocrisy, and unbelief: all who know not the difference between the law and the gospel; the covenant of works and the covenant of grace: and between legal and evangelical preaching.—All that never felt any thing of the power of God's word on their heart, in convincing them of sin original and actual, and drawing them to Christ, as their righteousness and strength, for justification and sanctification.—I debar all who hate to be reprov'd of their faults, and condemn their reprovers; and all who can be witness to the sins and faults of others, and yet never give any sort of testimony against them.—I debar all who love not the godly, nor care for their company: all who love not the Bible, nor search the scriptures: all who love not Zion, nor care how matters go with the church of Christ; whether its members be divided or alienated: whether its interest sink or swim. And who can go lightly over the belly of their own conscience for fear of outward losses or crosses, and easily cross their

light to please men.—I debar all that are not lovers of the truth, but espousers of error ; Socinians, Arminians, and Antinomians, who are properly so called, for some are wrongfully and ignorantly do designed.—I debar all that think they have believed all their days, and never were convinced of unbelief, nor found religion a work above them, and their natural powers.—I debar all who have no errand to the Lord's table, but to take a little bread and wine, and think it an easy work to communicate : nor ever had any fears or jealousies about their miscarrying in that work. All who come only to keep up a name among professors : and all who have no other tokens for communion, but that which they have got from their ministers or elders ; all who have been at no pains whatsoever to prepare for this work : and all on the other hand, who think they are prepared enough, and have no other thing to rest upon but their own preparation.—All these, and others of that stamp, I do, in the name of the living and eternal God, debar from this holy table, as being strangers to the man that is God's fellow, and strangers to the sacrifice whereby he has satisfied the awakened sword of infinite justice : therefore, as you would not take a cup of poison to destroy yourselves, as you would not eat and drink damnation to yourselves, and bring down the guilt of the blood of Christ upon your head, do not dare to venture to this holy table : for, "He that eats this bread, and drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." And if you will venture notwithstanding, remember, though you have got a token from me, or any person else, your blood is upon your own head, if you find yourself now debarred, and yet come to trample upon the blood of the man that is God's fellow.

But now, lest I should fright any of the children from their food, who are apt to take these things to them, more than they to whom they are principally directed, therefore I proteed,

3. To a third inference with relation to this ordinance, that may be drawn from our doctrine, namely, Hence we may see the character of those who have a right to approach, and are of God invited thereto ; namely, in general, all believers, who, through grace, have been made to flee unto the covert of the blood of the shepherd, into the covert of the blood of the man that is God's fellow, to screen them from the sword of divine wrath. As we dare not, for our souls, disallow or encourage any to approach this ordinance, who are unbelievers, under whatsoever names or designations they

may be called ; so, on the other hand, we dare not, for our souls, disallow, or discourage from this work, any the least, the weakest believer in Christ, that has gone in with the call of the gospel, and closed with, and embraced this sacrifice whereby justice is satisfied. And therefore, in the name and authority of the same glorious God, and gracious Lord, I invite to this table of the Lord, all such whatever their sins have been, though guilty of the sins that I have named, or whatever else : all such, I say, whatever their guilt be, who have taken this gospel-method of getting their sin and guilt expiated and removed, namely, by hiding their guilty souls under the wings of Christ's righteousness ; who gave himself a sacrifice to satisfy the sword of justice. But that it may be known more distinctly whom I mean by such believers in Christ, as I am calling to the Lord's table, you may examine yourselves more particularly from the doctrine ; " Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat." I hope you that are to communicate as believers, have been examining yourselves before this time ; but if you be yet in the dark, there are these four marks may be drawn out of our text and doctrine, for clearing whether you be believers indeed, that have closed with the man that is God's fellow, as a sacrifice to the sword of justice in our room.

(1.) Have you seen, some time or other, the sword of justice awaking against your own souls, the avenger of blood pursuing you ? Have you heard such a knel as that in your heart, " Awake, O sword ;" awake, O law ; awake, O vengeance, curses, and threatenings against a man for his sins ? Have you been so filled with the fear of hell and wrath, as you have been put to cry, " men and brethren, what shall I do to be saved ?" Or, have you been put to more concern about salvation, than ever you was about anything else in the world ? And have you seen, in this case, the natural tendency of your heart rest upon some other thing for peace with God than this sacrifice, which Christ offered of himself to the sword of justice ? There is such a natural inclination in all to rest upon some other thing for peace with God, and it is a good token when it is discovered, and becomes a burden and a ground of a challenge, that they have had a sinful inclination to put duties, prayers, tears, enlargements, and the like, in Christ's room. " Before the law came, I was alive," says Paul ; and thought I had a stock of righteousness in myself to be the ground of my peace with God : " But when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died : " when, by

the law, I got the knowledge of sin, I died to all conceit of myself and my righteousness; "What things were formerly gain unto me, these I counted loss for Christ."—Now, if you have been thus pursued by justice, which you see no sacrifice will satisfy, but that of the man that is God's fellow, and have been burdened with your natural inclination to some other sacrifice, I think the Lord has begun the good work upon you, and therefore I call and invite you to the table of the Lord.

(2.) Have you seen the glory and excellency of this sacrifice? What a glorious ransom God has found out for his own satisfaction, that thousands of rams could not do it, but that one lamb could do it, even the Lamb of God sacrificed? Have you seen the sword quenching its thirst in the blood of the Lamb? And have you taken up the love and mercy of God in providing such a lamb, such a ram caught in the thicket when your neck, like Isaac's, was upon the block? Have you seen him to be a worthy ransom, because of the worthiness of the persons sacrificed, he being God's fellow, God-man in one person, and so acting in his Father's name, and by his appointment, when he yielded obedience to the death, as being his shepherd, whom he sealed for this end? And has the view and apprehension of him, in this mediatorial glory, drawn forth your esteem of him and of his offering and sacrifice, so as you could venture heaven, and your eternal salvation upon it; so that you desire to say, "To him that loved me, and washed me in his own blood, to him be glory?" Is the view of this sacrifice that which cheers and delights you most? and is it matter of wonder to you, now and then, that when the stroke of justice was ready to come upon you, Christ should have interposed between you and the fatal deadly blow; Can you say, you count all but loss and dung, that you may win Christ, and be found in him; so that you care not what may be cast overboard, if you but get to that shore, even Christ and his righteousness? Then welcome are you to the table of the Lord; I invite you in his glorious name.

(3.) Have you found your souls in safety, from the sword of justice, under this shadow of the blood of the man that is God's fellow? Nothing rightly satisfies the awakened challenges of conscience, but that which satisfies the awakened sword of justice; and that is the smiting of the shepherd, and the blood of the Lamb that is his fellow. Now, have you seen God's justice satisfied thereby, and found your conscience satisfied with the same? Have you,

some time or other, found your soul at peace under this covert of blood, knowing that the sword was put up in its scabbard, it being fully satisfied with the blood of God; this is a being pleased with what the Lord of hosts is pleased; and you have thus, being justified by faith, had peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Where go you, when under challenges for sin? Do you find most peace in this sacrifice, even when you have the deepest and most kindly impression of your sin? For the legalist, he can believe well enough, when he has no challenges for sin, but under these challenges, his faith fails him. But for you, believer under all challenges, do you find this is always your only shift, the blood of Christ, the sacrifice of the man that is God's fellow? Is this also your only shift when you think of death, or of appearing before the judgment-seat of God? Do you make such use of Christ's offering to justice, as that it is your constant desire to put Christ in your room? Is the language of your soul, O! I desire no accompting and reckoning with justice; nay, I dare not count and reckon with Christ, but my soul, as it were, leaves Christ in its room, and runs from reckoning with justice, to hide itself under his wings who can count to the utmost farthing. Dear soul, who has attained to something of this in reality, I invite you, in my Master's name, to come to his table.

(4.) It is oft-times matter of exercise to you, to get over all other sacrifices to this alone, whereby the awakened sword of justice is appeased? Can you say, it has been matter of exercise to you, not only how to get over your sins unto Christ; but also, how to get over your graces and duties to him, so as you might not trust therein to the prejudice of trusting in Christ? Paul not only, while in nature, but even after conversion, found an inclination to account some thing gain, beside Christ; and therefore, in opposition to this inclination, he does, with a doubtless, cry down all things and count them dung and loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, Phil. iii. 8, 9. Taking in his gracious actings, and actions, as well as others, and found a need to cast away the good, as well as the bad, in point of justification. Did you ever find it a harder exercise to be quit of your duties, tears, and enlargements in point of dependence, than to be rid of your sins? The believer has one exercise of faith, how to be quit of sin; and another new exercise, how to be freed from resting on duties, and how to be singly engaged in resting on Christ: his mind is not quiet in all his duties

till he come hither, even to be found in Christ, to have his peace with God founded upon Christ, and not upon duties. The legalist, when he gets duties performed, then he has peace; but the believer, though he should be about duties a whole day, and is indeed more engaged in duties readily than the legalist himself, that relies thereon; but let him be about duties a whole day, yet perhaps he has little or no peace, because he would be over all duties, to Christ himself, as his resting place; and so has no peace till he enjoy him to his satisfaction. Hence also he is oft-times full of fears and jealousies, lest through unbelief, he put some other thing in the room of Christ's sacrifice. A natural man may, perhaps, suspect his duties, lest they be wrong; but the believer is more taken up in suspecting his faith, saying, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief:" he dares not trust his own faith, knowing his evil heart of unbelief that he has within him. Well, if this be oft-times matter of exercise to you, poor soul to get over all other sacrifices and services, to this great sacrifice, Christ Jesus, in whom alone the sword of justice is satisfied, I invite you, as a believer, to feast at the Lord's table, upon the sacrifice. Does the faith of this sacrifice purify your heart, so that you long to be perfectly holy, seeing and lamenting your own unholiness and impurity, and desiring daily to bring your impure sins and lusts, to the fountain opened, by the sword of justice, in the heart of a pierced Christ?—I then invite you, in the name of the Lord, to this holy table, as one that has seen the value, and shared the virtue, and participated of the efficacy of this sacrifice, given by the man that is God's fellow, to the awakened sword of justice.

In a word, is there any here, who, under a sense of sin, see an absolute need of this sacrifice; who, under a sense of their unworthiness, are fearing and trembling to approach to the Lord's table, and yet would give all the world for a share of the saving and healing virtue of this glorious sacrifice: and see nothing in the wide world so fit for them as Christ? I invite them to the Lord's table. Are there any here lamenting the Lord's anger and absence at this day? lamenting that things are so far wrong in the house of God, and that there is so little power and glory of God seen in the sanctuary, and panting after communion and fellowship with him, crying, "O that I knew where I might find him, O that it were with me as in times past!" O for an heart to love Christ! O for a sealed interest in Christ! O for the healing basam of the blood of the Lamb to cure the sad plagues of my heart, which

I see to be as black as hell! O come and take a drink, poor soul, at the Lord's table, even a full draught of the blood of Christ, which cleanses from all sin! Is there any here, any poor creature, that sees and laments his own weakness, and the power of sin and corruption in him, pained to the heart with his numberless backslidings from the Lord Jesus? I would gladly have a knot cast between Christ and his soul, that may never loose: such strength and grace communicate, as that he may never go back from God: I invite you to come forward to the Lord's table, and get a strengthening meal.—Perhaps there is some trembling weak believer here, that is doubting whether he has grace or not; whether he be a believer or not; O cry to the Spirit of God to be sent to clear you, by shewing to you the things that are freely given you of God. I shall only ask you, who are fearing you have no interest in him, no portion in the son of Jesse, the man that is God's fellow; tell me, will you quit your part of him? Could you freely choose to take the world and your lusts, and let others take Christ who please? would you find in your heart to rest contented with other things, and give any body your part of Christ? What say you to that poor doubting soul? Is your heart now melting, and relenting within you, and saying, O minister! what is that you are saying? that wounds me to the bottom of my soul! quit all my part of Christ! O no, no, no! If I were sure of my interest in him, I would not quit my part of him for ten thousand, thousand, thousand worlds; and, even as it is, though I dare not assert that I have an interest in him, yet I would not say that I would quit my part in him; no, for all that lies within the bosom of the universe. Is that the language of your heart? Well, Christ hears that, and he will mind it as a token of some heart-kindness to him. Can you say that God will be just and righteous though he should send you to the bottom of hell, instead of allowing you to sit at his table; and if such a dog as you get a crumb from him, it will be a miracle of mercy? Can you say that though doubts and darkness, and innumerable evils be now surrounding you, yet, for what you know, it was a day of power you met with at such a time, in which a saving work, as you thought, was begun, and now you would willingly have it cleared up to you? Can you say that though you have a thousand objections against yourself, and your own heart and frame, yet you have no objections against Christ? At least, if any reasonings and high imaginations against him be risen and raging in your heart, you would gladly take hold of him, that he may cast all down, and take

and keep the throne himself? Do you see the way of salvation, through free grace, and through his perfect righteousness, to be an excellent way, worthy of God, and suitable to man, becoming the wisdom and glory of God, and that you are well pleased with this way? Can you finally say, that you are one of the poorest creatures in all the world; poor and needy, destitute of all good, of all grace, of all faith, love, repentance, holiness, and any other spiritual quality in yourselves; but that you see an infinite fulness in Christ that can supply you, and out of which you desire to be supplied, with all that you need? And can appeal to heaven, that in him only you desire to be found, who is ALL IN ALL? Can you say Yea and Amen to these things? Then, poor soul, I charge and command you, in the name of the Lord of hosts, to venture forward to this table, as you would not displease him, and grieve his holy Spirit by staying away, when he calls you, and commands you to do this in remembrance of him, and of his kindness to you. You know not if ever you will get another opportunity, poor, straying, wandering sheep; though you be such a weak creature, as that you think, if you be among the flock of Christ at all, you are the worst among them all for sin; and the last among them all for grace; and straying so far behind all the rest of the flock, that you will never get up among the rest, unless the great shepherd take you up in his arms, and carry you: I charge you, in his name, to come forward, and see the glorious shepherd smitten with the sword of justice in your room. And now, hoping I have prevailed, or rather that the Lord has, and will prevail, with his little flock, to come to the Lord's table, and hear the Lord of hosts sacramentally saying, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, the man that is my fellow." I close with

4. A fourth inference from this doctrine, with relation to this ordinance: Hence we may see in what manner it is that believers should approach to a communion table, since the sword of JEHOVAH's wrath is ordered to smite the shepherd, the man that is God's fellow. Then you ought to commemorate this sacrifice, and come to his table.

(1.) With wonder and astonishment. O come! wondering that the sword of the Lord of hosts, that infinitely just God, should pass by you, man, and you, woman, that was an enemy; and satisfy himself upon the man that was his friend, by smiting the shepherd in the room of the sheep, that the man who is God's fellow should be made sin for you; made a curse for you; made

shame for you; made a sacrifice to justice for you; and made the channel in which the wrath and displeasure of God should run so as to run by you, and never light upon you. O wonder! wonder, men and angels!

(2.) Come with praise, gratitude, and thankfulness to the Lord of hosts, and to the man that is his fellow, for such a wonderful contrivance of salvation. What posture did grace find you in, poor believer? even lying open to the stroke of God's drawn sword of justice: and our Lord Jesus, on the one side, stepped in and said, Hold, Lord, let that stroke fall upon me, and let them go free; and, upon their side, there was God's good pleasure, condescending to accept of his offer, saying, "Awake, O sword; smite the shepherd, and spare the sheep." Poor soul, that desires to flee to him for refuge! Christ has changed rooms with you, by interposing to keep the stroke off you, and receiving it into his own bowels; and O, what infinite obligations to love and thankfulness does this lay you under! how will he be praised for ever among the redeemed for his love! Come, singing unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood,—to him be the glory.

(3.) Come with boldness, confidence, and cheerfulness. What a shame and dishonour to the glorious shepherd is it, that the sheep should be always trembling and quaking, while they are under such a sure and safe covert, as the blood and righteousness of the shepherd! If we were coming to deal with God about salvation, upon the footing of any thing in us, we might indeed be confounded with despair, and could not stand far enough away from God; but when you are to deal with him upon the score of the God-pleasing, justice-satisfying blood of the man that is his fellow, we cannot come with too much boldness: on this ground let us come boldly to the throne of grace, having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. Is it the blood of God's shepherd, the blood of the man that is his fellow! Is it not thy valuable blood, or not? Then why should you give way to diffidence? What a shame is it that we dare scarcely trust to his sacrifice! Therefore,

(4.) Come with full assurance of faith: assured of the love and good-will of God in Christ, in whom his sword is pacified, and through whom peace with God is proclaimed, and a cessation of arms to all eternity. If you can attain to this full assurance of faith, poor weak believer, you will, no doubt, come forward as the Lord shall help you, under covert of this honourable sacrifice; come

hoping against hope, and believing against unbelief; say, "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief." Come lamenting your unbelief, and crying to him for faith. Come depending on him for grace to communicate in a suitable way, and for grace to take a hearty draught of the sword-satisfying blood of the man that is his fellow.

SERVICE AT THE TABLE.

Now, believers, what was Moses's work, when the angel of the Lord appeared in a flame of fire out of the midst of the bush, *Exod. iii. 2.*, when the bush burned with fire and was not consumed? Why, says Moses, "I will turn aside, and see this great sight." That same should be your work and exercise now, at a communion-table: "Turn aside, and see this great sight!" What sight? The greatest sight that ever was seen, the eternal Son of God in the bush of our nature, and this bush burning in the flames of divine wrath, for our sakes, and in our room and stead, and yet the bush not consumed. O! with what holy fear ought you to look upon this great sight! "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet," says God to Moses, "for the place where thou standest is holy ground;" and Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God. You may perhaps think, if you were as great a saint as Moses, you would not be afraid; but, O the sight of God is an awful thing to the greatest saint on earth, and humbles them to the dust! But, if you be a saint at all, I will tell you, you will be reckoning yourself the greatest sinner out of hell, the chief of sinners; and if it be so, sure I am, this great sight may be wonderful in your eyes to see the sword of divine wrath drunk in the blood of the glorious surety, in your room.

Solomon says, "He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it," *Prov. xi. 15.* Behold the Son of God become surety for you, that was a stranger and alien; but he must smart for it: or, as it may be rendered, "He shall be sore broken." So was the Son of God, our surety; he was broken in soul, broken in body, broken to pieces; and we have here the symbols of his broken body; for, "In the same night in which he was betrayed, he took bread," as you see us take it here, after his example.

Now, spectators; now communicants; if you have the eye of faith, you might see a broken Christ represented under this broken

bread; now you may hear God saying, "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd. All we like lost sheep have gone astray; and we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord, the Lord of hosts, has laid on him the iniquity of us all." Sin brings down the sword of vengeance; but, behold your sin laid upon the shepherd, and thereupon the Lord of hosts saying, "Awake, O sword against the shepherd" O rare and ravishing contrivance! O admirable and amiable contrivance! O beautiful and beneficial contrivance! Eternally blessed be the contriver! and eternally blessed be the shepherd! O infinitely kind and compassionate shepherd that laid down his life for the sheep, and feeds his flock like a shepherd! Yea, feeds them with his flesh and blood! for, having broken it, he gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take ye, eat ye; this is my body broken for you: this do in remembrance of me."—ME! what for a ME, is this? Who was it that was smitten by the sword of justice? Why, it is even the shepherd, the man that is God's fellow, his own Son: we have sinned, and he is smitten for it; the sword awaked against him, and we go free: O sinner, sinner! O guilty sinner, filthy sinner, wretched sinner! who in all the world would have done that for you that Christ has done? Who in all the world could have suffered that for you, that Christ has suffered! O communicant, apply, apply his doing and dying to yourself in particular, and say, O marvellous and matchless love! O boundless and bottomless love! "He loved me, and gave himself for me!" Or, if you cannot attain to the particular application, that he did it for you; yet, O wonder, wonder, that he ever did and suffered so much for any; for he suffered the hell of all the elect; God made a gap or wound in the breast of Christ, with the sword of his justice, and then poured in a whole hell of wrath upon him. O! is it not good your part, to remember him who remembered you when the sword of justice was ready to be sheathed in your bowels, and to drink in the blood of your soul? No sooner did the Son of God behold the sword at your breast, and the hand of justice fetching the bloody stroke, but he cries out, O Father, hold thy hand; let all that vengeance that is due to those poor guilty creatures, fall upon me; behold I open my breast to receive the stroke of justice in their room. They have broken thy law, but here I am to fulfil it for them; they have enraged thy justice, but here I am ready to satisfy justice for them; they have drunk up iniquity like water; but lo! I will drink up the gall and vinegar of thy vengeance for them:

“Lo ! I come ;” let the sword light upon me with all its vengeance. Come, come then, my beloved Son, says God, the Lord of hosts, you know what this work will cost you, will you stand your hazard? Yes, yes, says Christ : what will I not do for thy glory, and for those miserable sinners? What will I not suffer for thy glory, and for those miserable sinners? What will I not suffer for them? Let it be infinite vengeance, I bear it for them.—Content, content, then says the Father ; and therefore, “Awake, O sword against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow : smite the shepherd.” Well, the shepherd, the man, the wonderful man is smitten, and the bloody stroke opens a wide gap in his heart, from hence streams a river of blood ; “A river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God ;” and of this river you are called to drink this day. Christ having sacrificed himself a peace-offering to the Lord of hosts, He, as the antitype of Moses, did sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice on the people ; and therefore, “In the same manner, after supper, also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood ; this do, as oft as you drink it, in remembrance of me ; for, as oft as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew forth the Lord’s death till he come again.—Without the shedding of blood there is no remission :” but there is blood shed ; take it, and remission of your sins with it ; it is worthy blood, the blood of the man that is God’s fellow ; the sword of justice has got such a full draught of this blood, that it craves no more. As long as God’s justice is demanding vengeance, no man can stand before God : but here justice has no more to crave ; for the satisfaction Christ gave was full measure, heaped up, and running over : he offered himself to God, for a sweet smelling savour ; justice was pacified and satisfied, and love got a vent towards man : and hence instead of a cup of wrath, you have a cup of love to drink. What was justice seeking from Christ, when the sword was running through his heart? Why justice was even pursuing him for your debt, and exacting all of the surety that was due by you. May it not affect the heart of any debtor, that has the least spark or remains of ingenuity, to see his cautioner dragged to prison for his debt? But here you see more, the sword of justice not only arresting your surety, but running him through, and killing him. O may not this fill you with hatred of your sins, and love to your surety, that was so well pleased to be thus dealt with for you! Let not unbelief say, that you cannot think that this blood was shed for

such a hellish sinner, such a wonderful sinner as you ; for it would not be such wonderful blood, if it was not for the cleansing of such wonderful sinners : be your sins what they will, lay them under the covert of this blood, the blood of the man that is God's fellow ; as sure as he was smitten, you shall escape ; for, " He was wounded for our sins." True, when he was wounded by the awakened sword, he might have cried, O father, these sins are not mine ; these transgressions are not mine ; these faults and miscarriages, these black crimes are not mine ; why should I be smitten for them ? No, no : there was never such a word in his mouth. Love breathed out some other language ; " I was content, as a surety, to take all that sin and guilt upon me ; and now I am as content to bear the weight of all that wrath and vengeance that their sins deserved." O mighty love !

Now, my dear friends, the time of a communion action should be a busy time. When you see the sword of justice awakened against Christ, O lay all the enemies of God, especially his enemies within you, under the stroke of his sword of justice ; bring all your lusts and idols to the justice of God, saying, Awake, O sword of justice, against these my sins and smite them. What think you of this love, believers ? What think you of this love, communicants ? What think you of this love, spectators ? If it had not been for this, instead of weeping at a communion table, you had been weeping in hell. Awake, O sword, against my lusts, and give this lust a stroke, and that lust a stroke ; Awake, O sword, against this pride and passion of mine, and give it a stroke ; awake, O sword, against that enmity, unbelief, and legality of mine, and give them a stroke ; awake, O sword, against my atheism, carnality, and worldlimindedness, and give these a stroke ; awake, O sword, against my filthiness and frowardness, my uncleanness and vileness of heart and way, my Delilah sins, and O give them a stroke.—Bring forth all your sins, and especially the sins that particularly beset you, bring them forth to the sword, to the sword of justice, to be hewed in pieces, like Agag, before the Lord ; saying, Lord, let the sword that awaked against my Lord, awake against my lusts, that they may be crucified with him. O take vengeance on thy enemies, within me ! O, it will be a blessed communion-day if it were but a day of vengeance upon your sins and lusts. O, cry down the vengeance of the sword of justice upon them.

And as you should bring forth all your sins, so bring forth all

your wants : whatever you want to your own souls : to your friends ; to your family ; to your children ; to your neighbours, and Christian acquaintances, that desire you to mind them : lay all your wants before the man that is God's fellow ; who as he is the sacrifice for your sins, so he is the store-house for your supply ; " My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus," Philip iv. 19. Want you anything for the Church of Scotland ? Our great want at this day is a spirit of zeal, a spirit of love, and a sound mind ; the want of God's holy spirit makes much division and disorder ; O cry down the spirit ! And do not wonder if the shepherd be smitten, that the sheep may be scattered ; this was fulfilled when all the disciples were offended because of him, in the night wherein he was betrayed ; and all forsook him and fled : they were scattered every one to his own, like so many timorous sheep, and left him alone, John xvi. 32.—But " I will turn my hand on the little ones : " some make that word a threatening, that, as Christ suffered, so shall his disciples ; they shall be baptised with the bloody baptism he was baptised with. Think not strange, if a scaffold of blood should be your trial ; if you be a believer indeed, you shall notwithstanding overcome by the blood of the Lamb, by the blood of the shepherd, the man that is God's fellow. " I will turn my hand on the little ones : " some make it a promise, that God will gather together the scattered sheep ; the little ones among Christ's scholars, may be divided and dispersed, but they shall rally again. O look for a time when he will return ; and, in mercy, turn his hand on the little ones.

Now, let all the little ones, the poor, weak, feeble sheep of the flock, follow and lean upon the great shepherd that was smitten for them, and he will supply all your wants, subdue all your iniquities, pardon all your sins, and bear all your burdens, and sanctify all your crosses, and do all your work in you and for you. If you have not now gotten what you would have, cry to him, and wait upon him, and let it be the top of your desires and endeavours, to have more and more fellowship, with the man that is God's fellow, especially in his being the only sacrifice to the sword of justice in your room. Upon this sacrifice, wherewith God is so infinitely well pleased, let all your hope of grace and glory depend.

Now, go in peace, and may the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you per-

fect, in every good work, to do his will; working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ: to whom be glory for ever and ever. AMEN.

SERMON II.¹

THE RENT VAIL OF THE TEMPLE; OR, ACCESS TO THE HOLY OF HOLIES BY THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

“And behold the vail of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom.”—MATTH. xxvii. 51.

SOME here may think, what will the minister make of that text, and what relation hath it to the work of this day? Indeed I cannot promise to make anything of it, unless the Lord himself make something of it to you. But, with his help, we may find a feast in it to our souls; and a suitable feast on the back of a feast, such as many of you have been celebrating. Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you this day, and as you have been called to feast upon his passion, so now you are called to feast upon the fruits and effects of it. Have you seen him dying on a cross for you! O come and see what immediately followed upon his death. “Behold, the vail of the temple was rent from the top to the bottom.” That I may divide the words, and then explain them, you may notice here.

1. The connection of this verse, with what went before, in the particle *AND*, intimating, the time of this miracle, that it intended the death of Christ, verse 50, “When he had cried, with a loud voice, he gave up the ghost.” This loud cry signified that his death should be public, and proclaimed to all the world, as it hath been to you this day; and his yielding up the ghost shewed that he voluntarily resigned his soul to be an offering for sin, according to his undertaking as our surety, Isa. liii. 10. Death being the penalty for the breach of the first covenant, “Thou shalt surely die;” the

(1) This Sermon was preached on the Sabbath evening, immediately after the administration of the sacrament of the Lord's supper at Carnock, July 12, 1729.

Mediator of the new covenant must make atonement by means of death, otherwise no remission. Now he gave up the ghost, and immediately the vail of the temple was rent.

2. You have a note of admiration, Behold! intimating what a wonderful thing did immediately ensue. Several miracles, besides the rending of the vail, are here mentioned; but this seems to be the most remarkable. We are told, that the earth did quake, the rocks rent, graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints arose; but that which is put in the first rank of these miracles is, that the vail of the temple was rent in twain; and we find the evangelist Mark mentions this in particular, and none of the rest of the miracles here named, as if this rending of the vail were the miracle most to be noticed, as containing somewhat mysterious and significant therein, Mark x. 37, 38, where we have the very same words, "Jesus cried with a loud voice and gave up the ghost; and the vail of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom." And here it is ushered in with a Behold! turn aside and see this great sight! be astonished at it. But what are we to wonder at? Then,

3. See this object of admiration: the vail of the temple was rent in twain, just as our Lord Jesus expired; that vail of the temple which parted betwixt the Holy Place and the Most Holy, was rent by an invisible power. In this, and the rest of the miracles, Christ gave testimony to his Godhead: putting forth the power of his divine nature at the same time wherein his human nature, his soul and body, were rent in twain, like the vail of the temple. It is remarkable how the evangelist describes the manner in which the vail of the temple was rent; showing what a full and entire rent it was. Luke says, "it was rent in the midst;" and here Matthew and Mark say, "it was rent in twain;" rent from the top to the bottom; an entire rent. But what was the meaning of all this? What did the rending of the vail signify?

(1.) It was in conformity to the temple of Christ's body which was now dissolved: Christ was the true temple in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. When he cried, and gave up the ghost, and so dissolved and rent the vail of his flesh, the literal temple did, as it were, echo to the cry, and answer the strokes by rending its vail.

(2.) The rending of the vail of the temple, signified the revealing of the mysteries of the Old Testament. The vail of the temple was for concealment: it was extremely dangerous for any to see the

furniture of the most holy place within the veil, except the high priest; and he but once a year, with great ceremony, and through a cloud of smoke: all which pointed out the darkness of that dispensation, 2 Cor. iii. 13. But now, at the death of Christ, all was laid open; the mysteries are unveiled, so that he that runs may read the meaning of them.

(3.) The rending of the veil of the temple signified the uniting of Jew and Gentiles, by removing the partition-wall betwixt them, which was the ceremonial law: Christ, by his death, repealed it, and cancelled that hand-writing of ordinances, nailed it on the cross, and so broke down the middle wall of partition: and, by abolishing these institutions and ceremonies, by which the Jews were distinguished from all other people, he abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments, contained in ordinances, for to make in himself of twain one new man, Eph. ii. 14, 15. Just as two rooms are made one, by taking down the partition wall.

(4.) The rending of the veil did especially signify the consecrating and opening of a new and living way to God. The veil kept off people from drawing near to the most holy place; but the rending of it signified that Christ, by his death, opened up a way to God for himself, as our blessed high-priest; and for us in him.

1. For himself this was the great day of atonement, wherein the high-priest, not by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood entered once for all into the holy place; in token of which, the veil was rent, Heb. ix. 7—13. Though Christ did not personally ascend to heaven, the holy place not made with hands, that is, to heaven, till about forty days after; yet he immediately acquired a right to enter, and had a virtual admission: his entrance into the heavenly temple, into the holy of holies, began in his death; having offered his sacrifice in the outer court, the blood of it was to be sprinkled on the mercy-seat within the veil, according to the manner of the priests under the law; but now the legal shadows were all to vanish: the great, the true high-priest having by his own blood entered, and so procured.

2. For us an open entrance into the true holy of holies, as the apostle applies it, Heb. x. 19, 20. "We have boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he has consecrated for us through the veil." We have now free access to come with boldness to a throne of grace, to a God in Christ, Heb. iv. 16. The veil of the temple did so interpose be-

twixt the people and the most holy place, that they could neither go in, nor look into it, but only the priest, in the manner that I said before ; but the rending of the vail signified that the true holy of holies, heaven itself, is now open to us, by the entrance of our great high-priest, that we also may enter in by faith, as a royal priesthood, following our forerunner, who for us hath entered within the vail, Heb. vi. 19. Nothing can obstruct or discourage our access to God in his grace and glory, for the vail is rent.

Now, I am to touch a little at the special mystery here represented, "Behold the vail of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom."

OBSER. That Christ by his death hath rent the vail that interposed betwixt God and us, and obstructed our access to him.

He gave up the ghost, and behold the vail was rent, 1 Pet. iii. 18. "Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust." Why? "That he might bring us to God;" and, in order thereunto, that he might rend the vail of guilt and wrath that interposed betwixt us and him, that he might take away the cherubims and flaming sword, and open a way to the tree of life.

The method wherein I shall speak of this subject, shall be to show,

- I. What is that Vail that interposed betwixt God and us.
- II. How the death of Christ hath rent that vail.
- III. In what manner the vail is rent.
- IV. For what end the vail is rent.
- V. Draw some inferences from the whole for application.

There may be some here that came to this occasion, to inquire into God's temple, to see his beauty and glory there, and to get near to God ; but ah ! they are complaining, they have lost their end ; why ? they apprehended a vail betwixt them and the glory of God, and thought it impossible to get through the vail ; but perhaps, you knew not that the vail of the temple was rent ; and therefore you have not seen the beauty of the Lord in his temple. If you had known that the vail was rent from the top to the bottom, you would have gone in more boldly to the most holy place ; and if yet you will believe that the vail is rent, I can promise that you shall not miss a sight of his glory, through the rent vail : "Did I not say to thee, if thou wouldst believe, thou shalt see the glory of God?" But I proceed in the method proposed.

I. What is that vail that interposed betwixt God and us? Not to speak of the vail of Old Testament shadows and ceremonies, now rent and removed by the death of Christ, there are some vails that, in a special manner, obstructed our access to God; and they may be reduced to these three, the vail of a broken covenant, the vail of God's injured attributes, and the vail of man's sin.

1. The vail of a broken covenant, or law of works. The covenant of works, you know, was, Do and Live, otherwise you shall die; "In the day thou eatest, thou shalt surely die." In which covenant, you see, there was a precept, a promise, and a penalty. The precept, was Do, or perfect obedience; the promise was Life, or eternal happiness upon obedience; and the penalty was death and eternal damnation, in case of disobedience. Now man by his sin hath broken the precept of that covenant, and so forfeited the promise of life, and incurred the penalty of death. If ever we have access to God, this broken spirit must be repaired, this forfeited life must be redeemed, this penalty must be execute. Here is a vail that separates betwixt God and us; a vail that neither men nor angels can rend, and yet a vail that must be rent, otherwise we die and perish for ever; and this vail is the harder to be rent, because of the following, namely,

2. The vail of God's injured perfections: particularly, his incensed justice, and injured holiness. Justice, infinite justice, was a black vail that obstructed our access to heaven; for God became an angry God, a God filled with fierce wrath against the sinner. God hath set this penalty upon the law, commanding perfect obedience upon pain of death: God's justice was engaged to make this penalty effectual upon man's falling into sin. Nothing can satisfy justice but infinite punishment; "The wages of sin is death; and God will by no means clear the guilty;" and so, if this vail be not rent by a complete satisfaction, the guilty sinner must go down to the pit. The holiness of God also was injured by the breach of the law; "Sin is a transgression of the law;" a transgression of the precept. Now, as God's justice stands up in defence of the threatening and penalty, so his holiness stands up for the defence of the precept and command of the holy law. God cannot justify the sinner, nor accept of him as righteous, unless he hath a complete righteousness; not a lame, partial, and imperfect righteousness; but a righteousness every way commensurate to the extensive precept of the law will satisfy an infinitely holy God. As infinite justice can-

not be satisfied, without a complete satisfaction, answering to the threatening and penalty of the law ; so the infinite holiness of God cannot be satisfied without a perfect obedience, answerable to the precept and command of the law. Now, our natural want of ability to yield satisfaction, and our natural want of perfect conformity to the law, make justice and holiness, and other perfections of God, stand in the way of our salvation, and of our access to heaven, like a vail that never can be rent by us ; especially considering, that there is,

3. A third vail, and that is the vail of sin on our part. This is a separating vail betwixt God and us, Isaiah lsa. lix. 2. "Your iniquities have separated betwixt you and your God." Now, before we can get near unto God, this vail must be rent, the guilt of sin must be expiated ; for without shedding of blood there is no remission : the filth of sin must be purged ; for, who shall ascend to the hill of the Lord, and stand in his holy place, but he that hath clean hands and a pure heart ? The power of sin must be broken. There is by nature, in us all a power of ignorance ; our minds are become a dungeon of darkness, and this is such a vail betwixt God and us, that unless it be removed, there is no hopes of mercy ; therefore says the prophet, "It is a people of no understanding ; therefore he that hath made them will not have mercy on them." There is in us a power of enmity, "The carnal mind is enmity against God," &c. We are enemies to God by wicked works ; this is another vail that must be rent by the arm of almighty power ; for it is a vail and curtain that the devil hath strongly wrought, like a web, with the warp and waft of pride, carnality, security, worldliness, and all other wickedness whatsoever, which are but so many threads and pieces of this web, this vail of enmity. There is a power of unbelief, that is another vail, that on our part stands betwixt us and the holy place, and separates us from divine favour ; "He that believeth not is condemned already."

II The second thing, How the death of Christ hath rent the vail ; when he gave up the ghost, behold the vail was rent.

1. By the death of Christ the vail of a broken covenant was rent in twain, so as we might get to God through that vail of the law ; for the law was fulfilled in every part of it, by his obedience to the death. Was the precept of the law a perfect obedience ? Well, Christ by his obedience to the death, did magnify the law, and make it honourable, brought in an everlasting righteousness ; his death

was the finishing stroke, the highest act of that obedience whereby the law was fulfilled. Was the promise of life in the law, or first covenant forfeited by us? Well, Christ rent this veil by redeeming the forfeiture with the price of his blood: he bought back the inheritance for us that we had lost, making a purchase of us, and of eternal salvation for us. Was the penalty of death in the law standing also in the way? Well, Christ comes in the sinner's room, endures this penalty, by coming under the curse of the law, becoming obedient to the death, enduring the wrath of God, and delivering us from the wrath to come; and so behold, the veil of a broken covenant was rent.

2. By the death of Christ, the veil of God's injured attributes, that stood betwixt God and us, was rent and removed. Christ hath satisfied the justice of God, by offering himself a sacrifice, Eph. v. 2. This offering being through the eternal spirit, it was of infinite worth and value: here the altar sanctified the gift; the altar was the Godhead of Christ, the offering was made upon the altar of the divine nature; and therefore this blood of Christ is called the blood of God. This sacrifice was of infinite worth and value, for doing the business of poor man, in atoning justice, and so rending this veil. But now, as Christ hath satisfied the justice of God, by enduring the penalty and threatening of the law; so he hath vindicated the holiness of God, by fulfilling the precept and command of the law, which he not only did through the whole course of his life, but perfectly finished in his death. Now, if Christ hath fulfilled the law, satisfied the justice, and vindicated the holiness of God, by his obedience to the death, then we may see and say, "Behold the veil was rent." But,

3. There is the veil of sin on our part: How is this rent by the death of Christ? Why, the Lamb was sacrificed to rend and remove this veil, "Behold the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world." By his death, the guilt of sin is expiated; for God set him forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins, &c. By his death the filth of sin is purged; "For the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin:" and that both meritoriously and efficaciously: for, by his death, the power of sin also is broken fundamentally, seeing by his death he purchased the spirit; which, in due time, he pours out, and thereby actually removes the veil on our part, which he had done fundamentally and virtually on the cross. By this purchased

spirit he rends the vails of darkness and ignorance: "The God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, shines into the heart," &c. All the light of nature, reason, education, and human literature cannot rend this veil, till the man receive the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. By this purchased spirit he rends the veil of enmity, shedding abroad his love upon the heart: and, indeed, the view and apprehension of God's mighty love in Christ, can rend that mighty veil of enmity; for we love him whenever we see that he first loved us, 1 John iv. 19. When the soul sees the God, whose majesty he dreaded, is now a God in Christ, reconciled to the soul through the sacrifice that Christ offered up, then the soul is reconciled to God, and so the veil of enmity is rent in twain. By this purchased spirit he rends also the veil of unbelief; for, as he is a spirit of light, to remove the veil of darkness, and a spirit of love, to remove the veil of enmity; so he comes into the heart, as a spirit of faith, and removes the veil of unbelief: he begins the rent of humiliation, when he rends the heart in twain with a sense of sin, and a sight of its undone state; when he makes the soul take with sin, and justify the Lord, though he should damn him for his sin. He makes the rent of the veil wider by a gracious manifestation, like that, John ii. 11,—“He manifested forth his glory, and his disciples believed on him.” Thus he rends the veil of unbelief: and completes the rent of this veil when faith is turned into vision. Thus you see how, by his death, the veil was rent.

III. The third thing, In what manner was the veil rent? All I say on this head, shall be an allusion shortly to the rending of the veil of the temple here: which, we see, was in a wonderful manner ushered in with a behold.

1. Behold, it was RENT; not only drawn aside, but rent. The curtain was not only drawn aside, but torn to pieces, as if God had been displeased at the veil of partition betwixt him and us; angry at the veil of separation, and enraged that there should have been any veil to intercept between him and us. God's heart was set upon a reconciliation betwixt him and us, and therefore his hand tears the curtain that was hanging up betwixt him and us; gave it such a rent, as it might never be whole again; all the devils in hell cannot sew up the rent, so as to disappoint God's design of bringing his people into union and communion with him.

2. Behold, the veil of the temple was not only rent, but rent

in TWAIN : the vail that was one was made two, that God and man, who were two might be made one. It was not half rent, but wholly rent ; rent in twain, a full and complete rent ; shewing that Christ, by his death, would not be a half Saviour, but a complete Saviour, and the author of a full and complete salvation ; taking entirely out of the way whatever separated betwixt God and us, not leaving so much as a stitch of the curtain to hold the two sides of the vail together ; no, the vail was rent in twain. And not only so, but

3. Behold the vail was rent FROM THE TOP TO THE BOTTOM : The vail was rent from the TOP, the highest thing that separated betwixt God and us was rent in twain ; could never have reached up to the top of the vail: yea, the hands and arms of all the men on earth, and angels in heaven, were too short to reach to the top of the infinite justice and holiness of God, that interposed betwixt him and us : the top of this vail, this wall of partition, was higher than heaven ; what could we or any other creature do for rending it from the top ? But Christ put up his hand as it were, to the top of the vail, and rent it from the top. The rent begins at the top, but it does not stop here : for,

4. The vail is also rent to the BOTTOM ; the bottom of this vail, that did separate betwixt God and us, did reach as deep as the bottom of hell : who could descend to hell for us to rend the vail to the bottom ? According to the lamentation of one Joanness Seneca upon his death-bed, “ We have here (says he), some that will go to the quire for us, some that will play for us, some that will say mass for us, some that will pray for us ; but where is there one that will go to hell for us ? ” But, O happy believer, Christ is one that hath gone to hell for you, that he might quench all the flames of hell with his blood, and conquer all the powers of hell that were in the way betwixt you and heaven. He descended to hell, in a manner, that he might rend the bottom of the vail. But there is yet more here, he not only rends the vail at the top and at the bottom, but,

5. From the top to the bottom ALL is rent ; both the top and the bottom, and all that is betwixt the top and the bottom, all the impediments betwixt heaven and hell are removed. Though heaven be purchased, and hell vanquished, yet there might be something in the earth, something in the world, betwixt heaven and hell, that might obstruct the passage to the holiest ; well, but the rent is from the top to the bottom ; all that comes betwixt the top and the bottom is rent as well as both ends : so that there is access from the

lowest part of misery to the highest happiness, a long rent, in a manner, from the top of heaven to the bottom of hell. We fell low as hell by sin, but Christ by his death hath made an open way from hell to heaven; for, "Behold, the vail was rent in twain from the top to the bottom."

IV. The fourth thing, for what END was the vail rent? I shall tell you only these two ends of it. 1. That Christ might enter into the holiest as our High-priest for us. 2. That we might enter in also after him and through him.

1. I say, the vail of the temple was rent, that Christ our glorious High-priest might enter into the holy of holies in our name. I told you, that the vail of the temple was that which parted betwixt the holy place and the most holy, and which kept off people from drawing near to the most holy place. The vail was for concealment; and none might enter within the vail but the High-priest, and he was not to enter in without blood, the blood of the sacrifice along with him, as you see, Heb. ix. 3, 7. Now, the most holy place was a type of heaven; so our Lord Jesus Christ having shed his own blood entered within the vail into heaven, the true holy of holies, carrying in with him the blood of his own sacrifice, Heb. ix. 12—"Not by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place." Not that Christ did carry into heaven his own substantial blood in his hand; we are not to understand it so carnally, but that, in a spiritual sense, and virtually, he did so. Under the law, the day of atonement was upon that day when the High-priest went into the holy of holies, Lev. xvi. 30; on that day the people were pardoned all their sins, and cleansed from all their transgressions; when the High-priest had been within the vail in the holy of holies, then was the atonement actually made: though the blood was shed without the camp, yet the atonement was not made till it was brought into the holy place, Lev. xvi. 14, 15. What did this typify, but that our atonement was perfectly made upon Christ's going into the holy of holies, namely heaven? See Heb. ix. 24—"For Christ 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." Perhaps you have thought hitherto that the work of our redemption was perfectly completed on the cross, so as there was no more to be done; but know, it was not enough for the sacrifice to be killed without the camp, but the blood must be carried into the holy of

holies ; all was not done till that was done. Indeed, when Christ died, the sacrifice was slain, the blood was shed ; there was no more sacrifice to succeed, all was finished in that respect ; but yet all was not done until the true vail being rent as well as the typical ; the blood of Christ was carried into the holy place within the vail, that is, into heaven. Though Christ did not personally ascend to heaven, as I said in the explication, till above forty days after, yet he immediately acquired a right to enter, and had a virtual admission ; so that his entrance began in his death ; and when he ascended into heaven he completed and perfected that in his own person, in the true holy of holies, heaven itself, which the high-priest did typically in the figurative holy of holies, which was of old under the law in the earth ; and there hath Christ, in the power and virtue of his blood, made atonement : and as the high-priest did under the law, he carried in with him all the names of all the tribes of Israel on his breast ; and by the power of this blood of the sacrifice made a full atonement. But then,

2. Another end of rending the vail was, not only that he might make a way for himself, as our priest, into the most holy place, but that he might make a way for us in him ; that we might enter in also, and have access to God through him ; access to heaven through him. See therefore how the believer is said to follow in after Christ into the holiest within the vail, Heb. vi. 19, 20. They are said to flee for refuge to the hope set before them, “ Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, entering into that within the vail, whether the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high-priest for us after the order of Melchisedec. Heb. x. 19, 20. “ We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the vail, that is to say, his flesh.” Where our way to heaven, or to the holiest, is said to be through the blood of Christ ; or, which is all one, through his flesh offered as a propitiatory sacrifice ; by which as by the rent vail, we have boldness to enter. Now, this entrance into the holiest, or access to God that we have in Christ, is twofold, either inchoative here, or consummate hereafter.

(1.) There is an initial, inchoative, or begun entrance that we have not the holiest in time. In the most holy place was the golden altar, and symbols of God’s presence and glorious majesty, and access thereto was typical of our access to God and heaven ; which ac-

cess we have now with boldness even in time, through the rent veil by which our high-priest hath entered into the holy place, Heb. iv. 14. 16. "Seeing then that we have a great high-priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace." And so it is inferred from this same doctrine, Heb. x. 22. "Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith." Quest. What is that nearness to God, and access to him, that a man hath in time, when he was brought within the veil? Answ. In a word, It lies not only in the first application of grace, and change of the man's state, when, in Christ Jesus he that was far off is made nigh by the blood of Christ; for, whenever the virtue of that blood comes upon us, by the Spirit of Christ, God comes near to us, and we are brought near to God; but there is still more and more nearness enjoyed by his people. Exercised Christians are able to give a distinct account of their having this nearness at some times and of their want of it at other times. He may be suspected indeed for an hypocrite that hath no changes, Psal. lv. 19; for the true Christian's sky is never long clear and without clouds: change of weather, and change of way, is usually found by travellers to heaven. Every believer indeed hath still the spirit of Christ, dwelling in him: "For, if any man hath not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." But there are some singular outpourings of the spirit promised and bestowed, and well known by all believers, and they are precious enjoyments. This spirit the world cannot receive, because it sees him not, neither knows him, says Christ: "But you know him, for he dwells with you, and shall be in you," John xiv. 17. This access to God within the veil, is sometimes experienced in prayer; yea, most frequently in that exercise is the light of God's countenance lifted up, and the soul made to say, "I love the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my supplication." Do not ye, believers, know this, that sometimes you have been so troubled that you could not speak? Psalm lxxvii. 4: that your hearts have become so bound and straitened, that you could do nothing, and say nothing before the Lord, but sit as dumb and oppressed, all dark above, all dead within, and all doors shut upon you? You durst not neglect prayer, and yet you could not perform it; but behold, you have quickly found the two-leaved gates cast open to you; your hearts enlarged, and mouths wide opened in asking; the windows of heaven open, and the banks of the river of life broken down, and the

streams gushing in upon you, like that in Isaiah xliv. 3,—“I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground.”—Also, this access to God within the veil, is sometimes experienced in sweet communion and fellowship with God; “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” This communion with God is a mystery, sweet indeed to them that have it, and surpassing all the delights of sense and reason; but to them that have it not, it is incredible and unintelligible; a stranger intermeddles not with this joy. Ye that know not what it is, although the word be full of suitable and savoury expressions of it, yet it is a riddle and dark parable to you; it is only tasting of it that can declare its transcendent sweetness. “O taste and see that God is good!” You that know what it is, though you cannot express it, yet you can relish and understand some sound words about it. It may be, you feel it sometimes in the secret retirements of the house, sometimes in the fields, or under a bush, as Nathanael under the fig-tree; but what you felt, you cannot make the world understand: only when the Lord directs the minister to speak somewhat suitably to it, then you are ready to think, O, it is just like the thing I felt at such a time and such a place: that which the minister is saying from God’s word, hath a sweet sound of that which I got yonder, when none in all the world heard me or saw me: “But (Nathanael) when thou wast under the fig-tree I saw thee,” says Christ: I heard you groaning to me; I saw you wrestling with me; I put your tears in my bottle, and poured in my comforts into your soul. O, know you what it is to be brought near to him, and to have the clouds and veils that are on your hearts or on your faces scattered, and the light of his countenance lifted up upon you? Have you not been sometimes on the mount, so as to think, O how good is it to be here? Have you not known what the warm and healing beams of the sun of righteousness upon you are? Have you not tasted that in his company that hath made all the wells of worldly comfort, like puddle water, loathsome and unsavoury to you; yea, that hath made you groan in this tabernacle, and long to be at that complete and uninterrupted communion above, whereof all you tasted on earth is but a small earnest?—However, the veil was rent, that you might enter within the veil into the holies, to a begun heaven even in time. Grace being the same specifically with glory; there is but a gradual difference: and therefore the believer, even on earth, is said to be come to Mount

Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to the innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born that are written in heaven, to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, Heb. xii. 22, 23. Why, when does the believer come to all this? Even when he comes by faith to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, then he is come to heaven itself, the true holy of holies inchoatively, or by a begun entrance. But,

(2.) There is a consummate entrance into the holiest, that the believer shall have, as fruit of the rending of the vail, and that is when he comes to the heavens above, to the higher house, whither the forerunner for us entered, having rent the vail, which was rent that we might have access to God in glory as well as in grace, and then the believer will not be half in it as it were, but completely within the vail; for then will his communion with God be completed, then his knowledge of God, his love of God, his delight in God, his vision of God's glory, his conformity of God's image, will all be complete; for that which is in part shall be done away, and that which is perfect shall come, 1 Cor. xiii. 10. O what a sweet exchange will that be, when faith will say to vision, I give place to you; when hope will say to fruition, I give place to you; when grace will say to glory, I give place to you; when partial communion will say to perfection, I give place to you; when short passing blinks will say to uninterrupted everlasting joys, I give place to you! Little wonder then believers, long to be wholly within the vail (but I insist not on it), for then indeed they fully enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

Thus you see the two great ends for which the vail was rent, namely, that way might be made for Christ's entering into the holy of holies, and so for our entering in also through him, and after him. But I come now to

V. The Fifth thing, viz. the application. Is it so, that Christ hath by his death rent the vail that interposed between God and us, and obstructed our access to him? Then, First, for information, Hence we may see

1. What a full feast of love we have to feed upon on a communion-day, namely, the love of Christ, not only in dying, but in rending the vail, that he might enter into the holiest for us. The apostle says, That Christ loved us; and how does he prove it? Eph. v. 2—He gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to

God for a sweet smelling savour. This savoury and sweet smelling sacrifice, was the offering of incense; and where was the incense offered under the law? Why, it was offered within the vail. God tells Moses, that Aaron should take his handful of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the vail, Lev. xvi. 12. Now, Christ having given himself an offering and sacrifice to God without the camp in this world, he rends the vail, and goes to heaven, and offers himself as incense within the vail. Perhaps you have seen and thought upon the love of Christ, in his dying upon the cross, in his making himself a sacrifice; but, O see his love also in his incense within the vail. We feed too sparingly upon Christ: and therefore our faith is weak: we eat, for the most part but of one dish, Christ as the paschal Lamb slain on the cross, but we should learn to feed upon Christ as a Priest gone in within the vail: our faith should not tarry on the cross, but we should carry it further, even after Christ, within the vail, into heaven itself. Our faith should flee for refuge, to lay hold upon all the hope that is set before us: the anchor of our soul will not be so sure and stedfast, as it might be, except it enter within the vail, Heb. vi. 19. As the apostle says of patience, "Let it have its perfect work;" so we say of faith, let it have its perfect work; let us follow Christ within the vail, and view him, not only shedding his blood, but entering into the holy of holies within the vail, and sprinkling his blood upon the mercy-seat and before it, Lev. xvi. 15. The priests under the law sprinkled the mercy-seat, which was within the vail, all over, and when Christ went to heaven within the vail, he did that in substance which the priests did in ceremony, in order to make a full atonement: and when faith is acted upon all this, then the believer is said to be come to the blood of sprinkling; and we act not our faith far enough, when we act it no further than the death of Christ: for the atonement was not actually perfected, though it was made fundamentally on the cross, yet not formally, till upon the rending of the vail, our High-Priest entered into the holy place, and sprinkled the mercy-seat with his blood; by which act mercy and justice are actually met, and kiss each other.

2. If the vail of the temple be rent, hence we may see the glory of the New Testament dispensation beyond that of the Old; the vail of the covering is rent, the darkness of that dispensation removed by the death of Christ, and Old Testament mysteries unveiled: so that now, he that runs may read the meaning of them.

Now we see clearly, that the mercy-seat signified Christ, the great propitiation; the pot of manna signified Christ, the bread of life. Now we all with open face beholding the glory of the Lord, as in a glass, which helps the sight as the veil hindered it; and that the veil of the temple was rent, it may give us ground further to expect that the veil shall be taken away from the hearts of the Jews: "For even to this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their hearts; nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away," 2 Cor. iii. 15.

3. If, by the death of Christ, the veil be rent, that interposed betwixt God and us, hence we may see what is the way to heaven, and what access we have this way; why, "We have boldness to come to the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by that new and living way that he hath consecrated through the veil." We may come, boldly to the throne of grace, for the veil is rent: by the blood of Jesus the way is open. How shall the unholy of sinners venture to come into the holiest of all, or to God's presence? Yea, says the Holy Ghost, "By the blood of Jesus," by the rent veil. There are many mistakes about the way to the holy place; it is a dreadful thing to think, that many who have heard the gospel, it may be, ten, twenty, thirty years, if they be asked of the way to heaven, they will say, "Why, if we do justly, live honestly and civilly, and do as we would be done to, we shall surely be saved." But I tell you, you shall surely be damned if no more be done. O sad, that after all the light that hath shined about the way of salvation by the slain Son of God, that civility that is to be found among heathen, is all the title that a great many have to eternal life. Others, they hope to get to heaven by a better righteousness, but it is a righteousness of their own: they say they will do as well as they can; they must read, and pray, and hear, and the like, and so they find out a way to heaven for themselves: some cannot endure to hear any thing spoken against self-righteousness, as if no person were in danger to be ruined by it; whereas this is a great part of the strong man's armour, whereby he keeps possession of souls. I tell you, sirs, your false righteousness is so far from being the way to heaven, that true holiness itself is but the business that people have to do who are in the way; there will never be another way to heaven but Christ: holiness is the walk, Christ is the way in which we walk, Col. ii. 6,—“As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him. I am the way; no man comes to the Father but

by me." This is the new and living way, consecrated through the veil. The veil of the temple is rent, and the way to the holiest through the rent veil. Every person thinks that it is very hard to get to heaven, and that it will cost a great deal of time and pains and struggling: But, says one, here is the mischief of it; people do not know that it is hard to know the way to heaven, and that flesh and blood cannot reveal it, till God himself send in a beam of light upon the heart, and give the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, who is the way, having by his death rent the veil. O this way is little known, and yet we assure you that there is free access for you all this way; and nothing to hinder your access to God and heaven this way, if it be not your own ignorant unbelieving heart; nothing to hinder your entering into the holiest for the veil is rent, the law is fulfilled, justice is satisfied, holiness vindicated, sin is expiated. Will you go to heaven this way, man, woman? for the door is open for you, the veil is rent for you; "To you is the word of this salvation sent;" to you, man, woman, young or old; whosoever hears me, to you is the way of the holiest made patent: and whosoever will, let him come and enter in; and him that cometh he will in no wise cast out. What, in all the world, is to hinder you from coming in? The law, however holy, needs not hinder you, here is a righteousness; justice, however awful, needs not hinder you, here is a satisfaction; your sins, however great, need not hinder you, here is a sacrifice: all these veils are rent, what should hinder? Are there any other veils to be rent? O, say you, the veil of darkness, ignorance, enmity, and unbelief that is upon my heart. Well, let me tell you, that needs not hinder you neither to come to Christ, and employ him to rend these veils on your part; that is but little for him to do, who could rend such great veils as were on God's part. O, sirs, he is good at rending veils; give him work, and the work is done. Did he not rend a greater veil when he satisfied infinite justice, and stopt up the flood-gates of divine wrath? And if he hath done the greater, O will you not employ him to do the less? Why, say you, if I knew that he rent that great veil for me, I would not fear, but he would rend the lesser; Why man, the veil was rent for sinners, and why not for you? Christ came to save sinners. But, say you, all shall not be saved and brought within the veil, and perhaps not I. We answer, Some shall be saved, and why not you? Wherefore are not all that hear this gospel saved, but because they will not give

employment to Christ to save them? Through unbelief they think he meant no favour towards them, when he rent the veil and so stand aloof from him, saying, It was not for me; but I declare in his name, it was for you, man; for you, woman; whoever will have the benefit of it. The gospel notifies in general that the veil is rent for you all, so far as that God calls and commands you all to come into the holiest by this way, this new and living way consecrated through the veil, and if you do not you shall be damned for your neglect of it. But as for your particular personal knowledge of your actual interest in the benefit of this rent veil, it is impossible for you to have it till you come to Christ and sue for it: therefore, let nothing hinder you to enter, since the veil is rent and the way patent: you have nothing to do yourself, for you cannot rend any veil; all that you have to do is to consent that Christ should rend all veils betwixt God and you; for he will be a complete Saviour; he will not leave a rag of the veil for you to rend, but with his own hand will rend all in twain from the top to the bottom. O say Amen to it, that he may get all the work and all the praise.

Use Second, for examination. Try what interest you have in this privilege: if the veil be actually rent from the top to the bottom, with respect to you; try whether or not you have gone in within the rent veil of the temple, to the holy of holies. The veil was rent fundamentally, when Christ gave up the ghost; it was rent formally, when he entered into the holiest. The veil is rent objectively in the preaching of this gospel: and now the question is, if the veil be rent subjectively, and so as you have the actual saving benefit of it in your own person. It is not enough that the veil is rent doctrinally for you, so as you have liberty to go into the holy place, but whether is the veil rent effectually to you, and in you, so as you have stept into the holiest by the rent veil? And,

1. If you be a believer indeed, in whom the veil is savingly rent, then you have got a humbling sight and sense of the veil that interposed betwixt God and you, and have seen yourself to be without the veil. Did you ever see such a veil of wrath on God's part, and such a veil of guilt on your part? such a veil of a broken law, incensed justice and injured holiness on the one hand: and such a veil of sin, darkness, unbelief, and enmity on the other hand, as hath made you to despair that ever the veil would be rent by you, or any creature in heaven or earth, and made you to see yourself lost and undone, crying out, "Men and brethren, what shall I do to be

saved?" Did you never see your sad state, as having a black veil standing up betwixt God and you? The exercise of persons about religion is suspicious, if they never saw the veil. Some will say, O I have seen many evils about me, and I have an evil heart, and an evil frame of heart; but I ask, man, did you never see yourself to be in an evil state, in a state of distance from God; in a state of separation from God, by reason of the veil that was betwixt him and you? The effectual rending of the veil begins here, namely at a humbling sight of the separating veil; the man sees himself without the veil, and so within the flood-mark of God's wrath.

2. If the veil be effectually rent in you, then you have seen the glory of him that rent the veil, and the glory of God through the rent veil; something of the glory of God in Christ. The apostle tells us, Heb. x. 19, 20. That Christ's flesh, that is, his human nature, is the veil for us to enter by to the holy of holies; that is, heaven or God's presence, God's face: so that in his flesh, or human nature of Christ, we may see the very face, the very brightness of the glory of God as in a mirror. Now, if the veil be rent in you, and the face of the covering removed, then you have seen the glory of God in Christ; you have seen God's law fulfilled by him, God's justice satisfied in him, God's holiness vindicated by him, and so God's righteousness declared the way of saving sinners through him, as the propitiation in blood. Have you seen his glory as the only way to heaven, as God's way to you, and your way to God, as the Render of the veil on God's part and on yours; the glory of his death in the value and virtue of it; in the value of it, for rending of the veils that hindered God's access to you; and in the virtue of it, for rending of the veil within you that hindered your access to God? Have you felt something of this virtue in rending the veil of darkness and ignorance that was upon your understanding, and shining in upon you with the light of life? The effectual rending of the veil makes a man see some glory that is within the veil; have you seen God's glory then through the rent veil, and that God's glorious attributes are all glorified to the highest in this way?

3. If the veil be effectually rent, then you have cast the anchor of your hope within the veil, Heb. vi. 18, 19. After your soul, like a weary vessel tossed upon the waves of convictions, fears, terrors, could find no rest, God hath brought you at last into this heaven of rest, to cast anchor within the veil; you have fled for refuge to the hope set before you; which hope you have as your

anchor, sure and stedfast, entering into that within the vail, whither the forerunner hath entered. Whither have you fled for refuge, when the law and justice of God was pursuing you for your debt, when they were ready to condemn you to hell-prison? Was you then made to flee for refuge to the surety that God set before you, for paying of your debt, and to say, Lord, take bail of thy own Son for me? I despair of ever answering such a charge as justice and the law hath against me; but, O look for a discharge in the blood and righteousness of Jesus: and let that answer the charge. When Christ entered into the holiest with his blood within the vail, he sprinkled the mercy-seat, and when the soul takes hold of this blood and righteousness of Christ, as the ground of his acquittance from the charge of justice, then he casts anchor within the vail.

4. If the vail be effectually rent for you, then surely you cannot but have a superlative love for that glorious high-priest, who by his death, rent the vail, and went into the holiest for you. O can you say with Paul, "He loved me and gave himself for me?" Or, can you say with Peter, "Thou that knowest all things, knowest that I love thee?" Surely, they that love him not, know nothing yet savingly about the rending of the vail. It may be, some love him, and dare not so confidently say it as Peter did; but if you can say Amen to two texts of scripture, we may warrant you that you love him indeed. The one is a sad text, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha," 1 Cor. xvi. 22. The true lover of Christ can say, Amen; let them be even cursed that do not love him, and shall not love him. They that can say Amen to that now, they shall sit at Christ's right hand at the great day, and say Amen to the sentence of the great Judge, "Depart from me ye cursed." The other is a sweet text, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing, Rev. v. 12. The true lover of Christ can say, Amen; worthy, worthy, worthy is the Lamb to receive all praises, of all the redeemed, to all eternity. They that can set the Amen of faith to this now, they have begun to join with the triumphant company, already within the vail; and they shall join with them for ever hereafter, saying, "Salvation to our God that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever." Indeed, if you love Christ at all, you love him with a superlative love; above husband, wife, children, lands, houses, goods and worldly comforts. You do not love him at all, if you do not love

him above all ; and if you love him at all, the veil is rent, and you have got into the holiest in part ; and if you will have patience, yet a little while and you shall get in fully. It is impossible that a man that truly loves Christ should ever go to hell.

5. If the veil be effectually rent, then all the veils on your part that continue to separate betwixt God and you, are matter of sad regret to you ; the veil of indwelling sin and corruption, the veil of darkness and ignorance, the veil of remaining enmity, the veil of unbelief, these veils are all whole and entire in the unregenerate ; and though in believers these veils be rent, yet they are not removed ; regenerating grace hath given them a rent that shall never be sewed up or healed again : but yet, alas ! they are remaining veils within the believer, while here ; though they be rent, yet they hang there, and many times sadly separate betwixt God and him ; and hence he cries, " O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? " O to be above corruption ! O to be within the veil, that I may see him as he is, and be like unto him. O ! when shall all veils be removed ? when shall the day break, and the shadows fly away ? O ! when shall the curtain be taken down ? Christ stands behind the curtain, and does not manifest himself. Hath he been a veiled Christ at this communion ? Then I am sure, believer, your heart will be saying, O that the curtain were drawn ? O that the veil were rent in ten thousand pieces !

6. If the veil be effectually rent, then your heart will be effectually rent also ; when the veil is rent, the heart is rent : and there is something it is rent for, and something it is rent from.

(1.) Something it is rent FOR : it is rent for sin. Indeed the sight of the rent veil, or of God reconciled by the blood of Jesus, will rend the heart for sin more than all the thunders of Sinai, or flames of hell ; " They shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn." When a man reads his sins, as they are written upon the cross of Christ, with the red ink of his sin-pardoning blood, O then he reads them over with tears of joy, and his heart is kindly rent for sin ; then he cries, " Behold I am vile." When the veil is rent, the heart is rent, not only for his own sins, but for the sins of others ; " Rivers of tears run down mine eyes, because of the wicked that break thy law. I beheld transgressors, and was grieved." They that can see God dishonoured, and hear men curse and swear and blaspheme the holy name of God, and yet never be troubled

about it, surely the vail remains upon their heart, otherwise their hearts would rend for the sins of others, and of the generation: "Set a mark upon the foreheads of them that sigh and cry, for all the abominations that are done in the midst thereof." Again, when the vail is rent, the heart is rent for the Lord's anger and absence: nothing fears them more than the Lord's anger; "O rebuke me not in thy wrath, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure." Nothing affects them more than the Lord's absence; for these things they weep: "Mine eyes, mine eyes run down with waters, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me." O the little lamentation after an absent God, an angry God, at this day!—Again, when the vail is rent, the heart is rent for the calamities of the church, Jer. ix. 1,—“O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughters of my people.” The miseries of the church, and the sins that bring them on, are heart-rending things to the people of God; and particularly, their hearts are rent for the rents of the church—“For the divisions of Reuben there were great thoughts of heart.” For my own part, I am but a person of little experience in the world, and therefore I desire to be modest at this juncture, about the present rent among us.¹ It is plain enough that the anger of the Lord hath divided us, and rent us in twain, like the vail of the temple, from the top to the bottom. God is angry because we have sinned. Surely, if we had been more valiant for the truth, and zealous for a covenanted work of reformation, when we had fair opportunities for it, our rent had not come to such a height. But yet, though I cannot justify the ignorant zeal of many professors, whose hearts are rent from ministers, and they know not for what; they can give no reasonable account of their separating courses; yet, I hope, there is a serious remnant, whose hearts are duly rent for the rents of the church, and the sinful causes thereof: and, I hope, the Lord will help such to be regular in the way of their dissenting, from whatever they reckon, upon solid grounds, to be the defection of the day they live in. But that I may not digress too far, I am telling you, that if the vail be effectually rent with you, then there are some things your heart is rent

(1) About this time the second form of the **ABJURATION OATH** was imposed, which occasioned different sentiments both among ministers and people: and the matter was carried so high by some, as almost to make it a term of communion. It is probably this that the Author hath in his eyes.

for, namely, for your own sins, the sins of others, the sins of the land, the sins of the church, the calamities of the church, the rents of the church. The Lord's anger with her, and absence from her, may indeed make you weep when you remember Zion, and hang your harps upon the willow trees, while we are gone so far into captivity, and the glory is so far departed. In a word, if the vail be rent with you, your heart will be rent habitually for all these things, as also for all your heart-plagues. Your heart will be so rent for your atheism, ignorance, enmity, carnality, hypocrisy, roving, wanderings, worldliness, and such like, that you will be ready to say as Rebecca said to Isaac, in another case, "I am weary of my life, because of the daughters of Heth."

2. If the vail be effectually rent, then, as there are some things your heart will be rent for, so there are some things your hearts will be rent from. Why, your hearts will be rent from sin as well as rent for sin; your heart will say with Ephriam, "What have I to do any more with idols?" What have I to do any more with lusts? All that expect to get into the holy of holies in the heavenly temple, are students of holiness and purity: "He that hath this hope purifieth himself even as he is pure" Christ having rent the vail, entered into the holiest with blood; and believers are daily besprinkling themselves with that blood, that so they may enter in all sprinkled over with that blood also. Believers want not sin, and it cleaves to them here; but they are so far from cleaving to it, that it is the desire of their soul to be rent from it, and therefore their daily sins oblige them to make daily application to the blood of sprinkling.—Again, if the vail be effectually rent, then your hearts will be rent from the world. O but this globe of earth, and all the glory of it, looks but like a filthy mote, a piece of dung, to the man who hath got his heart within the vail. The glory of God in Christ darkens all created glory. What cares he for worldly pleasures, who hath Christ for his delight? What cares he for worldly profits, who hath Christ for his gain? What cares he for worldly honour, who hath Christ for his crown of glory? What cares he for the world's all, who hath Christ for his all in all? His heart is rent from the world.—Again, when the vail is rent, the man's heart is rent from the law: "He that is married to Christ, is divorced from the law," Rom. vii. 4. The law, as a covenant of works, the believer hath nothing to do with it. 'He does not owe it a cup of cold water,' as one says; for Christ hath perfectly fulfilled the condition of the covenant of works; and therefore if the law challenge

him, he sends it to Christ for a perfect obedience; if the penalty challenge him, he sends it to Christ for a complete satisfaction. He desires, with Paul, to be found in Christ, and would not be found in his own righteousness for ten thousand worlds; he sees so much unholiness in his own holiness; so much unrighteousness in his own righteousness: so much carnality, in all his spirituality; so much earthliness, in all his heavenliness; so much sin in all his duties; that he is sure God may damn him for his best duties as well as his worst sins: and therefore he hath no expectation from the law, but is rent from it, and joined to the Lord Jesus, saying, "In the Lord only have I righteousness and strength."—In a word, when the vail is effectually rent, the man is rent from self: it is very hard indeed to rend a man from himself; self insinuates itself into all our praying, preaching, and communicating. However, the power of self is broken in all true believers. Instead of self-estimation he is brought to that, "Behold I am vile;" he hath never a good word to speak of himself, not a good thought to think of himself; but every time he prays, every time he communicates, he cries out, "Behold I am vile;" Instead of self-justification, he is brought to that, "I will lay my hand upon my mouth;" I will not answer, I cannot justify myself, but must condemn myself, and justify the Lord. Instead of self-love, he is brought to that, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes:" Self-loathing and abhorrence takes place. Instead of self-will, he is brought to that, "Lord what wilt thou have me to do?" Instead of self-ease and carnal security, he is brought to that, "O what shall I do to be saved?" And after the first exercise about salvation hath landed in conversion, he is always exercising himself to godliness, and giving employment to Christ to carry on and complete his salvation, and restless till salvation be completed. Instead of self-fulness and sufficiency, he is brought to that, "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing;" he sees himself empty of all good, and filled with all evil. Instead of self-confidence and hope, he is brought to that, "We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, which raised the dead." They are brought to despair in themselves. And instead of self-righteousness, of which before, they are brought to that, "All our righteousness are as filthy rags."—Thus, in so far as they share of the saving benefit of the rent vail, so far are they rent from self: and thus, by these things you may examine yourselves, what interest

you have in this privilege of Christ's rending of the veil betwixt God and you.

Use Third, for terror to unbelievers, who, though they hear that the veil is rent, and so a free access to the holy of holies proclaimed, yet they are not at all concerned about entering in by this rent veil. The door of heaven is open to you, but you will not come in; the veil of the temple is rent, but you will not enter. O wretched creature how can you answer that challenge, John v. 40. "You will not come to me, that you might have life?" You have no grace, no holiness, no repentance, no good thing; but, says Christ, you will not come to me that you might have grace, you will not come to me that you might have holiness, you will not come to me that you might have repentance, you will not come to me that you might have all good things that you need. The veil is rent, the door is open, but you will not come in. "O! what will you do in the day of visitation?" What will you do when he that rent the veil shall rend your soul and body in twain, and say, O sligher of the Son of God, come and give account of what use you have made of the Sabbaths, sermons, and communion-seasons that you enjoyed? Perhaps you are little thinking on death, but what know you but God will say to you, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee?" I defy all the ministers on earth to assure you that you shall live to get another offer of Christ to-morrow. Many here will not come again to-morrow; and many here may never have another venture for heaven. O! what will you do, when he that rent the veil, that you might have access to God, will rend these heavens, and come down to judgment? "Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him! With what countenance will you look him in the face in judgment, when you did not care for a sight of his face in mercy, through the rent veil? O what a dreadful voice will that be to you, when he will say, Rise ye dead, and come ye to judgment! Rise ye unbelievers of the gospel, and give an account of yourselves! Do you know that, while you are neglecting the gospel, and slighting the Son of God, you are saying with the Jews, "His blood be upon us, and upon our children?" The guilt of the blood of Christ is upon you, and upon the generation after you that follow your example; and, O! how terrible will it be, when he comes to make inquisition for blood, for the blood of God which you trampled under foot! O! how will you then wish to be rent and grinded in pieces, when you shall find all the curses of the Bible lighting upon you! O what will you do

when he that rent the vail, shall openly rend you from the company of God, saints, and angels, and set you with the goats on his left hand! When you shall see some of your acquaintances that are here, standing on his right hand, how will you then think with yourself, O what hindered me, that I did not consent to the gospel, as well as they? You now join with them in the same congregation, but your hearts are disjoined from them; you separate from them in your choice, your affections, your disposition, and conversation; but ere long, there shall be another kind of separation; you that will not come in among them through the rent vail now, there shall be a vail hung up betwixt you and them, that shall never be rent; yea, a vail betwixt you and the glory of God; for you shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; he that rent the vail to pieces, will eternally tear you to pieces, when there shall be none to deliver. Now, the vail is rent betwixt God and you, so as you may come to God's presence with boldness, through the new and living way that is consecrated through the vail; and you shall have God and Christ, and saints and angels, all welcoming you; "For the spirit and the bride say come; and whosoever will, let him come:" for the vail is rent; but if once you go down by the sides of the bottomless Tophet, the vail that then shall be placed betwixt God and you will never, never be rent, so long as eternity lasts. You will never hear again such a sweet word; and, O what would you then give for such a word as that, Behold the vail is rent, that you may come to God's favour and fellowship? But no such news shall be heard in hell: "Now, only now, is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation; to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts:" but think of coming into the holy of holies, while you hear that the vail is rent, and nothing to hinder you.

Use Fourth, for consolation to believers, to whom the vail is so effectually rent in twain, that from the marks given, they may conclude, they have made some entrance within the vail, by coming to a God in Christ, and casting their anchor within the vail. I have a word of comfort to say to you, though perhaps you are still complaining of many vails that separate betwixt God and you; yet a little while and you shall have a triumphant entrance ministered unto you, into the holy of holies above, whither the forerunner hath for you entered; for, "Behold the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom!" Therefore you shall come into Zion with

songs, and everlasting joy upon your heads; you shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away; and then all vails shall be rent and removed for ever. I will tell you, for your comfort, of a few vails that then shall be rent; for the rending of the vail of the temple, promises the rending of all vails in a short while.

1. Then the vail of sin and corruption shall be rent in twain; all the rents, all the strokes that sin gets by the word, the rod, the spirit, never rends a body of death from you; but still you are groaning under a sense of indwelling-sin, that separates betwixt God and you: but then, O then, believer, this vail shall be rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and from the bottom to the top; both root and branch shall be rent and removed; for "when he shall appear, you shall be like him:" your conformity to him shall be complete; you must go to heaven dragging a body of death after you; but whenever you come to the port of glory, there will be a joyful parting; for you shall take an everlasting farewell of all your lusts and corruptions; then you will say farewell with all our hearts; and glory to God that we shall never meet again. Blessed be God, we shall never see your face again.

2. Then shall the vail of darkness and distance be rent in twain; for then darkness will give way to light, glorious light; and distance will give way to presence, glorious and everlasting presence. Now you say, I cannot see him, he is far away; but says Christ, "Father, I will that these whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory:" to be with me where I am, there is distance removed; to behold my glory, there is darkness removed. Darkness and distance now create doubts and fears; but doubts and fears will then take wings and flee away, never to return again; for, "the face of the covering shall be entirely removed," Isa. xxv. 7, 8.

3. Then shall the vail of ordinances be rent in twain: any view we have of God's glory now, is mediate, through the intervention of means and ordinances; any glimpse we get of his beauty is through the dim glass of duties and ordinances; for, "now we see through a glass darkly," says the apostle; but the time comes when the glass shall be broken, and we shall see him as he is, in an immediate manner; Rev. xxi 22. "I saw no temple there; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb, are the temple of it." And then shall the saints be able to say, the half of his glory hath not

been told, when they shall see him face to face, and not his back parts, or the skirts of his garments only.

4. The vail of scanty enjoyments will be rent in twain ; the vail of passing blinks and interrupted views. The life of the saint here, is mostly a life of desire ; he can never get his desire fully satisfied ; and when you get any desirable meeting with the Lord, why, it is but a blink and away ; your desires are but increased thereby, and your melancholy wants remain unsupplied : but, within the vail all desires shall be satisfied, all wants shall be supplied ; for, " In his presence there is fullness of joy, and at his right-hand rivers of pleasure for evermore." No clouds, no night, no desertion there ; no such complaint as this, " O why hidest thou thy face ?" The best communion and enjoyment here admits of interruption ; but that which is above, is uninterrupted ; no tempting devil, no deceitful heart, no dismal cloud to darken their day, or interrupt their vision and fruition of God. Christ is here only passing by us, and as a wayfaring man, that tarries only for a night ; yea, hardly for a night : no sooner does he enter, but he is away ; no sooner does the heart begin to open to him sometime, than, alas ! he is gone, Song v. 6, " I opened to my beloved, but he had withdrawn himself, and was gone : " but then their enjoyment shall be full, and everlasting, and uninterrupted ; for, " So shall they ever be with the Lord." Partial enjoyments will give way to eternally full enjoyments ; " For when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away."

5. The vail of church-disorders and confusion shall be rent in twain. Many times you have reason to sigh, and complain that matters are all out of order in the church ; the vail of confusion and disorder is upon it, and the glory departed ; nothing but clouds in our sky. Indeed, we would gladly expect the rending of these veils that are upon the church, even in time, and even with respect to the Church of Scotland. It is with the church as it is with particular believers, the Lord usually brings them to an extremity before he give them a deliverance : the darkest night may usher in the clearest day ; to them that fear his name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise. Whatever dark eclipses the sun may be under at present, do not say the sun is gone out of the firmament, because it is a cloudy day ; the clouds may grow thicker and thicker yet ; yea there may not only be dark clouds, but rain, and perhaps a terrible shower of wrath is coming ; many things look like it : but though

there should be both clouds and rain, say not they sun is gone, and will never return and shine again ; he that rent the vail will rend the clouds in his own time. Yea, the rending of the vail of the temple did foretel good to the church. It says, that he will rear up a more glorious temple, such as is promised, Isaiah liv. 11, 12,—“ O thou afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted ! behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires ; and I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles and all thy borders of pleasant stones.” Why, what is the meaning of all this ? See it in ver. 13,—“ All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children.” You see it is a time of great darkness in the church, so it is indeed ; but, here is a promise of light that shall arise, “ All thy children shall be taught of the Lord.” Is it a time of great division and contention ? so it is ; but here is a promise of great peace, “ Great shall be the peace of thy children.” We hope there will be a more full accomplishment of this in the church, even in time : but when will all this come to pass ? why, we may come to be tried with another kind of tempest before it come to pass ; for, see how the promise is ushered in, “ O thou afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted ;” then follows the promise of a pleasant issue. But, withal, never expect a perfect church upon earth ; we hope it will be more pure, but it never will be perfect, till that which is in part shall be done away. The time is coming when the bride, the Lamb’s wife, shall be presented to him without spot or wrinkle ; when the union of the saints shall be entire, and the communion of saints shall be perfect. There will be no contention, no division, no disorder in the general assembly and church of the first-born that are written in heaven.

7. The vail of militant graces will be rent in twain : and nothing but triumphant graces will have the throne, “ Now remains faith, hope, and love ; but the greatest of these is love.” Why, love is a triumphant grace ; and faith and hope will resign to love the chair of state. There will be no need of militant graces in the church triumphant ; no need of faith, where vision is ; no need of hope, where fruition is ; no need of patience, where all tribulation is at an end ; no need of any fighting grace, where there is nothing but victory, light, life, liberty, love, joy, glory. You have a fighting life of it here, but then a song of victory ; victory for evermore.

7. The vail of infirmities will be rent in twain ; here believers

have infirmities on their bodies, that have no small influence on the actings of their souls ; infirmities on their souls, darkness and dullness in their intellectual powers : infirmities of the new nature, though created in Christ Jesus, though supported by his power, and guided by his grace ; yet still it is a weak thing, like a new-born babe : but none of these infirmities are in them that are within the vail ; they are become perfect ; “ Then shall we all come in the unity of the faith, to a perfect man in Christ,” Eph. iv. 13. Then that scripture shall be fully accomplished, Isa. xxx. 26,—“ The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun ; and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold, as the light of seven days.”

8. The vail of mortality shall be rent in twain ; for, “ This mortal shall put on immortality ; this corruption, shall put on incorruption ; and death shall be swallowed up in victory.” The vail of flesh, the clay tabernacle will be rent in twain ; We know, that if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens : for in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven,” 2 Cor. v. 1, 2. O was you ever brought to that man’s saying, “ O mortality, mortality ! O time, time ! that will not haste away, to let eternity come !” Was you never content to shake the sand-glass of time to win to eternity ? Was you never content to take death in your arms : and say, Welcome, welcome ; O friend, welcome news, that mortality shall be swallowed up of life ?

9. The vail of incapacity will be rent in twain ; now you are not capable of that glory which you shall be able to behold and contain in heaven ; your eye is so weak, that you cannot behold the Sun of righteousness shining in his strength. Though light be the most pleasing thing to the eye ; yet the meridian brightness of the sun cannot be looked upon without destroying the sight ; because the faculty is not so strong, nor capable to receive the object ; so it is here, we want a capacity to behold the light of glory ; but within the vail, or in heaven, the faculty will be strengthened, and the capacity enlarged, to hold an exceeding great and eternal weight of glory ; the want of which hath made some, in time, when their cup hath overflowed with consolation, to cry out, “ Lord, hold thy hand, thy servant is a clay-vessel, and can hold no more.” Indeed, it is little we get here below, and it is little we can hold, though we should get our fill ; but in heaven the capacity will be so enlarged,

that it will be able to hold a fulness of God, a fulness of glory, a fulness of the Spirit, fulness of joy, at God's right hand for ever and ever.

10. The vail of weariness shall be rent in twain; here we soon weary of praying and preaching, we soon weary of sermons and sacraments. I doubt not but many here may be wearied to the heart with this day's work. Indeed little wonder that the carnal heart say, What a weariness is this work? For, as one says, "you may take a carnal man, tie him to a post, and then kill him with praying and preaching only." But even the spiritual man himself, while he hath a wearying body of death about him, he wearies of ordinances, he wearies of God's service; but in heaven, within the vail, they shall serve him without wearying or fainting, Rev. xxii. 3; there his servants shall serve him. Their weary service here is hardly to be called a service; but there his servants shall serve him indeed. O! will it not be a mystery, and a great wonder, if we, who cannot pray half an hour to an end, and hardly hear an hour to an end, but we will be toiled, as if we had done some marvellous work, shall be brought to heaven, and never weary of the service of heaven? Here is comfort, believer, you shall through all the years of eternity, praise him, and never weary.

In a word, all the vails of trouble and trials will be rent in twain; "There remains a rest for the people of God."—The vail of sorrow and anxiety shall be rent in twain; for all tears shall be wiped from their eyes: Sorrow and sighing shall flee away.—The vail of sickness and uneasiness of body or soul shall be rent in twain: The inhabitants of that land shall not say, I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity.—The vail of wandering thoughts and vain imaginations will be rent in twain; you shall not have a wrong thought or conception of God throughout all eternity: for all your heart-plagues, lusts, and corruptions, that you have been wrestling with all your days, will leave you; and I am sure you will leave them with such pleasure and satisfaction, and be so glad to part with them, that you will hardly shake hands with them; but rather say, the back of my hand to you: many a sad hour, many a sigh and groan have you cost me; but it is well for me, that now I am quit of you for ever. And I cannot but say, that they who now have a glad heart to think of a parting with these, and a meeting with Christ for ever, they have gotten some communion with him this day.

Finally, the veil of time will be rent in twain : and the streams of time will be swallowed up in the ocean of eternity. O how will you say with wonder then, O hath such a black and ugly creature as I was, gotten glorious Christ in my arms, never, never, never to part again ! O how will his kind looks dart a sweetness and joy inexpressible into your hearts, when you shall be led with the Lamb about the rivers of living water, when time shall be no more !—Take all this comfort into your hearts, believers, for the God of consolation allows you to rejoice for ever, and to rejoice in the hope of the glory of God which you shall see and be for ever possessed of within the veil.

Use Fifth, for exhortation. All I shall now say, is this, if the veil be rent in twain by the death of Christ, O then come and see, come and take, come and wonder, come and enter, come and sing.

1. Come and see. When the seal was opened, Rev. vi., then the voice cried, “Come and see :” so, when the veil is rent, O come and see ; come and see. Turn aside and see this great sight, the veil of separation betwixt God and us rent in twain from the top to the bottom. What was to be seen within the veil of the temple, you are told, Heb. ix. 4, 5,—“There was to be seen the golden censer, the golden pot, the ark of the covenant, the tables of the covenant, and over it the cherubims of glory over-shadowing the mercy-seat.” What all these did signify, I cannot stand to show ; but in short, they all pointed out the glory of God in Jesus Christ. Now the veil is rent : then look into the holiest, and see the glorious mystery of redeeming love ; see the wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and grace of God, manifested brightly in the face of Jesus, who by his death rent the veil, that we might see heaven and the glory of it.

2. Come and take. The pot of manna was within the veil, as you see in that forecited text, which signified Christ the bread of life. Now, that the veil is rent ; you may come to the holiest and take manna : if you go away fastening this night, it will be your own fault ; for you have liberty to come and take, since the veil is rent. Christ himself is the manna ; and if you take him, you take all things with him that you need. Do you need a pardon ? Why, the opening of the veil is a proclamation of pardon upon a jubilee day. In the year of jubilee, the priests entered within the veil into the holiest ; and there was a discharge of debt, and liberty

proclaimed : so here is our jubilee : Christ our High Priest having rent the vail, and entered into the holiest, he issues out his proclamation of indemnity ; he proclaims pardon of debt. Many a bankrupt drowned in debt is in this green ; but behold, the cry is, "Go forth ye prisoners of hope." There is a pardon in this pot of manna, if you will but take it : yea, there is life to your souls, and death to your sins in this pot of manna, if you will but take it. Object. But you will say, I cannot take what is offered to me. Answ. I wish you indeed knew your own weakness, and were sensible of it : "No man can come to me," says Christ, "except the Father draw him : " But, O hath God drawn you so far as that you are willing to take Christ, though you can do nothing ; and willing that Christ should take you ? Do you know what it is to believe ? It is not to do some great thing by your own power, no : it is a grace that hath two eyes ; with the one it looks to a man's self, and sees his own utter weakness, saying, "Not that I am sufficient of myself to think any thing as of myself : " and with the other it looks to God, and sees his infinite power, saying, "My sufficiency is of God." So, that to believe, is to see that you can do nothing, and to employ the power of God to do all things for you and in you that you need. Now, when you are called to take Christ, you are called to take and employ the power of God to do all things that you are called to do, but cannot do of yourself ; this power of God is in your offer, and you may give employment to it : Isa. xxvii. 5,— "Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me." Did you ever know before that the power of God was at your service ? Take hold of his power, and give employment to his power, saying, Lord let this power of thine be put forth upon an indigent creature, that I may take Christ. Behold, the Father offers him for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption : there is manna indeed, which you have for the taking in this manner, saying, Lord take me, and I will take thee. Let thy power and grace be glorified upon me. If you be in earnest, it is a bargain ; for he never called a sinner to take his Son, upon any other terms, but that they only consent that Christ perform all the work, and take all the glory.

3. Come and wonder : "Behold, the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom." Come and wonder, that all hinderances are taken out of the way of your access to God. Wonder at the love of God in sending his son to rend the vail ;

wonder at the love of Christ in rending the vail, that you might have access to God ; wonder that it was rent at all ; wonder that it was rent in twain ; wonder that it was rent from the top to the bottom : wonder at the thing, and wonder at the occasion of it. Christ gave up the ghost, and the vail of the temple was rent. The rending of the vail cost him his life, it cost him his soul ; his soul was made an offering for sin, and then the vail was rent. O is there no wondering at this ? It would be an evidence of a good communion to you, if you were filled with wonder. A short wonder is better than a long prayer.

4. Come and enter. Not only see and take, and wonder, but also boldly enter into the holiest : not standing in the outer court, as it were, or behind the vail gazing, or only putting in your hand by the rent vail, but come in wholly and enter boldly. The vail is rent in twain ; O then, come and enter by the rent. You may all come boldly to the holiest, by this new and living way that is consecrated through the vail. O may such a dog, such a filthy dog as I come ? Yes, we use to say, when doors are open, dogs come in ; the door is open, the vail is rent ; let dogs come in and get a crumb. The Gentiles are called dogs in scripture ; and it is said, " Without are dogs, murderers, sorcerers, whoremongers : " but to all the dogs that are without the vail, we, in God's name, proclaim liberty to come in, and get what will save you and sanctify you. You say you have nothing to bring with you, no grace, no good. I tell you, there is none here, but they have something to bring to Christ with them. What is that ? Have you not much sin and misery to bring with you ; have you not much want, weakness, and wickedness, to bring with you ? Come with all your ills, in order to get all good ; come with you sins, and get grace ; come with your guilt, and get a pardon ; come with your filthiness, and get cleansing ; come with your wants, and get fulness. Let dogs come in and get a crumb ; yea, a feast. There is nothing to hinder you, since the vail is rent. The law is not in your way, for that is fulfilled : the flaming cherubim is not in your way, for Christ hath rent the vail of God's wrath and divided the Red Sea of divine vengeance, that you might pass through. Have you a mind for heaven, man, woman ? here is the way, it lies through the rent vail ; and if you take not this way, you shall never enter there : For there are two porters that will keep all unbelievers out, namely, justice and holiness. Justice will say, I must be satisfied ; holiness will say, I must be vindicated, or else you shall never

enter here ; but if you come by this rent vail, you shall have open entrance into the heavenly kingdom. Christ will say to justice, let such a man in, for I paid you all his debt ; holiness, let such a man in, for I gave you a perfect obedience for him ; look upon him in me. This will satisfy both these porters to let believers pass. O then, come and enter through the vail that is rent. Christless soul, who will satisfy justice and holiness for you ? These porters will never be bribed by you. Therefore, O come and enter by the rent vail, for there is no other way to heaven.

5. Come and sing. If you have made entrance, O sing, Glory to God in the highest, that ever rent this vail. You might go home singing, if you took up the true meaning of the text and turned it to a song ; and sing it with understanding, "Behold, the vail of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom." Behold, the vail is rent, and shall never be whole again. Behold, the work is completed by the Son of God : the work is done, and shall never be undone.—To the author and finisher of this great work be glory for ever. AMEN.

SERMON III.¹

THE BEST MATCH ; OR, THE INCOMPARABLE MARRIAGE BETWEEN
THE CREATOR AND THE CREATURE.

ISAIAH liv. 5.—"Thy Maker is thy Husband."

THE prophet Isaiah having largely discoursed of the sufferings of Christ, and the blessed fruits and effects of them ; among which one is, that he should have a numerous seed to believe on him ; and that, when the Jews reject him, the Gentiles should gladly receive him : And thus foreseeing, by the spirit of prophecy, the glorious state of the Gentile church, he breaks forth into a song of triumph in the beginning of this chapter ; where the prophet directs his speech to the church and spouse of God in these words, "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear ; break forth into singing, and cry

(1) This was delivered, in two discourses, at Culross : but the precise time and occasion cannot be ascertained ; only we see the first edition was printed Anno 1722.

aloud, thou that didst not travail with child : for more are the children of the desolate, than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord." Where we have a magnificent promise of the fertility and the felicity of the Gentile church ; and this is enlarged to the fifth verse, which contains the words of our text ; where we have the reason of her happiness and fruitfulness who was formerly a barren widow, for "Thy Maker is thy Husband : " he who made thee out of nothing, and therefore can easily fulfil all these promises, how unlikely soever they seem to be ; he who made thee a people, yea, which is more, who made thee his people, he will own thee as his spouse, and act the part of an husband to thee.

I shall defer my further introduction and explication, and also whatever might be said concerning the external relation betwixt Christ and the visible church, my chief design being at this time, only to speak a little to that internal spiritual marriage-relation betwixt Christ and the invisible church, or Christ and the believer, as it is represented under the formality of a marriage : and what I would offer upon this subject I lay before you in this doctrinal proposition.

That there is a marriage-relation betwixt Christ and believers, wherein he supplies the place of a husband unto them, and they the place of a bride and spouse to him.

In prosecuting whereof, I would essay these three things.

I. Prove, that there is such a marriage-relation betwixt Christ and believers.

II. Speak to the nature of this marriage.

III. Give the reasons, why Christ comes under such a relation to his people.

IV. Make some application of the subject.

I. To confirm the doctrine, that there is a marriage-relation betwixt Christ and believers. This will appear from these two considerations.

1. From the compellations given to Christ with relation to believers. How frequently doth the spouse call him her husband in the book of the Song ? "As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. My beloved is mine, and I am his," Song ii. 3, 16. And, says the apostle, 2 Cor. xi. 2

—"I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin unto Christ."

2. The marriage relation betwixt Christ and believers appears from the compellations given to believers in scripture with respect to Christ. How frequently calls he her his love, his spouse, in the book of the Song? "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my SPOUSE. How fair is thy love, my sister, my SPOUSE!" Song iv. 9, 10. In Rev. xix. 7, there the church, (or believers in the collective capacity) is called the bride, the Lamb's wife: "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and the bride hath made herself ready." We need not stand to prove that which is so evident, we need say no more to confirm it, than to repeat the text, "thy maker is thy husband." Therefore I come,

II. To speak of the nature of this marriage: and here we would briefly consider, 1. The parties married. 2. The terms of the marriage. 3. The properties of the marriage. 4. The effects of it. 5. How the match is carried on. 6. How it is concluded.

(1.) I say, let us consider the parties married; who is the Bridegroom, and who is the Bride.

1. Then, the bridegroom is the wisdom of God; and all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are found in him: he knows all the wants of the bride, and is ready to supply them.—On the other hand, the bride, before her matching with him, is the most arrant fool out of hell: her folly is discovered by continuing to refuse to match with him; to refuse to give her consent to this heavenly bridegroom.

2. The bridegroom is the eternal Son of God; the King's only Son: "The King made a marriage for his Son:" He is the blood-royal of heaven.—On the other hand, What is the bride's pedigree? She needs not boast of her descent; "Thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite," Ezek. xvi. 3. There is a vast difference here.

3. The bridegroom is the heir of all things: he hath all riches, "the unsearchable riches of Christ."—But what is the bride worth before he match with her? She is worse than nothing, poverty itself; and not only a beggar, but in debt, and Christ is willing to pay her debt.

4. The bridegroom is comely and glorious. All the seraphims and cherubims above, all the sons of men in the world, all the crowned heads on earth, in all the circumstances of glory, are but like black

pieces of earth compared with this glorious bridegroom.—On the other hand, What is the bride before he match with her. Even as black as the devil can make her. Not only a leopard, spotted here and there, but an Ethiopian, wholly black and ugly. When she is cast forth in the open field to the loathing of her person, she is a spectacle of horror and misery ; yet then it is a marriage-day and a time of love.

(2.) What are the terms of the marriage : the articles of it on his part and her part ? The terms on her part, though the whole belong to Christ, yet, to speak of terms in an improper sense, he requires of her what he worketh in her ; namely,

1. That she be divorced from all other husbands, and give up with all other lovers and idols ; particularly, that she be divorced from the law, that she may be married unto Christ : she must not obey the law from a principle of her own strength ; nor as a covenant of works, that, by obedience, she may purchase a title to heaven ; nor to gratify a natural conscience ; nor merely to escape hell, and make a righteousness of her obedience ; she must be divorced from that husband.

2. Upon her part it was required, that she be satisfied with this husband alone, as the great portion of the soul, that he may have no rival, no competitor in her affections, none to sit on the throne with him : she must keep the chief room for the son of God. Again, on his part, he contracts,

1. That he will make over himself to her ; all he is, all he hath, all he hath purchased, all he hath promised ; he will make over to her all the blessings of the everlasting covenant. O this is a sweet article ! and a large charter indeed !

2. He contracts to perform all the glorious offices of a husband to her ; to provide for her, protect her, direct her, pity her, clothe her, to encourage and comfort her ; and to do all for her she needs ; this is the sum of the contract ; for, to speak properly, Christ is all, and does all in this matter ; and our part is done by him in us, Hos. ii. 19, 20. “ I will betrothe thee unto me for ever : yea, I will betrothe thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving-kindness, and in mercies ; I will even betrothe thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord.” Christ signs the contract for him and her both. “ I will betrothe thee unto me in righteousness ;” I will fulfill the law, and satisfy God’s justice. “ I will betrothe thee unto me in loving-kindness :” though there

be nothing in thee to invite my love, but much to challenge my aversion, yet I will overcome all my imperfections, and set my love upon thee. "I will betrothe thee unto me in mercies;" in pardoning mercy, sanctifying mercy, supporting mercy, comforting mercy. But lest the bride think, that whenever she sins there may be a divorce, she may break and go away, therefore it follows, "I will betrothe thee unto me in faithfulness." He pledges his veracity for fulfilling the articles on her part and his both. But then,

(3.) What are the properties of this marriage?

1. It is a very mysterious marriage, that the Creator should take the work out of his hands for a bride; not only when in its primitive and virgin integrity, as it dropt out of his creating hands, but when polluted with the poison of the devil, the venom of the serpent, that he should take her for his bride; "Thy maker is thy husband." This is a wonderful conjunction. If a glorious angel should be matched with a creeping worm, and a king with a beggar, it would not be such a wonder; but the maker to join himself to the work of his hands; there cannot be a greater distance conceived betwixt any thing, than betwixt a Creator, and that which is brought out from the barren womb of nothing, a creature; and yet they are in a marriage-relation; "Thy maker is thy husband."

2. This marriage is very difficult and hard. It is true, there is nothing too hard for Omnipotency; yet the human nature of Christ had much to do with it; though he was supported by the divine nature, yet he behoved to swim through the river of his own blood, before he could get his bride. He satisfied the justice of God, established a new covenant. All this must be done in order to this marriage.

3. This marriage is an indissoluble marriage; death dissolves other relations, but it increases this intimate union: Nothing shall separate Christ and the believer: "I am persuaded, saith Paul, that neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord," Rom. viii. 38, 39.

(4.) What are the effects of this marriage?

1. The first and immediate effect is a most close union betwixt Christ and the believer. This union, though less than a personal union, although it be in some respect, yet it is more than a political union, more than a moral union; it is a very close union. The

bridegroom, Christ, he gives his bride his own spirit; communicates vital influences, from the glorious head, to her: and she cleaves, by faith and love, close to him; and God promises that he will make the house of Israel cleave close to him, as a girdle to the loins of a man, Jer. xiii. 11. He makes his spouse in spite of all her folly, in spite of all her enmity, in spite of all her enemies and temptations, to cleave close to him.

2. Another effect of this union, is sweet communion, mutual fellowship: he feasts with them and they with him: he blows upon her garden, quickens and animates her graces; and then he comes and eats his pleasant fruits.

3. Another effect is, familiarity, which is coincident with the former: he treats them not as strangers, but as friends; and not as friends only, but as his own spouse: he communicates to her, and speaks comfortably and kindly to her. It is a wonder what condescension God will make sometimes: and the believer again can be more familiar with God, than with the whole world; and can tell to God what he can tell to none else.—Thus you see some of the effects of this marriage.

(5.) How was the match carried on?

I answer, in a word. On his part it was carried on thus:

1. He gave the Father his hand, and engaged to him in the covenant of redemption, from eternity, that he would do all things necessary for accomplishing the marriage.

2. Because there must be an union of natures betwixt the bridegroom and the bride; (it was not possible that we could be matched with the divine nature;) therefore he becomes a man, and takes on our nature, that there might be an union of natures.

3. Because the bride is a slave, he pays her ransom, substitutes himself in her room, takes on her debt, and pays all that she owed to justice, and then takes on with her. But, on our part, just nothing at all; we had no hand in the covenant of redemption; no hand in the contrivance of salvation; we knew nothing about the business; we had no thoughts of a Redeemer; deserved nothing but pure wrath; we were lying, with full contentment, in the devil's territories when Christ was carrying on the match.

(6.) How is the marriage concluded upon his part?

1. He sends forth his ambassadors to court for him, as Abraham did his servant for Isaac: and there is a great work, indeed, to make her give her consent. Let angels in heaven unite their topics

of persuasion, they could not prevail with one soul, if a converting day were not come : but they must always speak fair to her. How rhetorical was Abraham's servant for his master ? he hath but one child, and that child hath great riches ; he seeks no portion with Rebecca, only her consent. Thus he rhetorizes and flourishes exceedingly, and persuades with the greatest motives. But yet the ambassadors of Christ have a larger commission, if our eyes were opened to see it ; they are sent forth to make love to the bride, and in his name to commend Christ.

2. He concludes the marriage thus. The bride being wretchedly ignorant of her true happiness, therefore his father distresses her with the debt which she owes to him ; and the wretched person is forced, for some time, to mount Sinai ; and there God descends in all the circumstances of terrible majesty ; he thunders against her, curses ; " Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them," Gal. iii. 10. God exacts all the debt, conscience roars, and the devils are let loose ; she fears hell and wrath ; and God declares, in the gospel, that the wretched bankrupt shall go to prison, and lie eternally in hell, if she do not take on with his son, marry him, and believe on him. Thus the bride is forced to an extremity : some have more, some have less of this law-work ; but all are humbled and broken in some measure, who are married to Christ : he sends forth his spirit and convinces the world of sin. But this would not do either ; and therefore,

3. The bridegroom sees that nothing but condescension will do it ; and so he appears in all his glory : when the bride is full of fears, perplexities, and anxieties ; when the terrors of God are surrounding her, and the arrows of the Almighty drinking up her spirits, and when she is crying out, What shall I do ? Whether shall I go ? Then the bridegroom appears in all his excellency and glory, and says, " Behold me, behold me ;" and she gets a view of him that ravishes her heart, and enlarges her soul ; then it is that the spirit is sent to determine her to consent. The manifestation of his glory does enlighten her mind and spirit ; and immediately grace, upon the will, draws out the whole heart after him : so that if the bride could be grieved and pained upon the marriage day, it would be for her folly in refusing him so long.—But what is done upon the bride's part, for concluding the match ; Nothing at all ; but the whole soul is enabled to acquiesce in a redeemer : and the

believer is ready, at such a time, to say, he is my Lord, my God, my strength, my all, and shall be for ever. Thus you have a brief scheme of the nature and way of this marriage.

Having spoken but very briefly to the former heads I shall here, before I proceed to the reasons of the doctrine, offer a few remarks upon the time of this marriage-union betwixt Christ and believers. We told you how this marriage was concluded and completed by Christ, and now we say, there is a stated day and time for the concluding thereof: and upon this head we may remark,

1st, That there is a two-fold day we are to consider in this marriage, namely, the day of espousals on earth, and the day of consummation in heaven; and we may compare these two together in a few words.

1. The day of espousals here is ushered in with a very dark morning or rather an evening, upon the bride's part, with the wrath of God, and the law: as it was said, "The evening and the morning was the day:" so, in this contract, the evening of legal terrors, at least some humiliation, ushers in the morning: But as to the consummation, there is a great deal of glory before it, the soul being taken to heaven already, and the body sleeping sweetly in the grave, a bed where the bridegroom lay three days before her.

2. In the day of espousals, when the person gets a victory over corruption, and finds little stirring of it, no sensible working of it, yet there is a party within, at the same time, that opposes the match, and which will afterwards get out its head, and will be still assaulting the believer, while he is on earth: but in the day of consummation, there is no such thing; no enemy, no sin, no corruption; but the whole soul goes out wholly upon the bridegroom.

3. The espousals are carried on secretly; it may be the person is sitting at your side, and you do not see, nor know when Christ is making up the match; or, perhaps, on his knees at home, there is a secret transaction: But the consummation will be before millions of angels, millions of saints, and millions of spectators. Here is a great difference: after the day of espousals is over, the bride may give many squint looks to her old lovers, looking back to Egypt, departing from her husband, doubting of his love, distrusting his word, fearing his dispensations: But after the consummation, no shadow of sin, no shadow of jealousy, no shadow of mistakes, or fears, can overtake her for ever; no cloud can intervene, for the sun of righteousness shall never be eclipsed any more. But then,

2. A second remark is, that the precise time of the espousals is condescended on by the Bridegroom and his Father, from all eternity ; the very moment when the bride shall be made to sign the contract, and flee to Christ, and pour out her whole soul upon him ; that precise moment is agreed upon betwixt the Father and the Son, in the covenant of redemption, from eternity.

3. We remark, that the Bridegroom waits patiently for that moment that is agreed upon betwixt the Father and the Son : he longs for it, he desires it. The believer many times is ready to think, O, Christ is not willing ! I have set days apart, I have gone to my knees, I have sought him in and about this and the other ordinance, and yet I could not close with him : I have been almost dipt in hell with affliction, yet my heart was never melted ; surely Christ is not willing. O let us flee the borders of blasphemy ! The Lord Jesus is willing ; but the fulness of the time is not yet come ; there is a set moment for his coming to his people, and for this they are to wait : yea, for this he waits himself, according to that scripture, which I shall read to them that cannot get that in duties and ordinances which they have been long looking for ; Isa. xxx. 18,—“ Therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you ; and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you ; for, the Lord is a God of judgment ; blessed are all they that wait for him.” He will wait upon the very moment of time, for the day of salvation ; he knows the proper season. The crane, the swallow, and the stork know their seasons, by the natural instinct God hath given them ; and will he not know his own season ? yea, he waits to be gracious.

4th Remark, That when the time comes, then there is a sweet conjunction of all circumstances to conclude the work ; all things work pleasantly together to complete the match ; conscience goes right to work, the word is made lively, the Spirit acts powerfully and sweetly in the soul : there is an auspicious conjunction of all favourable circumstances, for determining the bride, and drawing out her heart.

5th Remark. That there are several signs and characters of this day, by which it may be known. What are the signs of it ? you shall say. I shall not stand on this, only it is a day of light ; great light breaks in upon the mind ; it is a day of love ; much love is let in upon the heart ; it is a day of power, wherein the bride is persuaded and overcome ; difficulties are surmounted, enemies con-

quered, and the bride's will is moulded into a compliance ; it is a day of amazement. O what an ecstasy of wonder is raised in the person's heart ! I was blind, now I see ; I was dead, now I live ; I was weak, now I am strong ; this morning, perhaps, I was under affliction, and under the terrors of God, and now he hath ravished me with the consolations of his Spirit : I was afraid of hell, now I have the hope of heaven and eternal life. O what a day of wonder is it ! Lastly, it is a day of vows ; the soul will be ready to break forth in such a day crying, What shall I speak for him ? What shall I suffer for him ?

A sixth and last remark on this head is, that in this stated day of espousals, the bridegroom manifests his glory to the bride ; when he intimates to the soul, " thy Maker is thy Husband," he shews his glory ; his absolute glory, his comparative glory, his relative glory ; they are all one upon the matter, yet there is a formal different consideration of them.

1. His absolute glory is manifested. What does the soul see, that is matched and married to Christ ? Alas ! some see nothing but dreams and fancies ; but when the believer is matched with Christ, so he deals with him as with Moses, he makes all his glory to pass before him ; the person gets a view of the glorious attributes of the Son of God.

2. He manifests his comparative glory ; " Thou art more excellent than hills of prey : fairer than the sons of men ;" the bride, the believer sees him as the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, every way incomparable. Whatever he be compared to, he excels it ; if he be a lily, he is the lily of the valley ; if he be a rose, he is the rose of Sharon ; if he be a plant, he is the plant of renown ; if he be a physician, he is the physician of value ; if an advocate, he is an advocate with the Father ; he is represented without any parallel.

3. His relative glory is manifested : he is discovered as a glorious priest, a glorious prophet, a glorious king, a glorious husband, a glorious redeemer and Saviour ! and there will be a sight of his glorious fulness in all these relations, and the glorious fitness of that sufficiency and fulness, all suited for the soul : and thus revealing himself, he removes all jealousies and mistakes from the bride, supplies all her wants, heals all her diseases, and out-bids all her rivals, who can offer nothing to allure the soul, while he can, and doth say, I am all-sufficient to help thee.

III. I come now to the third thing proposed, namely, To offer

some reasons of the doctrine, why Christ comes under a married-relation to believers. I answer,

1. His own sovereign will is the best reason why he comes under a marriage-relation in this case ; "Even so, Father, for so it seems good in thy sight," Matth. xi. 28. His actions are not to be examined at the bar of our reason : He hath mercy because he will have mercy."

2. His love to them makes him come under such a relation to them ; "I have loved thee with an everlasting love ; therefore with everlasting kindness have I drawn thee." Love is the motive that engages him ; love brought him out of heaven for them ; love nailed him to the cross for them ; love laid him in a grave for them ; and love engages him to a marriage-relation with them.

3. He does it for the glory of his own free grace, mercy, and love. As love and mercy was his motive, so it was his end, that he might display and discover it to the utmost. This attribute is at its utmost line. Infinite wisdom could have contrived a thousand worlds, and infinite power could have made them, but the love of God hath gone to its utmost height ; it is not possible for Christ to give a greater demonstration of his love than he hath done, in giving his life for the bride, and entering into a marriage-relation with her.

4. He does it, that he may furnish work for the blessed company in the higher house ; for on the earth the contract is only drawn up : this is only the day of espousals ; heaven will be the day of the consummation of the marriage : this is only a courting and wooing time ; but the day will come when the nuptial solemnity shall be celebrated, and that shall continue while the day of eternity lasts,—This shall suffice for the reasons of the doctrine.

IV. The fourth thing was, To make some application ; and it may be, 1. For Information. 2. Lamentation. 3. Examination. 4. Exhortation. Now of these in their order.

(1.) For Information. Is it so, that there is a marriage-relation betwixt Christ and believers ?

1. This informs us of the infinite love of God towards lost sinners, in giving his own Son to be a husband and redeemer unto them : "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16. God so loved the world, as neither angels nor men can tell.

2. This informs us of the infinite love of Christ, in condescending to be a husband to such a bride. It could never have entered into the heart of the wisest angel in heaven, that Christ the eternal Son of God, should become man; and far less that he should take such a filthy and deformed creature and bride by the hand, as sinners are: if he had given us our deserving, he would have made his justice to ride in triumph over us, and hell to resound with eternal hollows of praise to incensed justice; but, to the quite contrary, he hath so ordered, that heaven shall resound with eternal hallelujahs of praise to his gracious mercy and free grace, in choosing those that were enemies, and admitting them to his blessed bosom.

3. This doctrine informs us of the believer's safety. Having Christ for her husband, who can hurt her? It is the duty of a husband, you know, to protect and defend his spouse; and to be sure Christ will not be wanting in this to his bride: "He will hide them in the secret of his presence from the pride of men: he will keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues," Psalm xxxi. 20. "About all the glory he makes a defence," Isaiah iv. 5. He covers them with the mantle of his Spirit; sure then, the bride of Christ is in absolute safety: he hath retiring chambers for her, to hide her in till the day of indignation be overpast.

4. This doctrine lets us see that believers are no such mean and despicable persons as the world generally takes them to be; they are Christ's bride, and he is their husband: and, O what an honour is it to be married to the Son of God! Having him for an husband, they come to be related to all Christ's relations; God is their Father, because he is his Father; angels are their servants, because they are his servants; saints are their fellow-brethren, because they are his members; heaven is their inheritance, because it is the kingdom of their husband. In a word, whatever is his, is theirs; "And all things are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's," 2 Cor. iii. 22, 23.

(2.) For Lamentation. Is it so, that there is a marriage-relation betwixt Christ and believers? This calls for deep lamentation in these two particulars.

1. It calls us to lament that Christ should have so few brides among us, though he be wooing and courting us by the gospel, crying, "Behold me, behold me," Isa. lxv. 1. Yet where is the man or woman that is prevailed with to enter a match with this glorious bridegroom? Though he be fairer than the sons of men, and con-

descends to offer marriage with sinners, who are as black and ugly as hell itself, yet they set him at nought, and give him just ground for that melancholy complaint, "My people would not hearken to my voice, Israel would have none of me," Psalm lxxxi. 11. And may he not appeal to the very immaterial creation, to judge of our folly as he did of old to Israel? Jer. ii. 12, 13,—“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; yea, be astonished and horribly afraid, for my people have committed two great evils: they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.”

2. This doctrine may afford us matter of lamentation also, That believers, who are espoused to him, should walk so unworthily of such a husband. You know a wife should demean herself conform to the character of her husband; and where her carriage is base and mean, it reflects a dishonour on him. O how unsuitable is it to see Christ's bride blackened with the filth of hell! to see those who have stricken hands with Christ, in a marriage-covenant, joining hands with lusts and idols, and defiling themselves with them!

(3) For Examination. Let us try if we be thus married and related to Christ; whether he be our husband, and we his bride and spouse.

I shall offer a few marks whereby we may know whether or not we be married unto this glorious Husband; and they may be drawn from the consideration of the antecedents, the constituents, and the consequents of this marriage.

1st. Try by the antecedents to the marriage-contract. Before ever Christ did contract with thee, didst thou observe him courting thy soul before this contract? Here is a courting. Now, how did Christ court you.

1. Did he court you by the austerity of the law, as with fire and sword? Did he court you by such a word as that, Thou art a cursed wretch: for, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them?” Gal. ii. 16. Did he court you by such a word as that, Cursed is every one that doth the work of the Lord negligently? Did he court you thus, by the spirit of bondage, with the terrors of God, as clothed with vengeance, telling thee thou art an heir of hell and wrath, a child of the devil? Did he court thee so as thou wast surrounded with fear and trouble?

2. Did he court thee as by the austerity of the law; so by the

sweetness of the gospel, when he saw thee cast down, when he saw thee a poor heavy laden sinner, like to be crushed under thy weights? Did he then court you with such a word as that, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," Matth. xi. 28; or with such a word as that, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come to the waters; he that hath no money, come; buy wine and milk, without money and without price," Isa. lv. 1. "Flee to your strongholds, ye prisoners of hope." Did he thus court you with the gospel-offer?

3. Did he court you by his love-letters? This is another antecedent of the contract. Got you ever a love-letter sent from Christ out of heaven? But you will say, What is the love-letter? Even the Bible: "Search the Scriptures, these are they that testify of me," John v. 39. Here there are the declarations of the love of Christ to thy soul: here there are love-promises in these letters, that shall be yours. There is a love-covenant in these letters. Have you read and pondered them? And can you say that Christ spake them into your heart? If it be a text that was preached upon, or if it be a single word, O Christ drop that into my heart! and I think it will go with me to my death-bed, it came with such life and power. In a word, Got you any gifts before the marriage-contract, such as the gift of true conviction, such as the gift of heart-contrition, the gift of real humiliation, the gift of self-denial, the gift of faith? These are given, some before, some at the contract?

2dly. Try by the constituents of the marriage.

1. If this marriage be made up betwixt Christ and thee, then thou hast put away all lovers besides Christ; the right hand will be cut off, the right eye put out; you will be divorced from all other husbands, particularly from the law; ye must be dead to the law, that ye may be married to another husband, even to Christ. But you will say, What is it to be dead to the law? I answer, It is not to lay it aside as the rule of obedience; for the law shall still be the rule and standard of the believer's obedience, life, and conversation: but to be dead to the law, is to be sensible that the law cannot save us as a covenant of works. It is to disclaim all hopes of being justified by the law, or by our works or obedience to it. I see Christ, the glorious husband, hath brought in an everlasting righteousness, answering the law fully: this is the garment I must put on, and cast off my filthy rags.

2. Hast thou given a cordial consent upon the contract-day?

Can you say you was enabled to take him, as the Psalmist, "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, thou art my Lord;" and thou art my God, my head, my husband? Have you given a rational consent to it? Yea, a superrational and supernatural consent? A deliberate, chaste, stayed, solemn, peremptory consent? Did you say it with faith, and with an heir of heaven, that he was yours, and shall be so for ever? It is true, persons may be matched to Christ who cannot condescend on the precise time: the Spirit may work many times some way that we cannot know; yet it is his ordinary way with his bride, after many tossings, to break in with ravishing, conquering sweetness, to draw forth her soul to a solemn remarkable closing with him, and consenting to him. Have you then been engaged to make over yourself to the bridegroom, by an unreserved resignation of yourself to him, that you will not only take him wholly, and for ever, for holiness and happiness, for light and life, for grace and glory, but also make over yourself to him, soul and body, whatever you are, whatever you have been? Have you been thus made to yield yourselves unto the Lord? Are you one with him? Have you one spirit with him? Are you of one faith with him, of one way with him, endeavouring to walk as he walked? "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit," 1 Cor. iv. 17.

3. Can you say, that upon the marriage-day, you got a marriage-gift from the bridegroom? Among the Jews, the bridegroom was to give a marriage-gift to his bride: Now, what gift got you on this marriage-day? Can you say, indeed I got the wedding-garment; he clothed me with his righteousness, which he span out of his own bowels, weaved with his own hands, and dyed with his own blood; and thus all my guilt is covered, the curse is done away? This is indeed what few get; yet some have been, and are able to say, I am delivered from the wrath to come; and there is no condemnation to me; and on such a time I got also an ornament of the graces with the spirit, which I wear as jewels, viz., faith, love, obedience, patience, humility; and I got the promise of an hundred-fold here, and I am expecting more gifts yet, before the marriage be consummate; I am expecting more assurance, I live in the hope of glory; I expect a sealed pardon of all my sins, and I look to get the earnest of the spirit, and more every day.

4. Another constituent of this marriage-contract is, the bride,

on that day, puts off one vail, and puts on another. This was the Jewish custom, the brides put off the vail of bashfulness, and puts on the vail of subjection. Christ's bride, before the marriage, cannot look the bridegroom in the face, is ashamed to look upon him ; but she is made to put off this vail in the presence of her former lovers, and to take Christ by the hand, and then she puts on the vail of subjection, whereby she promises in his strength, to subject herself to her husband's will. Have we thus promised to be obedient to his commands, in his own strength, whatever he enjoins us to do or suffer ?

3dly, Try by the consequents of this marriage. Would you know if there has been a contract between Christ and you ? Try then by the immediate consequents.

1. Did you see the king in his beauty, and such a glory and excellency in him as could not be paralleled by all the glory of ten thousand worlds ?

2. What was your converse with him on the contract-day ? Can you say, he embraced me in his arms, and I embraced him in my heart, and there was sweet communion and fellowship betwixt him and me ?

3. Wast thou crowned in the marriage-day, so as thou wast known by others, as it were, to be the bride of Christ ? The Jews, they not only crowned the bridegroom, but the bride also. You see what the crown is that Christ's bride should have, Rev. xii. 1. "There appeared a great wonder in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars." The bride of Christ is crowned with the doctrine of the twelve apostles.

4. The bride of Christ keeps at home, and delights in the bride-chamber. This is her delight all the days of her life, to dwell in the house of the Lord, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple, Ordinances will be sweet, being the galleries wherein the King is held.

II. Try by the qualities and duties of the bride, which are also the consequents to this marriage.

1. If you be Christ's bride, then you will love the bridegroom. Love is what every wife owes to her husband ; much more doth the believer owe it to Christ who hath expressed far more love to this bride than ever a husband did to a wife ; he loved her, and gave himself for her. He shed the hottest blood of his heart to

save and redeem her. You will love him with a love of desire; "With my soul have I desired thee in the night;" with a love of delight; "My meditation of him shall be sweet;" with a love of benevolence, wishing well to his interest; "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning; let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not thee to my chiefest joy," Psal. cxxvii. 5, 6. They that habitually love husband, wife, children, riches, or any thing more than Christ, have no reason to think that they are matched with him.

2. If we be married to Christ, we will trust in and depend on our husband? In whom can a wife trust, if not in her husband? The believer rests on Christ for grace and glory; and commits all to him, ventures all on him, and expects all from him. The soul that is espoused to Christ, looks on the infinite virtue of his blood, the infinite efficacy of his spirit, the infinite fulness of his grace, the infinite dimensions of his love, the infinite faithfulness of his promise: in all this he sees an infinite ground of hope, and thereupon he ventures, and rolls all on him. Here, he says, I will stay and rest, here I will build, here I am resolved to stay, here I am resolved to live and die.

3. If we be married to Christ, we will have a zeal for his glory. Some sacrifice Christ's interest to their own honour: but the believer says, Let my master increase. Though my name should never be heard of in the world, let Christ be exalted. O, says Christ's bride, I would have all the world coming and adoring him! I would have all the world to love him! I would have all the world to praise him! Especially when she is under any lively influence, O then, says she, if the greatest enemies knew what were in our Lord, they would come and join with him, as I have done!

4. The bride of Christ cannot live without him. An honest wife will be hard put to it, to live many years without her husband. O it is sometimes like a hell to her to miss Christ in ordinances! O the sore moans and heavy groans of the deserted soul, that has had the experience of the sweetness of Christ! "O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!" Job xxiii.

3. "O that it were with me as in months past!"

5. If you be Christ's bride you will be longing sometimes for his second coming; less or more you will desire the day of judgment, and long for his appearance. The epilogue of all the spouse's sweet discourses is, "Make haste, my beloved, be thou like a roe, or a young hart, on the mountains of Bether, till the day break and

the shadows fly away." And the conclusion of the whole Bible is, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly," Rev. xxii. 20. Can you say you have longed for his coming? I see the devil reigns here, corruption reigns here, and never will things be right till he come again in the clouds and set heaven and earth in a flame, when these nuptial solemnities shall begin to be celebrated, and the marriage solemnized while eternity lasts.

6. If there has been a marriage betwixt Christ and your souls, then readily you have some of the love-tokens to present; I mean, some expressions of his covenant love: you can tell, that, some time or other, he brought you to the banquetting-house, and displayed a banner of love over you. Sometime he hath enlarged your soul with ardent and longing desires after him, and satisfied you with the fatness of his house. The soul that is really espoused to Christ, will readily have some experiences of his love to tell of.

7. The spouse of Christ is a chaste spouse. Idols never get her heart as before; though now and then she may give a squint look, yet idols never have that force and room in her affections once they had; she is afraid of doing any thing that may be displeasing and dishonouring to him: hence we will find the spouse of Christ breathing out earnest desires and requests to God, to be kept and led in the way of righteousness; "O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes," Psalm cxix. 5. Hence she groans up her case, "O wretched one that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death!" Rom. vii. 24.

8. If we be Christ's bride, we will be a fruitful bride. Let us try; have we never a child of good works, or of grace? "Thy belly," says Christ to the spouse, "is as an heap of wheat," Song vii. 2. You know wheat is very fruitful: the barren soul that never loved, never mortified, never repented, never gave alms, never appeared for God; that barren soul is not the spouse of Christ; for the spouse of Christ is fruitful. This much by way of trial.

4thly, For exhortation. Is there a spiritual marriage betwixt Christ and believers? O then! shall we not be persuaded to come and close with Christ for our husband, and take our Maker for our husband, our God for our husband? If we be ambitious, here is the top of our ambition, Jesus Christ; if we be covetous, here is the true riches; whatever we are, whatever we have been, if we come to him, he will in no ways cast us out: it is true, we cannot come of ourselves, but let us cry, Lord, if I die, I shall be buried

under the mercy-seat, praying, weeping, looking, as I can, and go to hell with Christ in my heart as much as I can. Come to him, and he will overcome your whole impotency ; lay your case before him, saying, Lord, I am a wretched one in the highest degree : Lord, here is a great offer made, I have no heart to it ; O come and give a discovery of a lost state, and of thy excellent glory. O draw out my heart, and let me die upon the spot, rather than reject Christ for ever.

Many motives might be adduced ; consider only,

1. The loveliness and beauty of Christ. His beauty is universal ; he is lovely in his person, lovely in his nature, lovely in his offices, lovely in his estates of humiliation and exaltation, lovely in all his relations ; his beauty is transforming, it will make the bride comely also ; it is communicative, the bride is made comely through his comeliness. When we speak of the comeliness of Christ, we should let angels and saints above, that have the more immediate intuition of the radiant splendour of this blessed object, go forth to declare his glory. Everything in him is lovely, and nothing is lovely without him, nothing is lovely but what proceeds from him and goes to him ; he is so lovely, that he cannot possibly be otherwise : he is the primary, original, and necessary loveliness.

2. Consider, as he is lovely so he is loving ; his love is infinite, eternal, free, distinguishing, effectual ; never man loved like him. O how many foldings are in this love, as can never be unfolded ?

3. Consider, if we close with Christ we will give him a glad heart ; his heart is glad in that day, when he takes a poor sinner by the hand ; the day of his espousals is the day of the gladness of his heart. How many times have we grieved him by our hypocrisy, and formality, and backwardness ? And would we now give him a glad heart, for all the grieved hearts we have given him ? then let us embrace him as offered in the gospel, and then he will be glad. Why ? then he will see the fruit of election, the fruit of redemption, the fruit of his death, the fruit of his resurrection, the fruit of his ascension, the fruit of his intercession : then he gets back the temple of the Holy Ghost ; the lost sheep is found again : then he gets back the member of his own body.

I might give something by way of direction. You may say, What shall I do then, that I may be married unto Christ ?

In one word, if you would have Christ for your husband, O then, entertain his suit, and hearken to his wooing, and courting

motions! Is he darting light into your hearts, and letting you see the evil of some sin that formerly ye delighted in? O do not resist his suit, by continuing in sin after this! Is he strengthening that light so as to set conscience on fire with the sense of sin, and apprehension of wrath? O, quench not this fire till you get water out of the wells of salvation! otherwise ye reject his suit.—Is he carrying his suit farther, and stirring up your affections to desire after Christ! O quench not this motion! but cry to him to fasten the nail sure, and carry on the work, till the marriage be completed.

Now, I might give a word of exhortation also to them that are married and espoused to Christ.

All I shall say is this; O let Christ's bride live on him, and take all from him! as a poor woman married to a rich man, she lives upon his riches. Many are ready to say, that if Christ would call us his bride, we would live on ourselves; we would pray, repent, believe, &c.; but the bride of Christ must get all these things in him, and take all from him, and live wholly on him, and freely on him. When Joseph's brethren did not know him, they were buying and selling with him, they would have nothing from him without money; but when they knew that he was a brother, for all the offences that they had done him, they were content to come down every man of them, and take all from him for nothing; this is the way you must do with Christ, when matched to him; we must not, with the legalist, have repentance and duties of our own, we must take all from him, who is the repository of all divine fulness, whereof the believer's part is, out of that fulness to receive grace for grace.

SERMON IV., V.¹

CHRIST THE PEOPLE'S COVENANT.

ISAIAH xlii. 6. —“I will give thee for a covenant of the people.”

My dear friends, if your ears be open, there are three things that you may hear this day.

(1) This was an Action-Sermon, preached immediately before the celebration of the Lord's Supper, at Dunfermline, August 19, 1722. To which is annexed the substance of some discourses, after the sacrament, upon the same subject. The after enlargements on this subject, were mostly placed under their respective general heads of method.

1. You may hear what ministers will say ; but that is a matter of small moment ; and it is but a poor errand, if you be only come to hear what a poor mortal, sinful fellow-creature will say to you. Little matter what we say, if God himself do not speak into your hearts. Therefore,

2. You may hear what God says to you : this is matter of great moment ; for God's speaking can make us both hear and live, though we were as dead as stocks or stones. He spake the old creation out of nothing, and he can speak a new creation out of us, who are worse than nothing. Indeed it will be a wonder, if he do not speak terrible things in righteousness unto us, because of our sins ; and really if he speak to us out of Christ, it will be dreadful. Therefore,

3. You may come to hear what God says to Christ, and this is of the greatest moment of all. To hear what ministers say to the congregation, is a little thing ; to hear what God says to you is a great thing ; but to hear what God says to Christ, is one of the greatest things that can be heard. God in his word speaks to the sons of men, and perhaps you have noticed that. But he speaks also to the Son of God, to his eternal Son ; and perhaps that is what you have little noticed to this day. Why, what says he to Christ ? Is it any thing that we the people are concerned with ? Yes, what he says to Christ is of the greatest concern to us, and it is this, " I will give thee for a covenant of the people." O, might the great and eternal Father say to his great and eternal Son, who is one God with him and the eternal Spirit, Behold there is a company of people meeting in Dunfermline about a communion-table, with a view to the sealing of the covenant ; but their work will be to little purpose, if they view not THEE, my beloved Son, to be the spring, the spirit, the life, the all of the covenant : their covenant will be but a poor bargain without THEE ; and therefore, " Behold, I will give THEE for a covenant of the people !" O, a sweet saying as ever was said in the world ! and no wonder, for it is a part of a sermon whereof God himself is the preacher, and Christ is the text, and the Spirit is the voice that conveys it. If we had much of this Spirit with us, we might see how sweetly this glorious preacher handles this wonderful text, from the beginning of the chapter : O how sweetly does he speak of him in the first four verses ! and how sweetly does he speak to him from the fifth verse and downward !

1. How sweetly does he speak of him ? " Behold my servant

whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth," &c. That Christ is the subject here treated of, you need not question, if you compare this first verse with Matth. xii. 18., where Christ expressly applies it to himself; and now, when the Father here speaks of Christ, every word is a word of commendation; he commends him for a good servant in his mediatory work, "Behold my servant whom I uphold; mine elect in whom my soul delighteth:" He commends him for a well-qualified Saviour; "I have put my spirit upon him, and he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles:" He commends him for a meek Saviour: "He shall not cry, nor lift up nor cause his voice to be heard in the street," ver. 2.: He commends him for a tender-hearted Saviour; "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth," ver. 3.: He commends him for an able Saviour, that will go through with his work, maugre all impediments; "He shall not fail, nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth, ver. 4.: and the isles shall wait for his law;" the isle of Britain not excepted, and not forgetting Scotland in the north end of it.

2. How sweetly does he speak to him, from ver. 5, 6. And here notice both the divine preface to this part of the sermon, and then the divine discourse.

(1.) The preface, shewing the glorious dignity of the preacher, ver. 5. "Thus saith the Lord." Here the glorious JEHOVAH is commending himself, as it well becomes him, and none but him to do. Who is it that is speaking? It is the Lord the great Lord of heaven, earth, and mankind: it is the Lord of all the heavens that is speaking: he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; it is the Lord of all mankind that is speaking; he that gives breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that dwell therein.—Why then he is the God that hath authority to make the following covenant with the Messiah, and give a commission to him. Therefore,

(2) Notice the divine discourse itself, and what he says to Christ. ver. 6. "I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people," &c. He had spoken sweetly of him, and here he speaks as sweetly to him: and in this speech is opened up to us the great mystery of the covenant of redemption betwixt the Father and the Son from eternity; and the opening thereof in time makes

it a covenant of grace to us. And here we may see several parts of the indenture he binds and obliges himself unto.

The first piece of the indenture is, "I have called thee in righteousness." Here is the vocation; he takes not this office of being Mediator upon him, without being called thereto: and God called him thereto in righteousness; he was rightly called; for the right of redemption fell into his hand; he was rightly called for he was able for the work, and fit for it; he was rightly called; for he was willing to the work, and voluntarily offered himself. "Lo, I come;—I delight to do thy will, O my God:" He was rightly called; for as God did him no wrong, so he did himself right, and provided for the glory of all his perfections in this way.

The second piece of the indenture is, "I will hold thine hand;" that is another thing he says to him: Go, says he, and I will hold thee by the hand all the way; I will bear the expences of that hard service: Christ goes this warfare on God's charges; he bears equal burden in the work of our redemption. We misplace our love, if we love not the Father as well as the Son: the three glorious persons of the adorable Trinity had all one will to it, and they go hand in hand about it; "I will hold thine hand."

The third piece of the indenture, or the other thing he says to Christ, is, "I will keep thee;" I, says the great JEHOVAH to the God-man Mediator, I will keep thee, when the sins of an elect world shall all meet upon thee; when the curses of the law, the terror of justice, the vengeance of heaven, and the fury of earth shall invade and encompass thee, I will keep and preserve thee, and make all these red-seas to divide and make way for thee to pass through triumphantly.

The fourth piece of the indenture is in the words of our text, and it is one of the great and glorious things he says to Christ; "I will give thee for a covenant of the people, a light to the Gentiles," &c. Whatever be their malady, I will give thee to be a suitable remedy. Have they broken covenant? I will give thee to be a better covenant. But what of that, while they are ignorant? Why then, "I will give thee for a light to the Gentiles." But what though they have light, if they have not sight too; for a blind man hath no benefit of the sun; why then, "I will give thee to open the blind eyes." But what though they have both light and sight, if they be still in a dark prison, bound and fettered there? Why, I will give thee for this end, "To bring out the prisoners from the

prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house." O but these are sweet promises made to Christ, and in him to us ; and the leading one, that comprehends the rest, is in these words, " I will give thee for a covenant of the people." Where without critical division, you may notice these two things. 1. The gracious designation and title that Christ bears, a covenant of the people. 2. His glorious ordinance and appointment thereto, I will give thee for that end.

1. The glorious designation and title of honour that he bears : he is called, a covenant of the people : and here he is described by his relation to the covenant, and by his relation to us by this means. His relation to the covenant is such, that he is designed, the covenant itself ; he is the head and heart of the covenant ; he is the foundation and cap-stone of the covenant ; the bottom and top of the covenant ; the Alpha and Omega of the covenant ; the first and last letter of the covenant ; the all in all of the covenant. The first covenant-head broke and fell ; and he falling, all his seed fell. The second covenant-head stands ; and he standing all his seed stand in him ; " My covenant shall stand fast in him."—Again, his relation to us by this means. To whom is he a covenant ? Even a covenant of the people, of the Gentiles. O good news to us poor Gentiles !

2. His glorious ordination and appointment unto this business ; " I will give thee : " and here also every word hath some glory in it. Here is the glorious person ordaining him, in the pronoun I ; I JEHOVAH do it : here is the glorious person ordained, in the pronoun THEE ; " I will give THEE : " here is the glorious manner of the ordination, it is by way of free and gratuitous gift ; " I will GIVE thee : and here is the glorious reason and moving cause of the whole even the sovereign will of God ; " I WILL give thee." But the further explication of these particulars, I refer to the prosecution of the doctrine.

OBSERV. That, by the divine ordination, Christ is the covenant of the people. .

The only scripture I name for the confirmation, is Isa. xlix. 8. " Thus saith the Lord, in an acceptable time have I heard thee ; and in a day of salvation have I helped thee , and I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, to establish the

earth, to cause to inherit the desolate heritages." Where you see the vision is doubled, because it is true.

The method I would endeavour, through grace, to follow, is,

I. To offer some remarks concerning the covenant in general.

II. Shew how Christ is the covenant, and in what respects he bears that name.

III. Enquire for whose benefit he is so ; and thus shew that he is the covenant of the people.

IV. By whose authority he is so ; and here speak of his divine ordination, and being given of God for that end.

V. Offer some reasons of the doctrine, why he is given to be a covenant, and why a covenant of the people.

VI. Draw some inferences for application.

I. The first thing is, To offer some remarks concerning the covenant in general ; and I confine them to these four, which are imported in the text and doctrine.

1. The first remarkable thing imported in the text, is, "That the covenant of works is broken, and cannot save us ; and we are broken, and cannot save ourselves." There was a covenant of works made with the first Adam and his seed, before the fall ; and therein God was upon these terms with man, do and live ; and if you do not, you shall die. In this law of works, there was a precept and a sanction. The precept is, Do this ; that is, perform perfect and personal obedience ; the sanction is, "If thou do not, thou shalt die ;" importing that the reward of obedience was eternal life ; "The man that doth these things, shall live in them : " and that the punishment of disobedience was eternal death ; "The soul that sinneth shall die," Gen. ii. 17. Now, as by the fall of mankind, the precept of doing is broken, and the penalty of dying is incurred, and eternal life forfeited ; so our salvation is impossible without a perfect righteousness : a righteousness of obedience, performing the precept of the law, and so entitling to live ; a righteousness to satisfaction, undergoing the penalty of the law, and so delivering from death. The former is impossible for us ; for, we are dead in sins and trespasses, and so can never perform any duty acceptable to God, far less complete and perfect obedience. The latter is impossible : for being both finite and sinful creatures, we can never give infinite and sinless satisfaction ; and so we are broken and lost by the breach of this covenant. There are four things upon this particularly, that I presume, you all profess to know ; namely, 1. The

tenor of the covenant of works, "That, when God created man, he entered into a covenant of life, or works with him, upon condition of perfect obedience, forbidding him to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil upon the pain of death." 2. The breach of this covenant, "That our first parents, being left to the freedom of their own will, fell from the estate wherein they were created, by sinning against God," and particularly, "by eating the forbidden fruit." 3. Our concern in this original apostasy and fall in Adam, "That the covenant being made with him, not only for himself, but for his posterity, all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression; "For by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned," or, in whom all have sinned." 4. The fatal, woful effects of this fall and breach of the covenant of works, namely, "That by this means we have fallen into a state of sin and misery; that our state is a sinful state, we being guilty of Adam's first sin, wanting original righteousness, and our whole nature being corrupted, whence proceeds all our actual sin; and that our state is a miserable state, having lost communion with God, being under his wrath and curse, liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and the pains of hell for ever. Why? The wages of sin is death, and we are children of wrath; and cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law, to do them." It may be, it is long since ye knew these things in your catechisms: but, O, how long is it since you believed them? or, do you believe them yet? Have you seen your fall in Adam, and your woful, sinful, miserable state by nature, through the breach of the covenant of works? If you were convinced of this, surely the news of another covenant would be welcome to you. But then,

2. The second remarkable thing, imported in the text, is, "That there is a covenant of grace provided, for the recovery of some, by Jesus Christ, from a state of sin and death to a state of righteousness and eternal life;" or, you may take it thus, "God having out of his mere good pleasure, from all eternity, elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace, to deliver them out of the estate of sin and misery, and to bring them into an estate of salvation by a redeemer." Hence such spiritual expressions as these, "By grace are ye saved;—not by works of righteousness that we have done;—for if there had been a law,

[namely, of works] which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law," Gal. iii. 21. Now this covenant of grace may be considered, either in its original transaction from eternity, or in its actual manifestation in time.

(1.) Consider it in its original transaction from eternity betwixt the Father and the Son. God having, in his eternal decree of permitting the fall, foreseen the ruin of mankind by the breach and violation of the covenant of works, graciously purposed not to proceed against all mankind, according to the demerit of their transgression, in the execution of that death upon them which that covenant threatened; and therefore a council of peace is called from eternity, and the proposal made concerning the shewing mercy to an elect number, in a way that should be to the honour and glory of God's holiness, which says, They must do perfectly; and of God's justice, which says, They must die eternally. Well, none in all the creation of men and angels were able to satisfy this proposal: then says Christ, "Lo, I come," Psalm xl. 8. I offer myself to be their surety, to give a perfect obedience to the law, which was the condition of the covenant of works, and to give infinite satisfaction to offended justice, in answer to the penalty incurred through the breach and violation of that covenant, "Lo, I come;" since the law cannot be fulfilled without doing, nor justice satisfied without doing, Lo, I come to do both; and, seeing this undertaking must be accomplished by one, who is both finite, that he may die; and infinite, that he may conquer death and wrath; I offer to do it in their nature, and by an unspeakable mystery to become flesh: "Lo, I come;" let the impannelled criminal go free. The Father, being infinitely well-pleased with this consent, encourages his eternal Son, enters into covenant with him, calls him, qualifies him, promises to uphold him in the whole work, and to give him for a covenant of the people; and that, for making his soul an offering for sin, he should see his seed, and see the travail of his soul and be satisfied, Isa. liii. 11. This is called by many "the covenant of redemption;" not that it is another covenant of grace, but I take it as another consideration of the same covenant. It was made with Christ as the second Adam, and in him with all the elect as his seed. As it is made with Christ, it is properly conditional to him; the condition being perfect obedience, and complete satisfaction; but as made with the elect in him, it is absolute; consisting of free and absolute promises to them. But,

(2.) Consider it in its actual manifestation in time ; and here, omitting what might be said of the legal administration of it under the Old Testament, and the evangelical administration under the New, I shall only say, That as the transaction betwixt the Father and the Son from eternity, is the fountain, so this manifestation of it in time is the opening of the fountain : and the grace of God is manifested in this covenant of grace several ways. 1. In that he freely provides a Saviour for lost sinners, showing, by the gospel, that he hath made this provision. 2. In that he freely offers to sinners a Mediator, and life and salvation in him. 3. In that he not only calls and commands them to come to him by faith, as the means to interest them in him, and to believe in him for salvation ; but, 4. Promises his holy Spirit to work in them that faith, and all other saving graces. And though this, and all the other absolute promises of the covenant shall be certainly accomplished, and actually applied to the elect only ; yet, in the eternal dispensation of the gospel, and administration of the covenant, they are revealed and exhibited in a general indefinite way and manner, with an universal offer and command to all and every one that hear this gospel, to plead them, and lay hold upon them ; that in this way the hearers of the gospel may be left inexcusable that embrace it not ; and that the elect may be gathered in, made to believe, and come under the bond of the covenant.

3. The third remarkable thing, imported in the text is, "That there is an oneness and indentity betwixt the covenant of grace, as made with Christ, and as made with us in him ; both are one and the same covenant : " for here the Father is contracting with the Son, " I will give thee for a covenant of the people ; " therefore, that with the Son and with the people belong to one and the same covenant : with respect to Christ, it had its constitution from eternity ; with respect to us, it hath its application in time : on this account, it is called, " The grace given us in Christ before the world began," 2 Tim i. 9. " And eternal life, which God that cannot lie promised before the world began," Titus i. 2. As the first Adam was our public federal head, and he and we included in one and the same covenant of works ; so Christ, the second Adam, is our public head, and the covenant of grace with him and us, is the same covenant, though he alone is the Head, Surety, and Mediator, to whom some promises and precepts are peculiar : however, he being the covenant of the people, all things promised unto, or to be performed

by the people, are secured in the contract with Christ ; all the condition of life to be performed is found in him ; yea, he undertakes, in that covenant, the removal of all obstructions and impediments from within that would hinder their attainment of covenant-mercy, being for a light to the Gentiles, to take away the inward blindness that is found in them ; so that not only all necessities for redemption, but also necessities for the powerful and effectual application of that redemption, are first promised in the covenant to him, and then to us in him, upon his fulfilling the condition of perfect obedience. Is justification promised ? It is first to him, and then to us in him, Isa. liii. 11,—“ By his knowledge, [or, by the knowledge of him,] shall my righteous servant justify many.” Is sanctification and the spirit promised ? It is first to him, and then to us in him ; verse first of this chapter,—“ I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.” Is glorification promised ? It is first to him, and then to us in him ; Rom. viii. 17,—“ If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.”—He and the people are all in one and the same covenant : he, as the glorious head, surety, and representative, having all fulness in him, both of grace and glory, for our use and behoof ; and we, as members of that body whereof he is the head, and in a way of union to him by faith ; for, “ All the promises, not only some, but all the promises of God are in him, Yea ; and in him, Amen ;” twice in him : importing, That as the covenant of grace, which is the covenant of promise, is made jointly with him and us ; so in the constitution of the covenant, the promises are all made to him ; and in the application of it, they are made to us in him : primarily, and immediately, they are made to him ; secondarily and immediately to us in him.

4. Hence the Fourth thing remarkable, imported in the text is, “ Christ is the centre, in whom all the lines of the covenant do meet ;” and so by an usual figure, of the part for the whole, he bears the name of the whole covenant ; “ I will give him for a covenant of the people :” the covenant of grace is said not only to be made with him, but he himself is the covenant. And this leads me to,

II. The Second thing, To show how Christ is the covenant, and in what respects he bears that name ?

We reply, 1. Christ is the covenant of the people radically and fundamentally, being the root, basis, and foundation upon which the covenant of grace stands : the alone foundation : “ Other foundation

can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. iii. 11. He is the sure foundation that God hath laid in Zion, Isa. xxviii. 16. The covenant of works, being built upon something in man, it was not sure work, and so the fabric tumbled down: but the covenant of grace and mercy is built upon a never-failing foundation: it is sure work to eternity; and therefore says God, "Mercy shall be built up for ever: why? I have made a covenant with my chosen." Christ is the ancient and eternal foundation of the covenant; no other foundation is laid in Zion in time, but that which was laid in the counsel of peace from eternity; God hath promised nothing to us in time, but what he purposed and promised in Christ from eternity: "He has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world," Eph. i. 4, and promised eternal life in him before the world began. He is the foundation of all the blessings and privileges of the covenant, "Being made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, sanctification and redemption." He is the foundation of all the promises, graces, and comforts of the covenant. This were a large field, but I go on.

2. Christ is the covenant relatively, in respect of the relations he comes under to it: we find in scripture, that he is called the mediator of the covenant, Heb. ix. 15. Why? he brings God and man that were at variance, to meet amicably: by the price of his blood, he brings God to us; and by the power of his spirit, he brings us to God, and makes up the difference.—He is called the testator of the covenant, Heb. ix. 16,—“Where a testament is, there is the death of the testator:” He hath signed all the articles of it with his own blood, and so confirmed it, and made it a testament.—He is called the messenger of the covenant, Mal. iii. 1. When God would communicate his mind to us, it is in Christ; when we would communicate our mind to God, it is in Christ; whatever message God hath to us, or we to him, Christ bears it, and makes the travel, be the journey never so dangerous; “For this is he that came by water and blood,” 1 John v. 6. He came by sea, by a sea of water for our sanctification; “For, if he wash us not, we have no part in him;” and by a sea of blood for our justification; for, “Without shedding of blood there is no remission.” A dangerous voyage for bearing the message.—He is called the witness of the covenant, Isa. lv. 5,—“I will give him for a witness of the people.” He is the true and faithful witness. As he was an eye and ear-witness to the whole transaction of the covenant from

eternity; so he sets his seal to the articles of it in time, and bears witness by his word, by his blood, by his spirit. This he does effectually, sometimes in the hearts of his people, when he conquers all their unbelieving doubts and jealousies of his word, and suspicions of his love, or of his Father's kindness.—He is called the surety of the covenant, Heb. vii. 22. He is the surety both for debt and duty: surety for debt; the law demanded of us a debt of infinite suffering, the just demerit of our sins, which, if laid upon us, would sink us for ever; for, "The wages of sin is death:" And also it demanded a debt of perfect obedience and universal holiness and righteousness. Now, we are insolvent debtors, drowned in debt, and unable to pay a farthing; and unless there be a surety for us, we cannot escape the prison of hell, and the everlasting wrath of the omnipotent God. Behold, the surety steps in, even in this hopeless state we are fallen into, pays the debt to the last farthing, and puts his name in our bond: He was made under the law, to redeem those that were under the law. And then he is surety for duty, promising to put his spirit within us, and cause us to walk in his statutes. He is surety for both sides of the covenant; surety that all that God hath said and promised shall be accomplished; and surety that all that we are obliged to do, shall be done for us, and in us. O sweet and gracious covenant!—In a word, he is the servant of the covenant: "Behold my servant whom I uphold," Isa. xlii. 1. Wist ye not, says he to his parents that were seeking him, that I must be about my father's business?" What business? What service? The hardest service that ever was, even to satisfy justice, to fulfil the law, to conquer Satan, to purchase heaven, to save an elect world, to endure the contradiction of sinners against himself, in accomplishing this service.—He is the performer of the covenant; yea, the performance itself. Christ standing in all these relations to the covenant, may well be called the covenant of the people.

3. Christ is the covenant substantially, in respect of his being the very matter of the covenant; the principal part of it, the principal promise of it. He is the substance of all the promises, the first thing proposed; and whatever is promised else, is for his sake. He is the promised seed spoken of to Adam and Eve, to Abraham, to David, Gen. iii. 15; Gen. xxii. 18; Luke i. 32, 33. He is the substance of the prophecies, "To him gave all the prophets witness," Acts x. 43. He is the substance of all the shadows and Old

Testament types: he is the true brazen serpent, that heals diseased souls; the true manna and bread of life; the true sacrifice and pascal lamb, whose blood, being sprinkled on the door-posts of the soul, saves from the destroying angel: of all the types he is the antitype, the substance of the whole Bible, and of all the scriptures; "These are they that testify of me." It is a strange text, that a gospel-minister cannot find Christ in, since the whole scriptures testify of him: as if it said nothing else but Christ, Christ.—Thus he is the covenant substantially. Again,

4. Christ is the covenant eminently: in point of eminency, ornament, and excellency. He is the very ornament of the covenant, the excellency and sweetness of it: he is the blessing of all the blessings of the covenant: the mercy of all the mercies: the soul of all the privileges of the covenant: no blessing of the covenant is a blessing without him, for all the blessings come with him; "How shall he not with him freely give us all things?" Rom. viii. 32. The covenant is nothing without Christ, the blessings of it are nothing without Christ; he is the sweetness of all the blessings of the covenant, the marrow of all the mercies of the covenant, and the fullness of all the promises of the covenant; they are all empty without Christ, for he is ALL IN ALL. And therefore, O empty ordinances, without Christ; O empty sacraments, if Christ be not there; O empty ministers, if Christ be not with them; yea, O empty heaven, if Christ be not there; empty enjoyments, empty comforts without Christ.

5. Christ is the covenant meritoriously, and in point of acquisition and procurement. He does all that is necessary for the procuring the blessings of the covenant: his righteousness is the great condition of the covenant, the alone condition of it, properly so called; it is the cause, the procuring cause of all covenant-blessings. All that is promised to Christ, or to us, is upon the account of his obedience; Isa. liii. 10, 11, 12,—“By the obedience of one shall many be made righteous:” not by the obedience of any man for himself, Rom. v. 19. He is the procurer of justification, Rom. v. 18; the procurer of remission of sin, Rom. iii. 24; the procurer of peace, Isa. liii. 4; yea, the sum of it, or, “He is our peace;” the procurer of our access to God, and communion with him; all that are afar off are made nigh, only by the blood of Christ; the procurer of sanctifying grace, Isa. liii. 10; 1 Cor. i. 30, and of eternal salvation: his death is the purchase of the heavenly inheritance; and

so he is the covenant meritoriously, in procuring all the blessings thereof.

6. Christ is the covenant efficaciously, or efficiently: as he procures all by the price of his blood, so he applies all by the power of his spirit. By this powerful spirit of his, in the efficiency of his application, by the means of the law, he discovers to men their sad condition, while under a covenant of works; by the means of the gospel he discovers the excellencies of the covenant of grace, and also their claim to it, in and by the indefinite general dispensation of the gospel, and the promise of the covenant; so that whoever will, may come and put in for a share. But this is not all; Christ, in his efficiency, does persuade and enable the poor soul to take hold of this covenant, of Christ himself as the ALL of the covenant and that with particular application, to itself, for its own relief: and not only to accept, but to trust to it for all grace and life, and that upon the warrant of God's word of grace, renouncing all other ways of salvation, and resting only upon this, 1 Tim. i. 15. Acts xvi. 6. Yea, after the person is brought within the covenant, Christ is the great performer of all covenant-duties: he performs all our works in us, Isa. xxvi. 12. We are to present no duty of our own to God for acceptance, or in order to obtain life and salvation by it: but to present him with Christ, he being the covenant to perform all for us and in us, which we are obliged to. In a word he is engaged as the covenant of the people, to be all, and do all; to procure all, and to see all made effectual that concerns grace and glory: "I will give him for a covenant of the people," says the Lord. I will not enter into covenant, or deal with them in an immediate way, as with the first Adam, but I will take a surer course, I will give thee for that end; thou shalt undertake all the matter therein; I will look to thee for the performance thereof. Man hath broken covenant; I will not trust him again; but thou shalt be the covenant: the promise of life shall be made only in thee, and the condition of life shall be found only in thee—Thus he is the covenant.

III. The Third thing was, to shew, For whose benefit he is a covenant; and so to shew that he is the covenant of the people. Men and women have a way of excluding themselves by unbelief; but I am sure my text will exclude none this day, that are here, from a right to accept of this covenant, unless it be the devil himself. He indeed and all the fallen angels, are excluded; and no doubt he is come here among us this day, to tempt people to exclude

themselves, because he himself is excluded. But here is the foundation of faith for all the people that hear this gospel; Christ is the covenant of the people, insomuch that whosoever of all the people will subscribe to this covenant, and go into it by faith, shall have the everlasting benefit of it.

QUEST. Why, say you, I am, it may be, none of the people here meant, none of the elect whose names are in that covenant and contract, and therefore my subscribing of it may be in vain. ANSW. For the clearing of this, That Christ is the covenant of the people, you would know and remember, That there are two copies of this covenant; or rather, if we may express it, two writs of this charter, the one is an original, written in heaven; and the other an extract, written in this Bible. 1. I say, as to the original, it is written in heaven, and hath all the names of the church invisible enrolled in it, Heb. xii. 23; they are called the church of the first-born that are written in heaven. In this writing are the names of all the elect, of all that ever were, are, or shall be actually taken within the bond of the covenant; and these are they of whom it is said, "They are chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world," Eph. i. 4. And again, "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called," Rom. viii. 30. And again, "All that the Father hath given me, shall come to me;" and, "All that were ordained to eternal life believed." And of them Christ says, "I lay down my life for my sheep." This original draught of the covenant is a writ locked up in the cabinet of God's secret purpose; and secret things belong not to us, but the things that are revealed; therefore, 2. There is an extract of this original write, and this extract is written in the Bible, which is the book of the covenant: this you have among your hands; and this copy of the covenant is sent open to you all to sign and subscribe, by giving faith's assent and consent to the covenant or closing with Christ, the covenant of the people, as he is offered in the gospel. Now, though this extract be a true copy, answering exactly to the original; yet, for rendering all inexcusable to whom these presents are sent, if they do not subscribe, and for gathering in all the elect, this fair extract is directed to all, and every one of you, giving you full and sufficient warrant to sign and subscribe for yourselves; for you cannot possibly see your names in the original, till once you have signed your consent, by subscription, to the copy that is among your hands, which is here let down on the earth, to see how you please it this day. And if

you sign the extract as it is sent to you, then you may lay claim to the original, and see your name there, which alone is the privilege of these that make the extract their own by signing it; for, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant." He shews them sometimes their name in the original writ of the covenant. It is the settled order of heaven, that although some who, by faith, subscribe the extracted copy, are kept in the dark about their names being in the original; yet none shall see their names there, but these who subscribe their names here.

QUEST. But, for what purpose serves my putting my name to the foot of a bond, if my name be not in the bond itself? Why, then, read the direction of this gospel-covenant, and see if your names be there, and answer to your names; for I shall endeavour to be as practical, as I go along, as possible, that I may have the less to do in the application. For whose benefit then is he thus the covenant? Why, it is even for the advantage of these whose names are here set down; and though they may not here find their particular names, John, James, Mary, Martha, yet their general names; yea, both their more general and more special names are here.

1. Their more general name is the people; he is the covenant of the people: and here all sinners of mankind, who hear of Christ, have a claim to put in for a share in him, seeing the covenant is directed to them; whosoever they be that hear this gospel, all saving benefits are preached to them by Jesus Christ, according to the ministerial commission, saying, "To you is the word of this salvation sent," Acts xiii. 26. And in this sense the apostle says, Titus ii. 11,—“The grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men:” or, as it may be rendered, as you see it in the margin of some of your Bibles, “The grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men, hath appeared.” Let them straiten the gospel-offer who will, they do it at their peril; our commission is wide and full, inso-much that this covenant is directed to all to whom these presents may come. If this be your general name, that you are one of the people, but what you will otherwise, then you are concerned to answer to your name, and put in for a share of the grace of this covenant by subscribing and saying Amen to it. Why, say you, that is a general name indeed; I dare not deny but that is my general name; then, man, woman, do not put that covenant from you. But, say you, Is there no more special name of the people, whose covenant he is? Yea,

2. Their more special name is here set down in black and white ; for, who the people are, what people in a special manner is here meant, is cleared in the following words, " A light to the Gentiles, to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness, out of the prison-house." And here you will find both the name and surname of the people intended ; and I believe your names and surnames, that hear me, will be found in it. 1. The name is Gentile. 2. The surname is, Gentile, dark and blind ; Gentile, bound and imprisoned.

(1.) I say, the name of the people, whose covenant he is, is Gentiles ; and, I suppose, this is the name of all that hear me, if there be not Jews here : if I thought there were any, I would drop some promise of Christ to and concerning them that might draw him to them also, if the Lord would put forth power with it. However it is to you, Gentiles, that I am speaking ; and, O may I venture to say with Paul this day, " To me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, to preach among you, Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ !" This is a part of the mystery of godliness, Christ preached to the Gentiles, 1 Tim. iii. 16. It was a mystery to the Jews and primitive Christians, when Christ was first given by a preached gospel to the Gentiles, Acts ix. 17, 18. Why ? the Gentiles were called the uncircumcision, Eph. ii. 11 ; being abominable outcasts, whose entering into the temple, was enough to pollute it ; but now the gospel declares, God will justify the uncircumcision by faith. The Gentiles were called aliens without God, without Christ, without hope ; aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise, Eph. ii. 12. But now the covenant of promise is given and exhibited to the people that were aliens. Gentiles were called dogs ; " It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs," says Christ to the woman of Canaan, one of the posterity, it seems, of these accursed nations, that were devoted by that word, Gen. ix. 25. " Cursed be Canaan :" and indeed the Gentiles and Canaanites, as they were contemned by the Jews, and looked upon as dogs ; so in comparison of the house of Israel, who were so much blessed, dignified, and privileged of old, Christ seems here to allow it, and assert that they were cursed, that they were dogs. But now the tables are turned, the Gentiles are called ; and, in this woman, the Lord gives an instance of what mercy was in reserve for these dogs : and we Gentiles may plead the same privilege, at

least, with that woman of Canaan, "Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table." The door of Bethlehem, the house of bread, is open, Acts xiv. 27. God hath opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, even to dogs: the door of the covenant is open, and we dare not shut the door upon any dog in all this house; and therefore, as we used to say, At open doors dogs come in: allow me in this homely comparison; for, as all the Gentiles, so all the wicked are called dogs; Rev. xxii. 15, "Without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters." But, the door being open to all sinners by this gospel, you may come to Christ for salvation, as freely as a dog will come in at an open door; yea, more freely and boldly; for dogs many times come in uncalled, and therefore we beat them out again; but here is both a call to come, and a promise of welcome; "Whosoever will, let him come; and him that cometh I will in no wise cast out." Well, I say, the Gentiles are called dogs, and if that be a part of your name, man, woman, answer to your name, and take with your name, and take the blessing that is offered to you by name. If you have no better name than that of a dog, come with that same, and set it down at the foot of the contract, by subscribing your consent to have Christ to be your covenant; and, though it be a base name, he will not refuse to take in your subscription. In a word, the Gentiles are called heathens, Gal. iii. 8,—“The scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.” Good news to heathens and pagans, such as we and our forefathers were; and this is the gospel indeed, that was preached to Abraham long ago: “In thee shall all nations be blessed;” in THEE, what THEE? the same THEE that is in our text, which preacheth the same gospel also? “I will give THEE for a covenant of the people;” even the people that are called Gentiles, and heathens, uncircumcison, aliens, and dogs. Well, there is the name of the people whose covenant he is, they are Gentiles.

(2.) The surname of the people is Gentiles, dark and blind; Gentiles bound and imprisoned: and see if the surname be not yours, sirs, as well as the name. There are especially two surnames here that the people have. The first surname is dark and blind; this is imported in these words, “A light to the Gentiles, to open blind eyes.” Well, is this your surname? Are you darkness itself in the abstract? Are you in the darkness of ignorance, darkness of error,

in the darkness of corruption, in the darkness of confusion, in the darkness of desertion, in the darkness of delusion? O! here is a brave covenant for you to sign: It is a covenant of light; he that is the covenant of the people, is the light of the Gentiles. But all the light in the world, without sight, will be uncomfortable; and therefore, is another part of your surname blindness as well as darkness? Have you not only sore eyes, and see ill, but are you blind, and see none at all? Are you blind with respect to sin, and cannot see it in its power and guilt? Blind with respect to duty, and cannot see what to do? Blind with respect to God, and cannot see him in his beauty and excellency? Blind with respect to Christ, and cannot see him in his glory, fullness, and righteousness? Blind with respect to ordinances, and cannot see the power and glory of God in the sanctuary? Blind with respect to providence, and cannot discern the signs of the times? Blind with respect to your interest in Christ, and cannot see whether that be secured or not? Blind with respect to your warrant to intermeddle with Christ and his institutions? Blind with respect to all spiritual and eternal things? Why, this covenant of the people is designed to open the blind eyes: and if darkness and blindness be the surname of the people, for whose benefit Christ is the covenant, and if that be your surname also, why then there is room at the foot of this covenant, to set down your name and surname both. This covenant of the people is a covenant of light to the people that are dark; and a covenant of sight to the people that are blind. Let all them that find this to be their surname, subscribe to this covenant and say, I am one of the dark people, and I come for light; I am one of the blind people, and I come for sight: there is my name Lord; let it be recorded among the dark, blind people of which Christ is the covenant.—Again, the second surname of the people, is bound and imprisoned: This is imported in these words, “To bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison-house.” Now, whatever prison you are in, sirs, if your surname be a bound prisoner, our text speaks to you. Are you in the prison of sin, a bond-slave and a servant unto lusts? Are you in the prison of Satan, in the devil’s prison, led captive by him at his pleasure? Are you in the prison of the law, a debtor to do the whole law, and a debtor to bear the whole curse of it? Are you in the prison of carnality, clogged with things of this world? Are you in the prison of a black league with death, and covenant with hell? Are you in

the prison of a natural state, as a child of disobedience, and a child of wrath? Are you in the prison of temptations, either from without, or within, filled with dreadful suggestions, and blasphemous injections? Are you in the prison of affliction, either upon soul or body, state or family? Are you in the prison of doubts and fears and despondency, with your soul cast down within you? Are you in the prison of unbelief, concluded under it, so as you cannot for your life get an act of faith elicite? Are you in the prison of wretched carelessness, unconcernedness, and indifferency, not caring whether you be loosed and delivered out of prison or not? Are you in the prison of Atheism, and cannot believe a God, a Christ, a heaven, or hell? Are you in the prison of death, and in bondage through fear of death? Or, are you in the prison of security, fearing nothing, but sleeping in the arms of the devil? What prison-house are you in man? Answer to your name; prisoner in such a prison-house that I have named. Is the door of the prison-house bolted and barred that you cannot get out, and the heavy chains and fetters of hell about you, so as you cannot loose them any more than you can unhinge the axle-tree of the universe? Behold, this covenant of the people is a covenant of liberty for the people that are in prison. If I have not named the prison, or the chamber of the prison-house you are in, name it yourself, and say, I am a prisoner in such a prison-house; I have been so long and so long in such a dark prison, and lo, I set down my name, to wit, a bound prisoner, consenting to be liberate by the Son of God, and consenting that he would work the consent himself, and do all that concerns my liberty. Why, man, down with your name that same way; and if you be not set at liberty in God's own time and way, you will be the first that ever gave in a subscription, and was not received: nay, marked and recorded it shall be; for the covenant speaks to you by name and surname, saying, "Go forth, ye prisoners of hope: The spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he hath anointed me to preach and proclaim liberty to the captives." This covenant of the people then is drawn up already, and signed. See who hath signed it, ver. 8. "I am the LORD, that is my name?" He hath signed it by a name, by which he is known in heaven and earth, even JEHOVAH; I am JEHOVAH, I am the LORD, that is my name. O glorious name subscribing this bond! That is his name; what is yours? Why, can you say, I am one of the people they call Gentiles? I am a dark, blind, bound prisoner; that is my name and surname both. Yea, be your name as vile and

black as hell, yet down with it in capital letters ; for the infinitely fair name of the first subscriber will set it off ; his name will answer for all the defects and deformities of yours : and if you wait till you be in a better condition, and have a better name to sign with, you will wait to the day of judgment, and in the mean time inevitably perish at death ; and all the money of your terms, conditions, and good qualifications, which you will bring as a price in your hands, will perish with you. Nay, you have nothing to do in this covenant, but bless God that brought it to your hand, and sign it with your heart. Christ hath a commission from his Father, and we in his name, to take in the subscriptions of all the people, whose name and surname I have mentioned ; and I hope I have not missed any one here.—Thus you see who the people are, for whose benefit he is the covenant : and that he is well designed the covenant of the people, seeing all the people here named have a right of access to the covenant, a warrant to seal and subscribe to it ; and all the people, that are subscribers, have a right of possession to the whole good of the covenant, and to the seal thereof, the sacrament of the supper.

IV. The fourth thing proposed, was to shew, By whose authority, or by what authority, Christ is the covenant of the people : and so to hint at his divine ordination to this business, in these words, “ I will give thee.” Where you have, 1. The glorious person ordaining, I. 2. The glorious person ordained, THEE. 3. The gracious manner of the ordination, GIVE. 4. The gracious motive and ground, “ I WILL give thee.” A short word to each of these.

1st. The glorious person ordaining Christ to this work, “ I will give thee ;” What I ? I the LORD, I JEHOVAH, I the first person of the glorious Trinity. God the Father here is the first grand party of the covenant ; yea, here is God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, essentially considered, contracting with the Son, and ordaining him, personally considered, to this work. Now, this glorious person ordaining Christ to this work imports,

1. The will of God and the Father, that Christ, the second person, should come and bear the whole weight of the covenants : Hence Christ tells us, “ He had commandment from the Father, and that he came to do his will,” John vi. 37, 38, 39. God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, by an unanimous council, ordained and appointed the Son to come in his own person upon the errand

of man's redemption; and God the Father being the first in the order of subsistency, and so the first in operation *AD EXTRA*, therefore the giving is primarily ascribed unto him.

2. His being the person ordaining, imports the divine authority of Christ's commission, in that he is given of the Father, and came from the Father, John xvi. 28, and xvii. 8.; where Christ commends that faith which believes his divine mission, his divine ordination to this mediatory work.

3. His being ordained of God, imports, God's confidence in him, as being both able for, and faithful to perform the whole work that he gave him to do. He was confident that he would be a faithful and righteous servant: "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many. This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased."

4. His being the person ordaining, imports the Father's zealous concern for the redemption and salvation of men: "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son: I will give thee." His hand is first at the blessed bargain, subscribing this covenant; shewing, that he will do the whole work of the covenant by himself, and by his son Jesus Christ; and will get the whole glory of it; and hence the strain in which he subscribes, ver. 8.—"I am the Lord, that is my name, and my glory I will not give to another." He will let none share of any of the glory of it but himself, either in the contrivement, commencement, advancement, or the completement thereof.

2dly, The glorious person ordained, in the pronoun *THEE*, namely, Christ the second person of the glorious Trinity, and the other part of the covenant; "I will give *THEE*." And Christ being the person here ordained, imports,

1. His having cordially assented and agreed to the bargain; God would not have given him, if he had not consented; but as he and his Father are one, so there is but one will betwixt them: and his consent is recorded among the decrees of heaven; "In the volume of thy book it is written of me, Lo, I come."

2. His being the person ordained, imports, the insufficiency of all others for the work of man's redemption; "Him hath God the Father sealed: Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, a body hast thou given me." Though men and angels had put their shoulders to this work, it would never have been done; for the redemption of the soul is precious, and ceaseth for ever, as to the creature. He

alone is the Messiah, chosen, constituted, promised, typified, to whom all the prophets gave witness, and we are not to look for another: insufficiency is engraven and stamped upon all others.

3. His being the person ordained, imports, the alone sufficiency of this glorious person for this glorious work. O the glorious excellency of this person here given! and O the glorious sufficiency of this person! "I will give thee. I have laid help upon one that is mighty:" this is he that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength, mighty to save: this is he that comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah: who trode the winepress of his Father's wrath alone, and of the people there was none with him.

4. His being the person ordained of the Father, imports, the unparalleled love both of him that gave, and of him that is given; both of the ordainer and ordained: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and gave his son to be a propitiation for our sins," 1 John iv. 10. And herein is love, that Christ so cheerfully undertook this work; He rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, and his delights were with the sons of men, Prov. viii. 31. Here are both the parties of the covenant, God and Christ; that glorious I, and that glorious THEE: "I will give thee;" two wonderful Covenanters. God foreseeing from eternity that mankind would be ruined, by violating the covenant betwixt God and man, set on foot a better project, even an inviolable covenant betwixt God and Christ: two unchangeable parties, mutually engaging for the relief and recovery of the lost sinner: and Christ bearing such a part of the work, as to get the name of the whole: "I will give thee for a covenant of the people."

3dly, The glorious manner of this ordination, is imported in the word GIVE: "I will GIVE thee." "A man's gift makes room for him," says Solomon, "and gives him place among great men," Prov. xviii. 16. Men are esteemed and respected for the valuable-ness of the gifts and benefits they give; how much more should God's gift make room for him! Christ is God's gift: "I will give thee for a covenant of the people." And this giving of Christ implies several things which cannot concern the manner of his ordination to be a covenant of the people.

1. In general, and negatively, God's giving of Christ does not imply, that he was about to alienate his own right to Christ from himself to us; no, he is still his only-begotten Son: when we give

a thing to another, we alienate our own right to it; but it is not so here: what God gives, we may have the benefit and use of it, but God still keeps a right over us and it: hence says the apostle, "All things are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." But,

2. More particularly, and positively, God's giving of Christ for a covenant to the people, implies,

(1.) His eternal destination by the Father to this end, to be the covenant of the people, before the people had a being: they were not so much as consulted in the matter, when the contract was signed in the counsel of peace betwixt the Father and the Son; and we have no reason to complain of injury done us here, for we have nothing to contract on our part; the breach of the first covenant left us worse than nothing; for the first Adam left us with a burden of debt, a burden of poverty and want; yea, a burden of curses from the fiery law: and all that we can do, is to increase the debt, instead of being able to pay it off. Now, I say, God's giving him, includes his eternal destination by the Father for this mediatorial work, without our having any hand in it, or knowledge of it, or any obligation lying upon God so to do as he did, in the eternal transaction with his Son concerning the people, whom he designed to save. There was no obligation lying upon Christ, to come in our stead, to be our surety, to take our guilt, and pay our debt, previous to his own consent; nor any obligation upon God to accept of a surety, instead of the principal debtor: therefore, God's giving of Christ, must imply a transaction, wherein the Son consented to be the covenant, to be the mediator, to take our guilt upon him; and the Father consented to send him, and accept of his suretyship for lost sinners.

(2.) God's giving of Christ implies his actually qualifying, and sending him to accomplish that which was contrived from eternity. How he called and qualified him, you see in the preceding verse; he called him in righteousness, and qualified him with a supereminent unction of the Holy Ghost; "I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles." Accordingly, he received the spirit above measure. How he sent him you see in several places of Scripture; he gave him a body, a true body, and a reasonable soul; and then he gave him to the death in the fulness of time: for, "It pleased the Lord to bruise him:" justice awakened against him; "Awake, O sword, against the shepherd,—smite the shepherd." He was put in the

wine-press of divine vengeance, and bruised there: he was not only bruised in his name, being called a madman and a devil; not only bruised in his estate, while the foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, but the Son of Man had no where to lay his head: neither was he bruised in his body only, while they pierced his hands and his feet; but bruised in his soul, till it was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, and till the agonies of his soul pressed the blood out of his body, even great drops of blood: no wonder, for he was plunged in the ocean of God's wrath, and suffered all the hell that was due to sin; sin being imputed to him as the covenant of the people, justice did not spare him; Rom. viii. 32,—“He spared not his own Son, but gave him to the death for us all.”

(3.) God's giving of Christ implies that the manner of his ordination to this work, was every way free and gratuitous: what freer than a gift? God gives Christ for a covenant of the people, without regard to any motive, merit, or solicitation of the people; yea, and in opposition thereto. This gift is free, in opposition to merit, either of condignity or congruity. If we be for merit of our own, we must be for hell, for that is all that we merit; if wretchedness, misery, and a mass of confusion and enmity, be accounted merit, then we may lay claim to it, but no otherwise. This gift is free, in opposition to constraint, force, or necessity: God had nothing from without to constrain him to contrive the redemption of man, or to give Christ for that end; though all mankind should have been for ever drowned in the flood of his wrath, God had remained as he was, as happy as ever; no force was upon him to contrive a remedy for man. This gift is free in opposition to debt: God owed us nothing but wrath; but we owe many millions of talents to his infinite justice. In a word, it is free, in opposition to all motives from without God himself. There was nothing about us, to move him to pity us, ten thousand things to move him to destroy us. Upon what condition in us could God be moved to give his Christ to us; seeing our best condition, before he gave him in possession to us, is a condition of sin and misery, death and thralldom? But then again,

(4.) God's giving of Christ for a covenant of the people, his giving him thus, I say, implies a right and title that the people have to receive him. God's giving Christ, is the foundation of our title to receive him: faith, which is the only actual acceptance of the gift, is the mean of putting us in possession; but it would be the

height of presumption, thus to take and receive, if there were no giving; John iii. 27. "No man receiveth anything, except it be given him from heaven." As this receiving then supposes a giving of Christ, prior to the receiving, so this giving of Christ for a covenant of the people, implies the people's right, and title, and warrant to receive him. There is a twofold giving of Christ:

1. A giving of Christ in point of actual possession; and thus he is given to the elect soul in the day of believing; and this giving is the foundation of his title to all things in and through him: for, "How will he not with him freely give us all things?" Rom. viii. 32. And till a man have an interest in Christ thus, he hath no saving-right to any thing, no right to a communion-table; nay, no covenant-right to the food of his common table.

2. There is a giving of Christ in point of exhibition and gospel-offer; and thus he is given to the whole visible church, in the dispensation of the word; and this giving is a foundation of our title to receive Christ, and our claim of right to take this gift out of the hand of the giver. A right of possession none have, till they believe, and take the gift that is offered: but a right of access and warrant to believe, all have, whether they believe or not, or whether they take this gift out of God's hands or not. That Christ is God's gift to a whole visible church in this sense, is a great privilege, whatever the world think or say about it, and it is a part of my errand this day, to tell you of it: if it be disgusting doctrine to any, and will not go down, we cannot help it; it is Bible doctrine, and gospel-doctrine, and therefore we must preach it in his name, who commands us to preach the gospel to every creature. But, I think, it should be welcome doctrine to all that hear me, That Christ is given to all the people in this house, in the same manner that the manna was given to all the people of old, John vi. 32; where Christ speaking to all the promiscuous multitude, and making a comparison betwixt himself, and the manna that fell about the tents of Israel in the wilderness, says, "My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven:" where the revelation and offer of Christ is declared to be a giving of him, before ever he be received or believed on. It is such a gift and grant, as warrants a man to believe, and receive the gift; for this end is HE given to a perishing world: "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him, might not perish but have everlasting life." As the brazen serpent was given for a

common-good to the whole camp of Israel, that whosoever in all the camp, being stung with the fiery-serpents looked thereto, might not die, but live; even so is Christ given as a common good to poor stung sinners, that looking to him they may be saved. Christ is given to all, in the dispensation of the gospel. And, O it should be glad tidings of great joy to all people, That to us a child is born, to us a son is given, whose name is WONDERFUL. This giving, in a general and definite manner, to all, in the gospel offer, may be, and is, for the most part, where there is no receiving: but there can be no receiving of Christ for salvation, where there is not this giving; for, "A man can receive nothing except it be given." This giving then, implies a right, and title, and warrant to receive: he is also given to you, that all that please the bargain, have warrant to take possession. He is your own already, man, woman, in the former sense, whether you take him or not; as he said to the Jews, "He came to his own, and his own received him not." But faith's improvement of this gift and grant, among your hands, would make him your own, in a peculiar sense, by actual possession.—Thus we have the manner of his ordination, to be the covenant of the people; it is even by a free and gracious donation. The next thing here was,

4thly, The gracious motive, ground, and reason of this divine ordination, which is just the divine will: "I WILL give." This verb must necessarily be borrowed from the former clause, "I WILL hold thine hand, and give thee for a covenant of the people." I WILL GIVE; O sovereign reason! No gift in the world so free as Christ: when men bestow gifts upon one another, there is some impulsive cause that excites them to it, drawn from their relation to, or interest in one another; drawn from services and favours received, or expected from each other; but no such impulsive cause here: we have no relation to God, but as his enemies; we can do him no service, but sin against him; therefore can merit nothing from him but his curse. His reason of doing, then, must be his own sovereign will. Men may rack their wit, and dispute about the reason of God's actions: but there would be more calm reasoning in the world, about gospel-truths, if all our reasonings did strike sail to the sovereignty of free-grace, and stoop to that: he will, because he will: "I will give thee." I think this WILL imports, 1. A consent and agreement: the counsel of peace is concluded, parties are both agreed; I WILL. 2. A complacency and

satisfaction: God is well-pleased with this device of his own infinite wisdom; well-pleased with the ransom and ransomer; "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well-pleased:" I take pleasure in giving him to be a covenant of the people; I WILL. 3. I think it imports authority: supreme authority of the eternal Godhead, three in one, is interposed in this matter, for ordaining Christ to this work: I WILL. And, 4, I think it imports an express command, "I will give thee;" and of this command Christ speaks, when he says, "This commandment have I received of my Father, to lay down my life for my sheep:" And when he says, "Lo, I come to do thy will: by the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all," Heb. x. 10. In a word, it imports, That the sovereign will of JEHOVAH is the reason of all. And this may lead us to, and shall make me the more brief upon,

V. The Fifth thing proposed is, namely, the reasons of the doctrine: why is Christ given for a covenant of the people? And here I might shew, 1. Why he is given. 2. Why given for a covenant. 3. Why given for a covenant of the people, of the Gentiles.

1. Why he is given or exhibit by way of gift? Why, the grand reason is told already, even his sovereign will. Christ, the great ordinance of God for man's recovery, is dispensed freely; by a gratuitous gift, that salvation may be by grace, and that free grace may get the whole glory of it, from the foundation to the cope-stone, with shoutings of grace, grace unto it. The giving of Christ to all, in the gospel offer, is from sovereign grace, and must be absolutely free and unconditional; for what in all the world is the condition of the offer? If men be in a sinful condition, in a miserable condition, in a lost condition, that is all the condition and qualification, that I know necessary for making an offer of Christ as a Saviour to them. If any clog the gospel-offer with legal terms and conditions, they encroach upon the warrant ministers have to offer Christ to all, and the warrant that all have to receive him; yea, they encroach upon sovereign grace, which hath made this grant and offer of Christ, not to devils, but to men in the most extensive terms: "To you, O men, do I call, and my voice is to the sons of men."—Again, the giving of Christ to some, in actual possession, is from sovereign grace also; for, though none can be possessed of Christ and his benefits, till by faith they receive him:

yet this faith to receive, is given, as well as the gift received by it : Eph. ii. 8. "By grace ye are saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." It is given, by virtue of an absolute promise of the covenant ; such as that, "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power ;" and so, the hand to take the gift, being itself given out of the covenant, the covenant takes hold of the man before the man takes hold of the covenant. But,

2. Why is Christ given for a covenant ? I offer you only one reason of it : he is given for a covenant, that God might have more glory out of the covenant of works, by the second Adam's fulfilling of it, than he lost by the first Adam's breach and violation of it. The law of eternal life and death was irreversibly stated only by the covenant of works : and though we be changed, yet the covenant of works is unchangeable. And as by virtue of the stability of it, all the Christless world are condemned, cursed, and die eternally ; so, by virtue of its being perfectly fulfilled by Christ, in whom only it is established, all that are in him, are freed from condemnation, and live eternally. What is the covenant of grace ? I may say it is Christ's fulfilling, for us, the covenant of works. We were debtors to the mandatory and minatory part of the law, arraigned at the instance of divine justice, to pay the debt ; Christ substituted himself in our room, came under the law to pay the whole debt due thereunto ; and now, God gets more glory by his doing so, than he lost by our sins. Herein he glorified his sovereign Majesty, whose authority was so heinously violated by such a base creature as man is, in that he received him not into his favour, without a becoming reparation, made to his honour, by the intervention of a perfect obedience, and full satisfaction. Herein he glorified his infinite wisdom, in finding out a man to reconcile justice and mercy ; to punish the sin, and yet to pardon the sinner ; to take vengeance on sin, to the very uttermost, and yet, to magnify his mercy, while the sinner is justified, accepted and saved, without his own suffering. This is that, *POLUTOIKILOS SOPHIA TOU THEOU*, "The manifold wisdom of God." Herein he glorified his free love, goodness, and pity, in subjecting his life to such a death, and his glory to such a shame, and all to purchase such vile and worthless creatures as we are, and to redeem us from eternal woe and misery : as also, his almighty power is here glorified, in supporting the human nature of Christ under the vast load of divine wrath, and law curses. —Herein he glorified his holiness and faithfulness, in fulfilling not

only the promise of the law, as a covenant of works, even the promise of eternal life, made to perfect obedience; which, though we forfeited in our own persons, yet we recover in Christ: the condition of life in the covenant of works, being perfect obedience personal, and the condition of life here being perfect obedience and imputed; and so the promise of life, upon the ground of a perfect obedience fulfilled to us in him; but also divine faithfulness is glorified, in fulfilling all the threatenings of the law, while we, who come under the sentence of death in the first Adam, undergo that death in the second Adam.—In a word, herein he glorifies his justice and righteousness, in the remission of sins, through the propitiation of Christ; Rom. iii. 25. “Whom God hath set forth to be the propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.” Herein is vindictive justice displayed, in its greatest severity, in Christ’s being the sacrifice and propitiation: and here is retributive justice illustriously declared, in the sinner’s being rewarded, justified, saved, upon the blood and sacrifice, the obedience and righteousness of Christ; yea, all the perfections of the great God shine gloriously in the face of Christ, as in a beautiful and bright constellation, 2 Cor. iv. 6. And for this reason he gave him for a covenant.

3. Why is he given for a covenant of the people, of the Gentiles? Why, not only to shew his displeasure at the unbelief of the Jews, as we see, Acts iii, 46, 47. Rom. xi. 11. 19, 20; but also to shew his sovereignty, that he will have mercy, on whom he will have mercy; and to shew his truth, in fulfilling the ancient prophecy concerning the calling of the Gentiles. It is long since God promised to Noah, saying, “God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem,” Gen. ix. 27. Now of Japheth came the Gentiles, Gen. xii. 5; and of Shem came the Jews. By the posterity of Japheth were the isles of the Gentiles divided. The isles were solemnly by lot divided among them, (and probably this isle of Britain among the rest;) so that as Japheth’s dwelling in the tents of Shem, is a clear prediction of the conversion of the Gentiles, and their succeeding to the Jews in their church-privileges; so this directs us to understand the promise in the context, “The isles shall wait for his law.” He is given for a covenant of the people, a light of the Gentiles. In a word, he is given for a covenant of the people, to shew the extent and all-sufficiency of his grace, and the intrinsic

value of his blood. Suppose a prince were setting up a sanctuary, or city of refuge, the privileges whereof, are not restricted to any sort of men, but extended to all, Gentiles as well as Jews; would not this declare, that the privileges of the place are full and ample, so as whosoever comes to this sanctuary, might be safe? Here also, in like manner, the sufficiency of the merit of Christ, and the fullness of his righteousness is declared, insomuch that none can, with any shadow of reason, exclude themselves, be what they will, People, Gentiles, Dark, Blind, Imprisoned; seeing all Gentiles, who are called Dogs, Aliens, Heathens, Uncircumcised, are included; and seeing the motto written on the outside of the door of the sanctuary, is, "Whosoever will, let him come:" all comers are welcome and refusers left inexcusable.

VI. The Sixth thing proposed was the application of the whole. This doctrine would admit of a vast improvement, which we must confine to as narrow bounds as possible; and we may improve it,

1st, For Information. If it be so, that Christ, by divine ordination, is thus the covenant of the people; in the glass of this doctrine, we clearly see, many precious gospel-truths. And,

1. Hence we may see, in what way it is, that the ruin we brought upon ourselves, by the breach and violation of the covenant of works, is reparable. We have brought ourselves into a most lamentable state by sin; and we are irrecoverably lost indeed, as to all that we can do for our own help; "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself." Who can repair that ruin? There is a glorious ME that says, "In ME is thy help," Hos. xiii. 7. Who that ME is, is explained in our text, even a God in Christ, the glorious I and THEE: "I will give thee for a covenant of the people." There is no help, no justification for them now by a covenant of works; but, "I will give thee for a covenant to them:" which, though it be all works to thee, yet it shall be all grace to them. The world is busy casting the law of works into this and the other handsome shape, and pleasing themselves with a fancy, that in this way of works, they may have righteousness and life, to the disparagement of the way of grace, to the destruction of their own souls, and to the dishonour of Christ, who alone is the covenant of the people.

2. Hence we see the greatness of the love of God towards poor sinners, in giving such a great and glorious person as Christ, and that for such a great and glorious end, as to be a covenant of the people; "God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son,

that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." Christ came not to be a covenant of the people without a commission, call, and ordination from his Father. He had authority from the Father to do all that he did about the covenant; I will give thee for a covenant." Let not our notions of God be so gross, as to think, that God the Father is of an implacable nature, full of severity; and that the Son only is of a pleasant, meek nature, full of lenity towards sinners. Nay, God the Father was the first in order of nature, that made the motion concerning man's redemption; Christ was appointed, authorised, and given of him; behold, the love of God hath gone to its utmost height in giving Christ, for he cannot give a greater gift; and the love of Christ hath also gone to its utmost, in consenting hereto, and giving himself, and all this to be no less than a complete covenant of the people. Because the people can do nothing, therefore he leaves them nothing to do of themselves: "I will give thee for a covenant of the people."

3. Hence we may see a test of the true religion. All schemes that centre not in Christ, are to be rejected; and all schemes of the covenant, that make not Christ to be the all of it, are to be renounced: If I can find nothing in the covenant but Christ, surely I find enough, and I find all that my text makes of it; and if the world make it a new scheme, at their peril be it. But this I say, that every scheme, that leads to self, and takes off from Christ, is a false and ruinous scheme; yea, every doctrine that advances any thing to be a rival with him, and mingles our filthy rags with his excellent robes, is of a soul-ruining nature, and utterly to be detested. The second Adam came not to patch up and amend old Adam's coat, as some express it, but to give us a wholly new garment of his own making, and dyed with his own blood: "I will give thee for a covenant." Our chief business, as ministers of the gospel, is to trumpet forth the transcendent excellency of Christ, and desire to know nothing but Christ, and him crucified, and as the ALL of the covenant, for making people both happy and holy.

4. Hence we may see the believer's freedom from the law as a covenant of works; he is not under the law, but under grace; having closed with Christ, Christ is now all the covenant that he is under; he is freed both from the Do and the Die, the command and the threatening of the covenant of works; they are made void to him through Christ, for he is not under it, either to be justified or condemned: he is not under its command, to be justified for his

obedience ; nor under its threatening and sanction, to be condemned for his disobedience, as it is a covenant ; for, " There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ." It is true, as the law is a rule of obedience, he remains under it, as much and more than ever, and stands obliged thereby to study perfection ; and his disobedience may bring upon him rods and stripes, and all the terrible effects of God's fatherly displeasure upon soul and body ; but it is a rule of acceptance, a condition of life, or a covenant of works, he hath nothing to do with it, nothing to expect from it, nothing to fear by it : he hath nothing to do with it any more than a wife hath to do with a dead husband. Rom. vii. 4, " Ye are dead to the law, by the body of Christ, that ye might be married to another, even to him that is raised from the dead, that ye might bring forth fruit unto God." He is not to bring forth fruit any more to the dead husband, to the law, but to Christ, the living husband. He hath nothing to expect from it ; no life, no righteousness, no happiness, no holiness by his own legal obedience, but only by Christ, a better covenant. And he hath nothing to fear by it ; no hell, no death, no damnation, no condemnation, no liableness thereto. And hence,

5. We see what place the believer's obedience hath in the covenant of grace : His obedience hath no place here, in point of casuality, or proper federal conditionality ; for this were to turn it into the same place it had in the covenant of works, where, though there was no merit of condignity (I know few will dare to say so), yet, there was a merit by paction ; that is to say, there was a promise of life made to works and obedience, " Do, and live." But, in the covenant of grace, we assert, against all popish doctrine whatsoever, that there is no such reward of work, obedience, or personal holiness, upon compact and promise ; because the tenor of this covenant runs upon the condition of Christ's obedience and righteousness, apprehended by faith. Gospel-holiness, is of manifold necessity in the new covenant ; but the promise of life is not here made to the work, but to the worker ; and to the worker, not for his work ; but for the merit of Christ : As for instance, " Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life ;" the promise is not made to fidelity, but to the faithful person, whose fidelity is a sign that he is in Christ, " In whom all the promises are yea, and Amen." If the law had now the promise of life to our obedience, we should not have life and salvation any other way but by the law, and by the works thereof ; Gal. iii. 21. " If there had been a law given, that

could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law ;” therefore our obedience now is not a cause or condition, but a necessary effect of the covenant, and qualification of all that are within the covenant ; yea, all whom this covenant takes hold of, it makes them holy : And therefore, “ Without holiness no man shall see God ; because without holiness no man hath this effective evidence of his being within this holy covenant.

6. Hence we may see, what are the motives that now should influence the believer in his obedience. If Christ be the ALL of the covenant, and that he is loosed from all his former relation to the covenant of works, he is not to obey either from a legal hope of heaven, or slavish fear of hell. Not from a legal hope of heaven ; for the covenant secures the purchase of that by Christ’s perfect obedience : not from a slavish fear of hell ; for the covenant hath secured freedom from that by Christ’s complete satisfaction. The principal motive is the love of Christ constraining ; the love of a God in Christ, who is given for a covenant of the people. God deals not with believers now according to the covenant of works, neither ought they to deal with him as if they were under it. They ought to mourn for sin, to repent, to confess, to beg pardon, but not in a legal way, as if they had to do with a wrathful judge, but as having to do with a merciful Father in Christ : they are to yield obedience to the law, not out of a servile fear of hell and wrath, but out of a child-like love and willing mind ; so far as the believer acts otherwise, so far he is under a spirit of bondage. Neither ought the believer to act from a dread and fear of his being disinherited ; so far as he does so, it is not an act of faith, but of unbelief ; for he cannot view this covenant, and yet see himself left at an uncertainty. There is no liableness to a forfeiture of its privileges ; Christ is the covenant of the people.

7. Hence see, if Christ be the covenant of the people, by God’s ordination, why the believer is to take the law only out of the hand of a Mediator, and yet it is not without law to God, when he is under the law to Christ. He is not to view it in the first covenant-form, in the hand of an absolute God, but only in Christ, and as it is cast into a new covenant-form : and the original authority of the law is not here dissolved, nor obligation to obedience diminished, but rather strengthened and sweetened ; in regard that this authority does now run only in this sweet and blessed channel, by the Father’s ordination ; yea, the Creator’s authority and sovereignty is in Christ,

and the whole fulness of the Godhead, and by the voice of God the Father from the excellent glory, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased: hear ye him." We are so much obliged by the Father's appointment, to obey him, and take the law only out of his hand, that if we do it not we condemn the authority of the Father, and run cross to this divine ordination.

8. Hence see, if Christ be the all of the covenant, then believers have all things in Christ. Christ being the covenant of the people; this covenant is all his salvation, and all his desire. All his salvation is here; and well may the believer say, in the exercise of faith, in Christ I have all things at once; neither need I any more that is necessary to salvation; this covenant is all my salvation.—He may say, in the point of justification, Christ is my righteousness, my treasure, my work, my covenant, my all; yea, my ALL IN ALL; "For in him dwelleth the fullness of the Godhead bodily:" and believers are complete in him, who of God is made to them wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

9. Hence, we may see, if Christ be given for a covenant of the people, that the gospel strictly and properly taken, is a bundle of good news, glad tidings, and gracious promises; our text is a sum of the gospel, and it is a free promise, "I will give thee for a covenant of the people;" there is no precept or commandment here. The law is properly a word of precept, but not the gospel: the law commands all, and the gospel promises all. It were a disparagement to the divine law, if it were not perfect and exceeding broad, if there were any duty we are called unto not enjoined therein: Why, are there no commands in the gospel, say some? We are ready, sirs, to confound the dispensation of the gospel, with this gospel itself; and this makes much wranglings on this head. The gospel largely taken for the dispensation thereof, hath the whole law in it, subservient thereunto; but strictly taken, it is a quite other thing than the law of commands. Faith and repentance may be called gospel-commands, if you speak of the dispensation of the gospel; but if you speak of the gospel itself, they come in under consideration. We are to distinguish betwixt duties and graces: Faith and repentance, as they are duties, are commanded in the law: but as they are graces, they are promised in the gospel. We are to distinguish betwixt a new commanded duty, and a new presented object; the gospel presents a new object of faith, a God in Christ: but the same law that was from the beginning, obliges us to believe

whatever new revelation God makes. If we understand it safely, then we may say, the law obliges us to believe the gospel, and therefore he that believeth not the gospel, is condemned already by the law, John iii. 18. And this condemnation shall be more aggravated, than if this new object of faith had never been presented, or if this light had never come into the world, ver. 19.

10. Hence learn, If Christ be given as the covenant of the people, then we may see the nature of faith, and its appropriating quality. When God says, "I will give thee for a covenant of the people;" faith says something by way of answer, corresponding with the revelation and testimony of God: God says, I GIVE; faith says, I TAKE: God says, "I give him for a covenant;" faith says, I take him for a covenant; God says, "I give him for a covenant of the people;" faith says, I am one of the people; I take him for my covenant, my own ALL: it is the people's covenant in the general offer, but my covenant in the particular application of faith; faith breaks the shell, and eats the kernel. The general dispensation of the gospel says, he is given for a covenant of the people; the particular application of faith says, he is given for a covenant to me: God says, I give him; faith says, I take him as a gift, a free gift: God says, I give him, it is I that gives him; faith says, I take him as thy gift, as God's gift: God says, I will give him, it is my will to do it; faith says, thy will be done, even so I take him according to thy will, Amen, so be it; and all the people should say Amen: and every one for himself should say Amen to God's offer, and receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered; and in so doing, believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, they shall be saved, Acts v. 11.

11. Hence see, if Christ be thus given for a covenant of the people, see the ground of faith that all the hearers of the gospel have: Why, the offer is universal to all that hear the gospel; I give him for a covenant of the people. Let Arminians maintain, at their peril, their universal redemption; but we must maintain, at our peril, the universal offer: necessity is laid upon us, and woe to us, if we preach not this gospel to every creature. Christ is so far given to all the people that hear the gospel, that it is warrantable for them to receive the gift: it is no presumption for them to take what God gives; they shall not be guilty of vitious intromission in so doing; nay, they shall be guilty, they shall be damned, if they believe not, and take not God's gift. It is true, reprobates will

exclude themselves, but this gospel-offer does not exclude them; they have as fair a revealed warrant to believe, as the elect have. We cannot say, you are an elect man, you are an elect woman, therefore believe: we have no such commission; nay, God, by this gospel, casts the covenant in among all the people, saying, "Whosoever will, let him take;" whosoever pleases, let him take, and in taking, he shall have a proof of his being, an elect vessel. As it is said of the Jews, "To them belong the covenant and promises;" so say I to you, Gentiles, the covenant belongs to you; "The promise is to you, and your children:" you have a right and a warrant to take all; and this right was sealed to you in baptism, and is proclaimed to you in this gospel; and you shall be inexcusable if you improve it not: you will have none to blame for your damnation but yourselves, and your own enmity and ill-will;" "You will not come to me, that ye might have life. I would have gathered you, and you would not."

12. Hence we see the certainty of the conversion of the elect; whose conversion, in particular, is God's great end and design in exhibiting Christ as a covenant to the people in general. It is with a design to give Christ to them in possession, that he gives him to a visible church in the gospel offer. It is for the elect's sake that the reprobate have an offer of Christ: and if once all the elect were gathered, the sound of the silver-trumpet of the gospel shall be heard no more. The dispensation of the gospel is the mean which he sanctifies and blesses to that end, for working and begetting faith in all the elect, whose names, as I said before, are all recorded in the original draught of the covenant, which is indeed a sealed writ, that we have nothing to do with, till once we have subscribed the open copy that is before us all. However, this work is not left arbitrary to the will of men, otherwise none would ever be willing; for all are enemies, and the power of enmity is insuperable by men; therefore our text promises, not only the means, the general donation of Christ in the indefinite order, but also the power, the effectual application of the covenant of grace, to the conversion of all whom Christ did undertake for. Why, the covenant here exhibited, is proposed as a covenant of light; light to the Gentiles, and to remove spiritual darkness; a covenant of sight; to open blind eyes, and so to remove spiritual blindness: and a covenant of liberty; to remove spiritual bondage to sin and Satan: all which denote effectual vocation, which is a being brought from darkness to light,

and from the power of Satan unto God. And hence we see, how effectual vocation and saving faith followed upon this very gospel-dispensation, Acts xiii. 47, 48. So that an effectual application of the covenant of grace is here promised to Christ, in behalf of all that were given to him ; it is absolutely promised, that he shall see his seed, and see the travail of his soul. The election shall obtain ; and, All that the Father hath given him, shall come to him : and yet we see that the accomplishment hereof, is by ways and means of his appointment, in the general invitation and call of the gospel. God, by his will of precept revealed, commands all, wherever the gospel comes, to believe ; and he mocks none ; for all that do believe shall certainly be saved ; and though none have power to make the means effectual, yet the utmost attendance to the general call of the gospel, is of the utmost concernment to your souls for eternity ; for who knows that he is not of that number, whom Christ covenanted for, and will make it effectual unto ?

But so vastly copious and comprehensive is this doctrine, that I might begin anew to give a bundle of more inferences therefrom.

1. Hence we may see the miserable circumstances of all unbelievers, that hear this gospel, and yet refuse God's gift of Christ as a covenant. They continue under a covenant of works, both in its commanding and condemning power. That they are under its condemning power is evident ; for, says Christ, "He that believeth not is condemned already." And that they are under its commanding power is evident also : for, says the apostle, "They are debtors to do the whole law," Gal. v. 3. In Adam's covenant, they remain under obligation to duties and punishment, as long as they are not interested in the new covenant. Though by the gospel they are obliged to seek a title to life through Christ's obedience, and freedom from wrath through his satisfaction ; yet while this covenant is slighted, they remain obliged, in their own persons, to yield perfect obedience, upon pain of damnation : if they be not under the command with the promise, Do and live, they are under the command with the threatening, Do and be damned. They are in a miserable state ; for the least failure, in obedience to the command, brings them under the whole curse of the threatening, and wrath of the eternal God, while they will not have a better covenant.

2. Hence we may see the folly of all that prefer any ruining covenant to this covenant, which God gives for our relief. The covenant of works is now a ruining covenant ; yet many prefer this

covenant to Christ the covenant of the people. They prefer their doing to Christ's doing while they cannot believe they shall have acceptance with God upon Christ's doing and obedience; and yet they will hope, that if they do their best, then God will accept of them: O proud devil, that thus makes the dung of thy duties of more account than the perfect obedience of the Son of God! The covenant with hell is also a ruining covenant; and yet the world prefers this also to that glorious covenant, while they are in league with their lusts, and prefer their base idols to the Son of God.

3. Hence we may see the difference betwixt the law and the gospel; the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. The law promises nothing but upon our doing; the gospel promises nothing but upon Christ's doing: he is the covenant of the people. The covenant of works promises life, if we obey in our own persons; the covenant of grace promises life if we obey in our surety. The condition of the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace both, is perfect obedience; but here lies the difference, the condition of the covenant of works is perfect obedience personal; the condition of the covenant of grace is perfect obedience imputed, and conveyed to us by a faith of God's operation. Yet both law and gospel are sweetly subservient, the one to the other, and work to one another's hand, while the law declares what obedience God requires, and the gospel provides that obedience, and points out Christ as the all of it; so faith doth not make void the law, but establishes it, and makes it honourable, &c. Christ hath fulfilled the condition of the covenant, to the Father's contentment. "The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake, for he hath magnified the law, and made it honourable."

4. Hence we may see the difference betwixt God's covenant of grace, and our covenant of duties. Our covenant of duties, is either private and personal, or public and national. If by personal covenanting be either meant believing at first, and laying hold on God's covenant, or the believer's engaging through grace, to serve the Lord, in all the duties of religion; it is indeed the duty and honour of every person, to be thus engaged. Public and national covenanting is also the duty and honour of a land: it was the glory of Scotland, that we were solemnly in covenant; wherein our forefathers, for themselves and their posterity, "engaged and swore against popery, prelacy, superstition, and every thing contrary to the word of God; and to the doctrine, discipline, worship, and government of

the reformed Church of Scotland :—and that as we should answer to Jesus Christ at great the day, and under the pain of God's everlasting wrath, and of infamy, and loss of all honour and respect in this world." And, O may not our hearts bleed to think on our defection from old covenanted principles, and violation of engagements ; yea, of the burning and burial of our covenants, and many grave-stones laid upon the sepulchre ; also the prevalency of abjured popery in this land, without being duly lamented, and the open introduction of abjured prelacy, and English popish ceremonies and services, in many places of this land, without being duly testified against ; but the zeal of many runs in another channel ? Is it any wonder then, that the infamy and loss of honour, and respect in this world, mentioned in that covenant, hath come upon us, while our honour as a nation, and glory as a church, is sunk into the horrible pit and filthy mire of infamy, bondage, slavery, and contempt ? However, covenant-obligation to duty is what we stand still under : though many be ashamed of, and refuse to own these obligations, yet it is the glory of our land, however it be now defaced. And therefore, let us even, in our approaches to a communion-table, go forward, lamenting our sinful defection from the covenanted reformation, acknowledging our solemn covenant obligation ; and hoping, that the Lord will, in due time, revive a covenanted work, and pour out a spirit of reformation. But let us withal remember, there is a vast difference betwixt God's covenant and our covenant, betwixt his promise, and our promise ; we may break and change a thousand times, but the covenant of grace is unchangeable, and stands fast in Christ. Many poor Christians mistake matters sadly, by confounding their covenant and engagement to duty, with God's covenant of grace. They covenant to serve the Lord, and the next day they break it ; O ! says the man, the covenant of grace is broken. Gross ignorance ! the covenant of grace is quite another thing. Therefore,

5. Hence we may infer, If Christ be given for a covenant of the people, the transcendent excellency of this, above all other covenants, whether of legal works, or gospel-duties. For here the Father is promising to the Son, that he should be a covenant of the people : and so it imports all the excellent qualities and properties that can be in a covenant.

(1.) If Christ be given of God for a covenant of the people : then it is a divine covenant, a covenant of God's making, and not of ours : it was made when we knew nothing about it ; it was made

when we were nothing ; yea, when we were foreseen to be a company of lost and undone sinners ; God made it with his Son, and established all the articles, promises, and blessings of it, before the foundation of the world was laid ; yea, it is God that makes the elect, in a day of power, to take up the extract of it, to read it, to love it, to sign it. Again,

(2.) If Christ be given for a covenant of the people, then it is a free covenant, altogether free ; absolute, and unconditional to us : It is a covenant given of God ; “ I will give thee for a covenant.” Our legal hearts are still for giving something to God, and for giving him this and the other service, in hope of pleasing and pacifying him ; and doing so and so, in order to acceptance with him. Nay, but says God, your giving me, is vain, unless I give you ; your giving is not the way of it, but I will give and you shall take. The legalist is constantly for giving, but the believer is always for taking : you must know, that here you have nothing to give, but to take. There is an order indeed observed in the covenant, and in God’s giving : there is a condition of connexion between one blessing and another ; first the spirit of faith is given, and then by faith, the man takes other blessings : and receives of Christ’s fulness, grace for grace. Here God gives all, and faith takes all. All that is required, is given, and all that is given, is given freely. Faith itself doth but receive a right : it does not give one ; it acts in a way of taking what God gives ; it takes the covenant that God gives ; it takes the righteousness of Christ, which is the meritorious condition of the covenant, and so is the means of our being accounted righteous. Not one promise of life, or of the eternal reward, can the believer lay claim to, but in Christ ; “ For all the promises are in him, yea, and in him Amen ;” IN HIM, IN HIM ; twice over, as I said already : Why, we cannot claim any one promise in our name, upon performing any gospel-condition, though by the aids of grace ; for then, though it were never so small, it were of debt to us : but our only claim is in him ; that is, in the right of our Elder Brother, Jesus Christ : and thus it is of debt to him, but only of grace to us. And thus God is not a debtor to us, but to himself ; to his own goodness and faithfulness, and to his Son Jesus Christ. “ If ever faith or obedience were a condition, then there were a suspending the acts of God, upon some actings of the creature ; which, says an eminent divine [Dr Owen], cannot be, without subjecting eternity to time, the first cause to the second, the Creator to the creature.” Again,

(3.) If Christ be the covenant of the people, then it is a full covenant, having all things in it: it hath grace and glory in it: happiness and holiness in it: peace and pardon in it; yea, Christ, who is ALL IN ALL, is in it; for he is the ALL of it. Who can tell me of a grace or gracious quality that does not spring out of this covenant and the promises of it? It takes in all the promises made to Christ and to us. Some promises are constitutive of the covenant, as these betwixt the Father and the Son, concerning a seed; and here, Christ hath some peculiar promises appropriate to him, which are not afforded to us in the same manner and degree. Others are executive, or referring to the execution and application of it, as Heb. x. 11, 12., some are principal, and concern the end, eternal life: others less principal, and concern the means, whether internal, as the spirit and faith; or external, as ordinances; all is comprised in the covenant. Again,

(4.) If Christ be the covenant, then it is a sure covenant, "The sure mercies of David." This covenant is secured by the oath of God to his eternal Son; "Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David." He hath sworn, that the bargain shall stand, insomuch, that if all the devils in hell should attack the weakest believer in Christ, or that ever looked towards a covenanted Christ, they cannot ruin him, it is impossible; for the covenant in which he is wrapt up, is established, drawn up, and concluded betwixt two unchangeable persons, in presence of that consenting, unchangeable witness, the Holy Ghost, one God, and of one and the same will essentially with the Father and the Son; "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever." The parties of the covenant of grace are not God and man, but God and Christ; and the believer is no otherwise a party, but in Christ. And here is a bottom of everlasting consolation, that Christ and he are within one and the same covenant, and it stands as sure to them as it stands fast in him.

In a word, if Christ be the covenant, then it is a glorious covenant, a holy covenant, an everlasting covenant; but I omit a great deal of particulars that I might here mention.

6. Hence we may infer, what is the marrow of the gospel-feast in the sacrament of the supper: it is even Christ, given of God to be the covenant of the people: for, in the sacrament, "Christ, and the benefits of the new covenant are represented, sealed, and applied to believers." To take the sacrament is nothing but a mock, if

people do not in it sacramentally, really, and believingly take Christ as the covenant of the people; yea, the sacrament of the supper is the seal of the covenant, confirming to the believer all the promises thereof; "This is the New Testament in my blood." The covenant is sure enough in itself; but the believer is never too sure of it, while he hath unbelief in him: and therefore God hath condescended to give us all that we could require of the most faithless and dishonest man upon the face of the earth, that we may believe him: not only his word, and writ, and oath, but his seal too; and all hath enough to do to confirm the believer's faith: yea, nothing will confirm and strengthen his faith, but the same almighty power of God which wrought it at first, even the power whereby he raised it at first, even the power whereby he raised Christ from the dead. Yet, in these means, he uses to convey his power for that end; and therefore the believer is to use them: I say, the believer, because none, who, by unbelief, refuse the covenant, are to meddle with the seal thereof, to profane it; yea, they that use the seal, and refuse the covenant, they seal their own condemnation; for, being under the covenant of works, they seal no other covenant than that which they are under; and so they seal themselves up under the bondage and curse of the covenant of works, which is the heavy curse of the great God.—But now, passing all other uses, I come to close with a word.

2ndly, For Exhortation.—If God hath given Christ to be the covenant of the people, then the native exhortation is, 1. That all the people take the covenant that God is here giving them. And, 2. That all who take this covenant, take the seal thereof in the sacrament of the supper. But, at the time, I confine myself to the first of these.

The first exhortation is to all the people that hear me, That seeing God makes offer of his Christ to you, and gives him as a covenant of the people, you would take this gift of his hand. I am come to make an offer of Christ, as the ALL of the covenant, to you, in his name, who is the covenant, and in his Father's name, who gives him for a covenant of the people. If you go to a communion-table, and take the seal of the covenant before you take the covenant itself, you will but mock God, and set a seal to a blank; yea, you will seal your covenant with hell, and trample under foot the blood of the everlasting covenant. And, therefore, I call you all, beforehand, to come and take the covenant. I know not how the

call will be entertained ; many will slight it, but yet we must make the offer in God's name, who commands us to preach the gospel to every creature. I know that you cannot, and will not embrace the offer, without divine almighty power be extended ; but he uses to make the gospel-offer the channel of his power to gain souls to himself. I know, moreover, that as you are unworthy of such an offer ; so you would mind, it is not me you have to do with, but the great and eternal God, that is offering his Son to you for a covenant this day : and, as it well becomes such a glorious God to make such a glorious offer, so it becomes no vile sinner here to refuse the offer. And choose or refuse you must : there is no middle : either you must receive or reject Christ this day, for he is offered universally to all the people here for a covenant. I know further, that it is one of the hardest things in the world for men to persuade themselves that God is in earnest in offering Christ to them, and in giving Christ to them in particular : and yet because this is the very porch and avenue of faith, O plead that God would deliver you from such blasphemous thoughts as tend to give the lie to the God of truth, who swears by his life that he will have no pleasure in your death. Men shall find, to their cost, that he called them in earnest to believe, when he damns them in earnest for their unbelief ; for, " He that believeth not shall be damned." I know further, that many deceive themselves with a temporary faith, thinking they take Christ when there is no faith of divine operation, but a counterfeit faith of their own forging : however, the covenant must be opened, and Christ offered, though he should be a stumbling-block to many, over which they should fall and break their necks ; for the covenant will draw some to it powerfully and sweetly, to raise a divine building on a divine testimony. I offer, then, a whole covenant, a whole Christ to you, in his Father's name, who gives him for a covenant ; will not you take, when God gives ? It is true, God is not speaking immediately to you in this text ; but to Christ, saying, " I will give thee for a covenant of the people ;" but still so much the better for you, seeing it is on your behalf that God, who cannot lie, the eternal God, is speaking to his eternal Son in your favours. There is the surer ground, and stronger argument for your faith, that you may say, Lord, I take thee at thy word, and it is not thy word to me only ; if it were directed immediately to me at the first hand, I am such a black, filthy monster of hell, that I durst not credit it ; but it is thy word to the fair, fair IMMANUEL, who is thy heart's

darling and delight ; in whom thou art well pleased : and I think thy word to him must be a sure word ; and it is thy word to him concerning me : whatever I be, I am sure thou wilt not go back of thy word to him, who is the true and faithful witness : I agree to that contract, and put in my name, consenting to have him for a covenant to me. O sure work, if that be the way of it ! as sure as God is faithful and true to his eternally beloved Son. Well, man, woman ; young and old, do you find in your heart thus to take the covenant in the bulk ? Need I say any more for motives ? Consider,

1. What for a state you are in, while you are out of this covenant : you are under a covenant of works, and so under the wrath and vengeance of God, under the bondage and curse of the law ; yea, you are in covenant with hell and death by that contract : you have nothing to expect but a terrible death shortly, and a horrible hell eternally.

2. Consider that this covenant is the last bargain that ever God will make with you, or for you : the covenant of works is broken, and you are damned for ever, if you be not under another, for that bargain is blown up. This new covenant is a plank after shipwreck ; though it was contrived and transacted before the first was broken : yea, from eternity ; yet it is a new bargain proposed to us after the old is gone : and, if you refuse this, there is not another covenant to save you ; “ There remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery wrath, that shall consume the adversaries.”

3. Consider, that this covenant is a bargain made ready to your hand : it is not a covenant of your own making ; it was made before the world was made, and drawn up in the counsel of peace : and the all of it presented to you in Christ, who is the great ordinance, institution, and appointment of the Father, for your relief and recovery from sin and misery ; “ For him hath God the Father sealed :” sealed and authorized him to be the bread of life to perishing souls ; sealed and given him for a covenant of the people : God hath sealed and made ready a covenant for you ; and all that is required of you, is only, that you will not discredit God, and make him a liar ; but through grace, set to your seal, that God is true ; receiving his testimony concerning his Son.

4. Consider, that you have a good claim and right to this covenant ; or a warrant to accept of it ; you have a warrant, by the call

and command of God, to believe ; “ This is his commandment, that ye believe on the name of his Son.” You have a warrant sealed to you already by your baptismal sacrament ; it was a sealed right to believe in Christ, and to take him for a covenant ; and you are obliged thereby to take hold of this covenant : and if you will not set your hand to it this day, you practically renounce your baptism, and the devil hath a firm hold of you. You have a warrant from the general, indefinite promise and publication of this covenant to you : “ The promise is to you, and to your children ; and to you is the word of this salvation sent. I will give him for a covenant of the people, a light to the Gentiles.” So that it is published and directed to you, man ; to you, woman ; you have a claim to take it for your own. It is a covenant for you, for every soul of you within the four corners of this house ; even you that are thinking, O it is not me that is intended : yes, it is you. Away with unbelief, and let your heart say, “ This is a covenant for me.” This is a believing with application : and wherefore am I sent here, but to tell you that covenant is for you ? You are welcome to it, whosoever will.

5. Consider upon what terms you may have this covenant. On what terms ? The condition of the covenant is already fulfilled ; Christ hath brought in an everlasting righteousness, and God hath accepted it, and is well-pleased with it ; and on this account promises all other things freely : not a farthing have you to pay for this covenant, it is God's gift ; “ I will give thee for a covenant.” There are but two words necessary to make up this whole business ; the one is a word from God, saying, “ I will give him for a covenant ;” the other is from you, saying, I take him for a covenant to me. The first word is said already, “ I give ;” and if you want faith to say, I TAKE, this the covenant hath in the bosom of it ; the spirit to work faith is promised in it ; for he that says, “ I give him for a covenant,” says also, “ I have put my spirit upon him, and he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles :” yea, with the same breath that he is given for a covenant, he is given for a light to open the blind eyes, and for liberty to open prison-doors. Now faith to take is covenanted ; and this whole covenant, and all salvation in it, is laid to your hand ; all is given, when the covenant is given. Why, Sir, I think you leave nothing to do at all. Yea, as much as you can do and that is just nothing. If you can believe by your own power, then I will take back my word ; but that I know you cannot do : and I give you as much to do as my text allows, which

offers all, when it offers Christ as a covenant to you. But will you tell me, what the worse are you, that you who can do nothing, get nothing to do ; and that he who can do all things, gets all the work and all the praise ? Are you not pleased with these terms, to have all freely, without money, and without price ?

6. Consider, that the most part of the world rejects this covenant, and despises this free gift of God. The legal, unbelieving heart will not have Christ at that easy rate ; the hellish proud spirit of man is not for taking a covenant from God, but for making a covenant with him, for as bad as they are at keeping of covenants : they cannot believe that God will give all for nothing ; and therefore they will not take, without making some bargain of their own ; yea, they think, that this way of taking Christ for ALL, is an enemy to holiness : and because they thus contemn and reproach this holy covenant of free grace, which only can furnish them with holiness, therefore God hath blasted all their holiness ; insomuch that there was never less holiness, nor more wickedness in a Christian world. I say, the most part of the world rejects Christ, the gifted covenant ; few, in the world will have him ; few in Scotland will have him. And, “ Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by ? ” Do you think it a small matter, to see the world crucifying the Lord of glory, and interpretatively renewing the bloody tragedy again, that was acted at Jerusalem really ? And will ye have a hand in the murder also ? The more they be that reject him, the more should ye receive him. He hath long been set before you in a preached gospel, and you have long refused him ; and you know not but this may be the last communion-offer that ever you will get of him ; “ To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.”

7. Consider, that you cannot please God, nor glorify him so much any way, as by taking this gifted covenant out of his hand. As Abraham staggered not at the promise through unbelief, but was strong in the faith, giving glory to God ; so to take this covenant of promise is the way to give glory to God. You will please him better than ever your sins displeased him ; yea, it is impossible to please him another way ; for, “ Without faith it is impossible to please God : ” but in this way you will please him, and content his heart ; yea, you will give more satisfaction to his justice for all your sins, than your everlasting damnation would do ; for, this is a covenant with him by his sacrifice ; a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour, giving infinite satisfaction : for he that is given for a covenant, is

given for a sacrifice ; by which God is pleased, and glorified to the highest.

8. To name no more, consider that this covenant can answer all objections ; and the very proposals in the text is such as may obviate all, on whatever ground you state them, " I will give thee for a covenant of the people, a light of the Gentiles, to open blind eyes, and to bring out prisoners out of their prison-house." There is no room, no place for any objection here ; for the tenor of the covenant answers all difficulties. Whatever be the prison-house you are in, this covenant not only knocks at the prison-door, but breaks open the door, and comes in, saying, There is my hand of power to help you out ; will you take my help ? " O Israel thou hast destroyed thyself : but in me is thy help." Will you have it ? Let your heart say, Lord, it is welcome. Are you in the prison of the lowest hell that ever any was in upon earth ? This covenant comes so low as to lift you up, if you do not reject the counsel of God against yourselves. Would you wish to be free of all that deadness, hardness, blindness, stupidity, and enmity, which you reckon make you unfit, and unprepared for coming to Christ, and taking this covenant ? Why, this covenant is adapted for curing these plagues ; and when you take this covenant, you take it as a cure for all the diseases, which never can be cured till you take this remedy : for to cure yourselves, and then come to this covenant, is impossible ; but to come to this covenant, and get the cure of all maladies that affect you, is God's instituted means of salvation. Would you wish to be free of that temptation, that you are no elect ? Accept of this blessed bargain, and your election is sure. Who dare say that you are a reprobate ? Poor worm of yesterday's date, will you speak as if you had been upon the privy-council of heaven from all eternity ? Will you rather beguile the devil, by saying, Whatever I be, this covenant constitutes my duty, and therefore I will venture upon the covenant at the call of God ? But, if I be not an elect, I will not get grace to venture, or grace to believe. What mean you, man, by grace to believe ? Is not grace to believe conveyed by such a call as this ? And therefore, if you slight this call, you slight the grace that would make you believe ; and therefore, O let not the devil make a fool of you.—Would you wish to be free of that temptation, that you have sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost, and that there is no mercy for you ? Why, if you embrace this offer this day, you may be sure you was never guilty,

nor ever shall. Tell me the clause of the text that secludes you from meddling with this covenant, and why will ye debar yourselves? What is the case that this covenant cannot answer? Are there any here that hath false and inconsistent hearts, that break all bonds? O here is a suitable covenant for you. If you cannot keep the covenant, the covenant will keep you. The bastard-covenants of your own making will not keep you, but this covenant will, Jer. xxxii. 40. Are there any here that want throughbearing in the world, and are feared from straits, and even temporal difficulties? Here is a covenant that says, "Bread shall be given thee, and thy water shall be sure; yea, verily thou shalt be fed; and in the day of famine shall be satisfied." Are there any here that cannot get rest among all the creatures? Here is a covenant that says, "Come to me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Are there any here, that thinks themselves poor, abject creatures, saying, O I am but a burden to myself, and a burden to all that are about me; nobody cares for me, and, I fear God cares not for me either: I am cast out at all hands? O here is a covenant that says, "He will gather together the outcasts of Israel." Is there any here afraid of death, and knows not how to get through that dark trance! O here is a covenant fit for you, that says, "O death I will be thy plague; and death shall be swallowed up in victory." Are there any here labouring under desertion? Here is a covenant that says, "I will lead the blind in a way they know not. I will never leave you, nor forsake you." Are ye for this covenant? Is there any labouring under temptations? Here is a covenant that says, "The God of peace will bruise Satan under your feet shortly; and my grace shall be sufficient for thee." Is there any here labouring under the power of sin and corruption? Here is a covenant that says, "I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; I will subdue your iniquity;" yea, he who is the covenant says, "For your sake I sanctify myself, that you also might be sanctified. And again, The water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up to eternal life." Is there any here saying, I am a lost creature? The covenant is saying, "I come to seek and to save that which was lost." Is there any here saying, O I have sinned to the uttermost? This covenant says, "He is able to save to the uttermost." If you say, you cannot believe; the covenant says, Christ, who is the ALL of the covenant, is the author of faith; and the Spirit of faith is

given when the covenant is given ; all grace is given when it is given. Are you content to take this covenant, and all the grace of it ? If you say, you cannot repent, the covenant says, " Him hath God exalted with his right-hand, to give repentance." What is the case that the covenant cannot answer ? Why, say you, you are calling us all, both wicked and godly, to accept of this covenant : but does not God say to the wicked, " What hast thou to do to take my covenant in thy mouth, seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my law behind thy back ?" Very true, he says so, Psal. l. 16 : Yea, the voice of God in the law, says, Vengeance upon you ; and there is no escaping that vengeance, but by hearing and believing what the voice of God in the gospel-covenant says, and by taking it, not in your mouth to abuse it, but in your heart to love and improve it for your sanctification as well as for your justification, for making you holy as well as happy. God's covenant is a holy covenant, and it works out sin, and advances holiness in all that are under it. What ! would you have me believe in Christ before my life be reformed ? may some say. Yea, I would have you believe in Christ, in order to reformation ; and taking him for a covenant, in order to our sanctification. Why then, say you, I will take Christ and my lusts both. I defy you, man : if you take him, you must let these go away ; yea, it is impossible to take him, and keep your lusts too ; for, whenever the covenant of grace is embraced, the covenant with sin and hell is abandoned. And therefore, if any come to this covenant to seek shelter to any one lust under it, it is no coming at all ; it is no faith, but fancy : yea, it is a mocking of God, and his holy covenant, and will bring a curse upon you instead of a blessing. To come to this covenant is to come to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world ; it is coming to Jesus to be saved from sin. But O, say you, I cannot think that the covenant of grace says a good word to me ; I have been making God to serve with my sins, and have wearied him with mine iniquities. Indeed the law and covenant of works says, You are a dead man ; The soul that sinneth shall die : but see what the covenant of grace says, Isa. xliii. 24, 25. " I, even I am he that blotteth out thy transgression for my name's sake." Take this covenant then, and pardon with it, as well as purification. O ! but what says the covenant to one who hath been neglecting prayer, and forgetting God all my days ? Why, there is no word in the law for you but fury ; " Pour out thy fury upon the heathen,

and on the families that call not on thy name. The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." But there is a word even for such in the new covenant; "I am found of them that sought me not." O come and take the treasure you was never seeking after to this day, and it will sweetly determine you to seek his face all the days of your life. O! but what will the covenant say to such whose case you have not touched, and who think their case nameless, and that ministers cannot find out a name for them, because they are just hidden among the mist of the bottomless pit, among the smoke of hell, so as they cannot be found out? Why the covenant hath a word to you; Isa. lxii. 12, "Thou shalt be called, Sought out, a city not forsaken;" there is a name for you, thou shalt be called, "Sought out." This covenant is sent this day to seek you out from the bottom of the dark prison that you are in, whatever it be: will you take the benefit of this covenant? Are you for it, man, woman? Will you have a Christ to be a covenant to you? Young people, will you have him, that you may not live in the devil's service? Old people will you have him, that you may not die with the devil in your arms? Drunkard, will you have him, that you may get a drink of the new wine of consolation? Unclean person will you have him, to wash you, that you may be fitted to walk with him in white? Swearer will you have him, that your tongue may be shaped for a hallelujah? Man, woman, who hast seven devils in you, will you have him, who hath the seven spirits that are before the throne (that is, the eternal spirit, with his various operations) that he put the devil out of you, and put his spirit within you? Whosoever will, may have a covenant this day, that will make you up for ever.

Is there any here who despises all this love, saying, I will keep my lusts and sins say you what you will; it is but a new scheme, perhaps out of your own head; I have no fancy for that covenant? Say you so, man! then, as the Lord lives, you have spoken this against your own life. I protest against you, in the name of God, and shake the dust off my feet, in witness against you, That, on the nineteenth day of August 1722, at a communion at Dunfermline, Christ, and in him all the covenant of grace, was offered to you, and you refused him: and if you live and die in that mind, I summon you to answer for this refusal, before his awful tribunal at the great day.

But, because I am courting a bride for my glorious master, I

would gladly speak her fair on her marriage-day ; therefore, O refuser and despiser of Christ, will you bethink yourself yet, and take your word again ; many a slight have you put upon this glorious Christ, and yet he is content to take you for all that ; he is loth to take a denial ; and therefore I would ask, in his name, before you give him a total refusal, will you tell me, Where will you do better ? Will a broken covenant of works be a better bargain for you ? or will the black covenant with hell, and with your lusts and idols be a better bargain for you ? or is the vain perishing world a better bargain ? No, no ; the devil himself does not think so, whatever he suggests to you.

But again, before you give him a total denial and absolute refusal, will you tell me, how you will do without him ? Or, if you make a shift while you live, O how will you die without him ? and how will you stand in judgment without him ? and death and judgment may be at hand. There are many dead, and away to eternity since the last communion here ; and this may be the last communion invitation that ever you will get : if you refuse Christ now, it may be the last offer that ever you will get of him ; he hath taken many refusals off your hand already.

And finally, my dear friends, before you refuse him wholly, think again what you are refusing : Is Christ a despicable person, of no more worth than to be slighted by you, and trampled under your feet ? Is he a hateful object, whom yet the tongues of all the glorious seraphims are not worthy to adore ? Is the everlasting covenant a matter of moonshine ? Is the love of God, the blood of Christ, the eternal interests of your immortal souls, and the divine glory, all matters of indifferency to you ? Is the great JEHOVAH, his giving Christ to be a covenant of the people, a contemptible thing ? and is this a gift not worth the taking ? O no, no, say ye ; surely it is a worthy offer. Why then, by the awful authority of the eternal Son, I abjure you to take him and his Father's blessing ; and all the blessings of the everlasting covenant with him. O say you, I think I am gained and overcome by this offer and proposal : but I know not if it be a passing thought that will vanish, or a real faith that will abide the trial ; I fear it be but loose work and a temporary flash. Why, man, the covenant can resolve you in that difficulty : and it says, " Fear not for I am thy God : I will strengthen thee ; I am thy salvation. Are you content to take the covenant for this end, to discover the defects of your faith, and to

work in you the faith of God's elect? Can you say, that it is not in your faith, but in Christ himself, that you are seeking salvation: that you are not building your faith upon your faith, nor your hope upon your hope, but both your faith and hope upon the covenant? Can you say, that whatever be wrong about you and your faith, yet you see there is nothing wrong about Christ and the covenant, but that it is well-ordered in all things and sure, and such as can right all that is wrong about you? Can you say, however I am in the dark about my faith, yet I have sometimes found out my unbelief; and, that I could no more believe than I could move the earth from its centre; but yet the joyful sound of gospel-grace hath touched my heart, and made me take up so much glory and excellency in Christ, that I think all the world nothing in comparison of him; and I think my heart's desire is, O to have him for my Prophet to take away the darkness of my mind; as a Priest to take away the guilt of my sins; and as a King, to take away the power of my lusts! Gladly would I have him, and thus my soul may be blest in him, and his name may be glorified in me. Why then, whatever you think of your faith, and of yourself, as the blackest monster of guilt that ever was out of hell, yet it seems you have the faith of God's elect.

I would very gladly hope, that some souls in this assembly are taken hold of by the hand of grace, and content to sign this covenant with their heart: and woe's me that there should be any here that would let all this love and grace, and this good prize go by them, and they never have a heart to it. But yet some that have a heart to sign, may be saying, O I cannot write, I cannot believe, I cannot subscribe, though I think I could do it with a thousand good-wills. Say you so, man? I will tell you good news, Christ hath the book of the covenant, in the one hand, and the pen in his other hand, ready to set down your name, and to subscribe for you; only declare before witnesses that you cannot write, and do you touch the pen, saying, Lord, set down my name, consenting to every article of the covenant, and pleased with the whole frame of it. Say you so? Well, it is done, for he hath the pen of a ready writer; your name is within the bond already. But if grace will help you to a new act of faith, a stronger act, read over the covenant again, and hear how the great JEHOVAH is speaking, and not I; and speaking to his only begotten Son that lies in his bosom, saying, "I give thee for a covenant of the people."

Now, let faith say, Lord, I take thee at thy word ; I hear thee speaking to thy beloved Son concerning me a poor, dark, blind, and bound Gentile ; wilt thou ever go back of thy word to thy Son ? No, in despite of the devil, I think that is the surest word that ever was spoken ; it is to him thou speakest, and to me in him ; and therefore, behold, I take thee at thy word ; black and ugly as I am, the covenant can make me fair and clean : thy grace hath conquered me, thy love hath drawn me, and I am pleased with the bargain ; and I see it is the best bargain that ever was made, for advancing thy eternal glory, and my eternal good ; I see it is all my salvation, and all my desire ; I see it is well-ordered in all things, and sure. Why then, the Lord be thanked that it is a done bargain, and that God's gift is taken off his hand. And therefore, having taken the covenant, never stand to take the seal in the sacrament of his supper.

THE SUBSTANCE OF SOME DISCOURSES AFTER THE SACRAMENT, ON THE SAME SUBJECT.

Now, my friends, it were not fit I should detain you, by speaking to the several sorts of people here ; I shall only drop a few words in the general. I think, if my heart deceive me not, the great thing I was helped to seek, sometime before this solemnity, was not only assistance to ministers, and to myself, so as to be carried through the work, for I thought that would soon come to little account : but I would have had a day of power among you that are the people, that the glory of the Lord might shine among you. And now, what shall I say ? O ! " To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed ? " Hath the right hand of the Lord done valiantly, even the man of his right hand, whom he hath made strong for himself ? Hath the Lord appeared, as yet, for as much of the work as is over ? Or, shall we expect that he will appear in the work that is yet to follow ? Or, shall our prayer just only turn to our bosom again ? I would ask you, What welcome entertainment hath Christ, the Father's gifted covenant, got among you this day ? He hath given him for a covenant of the people : and who of all the people have welcomed the Father's gift ? I fear there are many fools here, that have a

price in their hand but no heart to the bargain. But to all the despisers of Christ, and all the refusers of Christ, in Dunfermline this day, in case the Lord may seize you with a word yet before you go, I have a word to say to you, whether you have been at the Lord's table or not, although the sacrament-table be drawn, yet the covenant-table is not drawn, it is covered yet, and Christ is set upon it, and you are all welcome; for all that have eaten there is bread enough and to spare, in his Father's house: Christ, as the covenant is offered to you, man; to you, woman; to you that are before me, and behind me, and round about me, in every corner of this place, though I do not see you, yet God's eye is upon you, and his word is directed to you: yea, this covenant is directed and offered to you, he is the people's covenant, let the people come, be who they will, even the vilest monster of sin out of hell; God's giving him in this gospel, is your warrant for taking him: and if you will not hearken to this gospel-offer of Christ for a covenant to you, I charge you, in God's name, and as you will answer at his tribunal, to declare before him and your own consciences, what ye have to say against him; is it that you are not holy? Nay, you shall not have that to say, for to the unholyest soul here, this covenant is offered, for this end, to make you holy; and never shall you be holy, till you come and accept of it. Is it that you have not grace to come? Why, man, when this covenant is offered, Christ and all the graces in him is offered, and among the rest, grace to draw you: and if you will not put away this grace from you, it will take hold of you.—Is your objection this, I fear my unbelief, enmity, and ill-will, put away all that grace? Why, that is the thing most to be feared; and yet, if that be indeed your fear, there is the less ground of fear; for this covenant is offered to you, to take away your ill-will and enmity. Are you contented to have God's gifted covenant for that end? Really I know not what good thing it is in all the world that you want or need, but what is offered to you in this covenant: for Christ is the all of the covenant; and he who is the ALL of it, is ALL IN ALL: and therefore, I charge you again, before you bid him farewell, to declare what you have to say against him, whom God is giving for a covenant: Shall I take your silence for a confession, that you have nothing to say against him? Then, by the glory of God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, by the eternal salvation of your immortal souls, by all the joys of the redeemed, and torments of the damned, I charge you all, and every one of you, to welcome the

covenant of the people that God is giving, and that by your hearty saying, Even so, I take him, as the Father offers him in the gospel, to be a whole covenant to me, to do all my work in me, and for me. What say you, drunkard, swearer, whoremonger, scarlet-coloured sinner in Dunfermline? What say you, communicant and spectator? It may be, the thing that keeps you back is, O I am unworthy to have him; true but unworthy monster of hell as you are, if you think him worthy to be received, I charge you again, by all the blood that he shed at Jerusalem, and by all the bowels of compassion that move within him, that you do not refuse him, but welcome God's gift, welcome God's send, saying, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." If, after all, you are staying, stay a little, Sir, let me take it to advisement for some days: No, no, man, woman; I have no commission, to allow you a day, or an hour's delay, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice harden not your heart:" If you refuse to day, I know not but you may be in hell to-morrow. What if the next hour the breath should go out of your body? and if your soul should flit out of your body before it flee into Christ, you are gone, you are undone for ever: if God's omnipotent grace and almighty power, which only can make you willing to accept his offer, be not accompanying this call, he needs not our apology; he is the Sovereign, that is obliged as a debtor to none but himself and his own pleasure, and his Son's righteousness: yet still you are obliged to obey his call, and your wilful rejecting, is inexcusable. And therefore, if, after all, this gift of God for a covenant of the people, be slighted by you, you not being content that God should rent and tear the old contract that was betwixt you and your lusts, but esteeming it above this covenant, betwixt God the giver, and you the refuser, be it; let him and you reckon together, I hope I am free of your blood this day, for there will be blood in the case: if you will not have the blood of the everlasting covenant to wash you, to justify you, to sanctify and save you, nor believe that God gives it to you to be received for that end, then there will be blood for blood; "He that believeth not shall be damned." Remember what a free offer of Christ you have got this day; you have nothing to pay for this covenant; "I will give thee for a covenant:" you have nothing to pay for a pardon; the condition of the covenant is fulfilled by Christ, and in it is a full payment of all debt; and therefore, so freely is the pardon, and life offered to you, that you cannot have it till you have nothing to pay

for it. See how the creditor deals with the debtor in the parable, Luke vii. 42.—“When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both.” Now, the legal old-covenant heart of many says, with the wicked servant, “Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all;” I will grow a better man, I will fall a repenting and reforming, and then I hope God will pardon me: that man hath something to pay, at least he fancies so, and therefore he hath no forgiveness. But when a poor soul is brought to this, Oh! I have nothing to pay; if I be the payer of my own debt, it will never be paid for me; the debt of satisfaction will never be paid for me; the debt of obedience, the debt of duty; I have nothing to pay my debt, nay, not the least farthing of the debt, were it but a good thought it can never be paid by me: Why then, that man stands fair for a full remission, according to this free covenant; “When they had nothing to pay he frankly forgave them both.” Are you for this new covenant way of it, to come and bring nothing, and get all freely out of the covenant that belongs to grace and glory, debt and duty, happiness and holiness? Now, what shall I say to God, when I go back to my closet, where I was pleading the last week, that he would shew his glory, and draw some of you to himself; shall I go with a complaint upon you, and say, Lord, they will not come; they prefer their base lusts to the glorious Lord Jesus; the drunkard prefers his cups to thee; the whoremonger prefers his whoredom to thee; the covetous man prefers the world to thee; the legalist prefers his own righteousness to thee. Shall we complain to this purpose? Or, will you give occasion to Christ to complain upon you to his Father, saying, Father, thou didst give me to be a covenant of the people, but there is a people in Dunfermline, that care not for me, and despise thy gift: “They will not come to me that they might have life.” O! will not the Father frown upon you, when the Son complains upon you? And, O! if you continue of that mind, he will frown you to hell. But, O may we hope that some at least have subscribed their names to the covenant this day! We would go back to God with a song of praise in our mouths, and glorify his name for the wonders of his grace; yea, if I may so express it, Christ would with a glad heart show his Father the copy of the covenant that you have signed, and that was offered and directed to you, as to the Gentiles; to these that are under darkness, blindness, and bondage, and in the prison of sin, death, and wrath. Will not

the Father be pleased when the covenant-roll is read over, with the names of all the subscribers and assenters to the covenant, and your name among the rest? There is one that subscribed his name thus, I, one of the people, one of the Gentiles: I, one of the blind and bound prisoners, assenting and consenting. Well may God say, was not the covenant directed and offered to the people of that name? Yes, Father, it was. Why then, let the name stand there registered to eternity, it shall never be blotted out for me; "Him that cometh I will in no wise cast out." Since they had no better name to sign withal, than the name of sinner, apostate, backslider, criminal, leper, blackamoor, slave, and hell's drudges; yet assenting and consenting to this covenant; this covenant that they have subscribed shall make their names better than that of sons and daughters. They shall have a name among the living in Jerusalem; even a new name, and the white stone, that no man knoweth, but he that receiveth it.

Now, as we have a commission from the Lord to tell you, that you are welcome to him; so, O! shall we have a commission from you, to tell him that he is welcome to you? Since God the Father declares that you are welcome to his Son, saying, "I will give him for a covenant of the people:" shall we go and tell him, O God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the people at the sacrament at Dunfermline have taken thee at thy word, and are saying in their hearts, thy Son is welcome to them? O if Christ and you welcome one another this day, whether it be the first welcoming to some of you, or a confirming welcome to others; if he and you, I say, be welcoming one another this day, glory, glory to God that ever this day dawned. Eternity will be duration little enough to praise him for this day. Glory, glory to God for the three happy meetings; glory to him for the happy meeting betwixt the divine and human nature in one person, and that is the glorious person given to be a covenant to you; glory to him for the happy meeting betwixt justice and mercy, who have kissed one another, and said, We are both pleased and are honoured by him, who is given for a covenant of the people; and glory to him for the happy meeting betwixt the Saviour and the sinner, betwixt the covenant and the people: Is it a meeting indeed! Hath the Lord God of the Hebrews met with you in Dunfermline? hath the covenant taken hold of your hearts? O, glory to him, for it is a meeting never to part; the covenant will never quit its holding again: and, therefore, "As you have received

Christ, so walk you in him ;" as you have received God's gifted covenant, so make use of it, and improve it.

When you find you have no righteousness, look to the covenant to furnish you ; " For his name shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS." When you find you have no strength, look to the covenant to furnish you ; for it says, " My strength shall be perfect in thy weakness." When you find you have no life nor liveliness, look to the covenant to furnish you ; for it says, " I am the resurrection and the life." When you feel little of the spirit's influences, look to the covenant to furnish you ; for it says, " I will pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground." When you find you have much sin and guilt in and about you, look to the covenant for pardon ; for it says, " I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for my name's sake." When you find your lusts and corruptions to be powerful and prevalent, look to the covenant for mortification ; for it says, " Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace." When you find little or no holiness taking place in your hearts and ways, look to this holy covenant, and it will make you more holy than ever the covenant of works could do ; for this covenant of grace does present the law with a perfect holiness, whether you take it as the law of works, or a rule of life in the hand of a Mediator. As the law is a covenant of works, the believer hath, by this covenant, a perfect holiness in his hand, a divine righteousness answering to that : and as the law is a rule of life, in the hand of Christ, the believer hath, by this new covenant, a perfect holiness also, not only by virtue of his union to Christ the fountain of holiness, but in his own person ; he hath a perfection of parts here, and a perfection of degrees hereafter. But, as to this perfection of parts in time, it is, indeed, many times so low, that the believer can hardly discern it.

Why, may one say, The thing that frightens me is, lest I be a practical Antinomian, and a gospel hypocrite ; because, though I think my heart goes in to the offer of Christ as a covenant, yet I can never find the powerful and sanctifying virtue of this covenant, to destroy my lusts and corruptions, but still iniquity prevails against me ; and can I take comfort in the covenant in that case, without abusing free grace to licentiousness ? For clearing this, I shall only say to you, that if you can nourish and cherish sin, and yet take comfort in the covenant, that comfort is suspicious like, and flows from a fancy, and not from the faith of God's operation ; for,

"He that hath this hope, purifieth himself, even as God is pure." Faith purifies the heart, wherever it is in exercise; and to take comfort in or from the covenant, and yet take pleasure in sin, at the same time, is a dream, and a delusion that the believer cannot be under, unless he be in a fit of temptation. But as to sin prevailing; sin may prevail against a believer, and yet he may have comfort in the covenant; as David had, when he says, "Iniquities prevail against me;" they are against my will, against my heart, against my prayers, against my inclinations; and he immediately adds, "As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away," Psalm lxxv. 3. But thou, poor soul, that says you never found the sanctifying virtue of the covenant? Why, did you never get grace to wrestle against sin? that is some virtue. Doth prevalency of sin never humble you to the dust? that is some virtue. Do you see and lament your own unholiness? that is some virtue. Doth the sense and feeling of the power of sin never make you long for complete victory and freedom from sin? that is some virtue. Did the power of a body of death never make you look upon yourselves as wretched, saying, O wretched person that I am! who shall deliver me from it? that is some virtue. Did the prevalency of sin never force you to the blood of Christ, the fountain open for sin and for uncleanness? that is some virtue. Are you glad of any victory you got over your corruption? yea, that is some virtue. How do you find it with you, when the light of the covenant is shining on your soul? Do you not find your heart rising against sin? Then that is some virtue. How do you find it with you between hands, when iniquity is prevailing? Do you not find yourself uneasy, and out of your element, aye till the Lord return? That is some virtue.—Do not deny the sanctifying virtue of the covenant: and what can be the reason of it, that though you sign the covenant, and go in to it, yet you find so little of its powerful sanctifying virtue? I will tell you one reason of your instability and inconstancy this way: It may be, when you signed the covenant, you put not your name at the foot of the bond, but set your name too far up, as if you were a party covenanting; you are to sign as a party consenting, but not as a party contracting: The covenant was drawn up, and signed by two unchangeable parties from eternity, the Father and the Son; and you, forsooth, would have your name in the midst of the contract, as if you were promising and contracting something for your part conjunctly with him, who is the first and the last, and the ALL

of the covenant. Remember you are but a poor assenter at best ; and therefore put your name lower down ; for your work is just to do nothing, but to consent to take him, to do all your work in you, and for you : for, says the Lord, in my context here, " My glory will I not give to another." He accounts it the standing of his glory, to perform all that is within the covenant ; and he will not let any black scullion of hell, like you or me, count our doits¹ among his gold. The higher place that you take for your name in the covenant, the more inconstant are you ; but the lower place, the more stable : Therefore, when you sign the covenant anew, put your name farther down, below his who is the covenant of the people : let him be the all of the covenant to you ; the worker of all your work, and you but an on-waiter ; for his glory he will not give to another.

Perhaps some may be saying, O Sir, the thing that fears me at this occasion, is this, I am put all in confusion with the differences that are among you that are ministers.² What do I know, but the reproach of a new scheme does justly belong to some of you, and that I may be in a delusion ? What do I know, but your way of opening the covenant of grace may be such as others may call an enemy to the law, and to holiness ? Why, what shall I say to you, poor creature ? Let God be true, and every man a liar. The Lord forbid that we should speak wickedly of God, and talk deceitfully for him. If there be any person here, that never found this doctrine of grace have any other tendency than to lead them to licentiousness, I will pledge my life, that he is not a believer, but a person ignorant of the mystery of the gospel. But what say you, believer ? cannot your experience bear witness of God, and his gracious covenant, that

(1) An ancient piece of small Scots copper-coin, in value the twelfth part of a penny sterling ; at that time current, but not so now.

(2) At the time when this Sermon was preached (viz. August 19, 1722,) the contest about the Marrow Doctrine was upon the field : First occasioned by a new impression of a book, entitled the Marrow of Modern Divinity, with a recommendatory preface, by the Reverend Mr. James Hog, minister of Carnock, as a book designed to vindicate the doctrine of Free-Grace ; which book the General Assembly 1720, by their fifth Act, severely animadverted upon, and condemned several precious important truths, through the sides thereof : And though a representation was given in by some ministers (among whom our author was one) to the Assembly 1721, laying open the dangerous consequence of the said Act, yet the Assembly 1722, by their seventh Act, further explained, corroborated, and confirmed the said fifth Act.—As this affair occasioned a very considerable difference, both among ministers and people ; so this much may serve as a key to this passage.

however vile and unholy you find yourself to be, yet when the new covenant cord of free grace is wrapt about your heart, does it draw you to the love of sin, or to the love of holiness? The more lively faith you have of Christ's being your treasure, your righteousness, your covenant, your ALL for debt and duty both, do you not find holiness the more lovely to you, and his love constraining you the more to delight in his service? Let the Word of God and the experience of all the saints, in an agreeableness thereto, decide matters of this sort. But, O poor believer, do not fall out with Christ though even many of his friends should differ with another; be not stumbled in a day of reproaches and offences: "Blessed are they that shall not be offended at Christ." Let your hearts go in to the offer of Christ as a covenant, to make you both holy and happy.

Now, if you have got little this day, leave the complaint upon yourselves, for God and his ordinances are not to blame; your iniquities do separate betwixt you and your God: and yet, say not you have got nothing, if you have got but a crumb; for a crumb is something that indicates that there is yet more coming in the Lord's time and way. Why, what is a crumb? If you are made more humble than you was, that is a crumb. Have you got more insight into the covenant? that is a crumb. Have you got more desire after Christ? that is a crumb. Are you longing more to be free of sin, and like unto Christ? that is a crumb. Have you so much as gives you a stomach for another marriage-supper? that is a crumb. If you have not got so much as a crumb, believer, it may be waiting for you in a closet, or a secret corner; and in the mean time, the Lord may be calling you to reflect upon some old by-past experience, when you got a more sensible hold of the covenant than now; and to live by faith, and wait at wisdom's door. And you that have been fed, and feasted this day, O resolve, through grace, henceforth, a stated war against all Christ's enemies within you and without you: and do all you can, to keep the ground you have gained upon enemies; and sit not down secure, otherwise Satan will soon trip up your heels: lie not down to sleep after meat; for God hath fed you, to run the race that was set before you, and to strive who shall run fastest in the way to heaven, following Christ the forerunner. You are to follow none, but as they follow Christ: the most godly ministers are but limited examples; you are to follow them so far as they follow Christ, but no further; "Be ye followers of me, said Paul, as I am of Christ." Take the word of God

for your rule, and gospel-truth for your standard, and the rather that there are many in this generation, who would be content that some gospel truths were scratched out of the Bible ; but let your prayer be, " Lord, Send forth thy light and thy truth, that they may guide me."

In a word, your life must be a living by faith upon the covenant, the unchangeable parties, the Father and the Son. Here is a sure ground of faith ; whereas the reason of your staggering is, because you put in yourself as the one party, who are but a changeable creature, that alters every moment : but it is concluded betwixt two unchangeable parties, whereof none of them ever repents the bargain. O, says the poor soul, though I have been helped to consent to this covenant, and subscribe it with all my heart, yet I fear I play the devil, and my heart break loose again. Yea, it may be so, but this covenant says, I will draw you to heaven, if you were a devil : I will draw you back again though you were even in the very mouth of hell. And I think, you will find he hath done so heretofore, believer, when you thought you was so far down in the pit, that the Lord would never return again, to lift you up ; he hath returned, and surprised you ; and, it may be, hath done so, at this occasion. O bless him, and serve him, and improve his covenant ; yea, let me tell you, believer, you having embraced the covenant, it lies upon God's honour to keep you, because he stands engaged to his Son ; his word of honour is past.

Some, it may be, are still questioning their right to believe, their right to take Christ, their right to subscribe to this covenant ; they stand, as it were, at the back of the door, saying, What right have I ? Indeed, if you were a party and actor in this covenant, you might speak at that rate ; but that you are not : you are only to be assenter and consenter. Your legal heart dreams always, that God will not accept of you, unless you do so and so ; but know that God and Christ do all here ; and they have bound themselves by this covenant to do all : and if you do anything, stay till you be able to do more than God hath done, than Christ hath done : and that will never be. God engaged, in this covenant, to hold Christ's hand, and to uphold him in the work of redemption : the Father bears equal burden in the work ; and all the three persons of the glorious Trinity had an equal will to it ; and therefore, seeing a Trinity hath done it, the work is completely done. O what fools

are they then, that refuse to join in with this covenant, because of their own short-coming, and because they cannot do so and so? Why, you can do all that you are bound to do in this covenant, and that is just nothing at all; for Christ is the covenant, and the ALL IN ALL of it. If ever you do anything in God's sight acceptable, it is the covenant of grace that does it in you. But now, as to your right to come to this covenant; what right would you have, but mischief and misery to be a right on your part; and the offer, call, and command of heaven to be a right on God's part? There is all the right to believe that I know. You would have a right founded upon some righteousness of your own: you would have in your clouted cloak with his fair robe; but God will have none of your blackened righteousness. The right is now, welcome a hard heart, to get softening grace out of this covenant: welcome a guilty soul, to get pardoning grace out of this covenant: welcome, filthy sinner, to get sanctifying grace out of this covenant: welcome, chief of sinners, sinner above all sinners, welcome to come and get salvation out of this covenant. Will you then object, and say, O I cannot turn from sin, and I must do that before I come? Why man, will you tell me, who, but the devil taught you to take Christ's room, and to take his work and employment out of his hand? "His name is Jesus, because he saves from sin." O let him in, and he will speak for himself; he will speak to the devil, Stand by, for I have broken your head; he will say to sin, Stand by, for I have condemned you by the sacrifice of myself; "He condemned sin in the flesh:" yea, he will say to justice, Let me through to heaven, with all my ransomed at my back; for I have given you full satisfaction. O let him speak for himself. Christ hath got the guiding of all about the covenant; and when we take him, we take holiness with him; we take perfect holiness in him for justification, and we get an imparted holiness from him for sanctification. What is the reason of your want of holiness? Because you do not take Christ; what is the reason that some who take Christ, have little holiness about them? Even because they take him very awkwardly, if I may so call it: they take him backwardly. If we were better at taking what God gives, we would find more holiness springing up; whole taking of him would make whole holiness to you; but your broken taking of him makes broken holiness. O! he is the performer of the covenant, and the performance itself; the doer of all our work in us and for us. And if our taking him, and believing on him were more perfect, our

holiness would be more too; for faith purifies the heart; a poor lean faith makes poor lean obedience and sanctification. O if you could get Christ once in your arms, you get all that the Father hath promised: but poor soul, the best way for you, when you find your own weakness and wickedness, and fear the Father's wrath, is to take Christ, as it were, and shut him into the Father's arms, and that will please him: when you get Christ in your arms, you want no more, you have all you need: and when God the Father gets Christ in his arms, he wants no more, he hath all that he seeks: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Know this covenant, as it is enlarged upon, in the text and context.

1. It is a covenant for light; a light to the Gentiles, Christ is the wisdom and light of poor souls, and teaches them all the good lessons that they learn; what lessons does he instruct them in? Why, he tells them what is the way to heaven, saying, "I am the way:" he preaches himself, and it well becomes him to do so.—He shews them how a man is made full by emptying himself; "When I am weak, then am I strong." If any say, I will do my part of the covenant, he his part: why, that is all wrong, if you make him not the ALL of the covenant, you make him nothing.—He teaches a man how to discern his voice, "My sheep hear my voice." He causes them to discern a spiritual preaching, a gospel preaching; a spiritual prayer, a spiritual exercise. Some will tell us, it is the great and learned men of the world that know preaching best: true, some learning may make them know how words are ranged together; but he who is the light of the Gentiles, makes all, whom he savingly enlightens, to know his voice in a preaching; "The spiritual man judgeth all things."—He teaches them to read God's will out of a providence; and to see more of God in some providences, than others see in all his ordinances: he teaches them to make use of the enemies weapons against themselves. Why, says Satan, will such a vile thing as thou art, come to Christ? Yea, says the soul, because I am vile, I am the more fit.—He teaches them how to dwell beside the fountain, and how to live near God; and the man that doth this, cannot always live upon two prayers in the day. You that never knew any more about prayer than your morning and evening set-times of prayer, it seems you was never taught by him that is the light of the Gentiles. O take him, and he will teach you how to cry, ABBA, FATHER; and to rejoice and work righteousness. O

when Christ comes, and discovers himself to the soul, with his robes royal on him, that soul is filled with joy and peace in believing.

2. It is a covenant for sight; "To open blind eyes: A man that is called JESUS, opened mine eyes," says the blind man. O there are many sorts of blind people, that need to go to Christ for opening their eyes: some are blind Atheists, who say in their hearts, "There is no God;" they see not the majesty of God, they see not the justice of God, they see not the grace of God, &c. O that they were flocking to him who is the opener of blind eyes.—Some are blind Civilians; they are very civil in their walk, but as far from grace as the former; they do not discern the things of God; know nothing about cases of conscience; there are some men's prayers and preaching they understand not, if they be spiritual and evangelical: the man knows not himself, but is pure in his own eyes: his neighbours, it may be, will call him a good man, an honest man, and he judges himself to be what people call him: and yet he is a rebel and traitor to God: he hath not much ill that men can challenge; but, O there are many things that God can challenge him for. God can see his vice in the thing that he thinks to be virtue and innocence; he may pray, and is content and conceited to hear himself pray, and he sees no fault in his prayers. O have not such need of Christ to open their eyes?—Some are blind in the matters of religion; they think all their sins are sins of infirmity: no doubt we are sinners, say they, and great sinners; who wants their faults more than we? O blind souls! know that Christ is the opener of blind eyes. There are blind persons that know their bodily case, but not that of their souls; they observe bodily providences, but not soul providences: they know not down-castings nor uprisings of soul. O! go to Christ, and he will let you see.—Some are blind with respect to any distinct knowledge of the gospel: they see not the ground of faith; they would build their faith on their little piece of holiness, rather than on God's holy covenant, that only can make them holy; and hence their holiness is always to seek: they see not how a man is justified in a moment, by an inward righteousness complete and full; they see not how justification can be complete, without somewhat of their own, to make it look fair in God's sight. O seek into Christ, that he may open your eyes:—Again, many are blind with respect to true faith; they cannot give a reason of their faith; they have lost their text, and cannot give a ground upon which they believe: it may be, they will

say, they have believed all their days. O stranger to faith! The Son of God is given to be the opener of blind eyes, he is a covenanted eye-salve for all blind people. But then,

3. It is a covenant for liberty; to bring the prisoners out of the prison-house. The Son of God is the looser of prisoners, by his covenanted indenture with the Father; "The spirit of the Lord God is upon him: for he hath annointed him:" Why, Christ knows all the prison-houses, and all the bands; he was made like unto us in all things, sin only excepted; "Such an High-priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." Yea, Christ carries all the keys of the prison-house: "The keys of hell and death are in his hand; he opens, and none shuts; and shuts, and none opens." The devil, it may be, hath the poor soul bound hand and foot in the prison; but in comes the king of nations, the gingle of whose keys makes all the devils tremble, and he orders the jailor to remove his chains; then, "Dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee to come out of him," said Christ to the posset man in the gospel; so says he, when he comes to loose a prisoner, Thou wicked, unclean spirit, I charge thee to come out; thou covetous and worldly spirit, I charge thee to come out; thou atheistical, unbelieving spirit: thou lying and swearing, thou drunken and debauched spirit, &c. I charge thee to come out, let that soul go free: and, "If the Son make you free, then are you free indeed." It may be the law hath the man in chains: for by the law is the knowledge and conviction of sin. The law comes and seeks his master's rent, saying, Pay what thou owest: and the spirit of God comes along with the law, and convicts the man, and he every day hears himself proclaimed over the cross, as it were, and put to the king's horn, there being many bonds registrate upon him: he is carried to prison, and there he lies, fearing the wrath of God, and the execution of the curse and threatening of the holy law. But, behold, the Son of God comes, saying, "Open to me the gates of righteousness:" his name is, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. The law is exceeding broad, but there is a righteousness as broad as it can be. Many are long in this prison, because they take a threatening, and dwell upon that; but believe the gospel-promise, and take hold of the gospel righteousness, and you shall be loosed. Others dwell long in this prison, because, if they take a promise, they take a conditional promise, and make no right use of it; such as that, "To you that fear my name, shall the Sun of righteousness arise." There is a sweet promise, the Sun of righteousness his

arising: but then the condition of fearing his name, that cuts off their fingers, and hinders them from applying it, because they think they want the condition: therefore, man, either take an absolute promise, that hath no condition in it at all, promising the condition too; or else, if you apply the conditional promise, take Christ for the condition to make up all to you, and then you will find a loosing of prison-bands. If you will not be content every day and every hour of the day, to be in God's common, in free grace's common, you will lie and rot in your prison. Many abide long in this prison, because they would willingly live to two husbands, both Christ and the law. We cannot live to Christ, unless we be dead to the law, Gal. ii. 19: but the man would embrace Christ for a husband, and yet stand seeking to answer the demands of the law: but whenever the law demands any thing of you, you must send the law to Christ, that he may answer it; and then you will be loosed. Some abide long in prison, because they build the faith of God's love on the work of God, and not on the truth of God: and hence it is, that when God's work within them languishes, their faith languishes also; but faith will never be firm and stable, till it build more upon the truth of the covenant. The stable Christian lives by bills of exchange; but the weak, unstable soul counts all by what he hath in his pocket; by what he hath in hand, and not what he hath upon bond. But how does Christ, the covenant of the people, open the prison doors? Why, he even teaches the soul to say, Let Satan, sin, justice, and the law come along with me to Christ; and what I cannot answer, he can; what I want he hath enough to supply. Come, and lay all my sins on my back, that I may away to Christ with them, and get more mercy and grace; for Christ is the ALL IN ALL of this new covenant: and in this way the prisoner is loosed, to the devil's shame, and to Christ's honour. Stand to your liberty, poor soul, and let your sins and wants hasten, and bring you forward to venture upon Christ, that he may loose you. O that the day of the Son of Man were come, when Zion will get a thousand Atheists at a draught, when Christ will get a multitude of prisoners liberate!

4. It is a glorious covenant, contrived wholly for glorifying God, and debasing self; therefore it follows, "I am the Lord, that is my name; my glory will I not give to another, nor my praise to graven images." God accounts it the standing of his glory, to perform all that is in this covenant, and not to give any creature a share of it; he will not break his credit, having once engaged him-

self in covenant; and he will not suffer any to gather up the rent and revenue of it but himself: "My glory will I not give to another." It stands on his glory, his word of honour, his word royal; he himself will do all, and no instrument shall have the glory of it. If you give instruments any of the glory, it is the way to blast the instruments; and blasted may they be, rather than that Christ should want any of the glory due unto his name. Therefore, for the Lord's sake, if ye get anything this day, do not give the glory to any instrument; for, says God, "I am the Lord, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another." And, for his glory's sake, do not think of doing any part of the work yourselves; there shall none get any of his glory but himself. Means belong to you; and, in God's name, I charge you to make use of them; and the obligation to duties lies upon you; but, if you have any regard for the glory of God, let God have the glory of the whole performance: not I, but grace; either the Lord will bring you to this, or he will bring you to nothing. Let it be your maxim in religion, to make always much room for the free grace of God in Christ.

What shall I make of this you have been telling me! Why, have your hearts gone into the covenant of free grace? Then I call you to a duty, such as you have, ver. 19. "Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praises from the ends of the earth." Whence you may notice, that when God is giving a full and free covenant; and he is the covenant, and the whole of the covenant: why? because Christ walks in the midst of the covenant: and when the covenant comes, he comes; and his very presence warms the heart, and that warmth enlarges it, and then the man is at that with it, "I will run the way of thy commandments, because thou enlargest my heart." Yea, when the free covenant comes to a man, and gets the throne, then holiness will run of course. The narrowness of your thoughts on free grace hinders all your holiness; for Christ will not sit down where the covenant gets not the throne. When the free covenant comes, it makes self go to the door, and bids pride be gone; for holiness hath a charge never to lodge in the same room with pride. When the covenant comes in, pride goes out; and when pride goes out, holiness comes in; for, He gives grace to the humble; and the most sweetly humbling thing in all the world, is a view of the free covenant, where God gets all the glory, and self nothing of it: nay, when the covenant comes, it makes self think shame of itself, and hide its face with blushes. In a word, when the covenant comes, it contains in its bosom all the

furniture that is necessary for making a man holy ; and also this covenant shews to a man that much is forgiven him ; and when much is forgiven him, he loves much. And where there is much love, there is true holiness, for the love of Christ constrains him ; therefore, where this covenant never comes, holiness never grows ; but when the covenant of grace in its freedom and fulness takes place with a soul, there holiness flourishes. Would you know wherefore there is so much wickedness, and so little holiness in Scotland, for all the talking of holiness, as if the free dispensation of gospel-grace would mar it ? The very reason is, little of this covenant is known ; men keep fast hold of their sins, because they will not take hold of this covenant. Where there is nothing of this covenant, there is no holiness ; where little of this covenant, there is little holiness ; and where much of this covenant takes place, there is much holiness.

The new covenant brings in the new song, verse 10,—“ Sing unto the Lord a new song ;” and the new song is the new obedience ; and the new obedience is the obedience of faith and love : and that obedience of faith and love is gospel-holiness. O, then, let the gospel-covenant have room, or holiness will never thrive and increase : take in the covenant, and it will make you sing ; “ Sing to the Lord a new song, and his praises to the ends of the earth ; for he that offereth praise glorifieth God :” and the more you glorify God, the more will your holiness be like that of the redeemed above who are singing the new song in the new Jerusalem.

SERMON VI.¹

THE WORLD'S VERDICT OF CHRIST AND HIS FOLLOWERS ; OR, THE TRULY DEVOUT RIDICULED AND REPROACHED BY THE PROFANE.

ISAIAH viii. 18.—“ Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me, are for signs and for wonders in Israel ; from the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth in mount Zion.”

THE subjects I have lately discoursed upon, compared with this text, will hold forth to us a fourfold verdict concerning Christ, the

(1) This Sermon was delivered by our author, in his own church at Dunfermline, December 16, 1722.

glorious Redeemer of an elect world. 1. The FATHER's verdict concerning him, saying, "I have given him for a covenant of the people, a light of the Gentiles."¹ 2. The SPIRIT's verdict concerning him, witnessing in his behalf, "He shall testify of me." 3. His OWN verdict of himself, saying, "I and my Father are one."² 4. The WORLD's verdict of him and his followers, "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me, are for signs and for wonders in Israel."—In the first, the Father commends him to us by his approbation; "I will give thee for a covenant of the people." In the second, the Spirit commends him to us by his attestation; "He shall testify of me." In the third, he commends himself to us by his proclamation; "I and my Father are one." But, in the fourth, the world discommends and entertains him with detestation; "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me, are for signs and for wonders in Israel."—Behold, how the Father's gift is despised, though he gave him for a covenant of the people! Behold, how the Spirit's testimony is rejected, while he testifies of Christ! Behold, how his own declaration is neglected, shewing that he and his Father are one! Behold, how unworthily this glorious one is entertained by the generality who hear of him; even with prodigious marks of reproach and contempt upon him and all his children!

It might have been thought that Christ and his friends should be better entertained by the people of the world, seeing he is given of the Father to be the covenant of the people: yet the most of people are such strangers to their true interest, such apostates from, and enemies to Christ, that his best friends are ready to meet with the greatest opposition, when they are most employed in witnessing for him. But that he whom the Father hath given for a covenant of the people will still find some friends amongst the people to witness for him, is evident from that word; "He shall testify of me; and ye also shall bear witness." And surely they shall have no reason to be ashamed of their testimony concerning him, seeing he is such a glorious person, that he and his Father are one in essence: and yet what treatment his witnessing friends are to expect, even in Israel, is declared in this text, by their glorious leader; "Behold, I and the children which the Lord hath given me, are for signs and for wonders in Israel."

(1) See the preceding Sermon.

(2) These two last subjects have not yet appeared in print.

That you may not apprehend we mistake the scope of the words ; it may be here asked, "Of whom doth the prophet here speak ? of himself, or of another ?" We answer, He speaks both of himself and of another. That he speaks of himself, is evident from the context, which you may view at your leisure : and that he speaks of another also, is evident from Heb. ii. 13, where this very text is cited, and applied to Christ : "Behold, I and the children whom thou hast given me." So that here the prophet is the type, and CHRIST the antitype : therefore, hence it is evident, that in discoursing upon this subject, I will not deviate from the scope, while I apply it either to Christ, or his servants and friends : and while I consider it either as the language of the prophet, the type, speaking of himself, and his children, converted by his means and instrumentality ; and so may be applied to all the faithful ambassadors of Christ, and their converts ; or, as it is the language of CHRIST, the anti-type, speaking of himself, and of all his friends and followers, who, of his own will, are begotten and regenerated by the word of grace : "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me, are for signs and for wonders in Israel."

The scope of this, and several following chapters, is to shew the great destruction that was shortly to be brought upon the kingdom of Israel, by the King of Assyria, for their sins. In these times of public calamity threatened and impendent, the prophet comforts the people of God, verse 11, with the same comfort, wherewith himself had been comforted of God ; "For the Lord spake thus to me, with a strong hand, and instructed me, that I should not walk in the way of this people." Where we may remark, 1. That there is a proneness in men to walk in the way of the people they live amongst, though it be not a good way : the best of men are prone hereto. 2. Those whom God loves and owns, he will enable them to swim against the stream of common corruption, though they should be called singular.—In these times of distress, the Lord also cautions his people, by the prophet against all sinful fears, verse 12. "Say you not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy ; neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid." Be not associate with them nor afraid of their confederacy. When the church's enemies have sinful confederacies on foot, the church's friends should watch against the sinful fears of these confederacies. And especially, it concerns us, in time of trouble, to watch against all such fears as put us upon any indirect courses for

our own security ; or any sinful shafts to shun the cross.—He next advises them to a religious fear, verse 13. “Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.” The believing fear of God is a special preservative against the disquiet and fear of man : and they that truly fear God shall not need to fear any evil ; for, He shall be for a sanctuary to them, though to others he will be a stone of stumbling, over which they will fall to ruin, verse 14, 15. They who are helped to keep up the fear of God, and keep down the fear of man, will find God to be their refuge ; while the wicked, and all their confederates, though hand join in hand, shall not go unpunished, but stumble and fall into despair and ruin.—In verse 16, we have the unspeakable privilege which the people of God enjoy, in having the oracles of God entrusted to them ; the scripture, as a TESTIMONY, to direct our faith ; and a LAW, to direct our practice : it is God’s proclamation, under the broad seal of heaven ; it is the good thing committed to them that are disciples.—In verse 17, we have the use, the good use we are to make of this privilege : and this we are taught by the prophet’s own practice and resolution ; he embraced the law and the testimony, and had the comfort of it, amidst all the discouragements he met with. What council God hath given, verse 12, the prophet here follows, verse 17.—“I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him.” God was frowning upon his people ; and then the prophet waiting and looking. When God is hiding his face, and threatening to come in a way of judgement, even then his people should be attending upon him, and expecting his return, in a way of mercy : and those that wait upon God, by faith and prayer, may look for him with hope and joy.

But now, while the prophet was taking this course, it was judged to be an imprudent and ridiculous thing in him ; he and his disciples, amongst whom the law and testimony was sealed, were scoffed and mocked, contemned and reproached for it ; “Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me, are for signs and wonders in Israel.” Where, for a short division, you may observe these six following things.

1. The note of admiration or lamentation, **BEHOLD !** The prophet admires that godliness should be so strange : or, he laments the sin of that age, that piety and religion should be such a strange thing among them.

2. We have the party that is here derided, contemned, and wondered at: "I and the children whom the Lord hath given me:" the prophet and his disciples, ministers and their converts, Christ and his friends.

3. Observe the mark of reproach and derision put upon them: they are signs and wonders; they are looked upon as prodigies and monsters, and turned to matter of scorn and ridicule.

4. We have the people that are guilty of this high contempt: and this is the special consideration, speaking is to be matter of wonder and lamentation: it is in Israel. If it had been in Egypt, and among heathens, it would not have been such a strange matter: but that they should be for signs and wonders, even in Israel, or, treated with contempt by a people professing the true religion, this is the more strange.

5. We have the spring of this dispensation; it is from the Lord of hosts. God, by his providence hath so ordered it; he hath a sovereign hand in over-ruling these things, for the trial of his people, wherein men have a sinful hand.

6. We have the ground of comfort that the children of God have under all these and such like discouragements; and this is implied in the titles that are here ascribed unto him; in that,

(1.) He is the Lord of hosts, who hath all the hosts of heaven and earth at his command; insomuch, that the reproachers and despisers of his people can do them no harm; yea, cannot touch one hair of their head, any further than he gives them liberty and permission.

(2.) He dwells in mount Zion; there were the symbols of his presence, and the ark that was a type of Christ; so that his dwelling in mount Zion points out, not only his presence with his people, but his dwelling upon a throne of grace and mercy; as a God in Christ reconciling the world to himself. He dwelleth in mount Zion, manifesting himself to his people, ready to hear their prayers, and receive their complaints; ready to satisfy their desires, and sanctify their crosses, and support them under their sufferings and reproaches for his name. Though for the present he hide his face from the house of Jacob; and the time of hiding, be also a time of reproach, wherein they suffer contempt and ignominy; yet he dwelleth in mount Zion, so as they know where to find him, and recover the sight of him.

Now, instead of adducing many observations from the words, I shall insist mainly upon this one.

OBSERV. That as it hath been, so it is still the lot of Christ and his friends, whether ministers or people, who bear his image, to be held as monsters; hated, contemned, reproached, and wondered at: Or thus, Christ and his people are the world's wonder. "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me, are for signs and for wonders in Israel."

In the prosecution of this proposition, I would, as the Lord may assist, essay the following things.

- I. Offer some remarks for the further application of the text.
- II. Adduce some scripture passages for the confirmation of the doctrine.
- III. Inquire into some of these marks of reproach, that use to be cast upon Christ and his followers.
- IV. Assign the reasons of the doctrine, whence it comes to pass, that they are thus held as monsters, and for signs and for wonders in Israel.
- V. Deducesome inferences for the application of the whole subject.

I. We proposed to offer some remarks for the further explication of the text: and there are these six following remarks evident in it.

Remark 1. "That converted persons are the children of Christ, and the children of those ministers by whom they are converted." They are the children of Christ, as being the only author of their regeneration and adoption; "Behold, I and the children whom God hath given me," saith Christ, Heb. ii. 13. They are the children of ministers, as being the instruments of their regeneration and new birth; "My little children," saith the apostle, "of whom I travail in birth, till Christ be formed in you," Gal. iv. 19. And again, 1 Cor. iv. 15, "In Christ I have begotten you through the gospel;" and 2 Cor. xi. 2, "I have espoused you to one Husband." Christ is the everlasting Father of all believers: and as a father pities his children, so will he pity them; for, of his own will begat he them, by the word of truth. Ministers are the instrumental fathers of all those to whom the Lord blesses their ministry, as the instrument of their regeneration. But no sooner doth the church, the woman spoken of, Rev. xii., bring forth any children to God, than the dragon stands ready to devour them, as soon as they are born. "Behold, I and the children whom thou hast given me, are for signs and wonders."

Remark 2. "That it is the power of God that converts and regenerates any that are converted and regenerated by the word:" "Who is Paul, who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?" 1 Cor. iii. 5, 6. Ministers must look upon their converts, as the children that God hath given them; for, whatever good they are instrumental of to others, it is owing to the free grace of God; if God had not given them, they had never been able to do them any saving good. Christ looks upon believers as his children, which the Father gave him: "I have manifested thy name to the men whom thou gavest me out of the world, thine they were, and thou gavest them me," John xvii. 6. They were thine by election from eternity, and thou gavest them me to be redeemed by my blood, and regenerated by my spirit: and in this regenerated work, the Father hath a special hand of power; for, "No man can come to me," saith Christ, "except the Father which hath sent me draw him."

Remark 3. "That the best that ever was in the world doth meet with the worst treatment therein:" "I, and the children whom thou hast given me, are for signs and wonders." We are held as monsters, and prodigies, and gazing-stocks. Who? Even Christ, and his children; ministers and their converts; the chief Shepherd and the fairest of his sheep; the under-shepherds, and the flower of their flock. Christ and his friends, both ministers and others, are generally hated and contemned by the wicked. Yea,

Remark 4. "That those who profess religion, and the worship of the true God, may yet despise Christ and his people: They are for signs and wonders; where? even in Israel: not in Babylon only, but even in Israel." Many that bear the name of Christians, are enemies to Christ; they profess religion, and yet are despisers of all that are truly religious: "All are not Israel, who are of Israel;" for, even in Israel are to be found despisers of the God of Israel, and of the Israel of God. Even within the church visible are to be found despisers of the church invisible, and their glorious head.

Remark 5. "That the children of God are not despised, contemned, reproached, and wondered at without the providence of God: it is from the Lord of hosts, that dwelleth in Mount Zion." "Is there evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it?" The evil of affliction, he ordereth it; the evil of sin, he permits it, for wise ends: for he is not the author of sin, but he is the Over-ruler of the wickedness of men, to make it contribute and work together,

for glory to his name, and good to his people. Man hath a wicked hand in all the marks of contempt he pours upon the godly : but God hath an holy hand in ordering the same, for the trial of faith and patience : and it is the comfort of his children, amidst all discouragement from without, that it is not without the wise providence of God that contempt is poured upon them ; it is from the Lord of hosts ; he hath bidden Shimei curse David. It is their comfort also that he is the Lord of hosts, who arms what instruments he pleases, to execute his will ; and that he is the God that dwells in Mount Zion, to be a present help in time of trouble, and to give present comfort in time of discouragement : he is not far off, he dwells in Mount Zion.

Remark 6. "That it is matter of wonder and lamentation to all the children of God, both ministers and people, that the power of religion and true piety, should be such a rarity, and exposed to such contempt in a sinful world, and especially in Israel ; and yet so it is, Isa. lxvi. 5,—‘ Hear the word of the Lord, ye that tremble at his word ; your brethren that hate you, that cast you out for my name’s sake, said, let the Lord be glorified : but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed.’ ” Where we see it is no new thing for the godly to be persecuted for Christ’s name, even in Israel, by men that pretend conscience, and a zeal for the honour and glory of God, and the good and welfare of the church ; and who prosecute their hatred and despite with all the formality of devotion Christ doth explain this, John xvi. 2,—“ They shall put you out of the synagogues : yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think he doeth God service.”—So much shall suffice for the remarks I premise for the explication of the text. I come now,

II. To adduce some scripture passages for the confirmation of the doctrine, namely, That as it hath been, so it is still the lot of Christ and his friends, whether ministers or people, who bear his image, to be held as monsters ; hated, condemned, reproached, and wondered at. You may see both Old and New Testament instances of it.—In the Old Testament, see an instance of it in David, Psalm lxxi. 7,—“ I am as a wonder unto many.” See an instance of it in the Old Testament believers and church, mentioned Psalm cxxiii. 3, 4,—“ Have mercy upon us, O Lord ; for we are exceedingly filled with contempt ; our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud.”—See an instance of it in Joshua and his fellows, Zech. iii. 8,—“ Hear

now, O Joshua, the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee ; for they are men wondered at."—You may turn over to the New Testament, and see an instance of it in the believing Hebrews, Heb. x. 33,—“ We were made a gazing-stock, both by reproach and affliction.”—We see an instance of it in all the primitive Christians, Acts xxviii. 22,—“ For as concerning this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against.”—And we see an instance of it in the flower of the flock, CHRIST himself, the Captain of the host, Luke ii. 34,—“ Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel ; and for a sign which shall be spoken against.” Christ is the rejected stone, Psalm cxviii. 22. “ Enduring the contradiction of sinners against himself,” Heb. xii. 3.

I might here demonstrate the truth of the doctrine, by an induction of particulars, shewing how Christ and his Father, his spirit and his word, his servants and people, and his religion itself, hath been signs and wonders for reproach.

1. CHRIST himself hath been spoken against and reproached.—They spake against his person, as base and contemptible. “ Having no form or comeliness,” Isaiah liii. 22.—They spake against his preaching, as false, factious, senseless, and seditious, John vii. 12 ; Luke xxii. 2, and xvi. 14.—They reproached and spoke against his miracles, as done in confederacy with Belzebub the prince of devils, Matth. xii. 24.—They spoke against his morals, charging him with blasphemy against God, profanation of the Sabbath, as a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. They spoke against his followers, as a company of ignorant, despicable people, John vii. 48, 49.—They reproached him in his offices : in his teaching office, when they challenged him to prophecy who smote him ; in his saving office, when they challenged him to save himself, as he had saved others ; in his ruling office, when they challenged him to prove himself the king of the Jews, by coming down from the cross.

It is long since the world thus spake against him, and reproached him : and that he was held for a sign and a wonder in Israel, and was spoken against even in Israel. But are there none that speak against and reproach him to this day, even when he is exalted to the place of glory and power ? Yea, How do the Jews speak against him still, in all these, and many other respects ?—How do the Mahometans speak against him, while they prefer their base imposter into his room ?—Again, how are Arians and Socinians daily speaking against Christ, as if he was a mere man, though he

thought it no robbery to be equal with God?—How do Quakers and enthusiasts speak against him, as if he was a mere nothing, an empty name, setting up, we know not what sort of a Christ with them, instead of that Jesus that was crucified at Jerusalem?—How do Atheists and Deists speak against him, as if he was a mere cheat; accounting the religion he hath established, a great imposture; and his gospel a jest?—How do profane and ignorant persons speak against him, as if our Beloved was no more than another beloved? saying, “What is thy beloved more than another beloved?”—How do Latitudinarians speak reproachfully against him, as if he was a minister of sin?—How do Legalists speak against him, as if he alone was not the Lord our righteousness?—How do Papists speak against him, and reproach him? They make him but a false Christ by their doctrine. They spoil him of his true manhood; holding that Christ’s body is not only in heaven, but really and substantially in all places wherever the sacrifice of the mass is offered: thus they make it omnipresent; and take away the very nature of a body. They reproach him in, and rob him of, his offices. They degrade him from his prophetic office; making the Pope the infallible judge of all controversies. They degrade him from his priestly office, which consists in satisfaction and intercession: they nullify his satisfaction, by joining therewith the satisfaction of man’s works, as if his were imperfect without that: and they rob him of his intercession, communicating the same to saints; yea, they exalt the Virgin Mary far above Christ, in this work; for they pray her to ask the Father, to command Christ her Son, by the authority of a mother, to do thus and thus for them. So much is evident from the genuine popish tenets, out of the Rhemish Testament.¹ Yea, they also degrade him from his kingly office, by placing the Pope in his room and stead, as his deputy, in his presence; while they give power to the Pope, to rule the Catholic church, to pardon sins, and make laws to bind men’s consciences; which are things proper to Christ alone; whereby they take the crown off Christ’s head, and set it on the Pope’s: for, to claim regency, in the presence of the lawful prince, is to proclaim rebellion against the prince; because commission of vice-regency ceases in the presence of him that appoints it: now, Christ is always present with his church, Matthew xxvii. 20. And, therefore, the Pope, by his claim, must needs thrust Christ out of his offices.

(1) A Popish translation of the Bible.

And, alas ! what a lamentable thing is it, by the bye, that this damnable doctrine spreads so much even in this island ; particularly in the north of Scotland, where, we understand, the popish mass is as solemnly celebrate, as we attend upon these divine ordinances ? And as Episcopacy was the very ground-work, and foundation-stone, upon which Popery was at first erected ; so, what matter of lamentation is it, that popish ceremonies, maintained in the Episcopal church, are so much affected ; whereby such indignity is offered to the appointments of our Lord Jesus Christ, as if his institutions were imperfect, defective, and faulty, without their additional inventions ? I do not think it worth my while, here to meddle with particular persons, and their principles, which some may think I have fair before me : we should pity and pray for them who despitefully use us, or our glorious Lord and his ordinances : and especially we should pity and lament over an ignorant generation, that are so infatuated, as to desire nothing more, than to have these realms entirely subject to a popish government, and Antichristian yoke ; which neither we nor our forefathers were able to bear : surely, such do not know and consider, how much Popery speaks to the reproach of Christ and true Christianity.—These are hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him, Jude ver. 15. which is the sign to be spoken against.

2. As Christ himself, so his FATHER is spoken against and reproached.—Some denying his being, though his existence be so necessary, that, if he be not, it is impossible any thing else should be ; yet many fools say in their heart, what they dare not speak out, viz. “ That there is no God,” Psal. xiv. 1. And he that saith there is none, would wish there were none : and if he could help it there should be none.—Some blasphemously charging the all-seeing eye with blindness, saying, “ The Lord shall not see,” Psal. cxiv. 7. Charging the eternal mind with forgetfulness, saying, “ God hath forgotten,” Psal. x. 11. Charging the omnipotent arm with weakness, saying, “ Can God give bread in the wilderness ?” Psal. lxxviii. 19, 20. Charging his rectoral equity with injustice, saying, “ Though we sin, we shall not surely die.”—Some speak against and reproach his providence, by quarrelling, murmuring, and complaining, and finding fault with the disposals of it.—Some profane his name, making it a by-word, by which they give vent to their exorbitant passions, and fill up the vacancy of other idle words. Not only is the name of God thus abused by those who belch out

their bloody oaths, which would make the ears of every good man to tingle ; but also, by those who mention the name of God slightly, or irreverently, in their ordinary conversation ; he is near to their mouth, but far from their heart. To use these forms of speech, which properly signify an acknowledgment of God's being ; as, O God ! O Lord ! or the like ; or an appeal to his omniscience, as God knoweth, the Lord knoweth : or an invocation of his favour as God bless me ! Lord be merciful to me ! I say, to use these, or the like expressions, impertinently, and intending thereby only to express our wonder and surprise, or our passionate resentment, or any thing beside that which is their proper and awful signification, is an evidence of a vain mind, that wants a due regard to that glorious and fearful name : yet, thus is the mouth of the ungodly set against heaven, Psal. lxxxviii. 9. Jude 16. May the Lord, that hath chosen Jerusalem, rebuke them ! Zech. iii. 2.

3. As Christ himself and his Father, so his SPIRIT is reproached. Many indeed are grossly ignorant of the Holy Ghost, like those, Acts xix. 2. " We have not so much as heard, whether there be any Holy Ghost." Others that hear of the Holy Ghost, they blaspheme the Spirit of Christ ; and so make fearful approaches to the unpardonable sin : while they reproach his motions, as enthusiastic fancies ; and his operations, as frantic notions ; and all his graces and influences, as dreams and delusions.

4. His word is reproached ; " But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming," Acts xiii. 45. Atheists speak against the authority of the scriptures : Papists speak against the perspicuity of the scriptures, and receive unwritten traditions with the same reverence and affection. Some profanely jest with the words of the scripture ; making themselves merry with scripture language, Jer. vi. 10,— " The word of the Lord is to them a reproach." Profligate wits relish no jests better, than those which ridicule the sacred word : as no cups could please Belshazzar better, in his drunken frolics, than the sacred vessels of the temple. But, he that sits in heaven will laugh at them, and hold them in derision ; and, in spite of impotent malice, will magnify the law, and make it honourable.

5. His religion and doctrine is spoken against and reproached. The truth of it, and of the gospel, are many times reproached, ridiculed, and contradicted, as false and groundless ; even as the media-

tion, and the resurrection of the dead was mocked at by the Athenian philosophers. The laws of it were accounted grievous and unreasonable, as hard sayings. The ordinances of it despised as mean, and having no form and comeliness; hence came in the gaudy ornaments of human invention, in the worship of God. Sabbaths and sacraments were mocked at and contemned. Primitive Christianity was industriously calumniated, because it overthrew idolatry; for, when the devil was silenced, in his oracles, he opened his mouth in lies and slanders: Julian discharged the Christians to be called any other thing than Galileans. And the reformed religion, in like manner, was reproached: Where was your religion, say the Papists, before Luther and Calvin? Why, it was still in the Bible, where Popery never was: though it maintains all that doctrine which Christ and his apostles preached; yet, the professors and preachers of it are called schismatics and heretics. And even amongst those who profess the reformed religion, how is the flower of godliness contradicted and contemned, by those that rest only in a form! They that are fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, must expect to be evil spoken of by such as affect luke-warmness and indifference in religion; and so,

6. His servants and people are also reproached. The preachers of Christ are, with a distinguished enmity, every where spoken against, 2 Cor. vi. 16. They have been trampled upon as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things, Ezek. xxxiii. 30—32. The standard-bearers have been most struck at. The professors of religion also, have been reproached, reviled, and persecuted, Matth. v. 11, 12. God's heritage hath been always a speckled bird; and his children for signs and wonders; and those who are the greatest blessings of the age branded as troublers of Israel. And, indeed, if they called the Master of the house Beelzebub, no nickname fastened upon his followers can seem strange. But this leads,

III. To the Third thing, which was to inquire into some of these marks of reproach and contempt that uses to be cast upon Christ and his friends, in the world. It is a true saying that the apostle hath, with respect to the children of God: "If in this life only we have hope, we are of all men the most miserable." This he speaks with reference to the trials that they must lay their account with in the world; for, they must be the butt of the malice of the world, and the subject of the mockery of the wicked: yea, of many professors in Israel: "Behold, I and the children whom the

Lord hath given me, are for signs and for wonders in Israel." There are these, and the like following marks of reproach that are cast upon them.

The First mark of reproach is, That sometimes they are held for monsters and prodigies of folly and impudence; 1 Cor. iv. 10, "We are fools for Christ's sake;" *i.e.*, we are thus reckoned in the judgment of the world; because we prefer affliction before sin; and because we fear God more than man; and the wrath of God more than the wrath of a king. The world reckons it is a folly for men to choose affliction rather than sin. No doubt, the three children were reckoned fools, to expose themselves to the king's fiery furnace: but surely it was more wisdom than to expose themselves to God's fiery furnace, whose wrath is more terrible than all the fury of the kings of the earth. The world thinks Moses' choice a folly; what! to prefer afflictions with the people of God, before all the pleasures of sin, and grandeur of Pharaoh's court!

The Second mark of reproach is this, They are sometimes held for monsters and prodigies of wickedness, monsters of villany. Christ himself was reproached as the most arrant villain upon the face of the earth; a man in compact with the devil: his followers were stigmatized with the greatest of wickedness; their religious meetings and conventicles for divine worship were reproached as being cloaks for covering the design of whoredom and uncleanness. Papists have looked upon Protestants as the worst of devils incarnate; and do not loose-living persons look upon those that are strict to be nothing but base persons, a pack of hypocrites, liars, and deceivers? They put them in bear skins, and then bark at them, and worry them. You will get a wretched, graceless, cursing, ranting, debauchee, that, in some company, will persecute a child of God, and make him as hell, if you will believe him; and if you observe attentively, you may see just the devil, the father of lies, and accuser of the brethren, speaking out of him; and his tongue to be the instrument of calumny, while he represents them as enemies to the law and holiness. See Acts xviii. 13.

The Third mark of reproach is, That they are sometimes held as monsters of injuriousness and hurtfulness: though even for their sakes the world is upheld, and for their sakes the wicked have many mercies continued with them; yet they are many times looked upon as the troublers of church and state: thus Elijah was the man that most lamented the sins of the children of Israel, and yet he is called

the troubler of Israel, 1 Kings xviii. 17. Thus they are reproached sometimes with rebellion, and as enemies to civil government, having laws different from all people, Esth. iii. 8,—“And Haman said unto the king Ahasuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad, and dispersed among the people, in all the provinces of thy kingdom, and their laws are diverse from all people, neither keep they the king’s laws; therefore it is not for the king’s profit to suffer them.” While they hold by the laws of king Jesus, in opposition to all the laws of earthly government, that seem to clash with the law of God, then they are treated as lawless persons. When Amos was reproving the sins of Israel, the priests of Bethel complain upon him to the government, Amos vii. 11—13. Thus were the Christians reproached, Acts xvii. 7,—“These are they,” say the wicked Jews, “that have turned the world upside down: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.” Thus the builders of the walls of Jerusalem were accused and charged with rebellion against the government, Neh. ii. 19,—“They laughed us to scorn, and despised us, saying, What is this ye do, will ye rebel against the king?”

The Fourth mark of reproach is this, They are sometime held as monsters of pride and self-conceit; as men affecting singularity; as men who think themselves wiser than others! and as a sect and faction preferable to all others, Acts xxviii. 22,—“As for this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against:” where the godly were represented under the invidious name of a sect, or a party that affected singularity.—The masters and maintainers of sects are looked upon as enemies to the great corporation of mankind: but there is not the least colour to put this scandalous character upon the true professors of Christianity, or followers of Christ: for it establishes that which is of general concern to all mankind.

We read, indeed, of the sect of the Sadducees, who justly deserved that character; because they overturned the foundation of religion, by denying a future state, and the immortality of the soul: whereas, the gospel and true religion establish those principles that concern man’s everlasting welfare.—Also, it cannot be called a sect, because it hath a native tendency to the uniting the children of men to the Son of God, and to one another in him, by love. Christ died to break down partition-walls, and to slay all enmity; and taught all his followers, not only to love one another, but to love their enemies. And his gospel and the believers of it, are far from being a

sect, which is supposed to lead to division, and to sow discord. It is true, the preaching of the gospel hath been the occasion of much contention in the world: and hence the preachers of the gospel have been branded as men of contention, Jer. xv. 10, where the prophet says, he was born a man of strife, and a man of contention to the whole earth; on which account Christ says, he came not to send peace, but a sword; and to set men at variance, one against another, Matth. x. 34, 35, intimating what occasion of contention the gospel would be; and what a load of reproaches might thereupon be cast upon its followers, as if they were contentious persons, and division makers; but whatever division it be the occasion of, yet it is nowise the cause of contention; for it was intended to be the cure of it: and, so far as gospel truth and principles do powerfully prevail upon the hearts of men, so far doth it make them meek and quiet, and of a loving disposition; for the wisdom that is from above is pure and peaceable: and the gospel proclaims peace on earth. In a word, true gospel-believers are so far from being a divisive sect, that, whereas the authors of sects use to be governed by secular interest, and to aim at wealth, honour, and granduer, true religion, instead of preferring a man to honour, lays him open to disgrace; and lays him obnoxious to fines and forfeiture, to flames and faggots, racks and imprisonments, when religion is persecuted openly, as was the common lot of the primitive Christians, and of several after-ages of the church; and hath been the lot of some in Britain, yea, in Scotland, since the Reformation: and that it is not the lot of our day, is owing to restraining Providence; but how soon it may be your lot, is hard to tell. However, in this respect, it is far from being a sect governed by secular interest.

We read likewise of the sect of the Pharisees; and they proved themselves to be a sect, by thirsting after the praise of men, by devouring widows' houses, and the like: but some sworn enemies to the Christian religion, such as Cæsar Vanius, who was industrious in searching out all objections against it, owned there was nothing in it that savoured of wordly and carnal designs. True Christianity is a heavenly calling, not under the conduct of fleshly wisdom.

But if, notwithstanding of all this, the true followers of Christ be nicknamed a sect; if a strict and sober conversation—if a zealous contending for the faith—if a diligent attendance upon, and adherence to the gospel, and its truths and ordinances—if joining in reli-

gious societies for prayer and Christian conference, and endeavouring in our places the suppression of error, immorality, and profaneness—if a vigorous opposition to everything that encroaches upon the prerogative of Christ, or tendeth to hurt the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of his house—if these, and the like, be called the badge of a sect, or party, let us not be moved at it; but rather say as David, 2 Sam. vi. 22,—“If this be to be vile, I will be more vile.” Let us not be deterred from gospel-principles and practices by the invidious name of a sect; it is better to be under the reproach of men for following of Christ, than to be under the curse of God for forsaking him.

The Fifth mark of reproach cast upon them is, That sometimes they are held as monsters of error, and as signs and wonders for novelty of doctrine and deportment, Acts xvii. 19, 20. “What new doctrine is this? For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears:” and yet it was nothing but the doctrine of Christ and his gospel, preached from the beginning of the world in Paradise, and professed of through the Old Testament; however, it was reproached as a new scheme, and a doctrine subversive of the law; “This fellow persuades men to worship God contrary to the law.” Acts xviii. 13. Christ himself was obliged to vindicate himself, from this charge, saying, Mat. v. 17. “Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.” And Paul vindicated himself, Rom. iii. 31. “Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid! Nay, we establish the law.”

The Sixth mark of reproach is, they are held as monsters of melancholy, dulness, and stupidity; that is an ordinary reproach cast upon religion, as if he turned men dumpish and sottish, dull and melancholy: which is occasioned especially by the humbled and dejected circumstances of new beginners in religion; while they are under a spirit of bondage, and under a law-work of conviction and humiliation. But let poor humbled souls, that are weighted under a sense of sin, and fear of wrath, and grievous reflections upon their misspent time; and with a concern about what will become of them at judgment, and through a long vast eternity; let them remember, that it is better to bear that yoke, for a while, till the Lord himself give an outget, though they should be called mad and melancholy both, than to bear the yoke of God’s everlasting wrath, which will be wreathed about the necks of all despisers of

God and godliness.—Sometimes this reproach is occasioned by the different dispositions that true religion works upon its followers, from that of the world. True godliness makes a man leave all sinful pleasure and delight, as well as all sinful profit and gain : and this being contrary to the way of the world, the man that is thus mortified to the world, is presently censured for melancholy ; whereas no pleasure in the world is comparable to the pleasure of religion : “ Wisdom’s ways are pleasantness.” And religion is so far from being a melancholy, uncomfortable thing, that nothing fills the religious man with more grief and melancholy than this, that he is not religious enough ; and that he thinks he hath no religion. Some prospect of eternal happiness, in Christ Jesus, freedom from divine wrath, communion and fellowship with God, and religion, in the life and power of it, is the best antidote against melancholy that I know ; and the greatest advancer of sober mirth, and spiritual gladness.

In a word, manifold are the remarks of reproach fastened upon true religion, and its friends.—Sometimes they are reproached as monsters of ingratitude to the world, because they will not humour and please them, in the way of wickedness ; because they will serve them only, *USQUE AD ARAS*, according to the Latin proverb ; that is to say, “ As far as is lawful,” and no farther.—Sometimes they are reproached as monsters of wrath and spite, while their zeal for God comes under the name of anger, and canker, and rancour. The meek of the earth can bear injuries against themselves : but if they cannot bear the injuries that are done to the honour of God : if they cannot bear evil, as it is said to the commendation of the church of Ephesus, *Rev. ii. 2.* : then they are censured and stigmatised for hot-headed zealots. If they be faithful in reprovng of sin, and testifying against other general defections, or particular enormities, then they are ready to meet with the prophet Micaiah’s entertainment : “ This fellow never speaks good of me.”—Sometimes they are reproached as bunglers and babblers, *Acts xvii. 18.* The Athenian philosophers, Epicureans, and Stoics encountered Paul, and insulted him, saying, “ What will this babbler say ? ”—Sometimes they are reproached for the very grace of God itself, that appears in them : *Gal. iv. 29.* “ He that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit.” So also it is now : and the persecution here especially pointed at, was that of scorning and mocking, viz. as Ishmael mocked Isaac. And, indeed, mocking and derision,

which arises from an hatred and contempt of our brother, is a degree of murder; "But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother, without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the Council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire," Mat. v. 22. Here RACA signifies all signs and gestures that express contempt; such as hissing, and flouting, and looking contemptuously on our brother. Now, the mocking where-with Ishmael mocked Isaac, proceeded from the contempt and hatred of the grace of God in Isaac; which Paul observes, when he says, that he persecuted that which was born after the Spirit. Thus Cain hated his brother, because of the grace of God in him: because his deeds were good, 1 John iii. 12. A great part of the sufferings of Christ stood in this, that he was mocked for his confidence in God, Psal. xxii. 8. Mat. xxvii. 43. The children of Bethel mocked Elisha, 1. For his person, saying, "Go up thou bald-head; go up thou bald-head." 2. For the grace and favour of God shared to Elijah his master, saying, Go up or ascend, as Elijah did; go up, not to Bethel, as some remark; but go up to heaven: and this profane scorning he cursed in the name of God. Let this learn children to beware of being mockers of the godly: the curse of God lighted upon these children, and she-bears came forth out of the wood, and tare to pieces forty-two children of them," 2. Kings ii. 23, 24.—Now, these are some of the many marks of reproach, that are cast upon religion, and the followers of it, while they are for signs and for wonders in Israel.

IV. The Fourth thing was, To give the reasons of the doctrine, whence it is, that Christ and his children have been and are thus for signs and wonders in Israel: or, why they have been, and are thus stigmatised with marks of reproach and contempt. And,

1. They are for signs and wonders, because they are not known, 1 John iii. 1. "The world knoweth us not, because it knew not him." The world knew not Christ, and therefore they abused him: if they had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. Christ was despised because the world knew him not, John i. 10., 1 Cor. ii. 8. The world did not know the dignity of his person, that he was the Son of God: yea, when he called himself the Son of God, they called him a blasphemer, and stoned him. They did not know the excellency of his doctrine, otherwise they would never have said, that he deceiveth the people. They did not

know the design of his coming, or that he was the Saviour of the world, and was to die that they might live. They did not know him in the power of his resurrection, or the fellowship of his sufferings; and, therefore, they reproached him. The world doth not know his followers and friends neither: though the world may know them with respect to their outward circumstances, yet the world doth not know the people of God. The world doth not know them in their spiritual relation to God, as being the children of God. The world doth not know them in their spiritual state of favour and friendship with God. The world doth not know them in their spiritual privileges, graces, and endowments. The world doth not know them in respect of their love to God, and God's love to them, and his disposition toward them. The world doth not know them in their acts of faith toward a God in Christ. The world doth not know them in their secret duties, and secret fellowship with God: their life is hid with Christ in God. As in a frosty night the stars will appear to them that live in that climate; while those that live in another climate, cannot discern them; so will the graces of the godly appear, like so many glistening diamonds, to the spiritual discerning of those, who live in the same spiritual climate. But the world cannot see them; they live in another climate; "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: they are foolishness unto him." The world doth not know them in respect of their usefulness; how useful they are to bring down blessings on these among whom they live; and how useful they are in holding off many sad judgments; so ten righteous men in Sodom would have saved it from destruction. The world doth not know them in these respects; they do not know them because they are spiritually blind; they do not know them because they do not converse with them; they do not keep company with them; they may outwardly trade with them, but have no spiritual correspondence with them. And, O how excellent are the ways of God, which none reproach but those that know them not!

2. They are for signs and wonders in the world, because they are not like the world; they are unlike to the wicked. As men will wonder at a person that is not like other folk: so they are for wonders, because they are a different species from the world; yea, they are men of another world, John xv. 16, 17; where you see the world hates the people of God, because they are like Christ, who was hated of the world; and because they are unlike unto the

world: they are new-born, and have another nature: they are strangers here, and have their face set toward another world. They are many ways unlike the world. The world and they are objects of different affections; the one is loved, and the other is hated of God.—They are subjects of different Lords, viz. God and the devil: and these two Lords command contrary things; they promise contrary rewards, and they threaten contrary punishments. The devil commands men to serve their lusts; he promises them temporal pleasures, and he threatens temporal miseries to those that will not serve him. Now, God's commands, promises, and threatenings are of another nature: and so there is vast odds between the one and the other, while they are subjects of different Lords; the godly being brought from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; the wicked being led captives by Satan, at his pleasure; he rules in the hearts of the children of disobedience; yea, the god of this world blinds their eyes; and suggests all manner of evil unto them, and fills them with prejudice and enmity against the saints.—But then, as they are objects of different affections, and subjects of different Lords, so they are persons of different principles, that they act from; the one acts merely from the flesh, the other acts from the Spirit: contrary spirits act them severally; “Ye have not received the spirit of this world, but the spirit which is of God.”—Further, they are a people of different ends, whether we consider the end proposed by them, or the end designed upon them. As to the end proposed by them; the godly man proposes the glory of God, as his great and ultimate end; the wicked man proposes the satisfaction of his own lusts as his end. As to the end designed upon them; the end of the godly man will be, that he shall enter into the joy of his Lord, to be for ever with him; the end of the wicked will be, that he shall be turned into hell, to be tormented with the devil and his angels.—Now, seeing they are every way so unlike to the world, no wonder that they be for signs and wonders to the world; for, “What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? Or what concord hath light with darkness? What communion hath Christ with Belial? What part hath he that believeth with an infidel?” 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15. Now, because they are so unlike the world, and cannot follow the course of the world; therefore they are reproached therein: “They think it strange, that they run not with them, to the same excess of riot; speaking evil of you,” 1 Pet. iv. 4.

3. They are for signs and for wonders in the world, because

they are enemies to the way of the world. The wickedness of the world is a vexation to them; "For that righteous man Lot, dwelling among them, in seeing, and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day, with their unlawful deeds," 2 Pet. ii. 8. An unjust man is an abomination to the just, and he that is upright in the way, is an abomination to the wicked," Prov. xxix. 27. The godly hate their ways, not their persons: we are obliged to love your persons, but to hate your vices, Psal cxxxix. 21, 22. They cannot but be as signs and wonders to the wicked, especially when they hate that which they love, and love that which they hate. And the world is not behind with them in their hatred; for, as the godly hate the wickedness of the wicked, as far as he is godly; so the wicked hate the godly and their godliness both. The carnal mind of them is enmity against God: and, the heart being full of enmity, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, and speaketh reproachfully. The very root of all this opposition is the enmity that is put between the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent.

4. They are for signs and for wonders in Israel, and in the world, because they reprove the world, and do what they can to cause them leave their carnal joy, their darling pleasures and sinful delights, of which they are so fond.—The children of God are the lights of the world, Phil. ii. 15,—“That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye shine as the lights in the world.” Now, the natural man loveth not to come to this light; “Every one that doth evil hateth the light; neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov’d,” John iii. 20. They will not come near the godly, so to speak; they will not so much as come in speaking terms with them upon any spiritual heavenly discourse: they love not to talk with them, otherwise their talk would reprove theirs, which is nothing but the language of Ashdod: they love not to walk or converse with them, otherwise their walk and conversation would reprove and condemn theirs; and hence they care for none of their change; their company is but a burden to them; they are in bondage when they are obliged to be in their company any time, especially if they be very spiritual Christians; the more spiritual their conversation is, the more hateful it is to the carnal man.—The godly are the salt of the earth, to keep the world from stinking; this salt will smart their wounds and sores; and they

cannot endure to be crossed : hence they hate them that rebuke them in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly, Amos v. 10. "Reprove a scorner, and he will hate thee," saith Solomon, Prov. ix. 8. See also ver. 7,—“He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame; and he that reproveth a wicked man getteth to himself a blot.” Men speak against religion, because it speaks against them. Why were the Pharisees so exasperated against Christ, but because he spake his parables against them? John vii. 7. He was a sign everywhere spoken against, because his doctrine everywhere speaketh against the way of the world : and no wonder then that all these speak against it, who hate to be convinced by it, and fear to be condemned by it. Why are faithful ministers so much hated in the world, but because they shew people their transgressions, their drunkenness, whoredom, swearing, lying, and Sabbath-breaking ; their villany, knavery, and vice? Though none pretend it is for that cause they hate them, but, perhaps, say it is for some ill thing they allege against them: for Satan hides his calumny and cruelty best under a cloak of pretence for religion. But, however, if they would flatter men and speak peace to them to whom God speaks no peace, they might avoid a great deal of reproach and censure ; but they dare not do it: they are not to make a new law, or a new gospel, but to preach that which is made, Jer. xv. 19. There we have the ministerial commission ; “Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them.” The hearts and lives of men must be brought to comply with the word of God ; for the word of God can never be made to comply with the humours and fancies of men; if they aim at pleasing men, they cannot approve themselves the servants of Christ; and therefore they are reproached and evil spoken of.

The fifth thing was, the application of the subject ; which we shall essay in an use of information, trial, and exhortation.

The First use then is of information. Is it so, as has been said, that Christ and his people, are hated, contemned, reproached, and wondered at by the world? Then hence we may see,

1. The necessity of the day of judgment: for if the world might be judged here, the best in the world would be run down with reproach and condemned ; yea, hated as monsters. But what a wonder of divine patience is it, that this glorious One, who hath so much said against him and his followers, while he and his children are loaded with reproach, doth not answer all these reproaches

with thunder and lightning? Why, it is a day of patience: but there is a day of vengeance coming, wherein he will no longer keep silence, Jude, ver. 14, 15, &c. This day God will not anticipate, for he knows it is coming, Psal. xxxvii. 13.

2. Hence see the duty of all that hear these tidings: the duty of professors, the duty of profane persons, and the duty of saints.—See the duty of professors, to beware that they be not a scandal to the wicked, 1 Tim. v. 14. Your scandalous conversation may occasion the reproaches, that are cast upon the saints by the wicked world: for, when you that profess religion, are but vain and frothy in your conversation, double and deceitful in your dealings, loose and untender in your walk, you bring up an ill report upon religion, and make enemies think that religion is but a sham.—See the duty of profane folk: that they beware of reproaching and contemning religion, and religious people, upon whatever pretence. And if none but saints shall win to heaven, what will become of them that look upon such as monsters! See also the duty of saints, and of all the children of God that are reproached; they are not to account it a strange thing though the world look upon them as monsters; yea, so blind is the world, that they may reckon you the very folk that should be banished out of the world. Paul, before his conversion, looked upon the saints as worthy of death; Acts xxvi. 9, 10, 11. “I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus: which thing I also did in Jerusalem; and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests: and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them I persecuted them even unto strange cities.” Think it not strange, that the world should condemn you and condemn you; you are condemned and despised with good company, even with the best of Company, with Christ himself; “Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me, are for signs and wonders.” I fear, to enlarge on this subject were to purchase myself more of that reproach.¹

3. Hence see the reason why the godly in all ages have been persecuted and barbarously used as monstrous persons, and religion

(1) About the time when this Sermon was preached, there were mighty altercations amongst both ministers and people about the MARROW DOCTRINE; our Author being a favourer of that doctrine, got his own share of the contumely and obloquy of these times.

as a monstrous opinion. The Lord's people need not look upon it as a rare thing; "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you," 1 Pet. iv. 12. We need not think it strange if religion itself be ridiculed: *IPSA RELIGIO IN OPPROBRIAM VERTIT*, said Bernard. Here many things might be condescended upon for the illustration of this point: but having assigned a variety of instances above on the second head, concerning Popery, &c., we shall supersede any further enlargement.

4. Hence see what reason the godly have to bear reproach and contradiction with patience, seeing Christ himself, and all his followers, have been thus treated. We are ready to represent any reproach very heinously, saying, "We do well to be angry; it is not a thing to be endured:" yet, O how much doth God bear with the contempt cast upon his name! How much doth Christ bear with the reproach cast upon his name. And surely this should moderate our resentment of any indignity done to our name. This does not hinder our taking all proper methods, for vindicating our own reputation, and good name, which is as precious ointment; but only it should mitigate our resentment: for, who are we that we should not be contradicted, seeing Christ himself endured the contradiction of sinners against himself?

5. Hence see what a wonder of divine power it is, that true Christianity and its followers have been kept up, and maintained, and preserved in the world, notwithstanding of the universal contradiction and opposition it had met with. The plantation of the gospel-church, at first, was opposed by all the powers of darkness; and in all ages it had met with such opposition, that if it had not been of God, it had come to nought: "This is the doing of the Lord; and it is marvellous in our eyes." That a profession, so opposite to the carnal thoughts, and sensual delights of men, should be yet preserved in the world, is a wonder, seeing it is everywhere spoken against, reproached, and reviled, and yet strangely victorious, not only without, but against secular power and force, for some ages. Here is the bush burning, and yet not consumed.

Mahomet's delusions could never prevail in the world, till getting the power of the sword, he discharged upon, pain of death, speaking against him or his doctrine; and by such barbarous methods it hath been supported now, above these thousand years. Thus Antichrist also had maintained his interest, by causing as

many as would not worship the image of the beast, to be killed, Rev. xiii. 15. Thus have errors and false religion been propagated : but strip them of these supports, and they fall to nothing of course. Where is all the splendour of the heathen deities and idolatries ? Are not their oracles silent, their altars deserted, their gods famished and perished from the earth ? We may not only say, " Where are the gods of Hamath and Arphad ? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah ? " But where are the gods of Babylon and Egypt, Greece and Rome ; and the illustrious names of Saturn, Jupiter, Juno, and Diana, &c. Where are the gods of our British ancestors, before they received the light of the glorious gospel ? Their names are written in the dust. But, behold ! Christ and his glorious doctrine still flourish, in some places of the world, to this day : though, for many ages destitute of all secular support, and assaulted on all hands, by daring and implacable enemies, yet still it is upheld by its own intrinsic truth and excellence, and that divine power that accompanied it : yea, to the end of the world, the Captain of salvation will ride forth, in the chariot of his gospel, with his crown upon his head, and his bow in his hand, conquering and to conquer.

6. Hence see the folly and wickedness of those, that reproach the way of the Lord, who spake against Christ and his holy religion as monstrous : surely we should lament their case, because of the dishonour hereby done to the name of God in Christ. How should it affect us, that the God that made the world should be so vilified in the world ! That Christ, who so loved the world, should be hated by the world ! What should we do with the reproach cast upon him and his followers, but as " King Hezekiah did with Rabshakeh's blasphemous letter ; He spread it before the Lord, saying, Now, Lord ; what wilt thou do for thy own name ? and with the psalmist : " O God ! how long shall the adversary reproach, and enemies blaspheme thy name, for ever ? " Psalm lxxiv. 10, 18, 22. What a miserable condition are they in, who thus presumptuously reproach the way of the Lord ! Though they may do it with an air of assurance, as if there was no hazard ; yet, he that rolls this stone, it will certainly return upon him : Zion will be a burdensome stone to her enemies ; and on whomsoever this stone falls, it will grind them to powder. How little do reproachers consider what mischief they do to the souls of others ? Unwary souls are easily beguiled, and brought over to entertain rooted prejudices against that which they hear every where spoken against and reproached. Few have con-

sideration and resolution enough to maintain a good opinion of that, which they, who set up for wits, make it their business to ridicule and cry down. Many poor souls have their minds quite debauched, by these means : and, under a pretence of free thought, a fashionable conversation, and a generous disdain of professing singularity, atheistical and deistical principles are imbibed, restraints of conscience are shaken off, brutish lusts are indulged, yea, pleaded for ; and serious godliness, and fervent devotion, looked upon with contempt ; and thus the heart impreguably fortified against Christ and the gospel.

Again, this doctrine may be improved by way of trial. People may try their state by this doctrine. Though every mark of reproach be not a mark of grace ; for, some may be justly spoken of, and yet be gracious persons ; and others may be unjustly reproached, and yet be graceless persons ; yet there are some things whereby we may try, if we be reproached, whether the reproaches cast upon us meet with such reception from us, as to determinate our being the children of Christ, that are bearing his reproach with him. I may apply to this what the apostle says of chastisement, Heb. xii. 8. " If ye be without chastisement, then are ye bastards, and not sons : " and yet chastisement of itself, as an affliction, is no mark of sonship, if it be not sanctified : even so here, if ye be without reproach, then are ye bastards, and not children ; and yet reproach of itself is no mark of being children, if it be not accompanied with saving good, and if it be not sanctified.

QUEST. How shall we know if we get any saving good, out of reproach, such as will discover us to be children ? " Behold, I and my children are for signs and wonders. "

1. It is a mark of one's getting saving good out of reproach, if he receive them with the same mind and spirit, with which Christ received them. How did Christ receive them ? Why, he received them as out of his Father's hand. Reproach was a part of his bitter cup ; " Now, says Christ, the cup which my Father giveth me to drink, shall I not drink it ? " So, the child of God looks upon reproach, as coming from the hand of God : though he sees the sinful hand of man, yet he sees the holy hand of Providence ; this is observed in the text ; " We are for signs and wonders, from the Lord of hosts, that dwelleth in Mount Zion : " we see the hand of our God. Thus David ; God hath bidden Shimei curse David.—Again, Christ received reproach with meekness ; for, " He was

meek and lowly ; when he was reviled, he reviled not again ; when he suffered, he threatened not :” yea, he was so far from reviling again, that he prayed for forgiveness to his reproachers, Luke xxiii. 46. Something of the same spirit will be in us, if reproach do us real good.—He received them submissively : “ He committed himself to him that judgeth righteously,” 1 Pet. ii. 23. So will we be submissive to God’s providential afflicting will, and thereby be more humbled.

2. It is a sign of one’s getting saving good of reproaches, if thereby they are brought to examine themselves, if they have given just occasion for reproach ; and though they find they have given no just occasion before men, yet are they made to search their own souls, to see and lament the sin that hath provoked God to afflict them with the scourge of tongues ; and thereupon are made to pray, with Job, “ Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me,” Job v. 2. And, withal being thankful to God, ascribing it only to his grace, that they have been kept from giving any just occasion for such an aspersion.

3. It is a mark of one’s getting good of reproach, if reproaches have come while we were in a course of backsliding, and they have been the means of recovering us ; whence we are made to bless the Lord that he hath sent them, to put a stop to our defection. This is an evidence of our getting good by reproach, as David said of affliction : “ It is good for me that I was afflicted ; before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I have kept thy word,” Psal. cxix. 67. And that reproach was a part of his affliction, is evident from ver. 69, “ The proud have forged a lie against me.”

4. It is an evidence of one’s getting good of reproach, when a person is, in a spiritual manner, suitably affected according to the rise of the reproach. If it arise from our sin, so that we have given occasion for the reproach, so as God is dishonoured : if in that case the soul be more grieved for the dishonour done to God, than for anything relative to his own particular interest ; this is an evidence of his getting good thereby, why, the man in this case lays his own honour in the dust, and grieves for the dishonour done to God. If the rise of the reproach be from our duty, and thereupon the soul be more confirmed in the way of duty, as those, Neh. v. 8, “ Ought we not to walk in the fear of the Lord, because of the reproach of the brethren ?” And as David, Psal. cxix. 69, “ The proud have forged a lie against me ; but I will keep thy precepts with my whole

heart." When a man, instead of being deterred from a duty, by reproach cast upon him, is more confirmed, and made more circumspect, in the way of duty than ever. If the reproach hath risen from our zeal for the concerns of Christ and his interest; and thereupon, the man hath been made to count it his glory, "Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt:" and the man is more grieved for the aspersions cast upon Christ, than what concerneth himself, saying, as Psal. lxi. 9, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up; and the reproaches of them that reproach thee, are fallen upon me." These are evidences of reproach doing good to a man: when thereby, also, he is made to long for the day of the manifestation of the sons of God; when our reputation will be cleared up, and aspersions cast upon us wiped away. Thus much for marks in order to trial.

Again, the doctrine may be applied for exhortation. Having no time for addressing myself to particular sorts of persons, I shall offer these following advices, and drop them in the general.

Advice 1. Let all professors of religion take care that they give no occasion to any to look upon them and their religion too as monstrous. Some that wear Christ's livery may be taxed, as a scandal to his family, by their lying, cheating, drunkenness, whoredom, and other vices: though it is unjust and unfair to reproach religion, because some who profess it expose themselves to reproach; yet, it is no doubt a grievous sin in those who give any occasion to do so, 1 Tim. v. 14. We should pray with David, "Lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies;" in the Hebrew it is, because of mine OBSERVERS. Our enemies are our observers; and though no sinful practice is consistent with religion, yet enemies will think and say so, if they find us making it consistent with the profession of religion.

Advice 2. If the world be set upon speaking reproachfully of religion, let us be the more engaged to speak favourably of it. Every believer should be both a witness and an advocate for his religion, and for the truth. When you hear how God's name is abused, his people reproached, his truth contradicted, have you never a word to say for him? Whoever is ashamed of him now, of him will he be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father. If we hear our dearest friends in the world slandered, we will be ready to appear for their vindication: and have we no resentment of the contumely and contempt cast upon God, and Christ, and the

scriptures of truth? If we fear we are not able to speak for the truth, as we ought, we may take encouragement from that promise, "It shall be given you in the same hour what ye shall speak." Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings he can ordain strength; and so still the adversary and avenger.

Advice 3. Reckon the godly to be the excellent ones of the earth, however contemptible and hateful the world judge them to be. The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour, however reproached; and it is the wicked that are the monsters. Let none think the worse of the way of religion and godliness; neither be frightened from walking in that way, because of the contempt poured upon it. Consider who the reproachers are; generally men of debauched consciences, and profligate lives: if you choose such for your leaders, then the blind leads the blind, and both will fall into the ditch. Consider how trifling their reproaches are: they that speak against religion, they make lies their refuge, and under falsehood they hide themselves. Consider how much is to be said in favour of the good old way, whoever they be that reproach it: "Wisdom's ways are pleasantness, and all her paths peace." All the wealth and pleasure of the world is not worth an hour's communion with God in Christ, in the way of believing the gospel, and embracing the truth. Consider, that however the godly may be run down, they shall be raised up; for the reproaching of them is the reproaching of Christ and his religion: though none pretend it is religion they reproach, but only such and such professors of religion; yet Christ reckons himself concerned in the quarrel. If his people be persecuted with tongues or hands, it is a persecution of Christ? "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" And surely Christ will be too hard for his enemies; he will concern himself in the cause of his friends and children; and therefore he and his people, and his cause and truths, will successfully prevail, and have the ascendant, ere all be done, let the world do and say what they will.

Advice 4. Beware of reproaching your neighbour in any case, lest you come to be amongst the reproachers of Christ and his children; "Speak not evil one of another," saith the apostle.

(1.) God discharges this practice; "Thou shalt not raise a false report: put not thine hand with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness," *Exod. xxiii. 1.* "Thou shalt not RAISE a false report;" it may be rendered, "Thou shalt not RECEIVE a false re-

port:" and it says, that raising or receiving of false reports are equally discharged.

(2.) God observes this bad carriage in a special manner; "I have heard the reproach of Moab, and the reviling of the children of Ammon, how they have reproached my people," Zeph. ii. 8.

God threatens such as are chargeable with this impiety in the same place: "As I live, saith the God of Israel, Moab shall be as Sodom, and Ammon as Gomorrah; this shall they have for their pride, because they have reproached and magnified themselves against the people of the Lord of hosts," Zeph. ii. 9, 10. "What shall be given to thee? or what shall be done to thee? thou false tongue. Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper," Psalm cxx. 3, 4.

(4.) The scripture shows this to be the ordinary practice of the wicked, and of the devil's children. Christ says to his reproachers, "Ye are of your father the devil, for his works ye do," John viii. 44.

(5.) Yea, revilers shall be put among the number of such as shall be excommunicated from the presence of the Lord; "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God: be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor revilers, shall inherit the kingdom of God," 2 Cor. vi. 9, 10.

(6.) Bonds of humanity should oblige us to take care of reproaching one another; the bonds of mutual obligation, fraternity, neighbourhood, and brotherhood; the breaking of these bonds was what imbittered the reproach of David, Psalm lv. 12, 13, 14,—"It was not an enemy that reproached me, else I had borne it," &c.; but it was thou, a man, mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance; we took sweet counsel together, and went to the house of God in company."

In order to shun this great evil, observe your heart; for that is the fountain from which false witnesses and all blasphemies proceed, Matth. xv. 16.—Seek to have the heart freighted with love to God and man: Love thinketh no evil, and speaketh as little.—Beware of giving credit, too hastily, to any ill report concerning your neighbour: it is God's command, as instanced already, "Receive not a false report." If you would not be a reproacher, beware of idleness; that is the root of much reproach; "They learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house: and not only idle, but tattlers also, and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not," 1 Tim. v. 13. If you would not be a reproacher, beware of pride

and self-love: this stirs up to reproachful language; such was that of Sanballat, Neh. iv. 2, 3, 4,—“What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burnt? Now, Tobiah the Ammonite was by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall. Hear, O our God, for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey, in the land of captivity.” As of pride cometh contention, so of pride cometh reproach; while a man cannot endure that others should be above him.—If you would not be a reproacher, beware of being a neglecter of prayer; if we be reproached, we are not to reproach again, but to make the reproach cast upon us to be an errand to God, that our spirits be not exasperated; this was the method that Nehemiah took, ch. iv. 4. And David, Psalm lv. 16, after he had considered Ahithopel’s reproaches; “But as for me,” saith he, “I will call upon God.”—In a word, if you would be no reproacher, beware of hypocrisy, and hunting after the praises of men, like the Pharisees; such will be careless how much their neighbour be reproached, providing they be applauded; they take all measures and methods for raising up their own name upon the ruins of the reputation of their neighbour. But if any, under a cloak of religion, or pretence of strictness, study to make others contemptible, and themselves famous, they take but a method to make their own name to stink: “They say, Stand by, for I am holier than thou: these are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day,” Isa. lxxv. 5.

Advice 5. To those that are reproached for Christ, that they would bear reproach for him: it is the express command of God, Heb. xiii. 13,—“Let us go forth to him without the camp, bearing his reproach.” Isa. li. 7, 8,—“Fear not the reproach of men: neither be afraid of their revilings: for the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool.” Christ bore many a reproach for us; and shall we not bear a reproach for him? “If they called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?” Saints, in all ages, have been inured to this cross: “For thy sake have I borne reproach,” Psalm lxix. 7. The Old Testament saints, mentioned in Heb. xi., had the trial of cruel mockings. But there is a blessing even in this part of the cross: “Blessed are ye

when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my name's sake," Matth. xv. 11. And 1 Pet. iv. 14, "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you." Yea, it tends to the glory of God; for it follows, "On their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified." There is a day coming wherein such as bear reproach for Christ shall be openly vindicated and owned by him: "Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven: that is, whatever affronts they meet with from men for owning of my gospel, there is a day coming wherein I will openly vindicate them from such malicious reproaches. Reproachers at that day will be obliged to account for all their hard speeches, 1 Pet. iv. 3, 4; Jude, ver. 14, 15. Reproaches for Christ betokens a good condition; "Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy; for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets," Luke vi. 22, 23. Whereas it is no good sign when all men speak well of us: "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you: for so did their fathers to the false prophets," ver. 26. The people of God are, for the most part, in a more lively exercise of grace, when under reproach, than at other times; "I take pleasure in infirmities, reproaches, persecutions, and distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong," 1 Cor. xii. 10. We are pilgrims here, in a strange land, in our enemies' land, and are not to stay; therefore we should bear reproach for Christ; Let us bear his reproach; for here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come," Heb. xiii. 13, 14. Christ hath forewarned us of reproaches for his name; "Remember the word that I said to you, The servant is not greater than his Lord; if they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you," John xv. 20. Upon these considerations, we should bear reproach for Christ when called thereto.

QUEST. What help, in order to bear reproach for Christ, will you offer us?

ANSW. A man that would bear reproach for Christ, must be a Christian indeed, a believer indeed: otherwise he will never bear his reproach aright. It is he and the children whom the Lord hath given him, that are signs and wonders: if you be not amongst his

children, you cannot be a zealous sufferer for him. Yea, a man that would bear reproach for Christ, needs to be, not only a believer, but a strong believer, having much Christian courage, that he may bear an hiss as well as a hymn; I mean, a hiss of reproach and disdain as well as a hymn of applause and commendation: to bear this requires the armour of patience and spiritual courage, for marching through the world's contempt and hazard, being looked upon as a monster, and made the scorn of fools: and all this requires the strength of faith; "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith: who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God," Heb. xii. 2. And, in the following words, we are called to consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest we be wearied and faint in our minds; for we have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. It requires much zeal for God and love to him. Alas! who can say, "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up?" It requires a good cause, and a good conscience; if a man be firmly persuaded of the goodness of the cause, it will help him to bear reproach; while he doth not suffer as an evil doer, though he be reproached as such; and a good conscience is an encouraging thing in this warfare; also, having a good conscience, that whereas they speak evil of you, as of evil doers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ, 1 Pet. iii. 16; iv. 15. In a word, it requires constant dependence upon the Captain of salvation, who was made perfect through sufferings.

FINALLY, Let us all consider and remember, that the cause of Christ will be a prevailing cause in the issue, however it be reproached in the world. There is a schism, a rent, and division in the world, sirs, ever since the fall of Adam: a battle between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent; between Michael and his angels, and the dragon and his angels: but Michael and his angels, Christ and his children will carry the day; and contradicted truths will be effectually cleared and vindicated: if never fully here, yet the day of the Lord will be the valley of decision, when the great cause of true religion will be decided, and the serpent's head broken so, as he shall never hiss or spit venom any more.

It is now a day of reproach, a day to be lamented, for the bitter calumny that takes place therein: yea, I may call heaven and earth

to witness, whether ever gospel preachers and professors suffered a hotter persecution of the tongue, than in this apostate age, wherein if some ministers fall foul upon the sins and errors of the times, the very naming thereof is enough to offend, though yet the nation be sinking under the weight thereof. Never was a gospel ministry more contemptible than in our day : Satan hath used many instruments, and most of them have had their effect, to bring the dispensers of gospel-ordinances into contempt ; and it is still more lamentable, that many have had a sinful hand in bringing their own ministry under a reproach, and laying stumbling-blocks in the way of the success of the gospel, and marring the edification of souls, by sad compliances with the public defections of the day, and errors of the age.

It is a day wherein the gospel of Christ is contemned. The time has been, when some have thought it worth crossing the sea, to enjoy the everlasting gospel : but now, that it is become so plenty and cheap, many are loth to cross the streets to hear it upon a week-day, unless they have some other errand, perhaps to compliment a neighbour with their presence, at a baptism or a marriage. How much are we souring upon the gospel, and loathing the honey-comb !

It is also a day wherein some of the friends of Christ are openly bantered, and lampooned, and gazed upon as signs and wonders ; and wherein many sacred truths are publicly defamed and ridiculed ; and heart-enemies to revealed religion, and to the gospel in its purity, in the mean time, taking occasion utterly to run down the gospel. What am I saying ! In the name of the great God, I defy all the powers of earth and hell to run it down : they may sooner run down the flowing tide, or the sun rising in his strength, than run down the least of the dictates of eternal truth : “ Not one jot or tittle thereof shall fall to the ground. Dagon shall fall before the ark ; and the rod of Aaron shall swallow up the rods of the magicians.

It is likewise a day wherein providence is shaking both church and state ; and particularly the ark must needs shake, when they who carry it are stricken at with axes and hammers, and many are knocking at all the four corners of it at once, namely, the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, to get it broken to pieces, while open enemies, (*viz.* cursed Popery and abjured Prelacy) are making inroads upon all corners of the land, in the public view of

the church: she, in the mean time, unthoughtful of her danger, seems to be doing nothing, but, by intestine broils, cutting off her right-hand with her left.

In a word, it is a day wherein that word seems to be made out, that there shall be scoffers, walking after their own lusts: drunkards, whoremongers, athiests, blasphemers, debauchees, and profane scoffers of the age, now have their day: it is now their hour, and the power of darkness. This is matter of lamentation, and deep lamentation. But, however, God will have his day ere long; and it will be a glorious day when Christ will appear, in all the glory and grandeur of the upper world, to the everlasting terror and confusion of all his adversaries, and to the eternal joy and honour of all his friends, who, though now they are for signs and wonders, by way of reproach, will then be for signs and wonders, by way of renown: when Christ will present them blameless unto his Father, saying, "Behold, I and the children whom thou hast given me, who, as they have suffered with me in my reproach in time, must now reign with me in my glory through eternity."

O sirs, let us seek, above all things, to be on Christ's side, on the side of truth now, and on the right-hand road to heaven, whatever rubs we may meet with by the way, so as we may come to be on the right-hand of the throne, in the day of the manifestation of the sons of God.

May the Lord bless what hath been said; and to his name be praise.

SERMON VII.¹

THE VANITY OF EARTHLY THINGS AND WORLDLY ENJOYMENTS.

ECCLES. i. 2.—"Vanity of Vanities, saith the Preacher; Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity."

THE words of a king are commonly reckoned very witty: the words of a wise king, speaking by experience, deserves special consideration; and much more the words of a wise king, speaking by divine

(1) This Sermon was preached at Broomhall, January, 1723.

inspiration, deserve the greatest regard, attention, and credit: all these do here concur. The words of our text are the words of Solomon king of Israel; the words of the wisest of mere men; the words of one who spoke from his own experience; and, moreover, who spoke by the inspiration of God.

The sum of the discourse stands in these two particulars:—1. that the chief good and chief happiness of the sons of man is not to be had in the creature, or in any worldly thing. And, 2. That it is only to be found in God in Christ, and in the true knowledge of him and gospel conformity of heart and life unto him; which he expresseth by fearing God and keeping his commandments: which pre-supposes a gospel-state of union to Christ by faith, and communion with him in his merit, for the justification of our persons; and of his spirit, for the justification of our hearts and lives.

The first verse gives an account of the penman of this book. Where we have a three-fold description of him: from his present office, his pedigree, and his royal dignity.

1. He is called the Preacher: and commentators observe, that it comes from a word that signifies to “gather;” intimating, that now he was a penitent soul, gathered in from his wanderings, gathered home to his duty, and come at length to himself; and that now he was a preaching soul, gathering in straying souls to God: seeing he himself was reduced, here was his penitential sermon, his recantation sermon; wherein, from the bottom of his soul, he sadly laments his own folly, in promising himself satisfaction, in the things of this world, and in the forbidden pleasures of sense: which now he finds more bitter than death. And hence two things should be learned.

1. We should be persuaded here of Solomon’s repentance after his fall. Those who think he fell totally and finally, are not only refuted by this, but by all the arguments which prove the perseverance of the saints, which are many and impregnable: and also by other arguments, which concern Solomon himself, viz. the name that he gets, Jedidiah, 2 Sam. xii. 25, which signifies, “Beloved of the Lord.” Now, whom God loves, he loves to the end. And more especially the testimony of Christ, that all the prophets are in heaven, Luke xiii. 28. Now, Solomon was a prophet, seeing the whole scriptures were penned by no others than prophets and apostles, 2 Pet. i. 19, 20, Eph. ii. 20.

2. We should hence learn to accept of this book with the

greater regard. The sun never shines more gloriously, than when it breaks out of some dark cloud, nor yet the graces of God's spirit, than when broken forth out of the clouds of sins and temptations, into repentance. And thus it was with David also, Psalm li.

2. The penman of this book here is called, The Son of David. And his calling himself the Son of David, teaches us, That he looked upon it as his great honour, not only that he was the son of a Prince, but the son of so good a man, a man after God's own heart; and that he looked upon it as a great aggravation of his sin, that he had such a father, who had given him such good education, and put up many prayers for him.—Again, his calling himself the son of David, saith, that he looked upon this as an encouragement to his repentance, and a ground of his hope of mercy, seeing though David fell into sin, by which he should have been warned not to sin, yet David repented; and therein he took example from him, and found mercy as he did.—But there is more here. His calling himself the son of David, intimates his faith, that as he was the son of the promise; he was the son of David, concerning whom God had said, that though he would punish his iniquities with the rod, yet he would not break his covenant with him, Psal. lxxxix. 32, 33, 34. It was comfortable to Solomon, that he was the son of David, both for the sake of the covenant and the promise made to David and his seed after him, 2 Chron. vii. 17, 18.—In a word he calls himself the son of David, to procure the more reverence, that he was a prophet, the son of a prophet; and it should procure the more reverend acceptance of the doctrine of this book, for the penman's sake: for, though it is a little matter what the pen be, whether it be the pen of a goose, or a swan, or a raven; yet when God makes use of such an instrument, so richly adorned, it challenges from us the more due respect.

3. The penman of this book is here called, "King of Israel." This intimates that his sin was greatly aggravated, seeing God had raised him to a throne, and yet he had so ill-requitted him; his dignity also, in being king of Jerusalem, the holy city, where God's temple was, made the ill example of his sin, and the influence it would have upon others, the more dangerous. It intimates also, that being such a one as a king in Jerusalem, what he preached and wrote, was to be the more regarded: for, "Where the word of a king is, there is power." He thought it no disparagement to him, though he was a king, to be a preacher. If men of honour would

lay out themselves to do good, what a vast deal of good might they do ! Solomon looked as great in the pulpit, preaching the vanity of the world : as in his throne of ivory ruling the people.

Here we may learn, that God uses instruments of all sorts in penning the scriptures : Kings, as David and Solomon ; some herdsmen, as Amos ; and Priests as Jeremiah ; Fishermen, as some of the apostles : this he did, that all sorts might meet with style and phrase of speech suitable for them.—We may learn that it is no disgrace to any man, or any man's children to be preachers : Solomon and David, both kings and both prophets, are of the number ; Solomon studying to teach the people knowledge, Eccl. xii. 9, 10. The Angels, higher than the highest man, are all ministering spirits, Heb. i. 14. Yea, CHRIST, the Prince of the kings of the earth, was the great New Testament Preacher.—Thus you have the penman described in the title of the book ; “ The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king of Israel.”

The second verse lays before us the general doctrine of the book ; “ Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher ; vanity of vanities, all is vanity.” Where, more particularly, we have, 1. The Judgment past upon all earthly things. 2. The person passing this judgment.

1st, To begin with the last of these ; we have the Person that passes this judgment, that all is vanity ; it is said to be the Preacher. I told you already what was the meaning of the word, viz., one that is gathered, by grace to God, who had learned, by his experience, the vanity of all things in time : and was convinced, that there was no real advantage in pursuing after these things. Who is it that thus speaks lightly of the world ? Indeed, it was one who was a very competent judge, as much as ever any man was. Many speak contemptibly of the world, either because they are hermits, and know it not ; or beggars, and have it not : But Solomon knew it, and had enough of it too ; and he spoke of it as one having authority, not only as a king, but as a prophet and preacher ; he spoke in God's name, being divinely inspired. And, as some think, one main thing he designed, was to show that the everlasting throne and kingdom, which God had been lately promising to David and his seed, (for Christ was also the son of David) must be of another world : for all things in this world are subject to vanity ; and therefore have not in them sufficient to answer the extent of that promise. If Solomon found all things to be vanity ; then the kingdom of the Messiah must come, in which only we can inherit substance. And,

indeed, the very end and design of our preaching to you, concerning the vanity of the world, is to recommend Christ to you ; seeing though you should inherit all things your heart can desire in time, you do but inherit passing shadows and vanity : but in Christ you will inherit everlasting and substantial goodness, saith the Preacher, Prov. vii. 21.

Solomon set the seal of his testimony to the vanity of all earthly things, after the trial of them : they that have had the most trial of earthly comfort, are most ready to avouch, and most able to preach the vanity of them. Experience is a divine testimony, as being taken from the works of God, in the event of things coming to pass by providence : and experience is of great authority with men, as being an argument more sensible, and less subject to ignorance and error. And hence we may see the great difference between earthly and heavenly things: for earthly things seem good, till men get a trial of them, and then they are found vain, altogether vain ; but heavenly things seem vain, till men get a trial of them, and then upon a sufficient trial, they are found to be excellent.

“ All is vanity, saith the Preacher.” There is one that draws a very strange inference from this word, viz., that reading is preaching ; because Solomon calls his book, though read, the Preacher. But, in answer to this, Solomon doth not call his book, but HIMSELF, the Preacher.—And again, one might rather infer from this, that writing is preaching ; and that one may deliver his sermon by writing. But, that reading is preaching, doth not follow from this. Why, in writing, a minister may and doth make use of spiritual gifts, requisite in a prophet or preacher, to the exercise of his ministerial gifts : but not so in reading, which even a school-boy may perform, that never attained any spiritual gift at all.—Thus much concerning the person passing this judgment.

2dly, We have the judgment past upon all earthly things, VANITY ; “ Vanity of Vanities, Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity.” Where observe three things, 1. The subject of the determination ; or the thing he passes his judgment upon, in the particle ALL. 2. The determination itself, or the judgment he passes upon them, it is vanity. 3. The aggravation of, or emphatic manner wherein he passes his judgment ; Vanity of Vanities, Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity.”

1. The subject, or the thing he passes his judgment on, namely, ALL ; viz., all that is in the world : all the pleasures, all the profits,

all the honours, all the preferments, all the lusts of the world ; all things under the sun that a man can set his heart upon ; all worldly employments and enjoyments ; all things besides God, and considered as abstract from him.

2. The judgment he passes upon all these is, VANITY. The things of the world are either to be considered in themselves, as the creatures of God, and so they cannot be called all vanity ; because they were all very good, showing forth his power and glory ; but consider them with respect to men, and his expecting satisfaction in them, and thus they are vanity ; they will disappoint them who seek happiness in them ; they are vain : and not only so, but,

3. Observe the aggravation of this judgment, or the emphatic manner of the preacher's expression of this matter ; they are not only vain, but vanity in the abstract ; and not only so, but vanity over and over again, three several times repeated : As if he had said, They are vanity, vanity, vanity : and not only so, but the foundation of vanity : and therefore called, "Vanity of Vanities ;" and again, "Vanity of Vanities : " intimating the vainest vanities ; vanity in the highest degree, nothing but vanity ; such a vanity as is the cause of a great deal of vanity : And again, not only this, but the redoubling of the expression, intimating the certainty of the thing, and with what a strong conviction the preacher spoke, what a deep sense he had of this vanity of all things. So that his judgment is here exaggerated, 1. By expressing it in the context, VANITY. 2. By calling it "Vanity of Vanities." 3. By repeating and redoubling this sentence, "Vanity of Vanities, Vanity of Vanities." By tripling the doctrine which he intended to make good, "Vanity of Vanities, saith the Preacher ; Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity." The truth of which doctrine he proved at large, by many cogent arguments, in the sequel of his sermon in this book.

The doctrinal proposition we intend to illustrate from these words, thus explained, shall be the following.

OBSERV. That all earthly enjoyments, and worldly things, are vain and empty.

And in speaking to Solomon's text here, viz., The emptiness and vanity of the world, we would incline, through divine favour, to do the following things.

I. Consider what it is in the world that is so vain and empty.

II. Inquire what is imported in its being vain, and vanity itself, and in the phrase, "Vanity of Vanities, Vanity of Vanities."

III. Offer some arguments to prove the truth of the doctrine, that all is vain and empty.

IV. Give the reasons of it, why it is so.

V. Deduce some inferences for the application, to shew what improvement we ought to make of this doctrine.

I. We return to the first thing proposed, To consider what it is in the world that is so vain and empty. Here, for preventing all mistakes, and obviating every wrong turn of thought, in the progress of this discourse, I would have you remember, that I speak not of the things of the world, absolutely considered in themselves; for thus many things in the world are good and useful, in many respects, when used according to God's allowance: but I consider the world here, and the things of it, as wholly vanity, in the following respects.

1. When separate from God; without God the good things of the world are not seen as coming from him, nor improved for leading to him; but esteemed in themselves above God, so as men are lovers thereof more than lovers of God. And so,

2. When it is made a man's happiness, or any part of his happiness; and so he makes it his end, his satisfaction, his rest, his god: for thus many make the world their god, their belly their god.

3. When opposing or hindering the service of God: when it steals away the heart from duty; and steals away the heart from ordinances, and so obstructs the service of God.

4. When it furthers and promotes sin, and is made the fuel for feeding and maintaining corrupt lusts and affections: when it is but the food of pride and ambition, the food of covetousness and carnality, the food of sensuality and lasciviousness, or the like. Why, in such respects as these, the world, and things in it, ought to be looked upon as base and contemptible vanity: and to be despised, opposed, and mortified.

But now, if the question be asked, What is it in the world that is vain and empty? Why, saith the preacher, "All is vanity." This word comprehends more than we can tell; for we will not get through all that is included in it. We shall name a few of these things in the world that are but vanity.

All the profits and riches of the world are vanity; "He that loveth silver, shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity. When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and no good is to the owners thereof, saving the beholding them with their eyes," Eccl. v. 10, 11. Let a man find as much riches as ever Solomon found, he cannot find happiness therein. Where is it that satisfying riches are to be had? No where but in Christ: "Riches and honour are with me: yea, durable riches and righteousness," Prov. viii. 18. All the riches of grace and glory are to be found in Christ.

2. All the pleasures and delights of the world are vanity; "I said in my heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and behold this also is vanity. I said of laughter, It is mad: and of mirth, What doth it?" Eccl. ii. 1, 2. See how he enumerates, in this chapter, manifold sensual pleasures; and the upshot of all is still, "All is vanity." No true pleasure shall we ever find but in Christ; "Wisdom's ways are pleasantness; and all her paths are peace," Prov. iii. 17.

3. All the honours and grandeurs of the world are vanity; "I made me great works, I builded me houses, I planted me vineyards, I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kinds of fruit; I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees. I gathered me all silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings, and of provinces: I gat me men-singers and women-singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments and that of all sorts: So I was great, and increased more than all the men that were before me in Jerusalem; my wisdom also remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired, I keep not from them; I withheld not my heart from any joy, for my heart rejoiced in all my labour, and this was my portion of all my labour," Eccl. ii. 5—10. Well, what was the upshot of all this worldly grandeur? Why, it was all vanity, ver. 11,—"I looked upon all the works that my hands had wrought; and, behold! all was vanity and vexation of spirit." Where is true honour to be had? It is only in Christ; "Riches and honours are with him." They who get in to Christ, they become kings and priests unto their God: and this is the honour of all the saints.

4. All the wisdom and policy of the world is vanity; yea, even the moral endowments of the mind, and the knowledge of arts and sciences. So long as a man is destitute of spiritual wisdom, let him

have the knowledge of all that is knowable in time ; let him have the utmost skill of mathematics, philosophy, astrology, astronomy ; “ All is vanity.” Solomon laboured to acquire wisdom, and actually attained a vast deal of it ; and we have his verdict of the whole matter : “ I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom, concerning all things that are done under heaven ; I have seen all the works that are under the sun : and, behold ! all is vanity and vexation of spirit — And I gave my heart to know wisdom ; I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit : for in much wisdom is much grief ; and he that increaseth knowledge, increaseth sorrow,” Eccl. i. 13, 14, 17, 18. Where will a man get true wisdom ? Why, it is in Christ ; he only can make you wise unto salvation, because he is made of God unto us wisdom, 1 Cor. i. 30.—“ In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,” Col. ii. 3. Solomon had no small share of knowledge, being indeed the wisest of all men ; but he gives this for the motto of all worldly wisdom, VANITY. Well then, “ Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom,” Jer. ix. 23.

5. All the strength and power of the world is vanity ; “ Let not the strong man glory in his strength. Let not either kings or subjects glory in their strength, in the strength of their armies and allies. What says Solomon of this ? “ The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong,” Eccl. ix. 11. Where is that to be had that deserves the name of strength ? It is only in Christ ; “ Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might ; Eph. vi. 10. I can do all things through Christ strengthening me. He is the strength of Israel : and his name is a strong tower to which the righteous run and are safe,” Prov. xviii. 10.

6. All the beauty and bravery of the world is vanity ; Beauty is vain, saith Solomon, Prov. xxxi. 30.—“ When God with rebukes doth correct man for his iniquity, he maketh his beauty to consume as a moth : surely every man is vanity,” Psal. xxxix. 11. Solomon was famous for the beauty and bravery of his court, and the splendour of his government ; but he saw all to be vanity : and Christ preferred even the beauty of a pile of grass to him ; for he saith of the lilies of the field, that Solomon and all his glory is not like one of these, Luke xii. 27. Such, indeed, is the fading beauty of men, so much thought of by many, that it is but skin-deep, and fades like a flower. If you would be a true, spiritual, and durable beauty, it is to be had in Christ, whose Spirit and grace makes a man beautiful, and all glorious within, Psal. xlv. 13.—“ Thou wast beautiful through my comlieness put upon thee,” Ezek. xvi. 14.

7. All the righteousness and feigned false religion of the world is vanity. There is much unrighteous righteousness in the world, much irreligious religion, much graceless grace, and faithless faith ; " Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, (saith Christ) ye can in no wise enter into the kingdom of God, Matt. v. 20. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth any thing, but faith that worketh by love, Gal. v. 6. And again, Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth any thing, but a new creature, Gal. vi. 15. For, Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," John iii. 3. The natural religion that the world hath, is but vanity. If the righteousness even of the godly, be but filthy rags, and cannot avail him for justification ; what account shall be made of the righteousness of those who are yet out of Christ, and are nothing but mere moralists, formalists, and hypocrites ? If you would have righteousness, you must have it in and from Christ ; he is the Lord our righteousness, and made of God to us wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification. He has to give you both an imputed righteousness, for justifying you ; and an imparted righteousness, for sanctifying you.

8. All the favour and friendship of the world is vanity ; " Favour is deceitful," Prov. xxxi. 30. They who put confidence in the favour and friendship of men, they will find themselves deceived : therefore, saith the prophet Micah, " Trust ye not in a friend ; put ye no confidence in a guide ; the best of them is as a brier : the most upright is sharper than a thorn hedge," Micah vii. 4, 5. Where will you get a true friend ? O seek to have Christ to be your friend : He is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother. His friendship doth not vary like those friends that love you to-day, and hate you to-morrow.

9. All the fashions and customs of the world are vanity ; they whirl about like the wind, as Solomon speaks, Eccl. i. 6. ; and the vain eye is never satisfied with seeing them, verse 8. There are many vain fashions of bodily gestures, vain fashions of apparel, vain artifices of the world ; wherefore and of all other worldly vices, the apostle saith, " Be not conformed to this world ; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds," Rom. xii. 2. The best fashion and conformity that ever a soul studied is conformity to the Son of God ; this study would be an evidence of election from eternity ; " Whom he did foreknow, them he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son," Rom. viii. 29. Whereas all

other fashions, and fond studying of conformity to the world, is but a mark of vanity.

10. All the great and mean men of the world are vanity : this Solomon shews in this book, when he is proving that all is vanity. And his father David saith expressly, "Surely men of low degree are vanity ; and men of high degree are a lie ; to be laid in the balance they are altogether lighter than vanity," Psal. lxii. 9. Here the prince in his robes, and the peasant in his rags are both declared to be vanity. "Surely every man in his best estate, is altogether vanity," Psal. xxxix. 11. What is man to be accounted of? A piece of rotten dust. In wisdom they are vain : "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain," 1 Cor. iii. 20. In power they are vain ; therefore saith the Lord, "Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm," Jer. xvi. 5. In comfort they are vain ; "They comfort in vain," Zech. x. 2. Let us never expect in man, what is not to be had in him : it is only in the God-man, Jesus Christ, that we ought to place our confidence, and expect our comfort : "The true circumcision rejoice only in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh," Phil. iii. 3.

In a word, all these things together are but vanity ; satisfaction is not to be had therein : "I have seen all the works that are under the sun ; and behold ! all is vanity," Eccl. iv. 4. The apostle gives a sum of all the things in the world, and writes vanity upon them ; "All that is in the world, the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world ; and the world passeth away, and the lusts thereof," 1 John ii. 16, 17. All these things are vanity.

II. The Second thing proposed was, To enquire what is imported in its being called vain ; nay, vanity itself : "All is vanity." And to enquire into the emphasis of the phrase, "Vanity of vanities, vanity of vanities."

1st, As to the first of these, viz., what is imported in its being called VANITY : "All is vanity." It imports, among others, these eight following things.

1. VANITY here imports the unprofitableness of all things ; "What profit hath a man thereof?" Eccl. i. 3. And to this purpose, saith Christ, "What shall it profit a man, though he had the whole world, if he lose his own soul?" Matth. xvi. 26. Treasures of wickedness profiteth nothing. The world is an useless thing to

the soul ; it cannot save the soul from hell : The redemption of the soul is precious, and ceaseth for ever, for any thing that either the world, or the things of the world can do for its recovery, Psalm xlix. 8. As to the world, it cannot deliver a man from the sentence that shall pass at the great day ; it will rather aggravate the misery.

2. All is vanity ; the word imports emptiness : VAIN ; that is, void of substance, worth, and sufficiency. Thus the words of Rabshakeh are said to be vain words, Isa. xxxi. 5 ; that is, empty, having nothing but wind in them : even so the world is vain, *i.e.*, empty : it promiseth great things, but performeth nothing ; like the god of this world, that said to Christ, " All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me," Matth. iv. 9. The world promises much, and boasts much : but yet can give nothing, and do nothing.

3. All is vanity ; the word imports hurtfulness, while they make the heart more and more vain ; and draw the affections away from God and heavenly things. They are hurtful ; like a man lying down to rest upon a bed of thorns and briars : he shall never find the rest there that he would be at.

4. All is vanity ; the word imports unsatisfactoriness : Eccl. i. 8, " The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing." As there is no true profit, so no true comfort therein, abstract from God. It is but a vain comfort that men have in that which is but vanity.

5. All is vanity ; the word imports falsehood and lying ; Psal. iv. 2, " O ye sons of men, how long will ye love vanity, and follow after leasing ?" And hence the things of the world are called lying vanities : " They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy," Jonah ii. 8. The world seems to be something : but it is a lie ; it is not what it appears to be.

6. All is vanity ; the word imports frustration and disappointment : James i. 26, " If any man seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, that man's religion is vain ;" that is, he will be disappointed ; he deceiveth himself. Thus the world is a cheat and a deceiver.

7. All is vanity ; the word imports folly ; Job xi. 12, " Vain man would be wise, though he be born like the wild ass's colt." All is vanity, all is folly. " He that followeth vain persons, is void of understanding."

8. All is vanity ; it imports frailty and inconsistency ; vanish-

ing away as smoke : "The world passeth away, and the lusts thereof," 1 John ii. 17. "All flesh is grass and all the goodness thereof as a flower of the field ; the grass withereth and the flower fadeth ; surely the people is grass," Isa. xl. 6—9.

2dly, We proposed next to inquire into the emphasis of the phrase, "Vanity of vanities, vanity of vanities." Why, this phrase, and the repetition of it, imports these six things.

1. The excessiveness of the vanity of these worldly things. Vanity implies, that they are not only vain, but exceedingly vain ; as vain as vanity itself. "Vanity of vanities," is, in the Hebrew, a superlative form of speech, to set forth the highest vanity : as the "Song of songs, *i.e.* the most excellent song ; the "King of kings," *i.e.* the most excellent king. So "Vanity of vanity," *i.e.* the greatest vanity.

2. It imports the multitude and variety of vanities that are heaped up in earthly things : as Samson speaks in another case, "Heaps upon heaps," Judges xv. 16. There are vanities upon vanities : one heap upon the top of another.

3. It imports the strangeness of these vanities ; he speaks by way of admiration, to shew the wonderful and strange vanity of these things ; O vanity of vanities ! He breaketh forth into this exclamation.

4. It importeth the inexpressibleness of it ; it cannot be uttered with words ; and therefore the same words must be uttered again and again, to shew what we cannot sufficiently comprehend or express, the vanity of things below.

5. It imports the fertility of these vanities of the world ; one vanity begets another ; one piece of vanity brings on another ; therefore called "Vanity of vanities:" such vanity as is the cause of other vanities.

6. It imports the certainty of worldly things, and what impression it should have upon us, when vanity is five times repeated in this one short text ; these repeated strokes should make impression upon us, to affect us with the certainty of the thing. Surely all is vanity.

III. We proceed to the Third thing proposed, *viz.*, to offer some arguments to prove that all is vain and empty ; or to prove the vanity and emptiness of the world.

1. The world is treacherous ; it betrays both the hopes and the souls of men at once. How big is man with expectations of

remote distant enjoyments ! Like a man looking at a picture, or statue at a distance ; but, coming near to it, and taking a close view, he sees it is but a cheat, a dead lifeless thing : so, when a man comes to the enjoyment of the world, he falls infinitely short of his expectations. Like children that think the cloud is just touching such a hill, and if they were at it they would be just in the cloud ; and, when they go there, they find the cloud removed away to another hill. Yea, the world betrays the soul, as well as the hopes ; it betrays a man's soul to ruin : like sweet poison, it goes down pleasantly, but kills presently. The silken cords of the world have taken away a prisoner ; and they have proven their fetters, which they never could break again. As Judas said of our blessed Lord, " Whomsoever I kiss, take him, hold him fast : " so the world being the devil's agent, says, " Whomsoever I kiss and embrace, and embraceth me mutually, and setteth his heart upon me ; take him, hold him fast. " So the creature betrayeth the soul, as well as the hope of the man.

2. The world is vanity, because it is vexatious ; for " All is vanity and vexation of spirit, " Eccl. i. 14. You cannot grasp the thorn of this world but you must be hurt.—The world is vexation in the purchase of it. A man spends night and day for a conquest : he sits up late and rises early ; sets his invention upon the rack, how to conquer such a fortune, how to make such a purchase.—The world is vexation in the possession of it : when a man hath it, what cares, what fears, what solicitude about the keeping of it ! He knows not how to secure it. If but a tile or slate falls off his house, he thinks the whole fabric will be down next. If he takes but a penny out of a large sum, he thinks it will melt and diminish away to nothing. He is vexed in keeping it.—And again the world is vexation in the loss of it. When the man loses it, he cries, " Alas ! they have taken away my gods, and what have I more ? My hope is gone, my all is gone, my portion is gone. "

3. The vanity and emptiness of the world appears in this, that a little cross will embitter all the pleasures and enjoyments of time. Solomon saith, " That the dead fly makes all the box of the apothecary's ointment to stink, " Eccl. x. 1. So the whole box of the world's greatest enjoyments, one small cross, such as a toothache, a touch of the stone, of the colic or gout, will imbitter all, and make all to stink. We have an eminent instance of this in Haman, Esther v. 11—13. If any man in the world might have

promised himself satisfaction from the world, Haman now might have done it : he was raised from a low degree to the highest pinnacle and dignity of a subject, being the chief minister of state to one of the greatest kings on earth. If a man be born to a great estate, it turns, as it were, natural to him ; it never increases, never elevates him : but, promotion from a low estate to an high, doth enhance the value of the estate, and gives a relish to the enjoyment, if we may speak so. Well, Haman had all riches ; he had a numerous family, plenty of children : he was the greatest favourite of the king, and reckoned himself a favourite of the queen also ; and yet, "all this avails me nothing," saith he. Why, what is the business, man ? what hath poisoned your box of ointments ? There is a wretched Jew, saith he, an ill-natured, ill-mannered fellow, that will not give me a hat, when I go into the court, and come out again. And that marred all his happiness, because a poor man would not yield him obeisance. A little cross will embitter the greatest enjoyments.

4. The world's emptiness and vanity appears in this, that it is so changeable, and of such a short duration. It is compared in scripture to the motion of an eagle ; "Riches take wings, they fly away as an eagle, towards heaven," Prov. xxiii. 5. When they fly away, they will not fly like a tame bird, to return to you again ; they go away like an eagle out of sight. Many a man thinks, by his good rights and security, by his heritable bonds, and the like, he will clip the wings of the world, that it shall not fly away from him : but, for all that, it will take the wings of the morning, whose wings cannot be clipt. The world is compared to the moon, Rev. xii. 1, which is sometimes full, and shining brightly ; but instantly it changes again. Men are ready to say, in a worldly sense, as David in a spiritual, "My mountain standeth strong ;" and, behold ! instead of health, we have sickness ; instead of reputation, we have disgrace ; instead of ease, we have pain ; instead of riches, we have poverty.

5. The vanity and emptiness of the world appears in this, that it will never be of service to you in a day of need. Are you in sickness ? All the riches of the world will not heal you ; it will not cure you of a gout or a gravel : make an experiment of it, lay your head on a pillow of gold, see if that will make you sleep sound. Nay, all the enjoyments of time will not ease you of the pain of a colic. And then, in the day of death, when death says, "I am

coming, I am at the door; the tribunal is fixing to judge you:" what will the world avail you! Nay, it cannot secure you from the wrath of God, from a hell, from a tribunal.

IV. The Fourth thing proposed in the general method was, To give some reasons of the vanity and emptiness of the world, and unsatisfactoriness thereof. Why,

1. God alone is the centre of a man's soul; Christ alone is the bread of life, the solid food of the soul. God is the centre of the intellectual world, the centre of spirits; and no rest shall spirits, souls, have till they centre in him; and the soul that never centres in him, shall never find rest to eternity. Every body hath its centre; the stone goes downward, and the fire goes upward. Every body is, as it were, in motion, or hath a tendency to motion, if obstacles were out of the way, till it comes to its centre: now, God alone being the centre of the soul, the creature can never give rest to the soul; the soul is still in disquiet, till it come to a God in Christ, which is the true rest; "Return to thy rest, O my soul," Psal. cxvi. 7. The covetous man, if he has riches, will say, "Return to thy rest, O my soul: Soul, thou hast goods laid up for many years." But he was mistaken of his centre; for he had no rest at all: he was disinherited that night, and sent out of the world. No quarters for the soul in the creature; there is no suitability to the soul in the creature. Why? The soul is a spirit; the creature is a body: the soul hath vast infinite desires; the creature is finite: the soul is eternal and immortal; the creature is but of yesterday, and perisheth to-morrow: and so there is no suitability between the soul and the creature. It is only between God and the soul that there is a suitability; and therefore the creature is empty and vain, and cannot satisfy the vast and immense desires of the immortal soul. But then,

2. There is the curse upon the creature, a manifold curse; a curse by Adam's fall, a curse after Cain's murder, a curse after the deluge, a curse upon every enjoyment of every wicked man: He is cursed in his basket and his store; cursed in his children, cursed in his table, cursed in all his comforts. How then can the creature, and worldly things, be any other than vanity and emptiness to us, seeing the curse is lying upon them since the fall! Gen. iii. 17.

3. All is vanity, because of the end for which God made them; they were made for us, not we for them. The Lord never designed the things of the world for the use that men would turn them to,

namely, to be a god, a portion, a happiness to them : and therefore they shall never find a happiness in them. And so,

4. Because they seek happiness in the creature, therefore they shall never find it in the creature : because they put confidence in it, therefore God will blast that confidence ; “ The Lord hath rejected thy confidences ; thou shalt not prosper in them,” Jer. ii. 39. Since the fall, man’s corruption makes him promise more from the creature, trust more to it, and delight more in it than before : the virtue of the creature is on the waning and decaying hand, yet man’s expectation from it is on the waxing and growing hand. How then can there be anything but disappointment and emptiness ?

5. No wonder then that it is vain, empty, and unsatisfactory, seeing the world is the great occasion of sin, and the fuel of lust. Many corruptions are starved till the world minister to their support : and it is the root of manifold sins ; “ The love of money [the love of the world], is the root of all evil.” It is the root of damnable neglect of the gospel : One went to his farm, another to his merchandise, and made light of the gospel-offer, Matth. xxii. 5. It is the root of heart-wandering from the Lord, and enmity against God ; “ The carnal mind is enmity against God. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” It is the root of unfruitfulness under the means of grace : The thorns of this world choke the good seed of the word. It is the root of woeful apostasy from the Lord ; “ Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world.”

V. The last thing proposed in the method was application of the subject ; which we shall essay in an use of information, reproof, lamentation, examination, and trial ; and in the whole study all brevity.

Use 1. The first use that we make of the doctrine then is for information. Is it so, That all earthly things, and worldly enjoyments, are vain and empty ? Then we may hence see,

1. The folly of mankind, in placing their happiness where it never was. Men would have happiness, but the general error is, they imagine the creature can give it : and therefore they pursue pleasure, and court honours, and hoard up riches, thinking their happiness lies there : but they are seeking the living among the dead ; they are seeking hot water among cold ice, who seek happiness among the creatures. Alas ! what a woeful exchange do they make, who sell their souls to commit sin, for any earthly benefit, which is but vanity ! Jonah ii. 8, “ They who observe lying vani-

ties forsake their own mercy." Temptations from earthly things may draw on sin like cart-ropes ; but they are cart-ropes of vanity, Isa. v. 8.

2. See what a great change sin hath made in the world ; it doth, as it were, blast the virtue and beauty of the creature. The time was, before sin entered, when God saw all the creatures to be very good, Gen. i. 31. Now, after sin hath blown upon them, he looks upon them again ; and lo ! all is vanity. Such a change will sin make in us, and in our counsels and courses, if it be not removed by the blood of Christ.

3. See what little reason they have to envy the wicked of their portion : they have all their portion in this world, Psalm xvii. 14. What a portion must it be, when it is but a sowing of vanity, and a reaping lies ! " All is vanity and vexation of spirit." Why should a godly man grudge when he sees the prosperity of the wicked, seeing it is all their portion ? A godly man may have a portion in the world, but he never hath this world for a portion ; no : The lines are fallen to him in more pleasant places ; he hath a goodly heritage : The Lord is the portion of his soul.

4. See that the godly are no losers, though they should lose all things in the world for Christ's sake. What makes them venture the loss of all for the cause and interest of Christ ? Why, they know Christ to be all, and the world nothing but vanity. They may easily forsake all things, and follow Christ ; for they lose but vanity, and reap solid comfort, solid happiness. We see this abundantly clear from Mark x. 29, 30,—“ Jesus said, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions ; and in the world to come eternal life.” This seems to be a contradiction : but, though they lose their houses and lands, &c., yet they shall reap them equivalently : yea, what is more than the equivalent ; they reap true comfort here, and true happiness hereafter : so that their light afflictions work for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Use 2. The next use that we make of this doctrine, is for reproof. Since all things here are but vanity, this doctrine reproves those that set their hearts upon vanity, upon the world, so as to forget God, and Christ, and religion, and their souls : O, my

dear friends, what will it profit a man, though he gain the whole world, if he lose his own soul? All is but wind and vanity, that the world can afford. What will become of the worldling in the day of death, when they must part with these things? What a miserable parting must it be, if you have no other thing for your happiness! I mean not to persuade men to a voluntary poverty; so the church of Rome make some of her votaries swear to be beggars all their life time; and they have gone, and abstracted from all secular affairs, under pretence of employing themselves wholly in devotion: and yet many of them are so ignorant, that they know nothing at all of religion. I have read of one who lived always in a mountain, and was appointed to spend his whole time in religion: and he told that he cried to God, and said his Pater-noster all the day, over and over, and over again, to the Virgin Mary: just a horrible blunder in religion, a damnable delusion, that no man, in his wits, could be guilty of. They think that, by turning to a solitary desert, and abstract life, they may overcome the world: but as Luther saith well concerning it, "A monk in his closet says, he thinks he is crucified to the world, and the world to him; but, alas! poor wretch, he is crucified to Christ, and Christ is a stranger to him."

But, sirs, the thing that we are reproving is, that the world gets so much of your heart, and God so little. The creature should but have a small portion of your affections, if it be not the creature but God, that is your portion. But, alas! many are like the great man, that, being asked if ever he saw an eclipse of the sun, said, "He had so much ado upon earth, he never had time to look up to heaven." Just so may it be said of multitudes in the world, they are so much taken up with the things of time, the vain and perishing things of the world, they never get time to look up into, and call upon God. Therefore we have reason to bewail the matter.

Use 3. Let our next use then be for lamentation, that, notwithstanding of the vanity of the world, yet many discover themselves to be wholly destitute of religion, by their inordinate desire after the world. For clearing this, I would shew you, 1. What sort of a desire the wicked have after the world. 2. Prove and make it evident that their desires are after these vanities. 3. Show whence it is. 4. Point out the evil of it. And in all these we will see much ground of lamentation.

[1.] What sort of a desire is it that the wicked have after the

world. Here we shall condescend on a fourfold desire they discover themselves to have after the world.

1. It is an original desire ; they are born with a world in their heart : anything in the world is better to them than God, or Christ. Had we continued in our original primitive integrity, the first words of the infant would have been the praises of God ; the first breathings would have been after communion with God : but now they are after the world, and earthly things, which gratify the outward senses.

2. It is universal, after anything that is in the world ; “ Who will shew us any good ? ” The beggar, who wants grace, before he make God his portion, he will rather make his staff or his meal-pock his portion ; as well as the king his crown, or kingdom : “ Who will shew us any good ? ” any good whatsoever, Psal. iv. 6.

3. It is a strong and violent desire they have after the world : notwithstanding all the experience they have of the emptiness and vanity of the world ; yet they pant after the dust of the earth. If a man was panting for breath he would pant after the free air : but to pant after the dust, that stops the breath, that is very strange !

4. It is a growing desire that the wicked have after the world : the more they drink, the more their thirst increases. O, saith the man, if I had a hundred pounds a-year, I would live on it. Well, perhaps he gets it. Is he now pleased and satisfied ? No. O, if I had a thousand pounds a-year, I could be content. Well, perhaps he gets it. Is he content ? No. He would have a million. Well, if he gets that, is he satisfied ? No, by no means. I would have a kingdom, a crown. Well, if he gets that, is he content ? No. I must be the son of Jupiter ; I must be a little god, and an universal monarch. Well, is Alexander the Great content with the whole world under his command ? No. O if there were more worlds for me to conquer ?—There is the nature of the desire that the wicked have after the world.

[2.] The second thing on this use was, To prove and make it evident, that the desire of the wicked is after the world. This will appear evident, if we consider these four things.

1. It is clear from this, that they make the world their portion ; they are content with it, they seek nothing else : “ Preserve me, O Lord, from the man that hath his portion in this life, whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasures,” Psalm xvii. 14.

2. It is clear from this, that they prefer the world to all the

duties of religion, and ordinances of divine worship : if Christ and the world come in competition, they choose the world and let Christ go. Public ordinances, family worship, secret and social prayer, all must stand by, that the world may get room. The gospel is slighted : Why ? They choose their farms and merchandise, and their hearts are wedded to these ; they will not be espoused to the Son of God.

3. That the wicked desire the world is clear, if we consider the unwearied pains and diligence they are at about the world. O what toil and travel ! What racking of thought, late and early, will they have about the world ! What joy will they have about a good worldly bargain ! More joy than ever they had in hearing, praying, reading, or any religious duty : they have gladness when their corn and wine increaseth. What sorrow, what tormenting grief are they haunted with, when they lose the world ! Then they say, with Micah, " They have taken away my gods, and what have I more ? " They think nothing of God, or Christ, or heaven, if they want the world.

4. It appears from this, they will not stand to commit the greatest sin, to make a purchase. If they can any way in the world purchase an estate, or a sum of money, even with the loss of their soul, they think they have made a good bargain. Judas thought he had made a good bargain, when he had sold the Prince of life for thirty pieces of silver. " Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world. "

[3.] We proposed next to inquire, whence is it, that wicked carnal persons have such a desire after the world.

1. Man hath no self-sufficiency : he cannot, in the enjoyment of himself, be happy ; hence he reckons himself miserable to be alone. Aristotle said, " A man that could live alone, was either a God, or an idiot. " Now, man seeketh to be happy in the enjoyment of something besides himself : but he misses the true mark, and so seeks it in the world, where it cannot be found.

2. God, who can only satisfy the soul, is out of sight : he is to them an unknown God ; " The world by wisdom knew not God. " They are destroyed for lack of knowledge, saving knowledge.

3. The world is at hand and a well-garnished world : this little ball, full of wind and vanity, blown up in the air, it sparkles and shines with a lustre and beauty, in their eye ; and they are, like children, mightily taken with it.

4. Because of the vanity of the heart. There is a world

with them, answering the world without them : the lust of the eye within, answering the riches of the world without : the lust of the flesh within, answering the sordid pleasures of the world without ; the pride of life, answering to the honours and grandeur of the world. And thus the world within them draws out the desire after the world without them.

[4.] We would next shew the evil of this, to have the desire running only out after the world. Why,

1. It is idolatry : hence covetousness is called idolatry, and ranked by the apostle, amongst the other things which are to be mortified, Col. iii. 5. Many worship gold in the coin, that will not worship it in the image : " They say to fine gold, Thou art my confidence "

2. It is sacrilege. The heart and affections of a man are like the royal mines that are annexed to the crown. The heart of a man, his love and delight, should be devoted to God, and consecrated to him. Why hath God given him such vast desires ? Was it to throw them out upon the world ? No surely.

3. It is monstrous folly to let the soul run out upon the world : " Be astonished, O heavens ! " Why ? what is the matter ? " My people have committed two great evils : they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water," Jer. ii. 12, 13. It is the height of folly to conclude, that there is more excellency in the stream, than in the fountain ; in the creature, than in the Creator.

4. It is a degrading of the soul. If you saw an angel licking the dung-hill, would you not say, that is not food for such a glorious creature ? It is far below it. Our souls are the younger brethren of angels, if we may be allowed the expression. Who can tell the difference exactly between the nature of angels and the souls of men ? Now, for that heaven-born soul to lick the dust of the cursed serpent : what a degrading of it is this !—Is not all this then matter of lamentation, that Christ is despised, and the world embraced ?

Use 4. The next use that we make of the doctrine, may be for examination. Try then whether you be weaned from the vain world, yea or not.

1. Are you content and satisfied with a little of the world's good ? And can you bear much of the world's evil ? Have you

got a discovery of Christ, even such as darkens all the glory and excellency of the world ; and been brought to consider, that you have a better portion than the vanity of time ? Can you consider, that the heir of all things, the Son of God, had no place to lay his head, had not a penny in his purse ? Women came and ministered unto him ; a fish came and gave him as much as paid his tribute to Cæsar. Are you deaf to the reproaches of the world, so as the loss of its applause doth not break your heart ? Are you deaf to the profits and honours of the world, so as the want of them doth not afflict you.

2. If you be weaned from the vanity of the world, then you will bear the want of the world with profound submission. If God, in providence, take your houses, your lands, your children, your riches, your loving friends and dear relatives, you will lay your hand on your mouth, and your mouth in the dust, and justify God ; “ In all this Job sinned not.” You will see your all in God and Christ : My God liveth, he is mine inheritance :” for you cannot be disinherited, if God be alive. Whereas the wicked saith in this case, “ They have taken away my gods, and what have I more ?” Their all is gone.

3. If weaned from the world, your affections will not ebb and flow with the world. There are some fountains that have immediate communication with the sea ; whenever the sea flows, they flow ; when the sea ebbs, they ebb and dry up. If it be thus with you, when the candle of providence shines upon your tabernacle, then you rejoice at it, and dance to it ; and when it is removed, then your roar, and weep, and pay a tribute of tears : this is a token you are not weaned from the world. As for the believer, when the world goes out, the Lord comes in its room, and makes him joyful and cheery : and this has such an effect upon him, that he would be content to loose a wife, a child, a worldly comfort every day, upon condition he got God in the room of them.

4. If you be weaned from the world, you will know what it is to carry your closet-frame to your worldly affairs with you. There are some people who have more of God upon their spirit, more fellowship with heaven in their shop, selling their wares, or when they are about secular work, than others have in their closet upon their knees : more of God sitting at their trade, than others in the house of God, hearing a good sermon. Some will have more intercourse with Heaven, at their own table, than ever the worldling had at

a communion table. They carry a heavenly frame to their worldly and earthly employment. As for others, they bring the world still along with them; they bring it to the church, as well as to the market; they are glued to it.

Use 5. We shall improve the doctrine in an use of Exhortation. If all be vanity, then, O seek to have your hearts disengaged from all things in the world; be persuaded to forsake lying vanities, Jonah ii. 8. If it be inquired, What is it to forsake the world? We might give both a negative and a positive reply to this.—Negatively, It is not to go out of the world. It is not to forsake personal society; though a vitious society must be forsaken. It is not to vow a voluntary poverty, with the Papists. It is not to be idle and improvident. But, positively, we are not to forsake it in the four following respects.

1 In respect of the immoderate use of the enjoyment of the world, 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30, 31. We are to use it as stewards, that are to give an account.

2. In respect of service. Be not servants or slaves to it; for you cannot both serve God and mammon.

3. In respect of confidence: trust not to it. Although you have worldly advantages, make them not your staff, your stay, your choice jewels.

4. In respect of adherence; be not glued to the world. Let not the world be like the skin on the hand, that will not easily come off; but like the glove on your hand, or the hat on your head, that you can easily part with.

Try your repentance by this doctrine, which was the evidence of Solomon's repentance. Such as see nothing but glory and goodness, in these outward things, Satan hath bewitched them, Matth. iv. 8; but such as see the extreme vanity of them, have repented with Solomon.

We shall now conclude the subject, by laying before you the following remedies against a worldly disposition. Consider, for this end, the six following particulars.

1. These vanities will not yield you pleasure in the time of the greatest trouble; they cannot ease you of the least pain. When you make a gash in your conscience, and wound your spirit, and so expose yourselves to the wrath of God, what will the things of the world avail you? Who loved the world better than Judas did? But when God burnt his fingers with it, if we may be allowed the

expression, then he threw it away with a fury. What will become of you at death, man? Will it be any comfort to you, that you die in a well-hung room? or that your chamber-floor is laid with silver? or that you die possessed of such a large estate, or ample fortune? Will not the man then cry out, "O if I had but spent some of this time in securing an interest in Christ, that I have bestowed in hunting after the world, that can now stand me in no stead!"

2. Seek a law-work; something of it is absolutely necessary to shake the world out of its place: "He will shake heaven and earth," Heb. xii. 26. People will never leave the world till God shake it out of their heart.

3. Be conversant with your own sensible experience of the world. Have you never found the vanity and emptiness of it? Nay, hath it never been a sting and gall to your poor soul, that the world hath got all your time, thought, and care?

4. Be persuaded, that God in Christ is the only good. Seek the discovery of the glory of God in Christ. Persons may harangue never so long about the world's emptiness and vanity; but they will never part with it till they get something better in the room of it. Something the man must have to set his heart upon: Therefore, till the unsearchable riches of Christ be discovered to the soul, so as your soul's desire run out after him, the husks of the world will be your portion. People may think it is their principle, that the world is but vanity; yet still they are taken up with the vanity thereof, till they see the glory of God. The Lord is a full and sufficient good: he is a proportionable good, suiting the soul: he is an everlasting good, suiting the immortal soul.

5. Believe the providence of God: he that made the world by creation, doth still preserve it by providence, allotting every man his portion, and by making every man's condition in the world best for him: "Your heavenly Father taketh care of you," saith Christ.

6. O beware of valuing yourselves for what you have of the world: I assure you, in God's name, it will be one of your challenges when death comes, or some time a-day or other, Oh! I neglected my poor soul! Like the woman that left her child in the flame; many leave their soul thus, to be consumed in the flame of divine wrath. Seek to have Christ for your everlasting portion. Many say, "Who will show us any good?" But say you, "Lord, lift thou upon me the light of thy countenance; then shall I have

more gladness than they, when their corn and wine abounds." Never rest till you come to that, "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" And then you will be able to say also, "When heart, and flesh, and all fail, the Lord is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."

7. Take up Luther's resolution, that you will not be put off with this world for a portion. If God, for holy ends, sees fit to imbitter worldly felicity to you, pray for weaning influences, improve weaning dispensations and weaning words, weaning rods, and weaning ordinances.

SERMON VIII.

SELF-CONCEIT INCIDENT TO A MULTITUDE OF PROFESSORS; OR,
THE IMAGINARY PURE GENERATION FOUND NOT WASHED
FROM THEIR POLLUTION.¹

PROV. xxx. 12 — "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness."

THE subjects I lately treated, as formerly observed,² hold out to us, 1. The FATHER's exhibition of Christ, saying, "I have given thee for a covenant of the people." 2. The SPIRIT's operation upon the hearts of the people, in order to his being known and believed in; "He shall testify of me." 3. The SON's declaration of his own excellency, as being God equal with the Father; "I and my Father are one." And so Father, Son, and Holy Ghost concur in their commendation of him to us. But, 4. We treated a little of the WORLD's disapprobation of this glorious One, and their harsh entertainment of him; "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel."³ And now, 5. This text may be looked upon as the ground and reason why

(1) This subject was handled in several discourses; but we are uncertain when or where delivered: though it is more than probable, they were preached in his own church at Dunfermline, sometime in the year 1723. The place they have in his notes seems to determine it.

(2) See Sermon VI.

(3) See Sermon VI.

there are so many, even in Israel, that entertain Christ and his followers with marks of reproach, and look upon them as signs and wonders: why? "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness."—Their self-conceit makes them value themselves, to the under-valuing and contemning of others: though yet, while they suppose themselves to be pure, their impurity remains.

We may observe two sorts of persons in the visible church.

1. Some truly exercised persons, who, looking more to their spots and weaknesses than to their graces and privileges, are ready to conclude themselves to be hypocrites and dissemblers with God. There are a few of these.

2. There are those who have nothing but a profession of religion, being strangers to the power of it; yet entertain an high opinion of themselves: who, looking more to their seeming righteousness than to their real cases; more to their gifts than to their spots, conceive themselves to be what they really are not. They have an high conceit, a towering imagination, and raised opinion of themselves, and there is a multitude of such; "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness."

This chapter contains, 1. Augur's confession of faith. 2. His prayer, and the parts of it. 3. His sixfold quaternary; that is, the coupling of four things together, and making a comparison between them; as you may see them divided in the contents of the chapter upon some of your Bibles.—The first four is a fourfold generation of sinners that are most detestable to God; though this be not expressed, yet it is clearly implied; and you will find a parallel where it is expressed, Prov. vi. 16. Now, of the four generations he here speaks of, the second is in our text: "A generation that are pure in their own eyes, yet are not washed from their filthiness." The scope whereof is to shew, that it is a fault incident to vast multitudes, to have an high opinion of themselves, while yet they are naught; to think themselves pure, while yet they are impure: they take external reformation for true conversion, outside holiness for inward sanctification, and common grace for saving.

In the text these persons are described two ways; both negatively and positively.

1. Negatively, from what they are not in reality; they are not washed from their filthiness: where, as the defilement of sin is expressed by the word filthiness, signifying excrement, and denot-

ing the pollution and defilement of sin ; so the necessity of purity is supposed ; they are not washed : they were never cleansed in the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness ; they never washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb ; their hearts and natures remain polluted, and under the power of corruption.

2. They are described positively, from what they are in their own opinion ; they are pure in their own eyes ; they have a spiritual pride. For it is of this, I think, the text chiefly means : because carnal pride is spoken of, ver. 13. They have an high opinion of themselves, and they are set forth by their number : there is a generation of such. This word is sometimes taken for the succession of one age to another. Sometimes it imports a multitude ; and in this sense I chiefly take it ; “ There is a multitude of people that are pure in their own eyes, yet are not washed from their filthiness.”

The farther explication I refer to the prosecution of these three doctrines ; 1. That sin is an impure thing, of a polluting and defiling nature. 2. That purity is an excellent thing, and of absolute necessity to denominate a true saint. Whatever we think of ourselves, if we be not washen from this defilement, we are naught. 3. That self-conceit is incident to a multitude of professors. Many who are most impure, do yet look on themselves as pure, and labour under a sad and woful delusion ; a gross and damnable mistake about the state of their immortal souls ; they have a good heart, they think, and yet, alas ! it is the worst part about them, “ There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness.” The two former doctrines are clearly implied, the last is plainly expressed and is what I mainly designed in fixing on the text : but I shall touch at the two other also. I begin with the first of these, and would speak a little to it at the time.

DOCT. I. That sin is a pollution and defilement.

The method we propose for handling this subject, through divine aid, shall be the following :—

I. We would consider what the scripture saith about the pollution of sin.

II. We would compare the pollution of sin with the guilt of

sin, for clearing the difference between the one and other ;
and for evidencing the greatness of this defilement.

III. Speak of the nature and qualities of this pollution.

IV. We would show whence this pollution comes, and how it
is derived into the world.

V. Make application of the whole subject.

I. The First thing proposed was, To consider what the scripture saith about the pollution of sin. Indeed, the scriptures compare it to all the greatest deformities imaginable. Sometimes it is compared to the blood and pollution of a new-born infant, Ezekiel xvi. 4, 5, 5. Sometimes to a dead body, or a rotten carcase, hanging upon a man, Rom. vii. 24,—“O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death ?” Sometimes to a stinking exhalation of a green open grave, and the rottenness of the land of darkness, Rom. iii. 13. Sometimes to the poison of asps or serpents, Rom. iii. 13. Sometimes to the vomit of a dog, and the puddle of swine, 2 Pet. ii. 22. Sometimes to a canker, or gangrene, 2 Tim. ii. 17. Sometimes to the dung of filthy creatures, Phil. iii. 8 ; or human dung : we read of the dung of men’s sacrifices cast in their faces. Sometimes to the plague and pestilence, to a putrifying sore, Isaiah i. 6. But, not to name any more ; surely, if sin had not been such a pollution and abomination, the spirit of God would not have made use of so many terms, to lay before us the odious nature of it ; yet none of these things, to speak properly, are pollutions in themselves, being part of the ornament of the creation, though they be poison to man, or disagreeable to our senses ; but sin is ugly in itself, and in the eye of God and holy angels.

II. The Second thing was, to compare the pollution of sin, and the guilt of sin together.

1. The pollution of sin hath a reference to the command and precept : the guilt of sin hath a reference to threatening and execution. God enjoins us to do so and so ; we do it not : or he forbids us to do, and we do it : here is the stain, blot, and pollution of sin ; being a deformity of soul, and contrariety to the law of God. The pollution of sin hath relation to the command ; the guilt of sin looks to the sanction : whoever sins shall die, shall be punished ; guilt looks to that.

2. The pollution of sin looks more directly to the holiness of God ; the guilt of sin hath a relation to the justice of God. The

pollution of sin is the direct opposite to that purity that is in him : it is a direct contrariety to his holiness : but guilt looks to the justice of God, which chains the moral evil and the penal evil together.

3. Though guilt of itself, properly speaking, cannot be said to be a good thing, it being evil to the rebel and criminal ; yet it is a good thing that sin should be punished with suffering, and misery and hell : it is the emanation of God's justice and sanction of his law, and obligation upon the rebel, to give God as much glory by his suffering, as he robbed him of by his sin. This guilt in a manner brings all into order again. The pollution of sin breaks the order of the universe : that moral dependence, that the intellectual reasonable world had upon their Maker, is broken by the pollution of sin : but guilt, by punishment, brings all into order again ; while either the guilty man suffers in his own person, which, alas ! he can never fully do ; or his guilt is transferred upon a Surety.

4. The pollution of sin is inseparable from it. Though sin be pardoned, it is still pollution : but guilt may be separate from sin. There may be sin without guilt in two respects. (1.) When God gives a law, and adds no sanction with it : as the greatest of our divines assert, ' that a law may be without a sanction.' (2.) When pardon comes and takes away the guilt. I say, sin may be where there is no guilt ; as in the case of the pardoned sinner, who is no more liable to the punishment due to sin. And guilt may be where there is no sin, as in the case of Christ, who had no sin of his own, yet, as Surety was liable to the punishment of all the sins of an elect world. But though, I say, guilt is separable from sin, yet the pollution of sin is inseparable from sin ; the very nature of sin must be destroyed, ere it can cease to be a pollution.

III. The Third thing was, to speak of the nature and qualities of this pollution. As to the nature of this pollution, there are two words I would say concerning it. There is in it a privation, or want of that beauty, which the soul had, when the image of God was upon it : it is a want of conformity to the holiness and of God's nature and law. There is also in it a positive foulness and defiledness of mind and conscience ; an introducing of the image of the devil ; yea, a deformity of soul, body, and conversation. But this will further appear from the properties of this pollution : and therefore as to the qualities of it,

1. It is a natural pollution ; " Who can bring a clean thing out

of an unclean ! no not one. Whatsoever is born of the flesh is flesh." Adam, after his apostacy, begat a child after his own likeness : had he stood, he would have had children after God's image : but having fallen, he begat a son after his own image. This is natural : "In sin was I conceived (says David) ; and in iniquity did my mother bring me forth," Psalm li. 5.

2. It is a deep and indelible pollution : it is of a crimson hue, Isa. i. 18. It is like the blackness of the Ethiopian, and the spots of the leopard ; much nitre and soap cannot purge it away, Jer. ii. 22. The deluge of water did not wash it away from the earth : the fire that came down upon Sodom did not burn it out. The fire of hell to eternity will not take away the stain of sin out of the souls that shall be there. It is deep ; nothing but the blood of God can wash it away.

3. It is universal : it hath invaded all the faculties of the soul, and set up its trophies of victory in all the powers thereof. The understanding is polluted with ignorance, darkness, error, enmity, and prejudice : in the will, there is a contrariety to God's will, a rebellion, a contempt ; in the memory, a forgetting God ; all his favours to us are written like characters in the sand : the conscience itself, God's deputy, is defiled ; "To the pure, all things are pure ; but to the impure and unclean, even the very mind and conscience is defiled." This witness is bribed to favour the rest of the polluted faculties. Soul and body are contaminated ; we read of the filthiness of the flesh and spirit, 2 Cor. vii. 1.

4. It is a diffusive and infectious pollution ; a spreading gangrene. All the children of men are overspread with it, and defiled. The whole man is over-run. It spreadeth itself to our best duties : all our acts of obedience are thereby rendered like filthy rags ; like a memstrous cloth. It infects others that are near the polluted sinner. It is hard to be in the company of a man that hath the plague, and not to be infected ; Even so, it is one of the hardest things in the world to be witness to sin, and companions to wicked sinners and not be infected ; "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and not be burnt ?" Yea, it infects the very timber and stones of the house where the man lies ; hence they are said to cry out against him. Yea, it infects the very ground on which he treads. Yea, the whole creation groans and travails in pain, because of the sins of men.

5. It is a growing and increasing pollution : "He that is filthy let him be filthy still : " that is, more filthy, Rev. xii. 11. "Evil

men and seducers wax worse and worse," 2 Tim. iii. 13. Sin, once given place to, makes gradual and successful advances upon the sinner.

6. It is a mortal pollution, a deadly pollution: "I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live: yea, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live." The doubling of the expression, shows the deadly nature of the pollution "in the day when thou wast born, thy naval was not cut, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee; thou wast not salted at all nor swaddled at all: no eye pitied thee, to do any of these offices unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out into the open field, to the loathing of thy person in the day that thou wast born. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thy blood, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live; yea, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live," Ezek. xvi. 4, 5, 6. A new-born child, exposed in that case, would soon expire. Oh! but sin puts confusion amongst men; it puts fire into hell; it puts rottenness in the grave: it was only he that went to the grave without sin, that rose without corruption; yea, sin put wrath in the heart of God against man. It is a mortal, deadly, destructive pollution.—Many other dismal qualities of it might be assigned: but I proceed,

IV. To the Fourth thing proposed, which was, to show how this pollution is conveyed into the world, and from one to another. This is a great mystery, and we must be modest on it. Let us only consider then shortly these two things about it.

1. That Adam, once being polluted himself, he cannot but beget a polluted child: hence we read, Gen. v. 3, that he begat a son in his own likeness, after his image. An Ethiopian begets an Ethiopian; and a blackamoor begets a blackamoor: "That which is born after the flesh is flesh," John iii. 6.

2. Consider, when God makes the soul of a man of Adam's race, he looks upon him as a branch and piece of the old Adam; of the old rebel and apostate, to which he gave original beauty, and made it like himself, the glorious work of his hand: but it soon deformed itself. Now, when he makes the faculties, the mind, the will, he goes no further in making them: he does not concrete the original beauty he once gave to man; he is under no obligation to restore what they threw away. Indeed, the elect soul, in the day of conversion, gets all restored to advantage, by the Lord Jesus

Christ; "Then he restores that which he took not away." Psal. lxi. 4. As he restores the favour of God in justification: so the image of God in sanctification; not till then.

V. The Fifth thing proposed was the application of the subject; which we shall essay briefly in several uses.

1st, By way of information. If sin be such a pollution and defilement, then hence see,

1. Why sin keeps men out of heaven. Sin stands directly opposite to the rectitude of God's holy nature; it is that abominable thing which he hates: and it is a positive law of the God of heaven, that nothing that defileth can enter into the heavenly Jerusalem. And therefore sin, considered in its own nature, as exceeding sinful, excludes from the presence of God.

2. See what matter of humiliation, before God, we have: we should lie down in our shame, and our confusion cover us, crying out, Unclean, unclean; humbled to the dust. Alas! what an unreasonable thing is pride: To see a proud sinner is as ridiculous a thing as to see a man vain with a contagious distemper, boasting of bodily comeliness.

3. See hence the dreadful infatuation of the most of the children of men, that are in love with sin, for as filthy as it is: yea, the doleful state of all men by nature. It is a vile state; a state of pollution: it is a state of separation from God; a state of enmity to God, the chief good: and mad love to sin, the chief evil and pollution. Whence is it that the world are in love with dung and filth? Surely it proceeds from blindness of mind: men do not see the evil of sin. It proceeds from unbelief, the power of unbelief; men do not credit the account given of it in the word. It proceeds also from the fair and pleasant varnish that the devil puts upon sin.

4. Hence see the miserable condition of those who are under the total power of sin, and never had the pollution of it washed away: why, it renders you abominable in the sight of God, who is of purer eyes than to behold evil: abominable in the sight of all good men, "In whose eyes a vile person is contemned," Psal. xv. 4: in the sight of good angels; they cannot but loath iniquity, being such spotless and holy creatures; yea, abominable in your own eyes; if ever God open them, you will loath yourself and your sin, as much as ever you loved it.

5. See what need we have to stand at a distance from sin. Sin has brought the greatest desolation upon nations and kingdoms;

ruined the most famous and flourishing churches ; brought destruction upon the greatest and most opulent cities ; vanquished and overcome the greatest men ; and turned the most fertile land into barrenness. Therefore we have much need to stand at a distance from it, seeing it has brought such devastation on the earth.

6. Hence see the righteousness of God in punishing sin. How just and righteous is he in punishing it, whether here or through eternity ? Damnation itself is a most holy, pure, and righteous action. The punishment is not above the fault. Thou that by sin dost trample upon God, how just is it that he should trample upon thee ? Sin is an infinite evil, objectively considered ; and therefore an infinite evil must follow. How unreasonable then are men's complaints of the punishment of their sins in time ? Complain not against the Lord, for any thing that can come upon you : it is the punishment of your sin ; accept of it : " Why should a living man complain ? " So long as it is below damnation, it is far below your desert : " He hath punished us less than our iniquities deserve."

7. Hence see the excellency of holiness : If sin be most vile, holiness is most lovely. Sin is our deformity, holiness is our beauty ; sin is a shame, holiness is a glory.

8. See the impossibility of satisfying God by ourselves ; and the necessity of flying to the blood of Christ. How impossible is it for you to satisfy God by your own duties, reformation, and righteousness ? Can this repair the wrongs done to God, while we have cast the dung of sin upon all the perfections of God ? We have, as it were, trampled God under our feet, and trodden under foot the Son of God, Heb. x. 29. This is worse than that all the world should burn in hell. Can we then make reparation or satisfaction by our duties ? or be justified by our works, while our works themselves are full of sin, and so full of pollution ? No, no. See then the absolute necessity of flying to the blood of Christ : this is the only sanctuary and city of refuge for guilty sinners ; the only purgatory and laver for filthy sinners to be cleansed in : " The blood of Christ [and that only] cleanseth from all sin."

The next use that we make of the doctrine is of Examination. From this we may try, if ever we got a right sight, a saving sight of sin, so as to see it in its polluting and defiling nature. There is a law-sight of sin that ushers in a gospel saving light. Law-work is necessary ; I do not speak of the degrees : but the bankrupt will not run to the surety, till he see himself a dyvour, quite insolvent.

The polluted soul will not fly to the fountain till he sees himself polluted and defiled.

But possibly it may be asked, How shall a person know, if, after some law-work of this sort, he hath got a gospel saving sight of the pollution of sin?

We shall answer to this only in these two particulars following.

1. If so, then you have seen it in the gospel glass, and that is a crucified Christ: "They shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn:" that is on a crucified Christ. Christ on the cross, is a glass wherein we see the sinfulness of sin more than any-where else. Here God's hatred against sin appears most clearly; and at the same time his love to the sinner, in giving his Son to the death for his sin: and this love melts the heart, and breaks and dissolves it more than all the terrors of the law or flames of hell could do.

2. If so, then the sight hath wrought a gospel effect, such as that upon Job, chap. xlii. 5, 6.—"Now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." This sight hath made you look upon yourself with abhorance; and made you displeased with yourself, and even to loath yourself before God; and loath your sin, and see yourself more filthy than the most loathsome creature on earth: yea, than the blackest devil in hell: And you will also find some disposition, under a sense of daily defilement, to make a daily improvement of the fountain of the blood of Christ, for cleansing. When any pollution is contracted, you will anew find yourself uneasy, till you get a new dip in the fountain. If it be thus with you, I think the Lord hath begun to cleanse you from your pollution. But, alas! the most part who hears me, lie stinking in the filthy mire of the pollution of sin.

Therefore, in the next place, permit me to apply the doctrine in an use of Exhortation. Let me exhort you,

1. To see and be convinced of your sad, sinful, and polluted state and condition. Alas! what is your natural state, man, woman? You that are unregenerate, you are lying in the mire, and loving to wallow like swine in it. A sheep may run into the mire, but cannot rest there till it get out: but the swine love to lie in it, to wallow in it, and seek no better place to stay in. "The whole world lieth in wickedness," 1 John v. 19. They lie in it like a vessel in the dub, that must needs be full. They are full of sin; never emptying, but always filling: yea, when the man thinketh

he is emptying of sin, when he thinketh he is repenting and reforming, then he is filling with it, and carrying a fulness of it about with him, insomuch that he is dropping off that fulness of sin wherever he goes. You will say, that beggar is so full of vermin, that he is dropping his vermin, wherever he goes : So, many people discover their fulness of sinful pollutions, by dropping this vermin wherever they go. If they come into good company, they are dropping their vermin there ; if they come into bad company, they are diffusing their pernicious pollutions there. Why they are so full of pollution, so full of sin, that sometimes it drops out of their eyes in proud looks, or wanton glances ; sometimes it drops out of their lips in vain discourse, or profane language, such as swearing, lying, slandering and idle words ; and drops out of their whole behaviour and deportment. Alas ! what a miserable case and condition are they in ? Their heart is the source of all corruption ; a nest of vermin that was never herried, a sty that was never cleansed ; and out of that receptacle creeps a multitude of noxious vermin every day, and every hour of the day ; for out of the heart proceedeth all the wickedness of the heart and life : “ Out of the heart proceedeth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnesses, blasphemies ; these are the things that defile a man,” Mat. xv. 19, 20. Oh ! see and lament your sad state ; and know, if ever you dwell with a holy God, you must be washed, Psal. xxvi. 3, 4. If your filthiness remain, the filthy devil and you must lodge together in hell for ever. Therefore,

2. O seek to be washed : “ Wash ye, make ye clean.” Isa. i. 16. This was an exhortation to the church of the Jews, when very corrupt and degenerate. In which exhortation, there is something supposed, namely, that the church was greatly defiled. Indeed, the church of God is sometimes black like a Pagan nation ; yea, blacker by reason of sin against clearer light, greater love, stronger vows, and contempt of an offered Christ. Again, in this exhortation there is something expressed, even their incumbent duty ; “ Wash ye, make ye clean.” It is a New Testament duty under an Old Testament phrase. But who can cleanse his heart ? Indeed, when God commands us to make a clean heart, the design is, that we may turn the precept into a prayer, and say, “ Lord, create in me a clean heart : wash me, and I shall be clean.” This seems to be the native view, and plain import of the text. “ Wash your hands, ye sinners ; purify your hearts, ye double-minded,” saith the Lord, by

the apostle James. O what filthy hands are there amongst us? and much more filthy hearts! Heart-unbelief, heart-hardness, heart-enmity, heart-stupidity, heart-hypocrisy, heart-atheism, heart-deadness and indisposition, heart-wandering and wickedness, and innumerable such plagues, discover the pollution of the heart. Do you not need washing?

There is a fourfold water that God makes use of for this end; and you should improve these waters.

(1.) The water of affliction; "By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged. It was good for me that I was afflicted." This water, indeed, washes not of itself, but only as a mean in God's hand, when he blesses it; this water washes subserviently, as the saw hath a subserviency to cut the timber, when in the workman's hand. Therefore, improve dispensations of providence, and cry, "Lord, let not this affliction pass without some efficacy upon my soul, to wash and cleanse me from my sin."

(2.) The water of the word, the waters of the sanctuary; these are healing, medicinal, and cleansing waters: "Now are ye clean, through the word that I have spoken unto you. Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth." This water washes instrumentally; not by an intrinsic virtue of its own, but by the power of God accompanying it. Therefore, when you hear the word, cry for power to attend it for washing you. The word discovers the spot of sin, James i. 23, 24. The word proposes the rule of holiness, and the most noble pattern of purity: "Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto, according to thy word," Psal. cxix. 9. The word hid in the heart is like a fire, to burn and consume the dross of sin. The word holds forth the grace of God, and the love of Christ, which constrains to purity: "Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness."

(3.) The water of the Spirit's saving influences; this water washes efficiently. It is only through the Spirit that we mortify the deeds of the body. O sirs, employ the Holy Ghost to wash, to cleanse, to purify, regenerate, and sanctify you: we are said to be washed, justified, and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. It is the work of the Spirit to cleanse and purify; it is his function, it is his office, and he loves to be employed.

(4.) There is the crimson water of the Redeemer's blood; and this water washes meritoriously: this is the fountain opened to the house of David, and inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for un-

cleanness, Zech. xiii. 1. The blood of the Lamb is a fountain; it is not a rivulet, but a fountain, gushing out with freedom; it is not a fountain sealed, but a fountain open; every man, every woman is welcome to wash and purify themselves at it; welcome to bathe in it, till they be whiter than the snow. It is open, not only to the house of David, the royal family: but to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; to the poorest and meanest of the visible church. This is the river that makes glad, because it makes clean the city of God. O sirs, run to this blood of the Lamb; wash there every day. There is an original washing in the day of conversion: this is an initial washing that many hearing me stand in need of: O but you stand in need to be plunged well then, in a day of power, that the filthy nature may be washed and changed. There is also a progressive daily-washing, from the daily pollutions that are contracted; and this washing the godly themselves daily need: though they need not to be regenerated again, or a new regeneration of their nature; yet they need always a new conversion and washing of their heart and way; hence Christ saith to Peter, John xiii. 10, "He that is washed, needeth not save to wash his feet." Sins contracted, by daily unwatchfulness, put the people of God under a necessity of daily washing, though not a washing of the whole person; for that is done in regeneration, wherein the state is changed; "He that is washed, needeth not save to wash his feet;" the feet of his affections, the feet of his conversation, the steps of his daily walk. But there are multitudes that were never washed at all; they must wash head, and heart, and all; their nature and state need washing, as well as their heart and life.

In a word, employ the Lord Jesus to do all the work, who said in that context, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me." Know you cannot wash yourselves by any of these means, unless he put to his hand, and do the whole work: put your polluted souls into his hand, saying, "Lord, wash me; apply thy cleansing blood by the power of the eternal Spirit."

S E R M O N I X.

PROV. xxx. 12.—"There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness."

[The Second Sermon on this Text.]

It contributes much to set forth the excellency of the Scripture as being indeed the word of the infinitely wise God, that it points out

the lively picture of people, in all times, and ages, and generations : insomuch that the Scriptural account of people is never out of date. It were well if the world were mended, since the Spirit of God dictated this sentence, so many thousand years ago : nay, but I think it is as applicable to the present generation, as if it had never concerned any other. Try it when you will, sirs, either with respect to yourselves or the generality of people round about you, and you will find it to be the very image and picture of the day. As face answering face in a glass, so, in the looking-glass of this text, you may see your own face, man, woman ; and the face of a multitude in our day. Was there ever more filthiness and impurity of thought, word, and action : of heart, speech, and behaviour ; and yet in what a proud, self-conceited, self-justifying delusion and dream are many into ; as if they were pure, good, civil, sober, honest, and righteous enough. Well may it be said, " There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness."

Having, in the preceding discourse, opened up and applied the first doctrinal observation we laid down from the words, we shall now proceed to the second doctrine.

OBSER. II. That purity is an excellent thing, and of absolute necessity to denominate a true saint, a true Christian.

In the handling of this proposition, we propose, through divine aid, to observe the following method and order,

- I. Touch a little at the nature of this purity.
- II. Mention some of the qualities of it.
- III. Inquire into the necessity thereof.
- IV. Point out the excellency of this purity.
- V. Make application of the subject.

I. We shall return to the First of these, viz. To touch a little at the nature of this purity. And what we intend to offer upon this head, may be comprised in these two things. 1. The removal of the filthiness. 2. The conferring of cleanness.

1st, This purity lies in the removal of the filthiness that the text speaks of. The man that is pure is washed from his filthiness in the blood of Christ. And there is a threefold filthiness that is washed away.

1. The filthiness of our nature. We are naturally unclean and defiled ; for, That which is born of the flesh is flesh, John iii. 6. And, who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Now it is the purifying grace of God in Christ, that only can remove this defilement of our nature ; "Such were some of you ; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God," 1 Cor. vi. 11. He saveth by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, Titus iii. 3—5. Now, how far original pollution is removed, in those whom the Lord purifies, we need not dispute : it is certain, the soul is made fair and beautiful in the sight of God ; though the sin that doth defile, remains, yet its habitual defilement is taken away, when the person is purified.

2. The filthiness of our person, in actual transgression, is taken away in this work of sanctification and purification. There is a defilement attending every actual sin : Now, it is the blood of Christ that cleanseth from all sin. Besides the defilement of the nature which he purges, Titus i. 15, he takes away the defilement of our persons by actual follies ; for, "By one offering he perfected for ever them that are sanctified," Heb. x. 14.

3. The filthiness and defilement of our duties is also taken away, in this work of purification. There is a defilement arises from our duties ; unbelief and formality drop in into our best duties ; we may be ashamed of our choicest performances. God hath promised, concerning the good works of the saints, that their works shall follow them, Rev. xiv. 13. Truly, if they were to be measured by the rule, as they come from us, it might be well for the saints that they might be buried for ever : but the Lord Jesus Christ, as their High-priest, bears the iniquities, the guilt, and provocation which, in strict and severe justice, doth attend them, Exod. xxviii. 38. He bears the iniquities of our holy things ; and not only so, but washes away all filth and defilement ; and adds sweet incense that they may be accepted. Whatever is of the Spirit, of himself, of grace, that remains : but whatever is of flesh, self, and unbelief, that is hay and stubble, and that he consumes and takes away ; in-somuch, that the good works of the believer shall meet him one day with such changed countenance, that he shall not know them ; that which seemed black, deformed, and defiled, shall appear beautiful and glorious ; they shall not be afraid of them, but rejoice to see them follow them.

This cleansing of the man's nature, person, and duties, from all defilement, is owing to the death of Christ meritoriously, to the power of the Holy Ghost efficiently: he is that pure water where with we are sprinkled from all our sins: that Spirit of judgment and burning, that takes away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and purges the blood of Jerusalem from the midst of her, Isa. vi. 4. But then,

2dly, This purity lies not only in the removal of this filthiness and defilement; but in the conferring of cleanness. And this is also in a threefold gradation.

1. When God purifies a person, he gives the Spirit of purity and holiness to dwell in the man; our renewing is of the Holy Ghost, who is shed on us abundantly through Christ, Tit. iii. 6. The principal thing in sanctification and purification, is the indwelling of the purifying Spirit; and our following after the guidance thereof. The Spirit is the well within, the fountain of purity: "I will put my Spirit within you; and cause you to walk in my statutes," Ezek. xxxvi. 26. No pure and holy step, till once this pure and holy Spirit be put within men.

2. He gives habitual grace; the principal of grace opposite to the principal of sin that is in our nature; this is that incorruptible seed that dwells in the man whom the Lord purifies. This grace, according to the distinct faculties of the soul where it is, or the distinct object about what it is exercised, receives various names and appellations, though all be but one new principle of life: in the understanding it is light; in the will, it is obedience: in the affections, it is love; and in all it is faith: but still one and the same habit of grace.

3. He gives actual influences, for the performance of every spiritual duty; for, though a man be purified in both the former respects, by having the spirit dwelling in him, and a principal and habit of grace infused; yet, even to such as have both these, Christ saith, that without him they can do nothing; that is, without new influences of grace, new supplies, and motions, and operations of the Spirit. They cannot live and spend upon the old stock; for every new act they must have a new influence; and the spirit that dwells in the man, must work in him. And as he hath implanted grace, so he must draw forth grace into exercise; and work in us both to will and to do, Phil. ii. 13.—Thus you have somewhat of the nature of this purity; it consists in the removal of filthiness, and conferring of cleanness.

II. As to the qualities of this purity, I shall express them both negatively and positively at once. And,

1. It is not a natural, but a supernatural and spiritual purity. The power of natural conscience, may engage a man to do many things, as Herod, while yet he is a stranger to gospel purity, which is supernatural; for it is from above; the man that is purified, is born of the Spirit, and born from above; he is God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. It is the Spirit of God that garnishes the soul with these spiritual embroideries; they are fruits of the Spirit. These that are no purer than when they were born, or than they are by nature, have no purity at all; they are not washed from their filthiness.

2. It is not an hypocritical, but a real unfeigned purity. Many hypocrites there are, that draw near to God with their mouth, and honour him with the lip; but their hearts are far removed from him. Their hearts are not right with God. The saint is said to have his heart sound in God's statutes! and to have truth in the inward parts; and a spirit without guile, in opposition both to gross and close hypocrisy. The gross hypocrite is one that knows he is juggling with God and religion; surely there is no purity there. The close hypocrite is deceiving himself, and is not aware of it.

But here a question may arise, May one be a hypocrite and not know it?

To which we may reply, no doubt of it; for many are playing the hypocrite, when they think they are very devout persons; their hearts are divided; not upright, but complex: and they have a complex portion; God and the creature make up a portion to them. The hypocrite gives God a part of his heart, and the creature a part of his heart; he gives heaven and duties a part of his heart and time; and he gives hell and idols another part of his heart and time. The worship of God that gratifies his conscience; the way of sin, that gratifies his affections; and between the two he is pleased. God alone doth not satisfy him; the creature alone doth not satisfy him: but he runs between the two. But the cloven foot is a mark of the devil; the heart is divided. But the pure, the upright man, is one who dares not regard iniquity in his heart, and who takes a God in Christ alone for all his portion and happiness; that satisfies all the vast desires of his soul; "and "To whom shall I go? saith he, Thou hast the words of eternal life." God is the centre of the soul's rest: Return to Thy rest, O my soul," Psal. cxvi. 7.

3. It is not a speculative, but an operative purity. Some have all their religion in their head, but nothing in their heart and life; all the knowledge they are master of hath no influence upon the sanctification of either. Many people are like rickety children, their heads are swelled, but their backs are narrow and contracted: so they have heads full of light, but they are empty of piety and purity; "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him." Indeed, if they had a true knowledge of God, it would lead to true sanctity; but they are the liker the devil, who hath much knowledge, but no purity. People may be like the toad, who hath a precious stone in his head, but his belly is full of poison; they may have a head full of notional knowledge; but they have an heart full of unmortified enmity.

4. It is not a common, but a special purity. People may have common influences of the Spirit of God; not only may their understandings be much enlightened, like those, Heb. vi. 4.: but their will may be renewed, toward many good purposes and resolutions, like Agrippa, almost persuaded to be saints: their affections may be several ways touched. There are common gifts and graces of the Spirit, that may both warm the affection, and smooth the conversation; while yet the heart is not washed from its filthiness, in the manner that I have described.

5. It is not a superstitious, but a scriptural and regular purity. Many worship God vainly, while they worship him superstitiously; in a manner not required in his word: such are all these forms of worship, and of divine service, in those churches that are over-run with human inventions, and unscriptural ceremonies: "In vain do they worship me: teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." The word of God is the standard of true piety and purity: "As many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them," saith the apostle," and on the Israel of God. To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this it is because there is no light in them." No man can do any thing in faith, unless he can say, "So it is written;" or hath a "Thus saith the Lord," to warrant it; and whatsoever is not thus of faith, is sin. This purity is scriptural, both with respect to the law and the gospel: the law is the rule of purity, and the gospel is the instrument, even the word of grace: "Now are ye clean, through the word that I have spoken unto you. Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth."

6. It is not a partial, but an extensive, universal purity. It is

not a part of the man, that is washed from filthiness, but the whole man ; the whole man is renewed after the image of God. " If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature ; old things are past away ; behold, all things are become new." There is a new state, a new disposition : there is a new light in the understanding : the light of the knowledge of the glory of God : a new liberty in the will ; being made willing in the day of God's power ; a new order in the affections ; they being set upon things above ; a new peace in the conscience ; a peace that passeth all natural understanding ; a new lustre in the whole conversation ; it being a conversation becoming the gospel ; a new trade of communion with God, and intercourse with heaven ; a new war against the devil, the world, and the flesh ; " All things are become new." Think not you are holy enough, when free from the outward pollutions of the world. New desires and new delights must be inlaid and implanted in the soul : new faith, in opposition to the old dead faith ; new hope, in opposition to the old natural hope ; new repentance, in opposition to the old covenant repentance ; a new obedience, in opposition to the old-covenant obedience. And so,

7. It is not a legal, but an evangelical purity. Legal-purity is built upon the ground of personal righteousness and inherent strength, like Adam's in a state of innocency ; but evangelical purity, is built upon the ground of Christ's righteousness and strength, Isa. xlv. 24. The man that is evangelically purified, saith, " Surely in the Lord only have I righteousness and strength." Gospel-purity acts upon the divine strength of Christ, for being to itself, and for all its assistance ; and it acts upon the divine righteousness of Christ, for acceptation to itself, and for all its acceptance.—Legal-purity acts by compulsion and constraint, from fear of hell, and the like : but gospel purity acts freely, and from love. Legal-purity levels at self, and the magnifying thereof : gospel-purity levels at free-grace, and the praise and glory thereof.—Legal-purity is mercenary, expecting God will make out his part, because the pure creature thinks he has done his endeavour, to perform his condition on his part ; and so imagines he has a right founded upon his purity and holiness ; but gospel-purity is humble, and takes all things freely ; not in a conditional way, but in an absolute manner, with respect to him ; and expecting all things promised in the covenant, only upon the condition performed by Christ, his obedience to the death.

8. It is not an evanishing, but a permanent purity. All the religion that many have is evanishing and superficial ; it comes and goes like a flash of lightning. True purity is permanent and constant ; it continues and grows ; for, " He that hath clean hands shall wax stronger and stronger." The righteous holdeth on his way, like a vessel sailing towards such a port, though it meet with many blasts to drive it hither and thither, and sometimes very far back ; yet it goes on again, and makes out the harbour designed : so, though the believer may meet with blasts of temptation and corruption, that may set him far back ; yet he holds on his way. A God in Christ is the centre of rest, to which he moves ; yea, he hath taken up his rest in him, and there he resolves to stay for ever : he hath chosen a God in Christ for his portion, and he is determined to abide by his choice ; " Whom have I in heaven but thee ? And there is none in all the earth that I desire beside thee," Psal. lxxiii. 25. As if he had said, I have been ranging and ransacking heaven, and looking to all the angels there ; I have been traversing earth, and viewing all the children of men ; but there is none worthy of my choice but thee alone ; " Whom have I in heaven but thee ? And there is none in all the earth that I desire besides thee." Here is a characteristic and distinguishing quality of a pure and upright man. A hypocrite can go to a preaching and prayer ; but he can never say, Now, I could live and die in this work ; no, no : the man must be back to the world again, back to his idols again : there is something in the earth that is more his portion than God ; so his religion is vanishing. But,

III. It is proper now to speak a word of the necessity of this purity. Here I would essay two things :—1. Shew that it is necessary. 2. Inquire for what it is necessary.

1st, We are to shew that purity is necessary. This will appear clear, if you consider these things following.

1. That purity is necessary, will appear from all the typical works under the law ; the legal washings and purifyings. What meant the great sea of brass that was appointed for the high priests to wash in, before they compassed the altar ? What needed all the washings of the people and of the sacrifices ? Certainly, if we look not to the spirituality of it, but only to the letter, they seem a piece of pageantry, unworthy of the divine spirit to concern himself in these outward washings : but having a further view, they point at a gospel, spiritual washing and purification.

2. The necessity of it is evident from the sacramental washing in the New Testament. What means the sacrament of baptism? Doth it not speak forth the necessity of our washing? Who no sooner enter on the threshold of life, than there is the laver of regeneration presented for washing and purification.

3. The necessity of it is evident from all the commands of the law. Every command hath a voice; and the general voice and cry of all is, "Wash ye, make ye clean," Isa. i. 16. "The end of the commandment is love, out of a pure heart," 1 Tim. i. 5.

4. The necessity of it is evident from the promises of the gospel. The great promise of the new covenant is, "I will sprinkle them with clean water, and they shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols I will cleanse you," Ezek. xxxvi.

25. These promises were needless, if purity was not necessary: and we ought to make use of these promises, and plead them.

5. In a word, It was the end of Christ's coming into the world, that he might redeem from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people.—It was the design of his abode in it, that he might leave us an example, set before us a pattern of holiness, that we might follow his steps, and be holy as he is holy.—It was the intention of his death, and the shedding of his blood; for he suffered without the gate, that he might sanctify the people, and that his blood might be a laver for washing away all their filthiness and impurity, and a fountain for washing away all sin and uncleanness, because his blood cleanses from all sin.—Christ prayed for this blessing to us; "Sanctify them through the truth."—He sent the spirit for this end, that he might convince of sin, cause us to walk in his statutes, and apply his blood for purifying our consciences from dead works.—Thus we see that purity is necessary.

2dly, We proceed now to consider, for what it is necessary. Amongst others it is necessary for these things following.

1. It is necessary to evidence our justification and pardon. Why, if you be not purified, you are not pardoned; for the pardoned man is a purified man. When God reveals the guilt of sin, he destroys, in some measure, the strength of sin; Rom. viii. 1. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus:" i. e. they are justified. Well, how do they evidence that? They walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

2. It is necessary to clear up our evidences for heaven.—It is necessary to clear your adoption; "Touch not the unclean thing,

saith the Lord; and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters," 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18. The meaning is, in a word; this purity shall be an evidence of my paternal relation to you; and hereby your adoption into my family will be cleared up; for, if you be of God's family, you will, through grace study purity.—It is necessary to your union with him; I do not mean that the soul must first be purified, before it be united to Christ; as if none were to come to Christ, till they first make themselves pure: nay, that is cross to the very scope of the gospel, which calls polluted sinners to come to him, that they may be washed by him. But I say, it is necessary to union, in regard that, in uniting a soul to himself, he purifies that soul; and there cannot be an union between Christ and the soul otherwise; "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made to us sanctification," 1 Cor. i. 30. If Chrish come into the soul, he comes in sanctifying and purifying the soul: for he cannot unite with impurity; light cannot unite with darkness, neither life match with death. Can heaven mingle with hell or flesh with spirit? No; there is no union, but in this purifying spirit to come in. It is necessary to our communion with God. As I said of union so I say of communion; when God vouchsafes to bring a person to communion with himself, he purifies that person; for, what communion hath light with darkness? And the more that a person is purified, the more communion with God; "If a man love me, and keep my words, my father will love him; and we will come unto him, and take up our abode with him," John xiv. 23. And, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him," John xiv. 21.

3. It is necessary to the acceptableness of our services unto God. As in justification the believer is made accepted; so in sanctification he is made acceptable. I distinguish between acceptance and acceptableness: We are accepted only in the beloved; but those that are loved of him, and accepted, they are also made lovely and acceptable. Justification and pardon makes a man loved and accepted; but sanctification and purity maketh him lovely and acceptable. The greatest performances, in obedience to the most express commands, are lost; they are unacceptable and abominable, in the sight of God, without purity, Isa. lxvi. 3.—He that killeth an ox, as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut

off a dog's neck ; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood ; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol ; yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations." All duties, all actions : natural actions, civil actions, religious actions, they are all abominable to him, without this purity.

4. It is necessary to access to God : " I will wash mine hands in innocence, and so will compass thine altar," Psal. xxvi. 6. " Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord ? who shall stand in his holy place ? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart," &c., Psal. xxiv. 3, 4. It is necessary to access, not as the ground of access to God, but as the qualification of the person that shall have access. The legal dream of the natural bias of the heart makes it necessary still to distinguish matters well upon this subject. The only ground of access is the blood of Christ ; " In whom we have boldness and access, with confidence, by the faith of him," Eph. iii. 12. Purity itself, in whatever measure communicated to us, is not the foundation of our access to God, but it is the qualification of the subject, or person, that hath access ; he is a person who, being privileged with access by the blood of Christ, is also washed and purified by that same blood ; and this is the character of the man that shall ascend to the hill of the Lord, and stand in his holy place, being thus put in a capacity so to do. Indeed, the believer comes always in the sense of impurity, and to be cleansed ; and this very thing is some purity.

IV. The Fourth general head we proposed, was, To touch at the excellency of this purity. We shall endeavour to point out the excellency thereof in the ten following particulars.

1. The excellency of it appears, in that it assimilates unto God : It is a resemblance of God, who is perfect purity ; and purity is one of the most noble parts of his image. Every creature hath some resemblance of God ; the very inanimate creatures resemble him, in respect of being : and living creatures resemble him, in something of life ; nay, the very devils resemble him in something of knowledge. But for the resemblance of the moral perfection, his holiness and purity, this is what devils and men, by their sin and fall, are opposite and antipodes to : but it is the honour of all the saints, to have some resemblance of God, even in holiness,

2. It cannot but be excellent, for it retrieves our original innocence, partly here, and fully hereafter. When man dropt out of

God's creating hand, he was like the picture of God, in a cloud: O he was lovely! he was an absolute beauty, without any deformity! But, alas! he quickly was perverted, and his beauty defaced. Now, this purity retrieves our original beauty.

3. The excellency of it cannot but appear in this, that it is the design of the whole Trinity, in all their great actions. It is the design of God, the Father, in electing a set of people, that they might be holy; "He hath chosen us in him, that we should be holy," Eph. i. 4. It was the design of Christ, in dying, that he might purify to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works, Tit. ii. 14. It was not merely to pardon, but to purify; pardon only keeps us from hell; but purity makes us like God himself, and fit for heaven. It is the design of the Holy Ghost to purify; and why is he called the Holy Ghost? Not only because he is essentially holy; for, indeed, the Father and the Son are the same holy spirit with him; but because of his function and operation, by the divine economy; it being his work to make a holy world, a pure world.

4. It is excellent, in regard it is a distinguishing character of the Christian religion, from all others. What is Mahometanism, but a mixture of distracted fancies and erroneous pollutions? The Pagan religion is nothing but a pollution; their gods are brought in as murderers and liars. Piety and purity is the distinguishing character of the Christian religion, and the great design of it; "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity," 2 Tim. ii. 19. Their name should be, "Holiness to the Lord."

5. It is excellent, in regard it is the beauty of the rational creature. We are called to worship him in the beauty of holiness, Psal. xxix. 2. This is a beauty that makes a man outshine the sun in splendour. Impurity is the greatest deformity. I have read of an old woman, who, seeing her deformity in a glass, did run mad. O sirs! if God should show us our deformity, in a glass of the law, it were enough to make us run distracted, if there was no discovery of a fountain for purification and washing.

6. It is excellent, in regard that it is the real glory and honour of a man that hath it; and it is sin that is a man's shame and dishonour. Naaman was general of the king's army, a man of great favour with his prince, a man of great honour and respect, a mighty man of valour: but he was a leper; this, "But he was a leper," was a cloud upon all his glory, and a nail upon all his honour. So

to say, There is a wise man, but he is unholy ; there is a great man, but he is unholy : there is a good-natured man, a learned man, but he is a stranger to gospel purity ; this is a cloud of darkness upon all his other excellencies. Whereas purity and piety, in a gospel-sense, is the real glory and honour of a man : “ Righteousness exalts a nation,” saith Solomon ; “ but sin is a reproach to any people,” Prov. xiv. 14. Purity exalts a man, exalts a people. God’s holiness is his glory, Deut. xxvi. 18, 19, and must be much more so to man. Yea, it is not only an honour to the man himself, that is endowed with it ; but it makes the man an honour to those that are concerned in him. The purity and piety of the father, is an ornament to the child : when it can be said, There is the child of a godly man ; it is the child’s honour : and the purity and piety of the child is also an ornament and honour to the parent. So was Abraham to Isaac, and Isaac to Abraham. Solomon calls a good and virtuous wife, a crown to her husband : and so is a godly husband a crown of honour to the wife. Such persons are a crown and honour to the families where they reside ; yea, to the place where they are born and bred : “ Of Zion it shall be said, This man and that man was born there,” Psal. lxxxvii. 5.

7. It is excellent, in respect of its gainfulness, or the advantages accruing to it. True riches are to be had this way : “ Godliness is great gain,” 1 Tim. vi. 6. “ It is profitable in all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come,” chap. iv. 8. It hath the promise of all things annexed to it : not as a promise of life that was made to works and doing, in the covenant of works : beware of that thought : for now, in the covenant of grace, all the promises are thus annexed only to Christ, and his obedience to the death, his perfect righteousness, and to the believer only, in and through him, and through this obedience of his. The annexing of the promise to our works and obedience, as in themselves considered, as it is to turn the covenant of grace into a covenant of works ; so, it is like to be the ruining error of many in our day, and even of tall cedars in our Lebanon, that are like to fall into the horrible pit of an old covenant religion, notwithstanding of a new-covenant-profession : but the promise is annexed to godliness thus, viz. as it is an evidence of union to Christ, and participation of his righteousness, in whom, and through which righteousness, “ All the promises are Yea and Amen.” And now, what gain what profit is here ? It hath thus the promise of all things, tem-

poral and eternal, Prov. xxii. 4. Profit is a bait that all bite at ; it is the great god of the world, that competes with the true God, for a place in the heart and affections of men, in opposition to the first and great command, "Thou shalt have no other god before me." But here is profit, infinitely beyond the world : it is present gain ; it is the best, the true gain.

8. It is excellent, in regard of its pleasantness : here is pleasure, as well as honour and profit : which three are usually called the world's trinity. What pleasure is there to be had in the way of purity ? Why, "Wisdom's ways are pleasantness, and all her paths are peace," Prov. iii. 17. This made David choose rather to be a door-keeper in the house of God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness ; and to value a day in his courts better than a thousand elsewhere, Psalm lxxxiv. 10. It is true, many never tasted the sweetness that is in God's way ; and hence they weary of means and ordinances ; but they that taste the same, they find that the work of righteousness is peace ; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever, Isa. xxxii. 17. And it is not only pleasant to all that know it, but hath such a perfume and savour, that it is most pleasant and delightful to all that come near it. We have a bright example of this in the primitive Christians, Acts ii. 46, 47. "And they continued daily with one accord in the temple : and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people." What was it that recommended them to the favour of all the people ? It was the exercise of their graces, by reason of the Lord's presence with them. A pure conversation is a gaining thing ; hence the apostle speaks of being won by holy conversation, 1 Pet. iii. 1. We read of a pure virgin, Cecilia, by her holy deportment at her martyrdom, that she was the means of converting four hundred to Christ.

9. It is excellent, in regard of its antiquity. Purity was the first suit that ever was upon man's back ; he being created after the image of God. Sin is of a later edition than sanctity ; it is but an upstart. Sanctity is the first-born : "Ask for the old path," Jer. vi. 16. Many boast of antiquity for the defence of their ceremonies and superstition : Where was your religion, say the Papists, before Luther and Calvin ? Why, it was even in the Bible, as well as among the church visible. But, what though men should pretend to the greatest antiquity that it is possible for sinful and supersti-

tious customs to pretend to, let us hold by Scripture antiquity. It will not justify sin, that it is as old as the devil; but purity and holiness is of an older date than the devil himself; he was a holy angel before he was an unholy angel.

10. It is excellent, in regard that it is the excellency of all other excellencies: it is the excellency of all the divine perfections, that they are holy. The angels that knew well what is the top of their excellency, discover this in their threefold repetition, "Holy, holy, holy," Isa. vi. 3. It is the excellency of all accomplishments among men. Let a man have never so much excellency, birth, and breeding, wit and wealth, honour and grandeur, learning and literature, if this be wanting, there is no true excellency therein. In a word, "Without holiness no man shall see God," Heb. xii. 14. "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God," Matth. v. 8. So much for a short hint at the excellency of this purity.

SERMON X.

Prov. xxx. 12.—"There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness."

[The Third Sermon on this Text.]

It is a sad sentence, when God passes it upon any, "He that is filthy, let him be filthy still; he that is unjust, let him be unjust still," Rev. xii. 11. "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone," Hosea iv. 17. O how sad is it, when God says, concerning such a person, "Let him alone!" Ministers and ordinances, Let him alone: Word and Spirit, Let him alone: Let no word that is preached do him good: Let no threatening of the word awaken him: Let no promise of the word allure him: Let no precept of the word draw him: Let him continue hardened against all that can be said from the word: Let him alone; let him live and die under the power and guilt of sin, under the wrath and curse of God: he is a filthy man, and she is a filthy woman, and let them be filthy still. Oh! dreadful sentence. And yet it seems to be passed against the generality of people in our day: and yet few or none are touched with it: let us think on it in sad earnest: for, as my text

saith, "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness."

We have finished what we designed on the doctrinal part of the second observation we deduced from the words, by inquiring into the nature, mentioning some of the qualities, evincing the necessity, and pointing out the excellency of purity. We now proceed,

V. To the Fifth thing proposed, viz. The application of the subject. This we shall essay in several uses.

1st, Let us improve this doctrine for information. Is it so, as has been said, That purity is an excellent thing and of absolute necessity to denominate a true saint? Then,

1. Hence see the difference between justification and sanctification. Sanctification, or purity, is necessary and excellent, in all the respects that I have formerly named: but yet it is not necessary for justification, so as to be the ground thereof. It is necessary to be the evidence of justification; but not the ground thereof: the ground of justification is only Christ's righteousness. Many are utterly bemisted in this point; they confound justification with sanctification. Though, indeed, they be as inseparable as head and body to a living man, yet there can be nothing more different. They are most distinct, (1.) Justification comes from the merit of Christ; sanctification comes from the Spirit of Christ. (2.) Justification makes a relative change, by bringing us from enemies to friends, from condemnation to absolution; sanctification makes a real change, by healing our inward maladies and plagues. (3.) Justification gives us a title to heaven; sanctification gives us a meetness for heaven. (4.) Justification takes away the guilt of sin; sanctification takes away the filth, and power, and pollution of sin. (5.) Justification is by a righteousness without us; sanctification is by a righteousness within us. (6.) In justification there is the imputation of Christ's righteousness and sanctification; but in sanctification there is the implantation of grace, and something subjectively imparted, not imputed to us, but wrought in us by the Holy Ghost. (7.) Justification is but one act and once acted; sanctification is a continual action, or a progressive work. (8.) Justification is perfect and absolute; sanctification is imperfect and but begun. And hence, (9.) Justification is equal and alike in all believers; no man is more justified than another: sanctification is unequal, in some more, and in some less, according to the measure of the gift of Christ: justification is perfect the first moment;

sanctification is never perfect till a man die. (10.) In justification we are passive, and do nothing; but in sanctification we are active; for being acted, we act; being moved, we move and do work, being set on work by the Spirit of God: Is there anything more distinct than these two? (11.) Justification answers the law as a covenant; sanctification answers it as a rule. (12.) Justification makes a man accepted: sanctification makes a man acceptable: as we formerly observed on the third general head of the doctrine.¹

2. Hence see, that there is no justification by the deeds of the law. Why? because, though this purity and conformity to the law be thus necessary and excellent for denominating a saint, and evidencing of justification, yet it is imperfect in time, and so cannot be the matter and ground of justification: no righteousness, but a perfect one, can justify us before God. Do any of the saints reckon their purity and piety to be their righteousness before God? No, by no means; David trembles at the thoughts of this; and deprecates it with abhorrence: "O Lord, enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified," Psalm cxliii. 2. Purity may justify us before men; but we cannot appear before an infinitely holy God, without a perfect holiness; nor before an infinitely just God, without a complete satisfaction; and these are only to be had in Christ. For, when our purity and righteousness is laid in the balance of God's holy law, MENE TEKEL is written on it; it is found wanting; we are but unprofitable servants, and our righteousness is as filthy rags, a menstruous cloth. If any poor deluded soul be expecting that God will justify him, and accept of him, and shew favour to him, because he does as well as he can, and because he performeth this and the other good duty, and hath a good heart to God, meaneth well, and the like, it is evident the man knoweth not himself, that he knoweth not the purity of God's holy law, and the impurity of his own heart, otherwise he would fear to think of standing upon that ground before God.

3. Hence see the necessity of a law-work, in some measure and degree. No man will run to the surety, till, by the law, he hath the knowledge of his being quite insolvent, and a bankrupt. What

(1) The reader may see this point of doctrine, viz. the difference between Justification and Sanctification, further illustrated, and their difference still more copiously held forth, and their harmony pointed out in a great many instances, Gospel Sonnets, Part VI., Chap. iii., Sect. i. 2.

man will run to the fountain for cleansing, if he does not see that he is defiled and polluted. If purity be so necessary, than a law-work, discovering our impurity, is necessary also; that knowing the malady, we may apply the remedy.

4. Hence see the reason why God treats mankind as he doth, both with judgment and mercy. Why, the world is polluted; and God hath a mind to purify it. Why doth the Lord shine upon you with the sun of a kindly providence? It is even to melt you, that you may part with sin, and that his goodness may lead you to repentance. Why doth he cast you into a furnace of affliction? It is to purge away dross; and that you may come forth as gold tried in the fire. Why was the whole earth washed with a deluge? Why, it was polluted, and needed to be cleansed. And why will he again melt it with fire? Because it must be purified before it be a new earth.

5. Hence see the necessity of the open fountain for sin and uncleanness. The blood of the Lamb is a fountain: it is not a rivulet, or a stream, that quickly dries up; no, no: it is a fountain, a never-failing fountain. It is not a fountain sealed: anciently, in these hot countries, when they got a fountain, they reckoned it a precious treasure, and sealed it: people had not promiscuous access to it. Yea, but here is a fountain open; every man, every woman is welcome to come and purify themselves at it, and bathe in it, to wash till they be whiter than the driven snow. It is not only open for the house of David, for the royal family; but to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; it is tendered to the whole visible church. And it is open for sin and uncleanness: for all pollution whatever. O what need of this fountain among such poor polluted sinners.

6. Hence see the reason of what is a paradox to many in the world, and yet what is the experience of the saints: it lets us see, I say, why some folk long so passionately for death sometimes; yea, would choose rather to die than to live: why, the children of God know there is no perfect purification, but by death; and that death will purify them more than all the sermons ever they heard, than all the providences ever they were trusted with, than all the prayers they ever put up, and all the tears ever they shed. It is a mad fancy of the church of Rome, and it was an ignorant fancy of some mistaken divines, and Greek fathers, that there is a state of purgation between this and heaven: but we see from the Bible, that in a moment the soul, separated from the body is made pure. The thief

upon the cross, the same day that he is converted, he is glorified : "This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." O how will the believer, when groaning under a sense of sin, long for the day of dissolution, saying, "When shall the day break, and the shadows flee away," when there shall be no more sin, no more pollution ?

2dly, This doctrine may be applied for Lamentation, that there is such a scarcity of this necessary and excellent thing purity ; and such a plentitude of the contrary evil, even of all manner of impurity. Oh ! may we not lament that there is such a famine of piety and purity, and such a fulness of impiety and profanity ? I might here tell you, 1. Somewhat of the evils of impurity, that we should lament over. 2. Some of the evidences of it.

(1.) We are to acquaint you of some of the evils of impurity. It is a lamentable thing, that there should be so little purity, and so much impurity. For,

1. This impurity mars all our excellency. We lose our excellency by sin and impiety. It takes away the peace of a good conscience, which should be a continual feast : There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. It takes away God from us ; "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God." Is not this one of the reasons why God is so far from this generation ? It is a filthy generation. And if our pollution take away God from us, should it not trouble us ? Let a carnal man lose that which he makes his god, and see how he will be troubled for it : his heart will even die within him, as Nabal's did : and he will be much perplexed. Oh ! how heavy should it be to us, that our impurity and defilement doth us such a mischief as this !

2. It clouds all our profession. Men may profess what they will but if they remain defiled and impure, and if they do not fight against, wrestle against it, profess against it, their profession is but a screen to their atheism ; "They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him ; being abominable and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate," Tit. i. 16.

3. It brings on the wrath of God, if it be not removed ; "God is angry with the wicked every day ; if he turn not, he will whet his sword," Psal. vii. 11, 12. O sirs, if God begin to fire against a sinner, or a sinful and impure people, his wrath will be insupportable. It is true God stays long, before he come forth with all his indignation against a polluted people ; but then it is the worse and

there is the less hope of mercy when he begins to destroy : for then he will strike them dead with the next blow, and make a full end. Is not the Lord threatening to do so with this generation, whether we see it or not? When the cup of iniquity is full to the brim, be sure that the eup of wrath is full also ; full of the vials of dreadful vengeance. But death, and hell, and wrath, are matters of jest and mockery to a filthy and impure generation, whose very mind and conscience are defiled : but though their consciences be seared, and their souls be sleeping in security, yet their damnation slumbereth not : for, the abominable shall have part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death, Rev. xxi. 8. Oh ! is not this matter of lamentation, that we are in such danger, by reason of the defilement and impurity of the day we live in. But, say you, how do you prove the charge? This leads to the next particular, which was,

[2.] To mention some of the evidences of impurity : they, indeed, are many. May not he that runs read innumerable grounds of lamentation? What means the abominable whoredom, adultery, uncleanness, drunkenness, and all manner of wickedness : swearing, lying, cheating, stealing, Sabbath-breaking, contempt of the word and ordinances, that take place? Do not they all manifest, that the generation is not washed from their filthiness? Is not profanity, impiety, and immorality, become open, avowed, and professed, and shameless?—But I shall close at the time, by offering only these three general evidences of want of purity, that we may see matter of lamentation here.

1. The first evidence is in the impurity of our affections. Are they not carnal and impure? Surely where a man's treasure is, there will his heart be also. What are your morning thoughts, and daily meditations? Whether are they conversant about earthly or heavenly things? It is indeed matter of exercise to a child of God, that he finds his affections carnal, and earthly, and vain ; but the impure man lets the devil, and the world, and a thousand lusts, run away with his affections all the day, and all the week, and all the year : and he hath never a sore and grieved heart for it.

2. Another evidence is, the impurity of our speeches, which are the fruits of the affections : for, “ Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh, said Christ : and, A good man, out of the good treasure of the heart, bringeth forth good things ; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure of his heart, bringeth forth evil

things," Matth. xii. 34, 35. When the heart is full of any thing, it will be ready to utter itself: as if you jog a full vessel it will run over; so the heart that is full of the world, will run over the lips, and be always speaking of that; or, if an impure man play the hypocrite, and vent hypocrisy in some good speech, yet he is out of his element: it is not his natural dialect, or easy for him to employ his tongue for God. It is true, the godly may sometimes have their tongue tacked, as it were, to the roof of their mouth; but it is not always so.

3. The next evidence is the impurity of our actions, How do you act towards earthly things, and heavenly things? What pains are you at about earthly things? And how much little pains are you at about heavenly and spiritual things? Is not that an evidence of carnality and impurity?—How do you act with reference to sin and duty? How little care do you take to avoid sin yourselves, or reprove it in others? And how little care do you take to perform the duties of religion, whether secret or social? How do you act with regard to God and yourselves? How much time do you take for yourselves and your own things? and how little time do you allot for God, and the things of God? Doth not this evidence your impurity?—How do you act towards the world and religion, when they come into competition? The world saith, There is a business must be done; God saith, There is a business must be done: they interfere; the one of them must be neglected: Well, the man lets God go, lets religion go, rather than his dear worldly affairs. This discovers impurity.—How do you act with reference to the word? The impure heart doth not relish the purity of the word, or the things that are of God: for, he that is of the flesh, favours the things of the flesh; but he that is of the spirit, favours the things of the spirit. Now, when you hear the word, do you favour nothing but earthly and carnal things? Why, the vain man will pick out the vanity in a sermon: if he can catch at any word that will feed his vain mind, he lays hold upon that: the curious man will notice the curiosity that is in it, and relish that; he that is learned, will observe the learning in it, and applaud that: but he that is spiritual, will find out the things that are spiritual, is well pleased with, and feeds upon them. See 1 Cor. ii. 6.—In a word, how do you act with respect to conscience and interest? When the keeping of a good conscience and worldly interest come to be in competition, by our way of acting then, we may know who is our master, God or the

world: for, till then, we know not who is our master: but when conscience commands one thing, and the world another, so that now the world and religion go not hand in hand, here is the trial of a pure heart. As a dog follows two men so long as they go together, and you know not who is the dog's master, of them two: but let them come to a parting road, and one go one way, and another go another way, then shall we know which of them owes the dog. Why, sirs, sometimes religion and the world go hand in hand: while a man may have the world, and a religious profession too; while it is so we cannot know who is the man's master, whether God or the world: but stay till the man come to a parting road; God calls him this way, and the world calls him that way; why, if God be his master, he follows religion, and lets the world go; if the world be his master, then he follows the world, and the lusts thereof, and lets God, and conscience, and religion go.

Oh! Is it not very lamentable that there are so many evidences of want of purity, that necessary excellent thing? And even among the children of God, O how little purity! Are they not fallen from their first love? Fallen from the heaven that sometimes they have been in, to the very centre of the earth? How far art thou grown earthly minded? How doth this declining come upon you by degrees, or ever you are aware? Like Nebuchadnezzar's image, whose head was of gold, the arms and breast of silver, the thighs of brass, the legs of iron, and the feet of clay; so it is with many declining Christians in our day; they have had a golden head, and begun with a golden age, but now they are come to the clay feet. How heavenly minded have you once been? but now, how earthly-minded art thou? How pleasant were duties and ordinances formerly, perhaps? But now, how tedious, wearisome, and irksome? How zealous have you been for God's glory, and against all sin? But now, how cold and lukewarm?—O sinner, see the necessity of more purification, and deliverance from that consumption of grace, and decay of purity, that is taking place in you: and cry to God to send the Holy Ghost whose office and function is to sanctify, wash, and cleanse you.—Lament the impurity of the day and your own impurity; and lay your soul at the side of the purifying fountain, and in the way of purifying means, looking to the Lord to bless the means to you.

There are two things relating to this subject, that the generality of people are very great strangers to. The one is the sin

of their nature; and the other is, the nature of their sin; and yet these two things should be much laid to heart by us all; namely, the sin of our nature, that we carry a dead corpse, and a body of sin and death about with us; and the nature of our sin; that it is a transgression of, and disconformity to the law of God. Though it be a misery to have a sinful heart, yet it is a mercy to see it to be so: For, conviction is the first step to conversion. And though there be many, as to their state, vile and filthy enough to be damned; yet there are few, as to their sense and conviction, vile and filthy enough to be saved: nay, they are vile in God's eye; and yet pure in their own. "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes; and yet are not washed from their filthiness."

3dly, The next use we shall make of the doctrine, shall be for reproof and conviction. This doctrine reproves all manner of impurity, impiety, and unholiness, that stands opposite to this purity and holiness, whereof I have shewed the necessity and excellency. It reproves all that filthiness that is opposed to this cleanness. And here is a large field, a vast theme: we know not well where to begin, or where to end; there are so many pollutions, and so much filthiness of flesh to be reproofed. We might here go through all the ten commands, and shew how manifold sins and impurities are reproveable, in opposition to every one of them. Oh! that God himself would fasten a reproof and conviction of sin upon our hearts and consciences, for carrying home this use the more closely, both upon the wicked, that are under the power, and upon the godly, that may be under the prevalency of sin and impurity. I shall, on this topic, 1. Produce some kinds of impurity and filthiness, that we should all take with, and be convinced of. Produce some witnesses for proving either the total or partial want of purity and holiness; that the crime being proven, we may take with it, and condemn ourselves.

[1.] I would tell you some sorts and kinds of impurity and filthiness, that we should all take with, and be convinced of. There are especially these three sorts. 1. The impurity and sin of our nature. 2. The impurity and filthiness of our hearts and thoughts. 3. The impurity and filthiness of our life and practice, especially living under the gospel.

(1.) As for the pollution of our nature. This, it is evident, many never thought of, never were convinced of, never challenged themselves for; and yet it is a great predominate root-sin; and if it be not removed we are filthy still. Now, in order to fasten a con-

viction of the greatness of this pollution of our nature, consider the greatness of it in these particulars.

1. That when the leprosy and contagion is universal and over-spreading, then it must be great; but so it is here; the pollution, and defilement, and sin of our nature, is an universal leprosy, it over-spreads all our faculties; our understanding, will, affections, reason, conscience, memory, and all are defiled; become altogether filthy: we, being conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity, are nothing by nature, but a body of sin and death.

2. When the leprosy and contagion is so great, in an house, that nothing will help against it, but the pulling down of the house; then the leprosy must be very great; but so it is here, the sin of our nature is such, that nothing will cure it, but the pulling down of the house. Some think to mend the house by education: but all the lime and mortar of acquired parts and accomplishments will not do, unless the nature be renewed by regeneration; and even after regenerated, this leprosy breaking out, nothing will wholly remove it, but death's pulling down the house entirely.

3. Consider, that sin which is most unwearied, and which a man is most unwearied in the pursuit of, that must needs be very great: but such is the sin of our nature, it is most unwearied, as the fountain is unwearied in sending up water. A man may be wearied in drawing up water out of the fountain; but the fountain is not wearied in bullering up water; so, a man may be wearied in sinful actions; but sinful nature is never weary. A man may be wearied with looking to some particular object; but his eye is never wearied readily with seeing and looking; because it is natural for the eye to see: so, a man may be wearied with some particular sin; but the natural man is never weary with sinning, because, it is so natural for him to sin.

4. Consider, that this sin that is the ground of all our relapses and returns to sin, must needs be very great. Now, what is the ground of all our relapses and returns to sin, after all our repentance and reformation? Even our nature, or the sin of our nature. Suppose water be heated and warmed, it cools again; heat it again, and it cools again; why? because coldness is its nature: and so, why do men return again and again to sin, after all their repentance and reformation? Why? It is their nature.

5. That sin that is least lamented, and whereby our other sins are most excused, must be a great sin. Now, of all sins, the sin of

our nature is least lamented ; and thereby our other sins are most excused. Bear with me, for it is my nature ; I am passionate, but it is my nature ; I am so and so disposed, but it is my nature ; men excuse themselves by it ; and hence it is not lamented, it is not mourned over.

6. That pollution that is most predominant must be a great pollution ; now, the sin of the nature is the pollution that is most predominant. Many marks have been assigned of the predominant sin ; and some actual sin may reign above other sins. But the sin of the nature is the most predominant sin ; it is the sin that reigns unto death, Rom. v. 21.—O then take home the conviction of this sin ; and seek to have it broken in the power of it.

(2.) The impurity and pollution of our hearts and thoughts is what we are to take with, and be convinced of. Alas ! how little is the impurity of the heart bewailed. Many think their thoughts are free : but before God they are not free, but bound to obedience to his law, who searches the heart and tries the reins, to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings ; and even according to the doing of his heart : for the thoughts are the deeds of the heart : and it is, indeed, deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, Jer. xvii. 9, 10. Now, the sin and pollution of the heart is great, if you consider these following particulars.

1. The sin that is most incurable is a great sin : but the sin of the heart is a most incurable sin. As a secret, hidden wound within the body, or a disease within the bowels, is most incurable. And such are the sins of our thoughts, and the plagues of our hearts. We need, therefore, to know the plague of our hearts, and to be convinced of it.

2. The sin that is a parent to other sins must needs be very great : now, sinful thoughts are the parents of sinful actions, both in the godly and ungodly. In the godly, as in the case of Abraham, Gen. xx. 11, 12, “I thought the fear of God was not in this place ; and therefore I said, she is my sister.” She was indeed his sister, he lied not in saying so : but he dissembled and hid the truth, using an unworthy shift for his preservation. And where began this evil, but in a sinful thought ? “I THOUGHT that the fear of God had not been in this place.” In the ungodly, it was so likewise, Psal. l. 21, “Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.” The wicked steal, and lie, and drink, and commit adultery, and deceive, and slander others. And how are they

led into all this, but by thoughts? "Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself."

3. By sinful thoughts our formerly committed sins, that were dead, are revived again, and have a resurrection by our bosom ones; by our contemplating the same with delight. As the witch at Endor called up Samuel that was dead, so a delightful thought calls up a sinful action, that was dead before. Hereby our sins, that were in a manner dead before, are revived, and have a resurrection.

4. By sinful thoughts, a man may sin that sin in effect which he never did commit in act: and so the Lord may punish him for it. As the Lord said to David in another case; "Because it was in thine heart to build me an house, I will build thy house." So saith God to a man, in a way of punishment, Because it was in thine heart to do this evil, though thou didst it not, I will punish thee for it. By the sins of our hearts and thoughts, a man may sin that sin, in effect, which he never did commit in act. Christ reckons the adulterous thought, adultery; the malicious thought, murder. Alas, how will the day of judgment give other views of sin than now we have, when the whorish thoughts will be judged whoredom; and the adulterous intention, adultery; and the malicious thoughts, murder, though it was never actually committed!

5. By sinful thoughts, a man doth repent of his repentance. A man sins, and afterwards is sorrowful for, and repents thereof; and then after his repentance, he thinks on his sin with delight. What is this but to repent of his repentance? As by your repentance you are sorrowful for your sin, so by musing on your sin, with delight, you repent of your repentance: now, is it not a great evil for a man to repent that he repented?

6. That filthy mud, that cannot be searched to the bottom; that deep mystery of iniquity, that cannot be founded, it is so deep, must be very great; and so it is with the sin of the heart; "It is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?" Jer. xvii. 9. In a word, "Out of the heart proceedeth all manner of evil thoughts, murders, adulteries," &c. Matth. xv. 18, 19.

(3.) The impurity and pollution of our lives and practices, especially under the gospel, is what we are to take with, and be convinced of. And sins under the gospel are great sins. Why?

1. Sins under the gospel are sins against the remedy: and of all sins, sins against the remedy are the greatest. The great remedy against sin is the gospel of the grace of God; the good

news of a crucified Christ, a Saviour, whose name is Jesus, because he saves his people from their sin. The promises are the remedy also: and therefore to sin under the gospel, is to sin against the remedy: yea, it is a sinning against the greatest obligations of mercy and grace that are offered: and so, by our sinning against these, we engage the very mercy and grace of God, our greatest friends, to become our greatest adversaries.

2. The more repugnancy there is between the sin and the sinner, the greater is the sin; even as it is worse for a judge to be unjust, than another man. Now, there is here a great repugnancy between the gospel, and the man that sinneth under the gospel; for he professes the contrary.

3. Sin under the gospel is the most hurtful and mischievous, both to ourselves and others. To ourselves: as poison that is taken in sack, or something that is warm, is the most venomous; so, sin under the gospel is the deadliest poison: Why? because it is warmed with gospel heat. And to others it is hurtful: because they are the more hardened thereby.

4. Sin under the gospel is most deceitful, having specious pretences and defences: and so it is the worse. A man under the gospel, hath readily many shifts for his sins; many distinctions to palliate his sin; much knowledge to cover his sin. And by this knowledge, perhaps, he is able to defend his sin, by many distinctions: as, that it is the sin of infirmity; it is an occasion for grace and mercy to abound; and many such ways may grace be abused to the encouraging of sin. Now, those bred under the gospel, are able to defend themselves by knowledge fetched from the gospel; therefore they are the worst.

5. Sins under the gospel throw contempt upon the great things of God: even the glory of God, the grace of God, offered in the gospel. And how great is that sin that casts contempt upon the greatest love, the richest mercy, the sweetest offers, and upon the great salvation!

6. Sin under the gospel is the most dangerous sin; and therefore it is great. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" Heb. ii. 3. He that sinneth under the gospel, cannot sin at so cheap a rate as others, though he sins the very same sins that others commit, who are not under the gospel. Why? "He that knoweth his master's will, and doth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes." O sirs, be convinced of these sins, and the evil of

them : the sin of your nature, the sin of your heart, and the sin of your way under the gospel ; for they are great sins and impurities.

[2.] I would produce some witnesses, for proving of the great want of purity, whether total or partial. Many witnesses may be brought in to prove the charge.

1. The first witness is the power and prevalency of sin. Where sin is up, holiness is down. Are sins and corruptions as many and as strong with you, as they were ten, twenty, or thirty years ago, notwithstanding of all the means you have enjoyed, and sermons you have heard, and engagements you have made ? The power of sin doth witness and evidence either the want or weakness of purity.

3. The third witness is the easy and frequent falling before temptation and motions to sin. When temptation touches it takes. No sooner are you tempted than you are conquered. Does not this discover the want of purity ; and that it is either wanting or at a low ebb ? Those that were eminent in holiness, in Scripture, were eminent in resisting temptation ; as Joseph, Daniel, and others. When a man needs little, or has no temptation to lead him to sin, it witnesseth against him, that he is impure.

4. The fourth witness is fears and faintings in a day of adversity ; “ If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small,” Prov. xxiv. 16. Do not fret under affliction, or faint under adversity ? That is an evidence of the want of purity, and the weakness of grace.

5. The next witness is barrenness and soul-leanness ; Isa. xxiv. 16. “ I said, my leanness, my leanness : wo unto me !” Look to them that have my grace, and see what poor and lean graces they have : how little faith, how little love, how little zeal, how little repentance, how little knowledge ; how much unbelief, how much ignorance, how much untenderness in their walk, how much neglect of duty, how much of a legal spirit in duty, &c. ; how much laxness of principle, and levity of spirit ; how much pride of duty, how much pride of preaching, pride of praying : how much apostacy, unstedfastness, and unconstancy ; the goodness of many is like the morning cloud, and early dew, that passeth away.

6. Another witness is indifferency. The great indifferency that is among many professed Christians, shews their want of purity : they are indifferent whom, and what they hear : indifferent whether they perform duty or not ; whether they attend ordinances or not : “ Galio cared for none of those things.” Surely, where there is much indifferency, there is little holiness, little purity.

7. The seventh witness is gross immorality. And here, will not the gross abominations of the day and generation, and of the congregation witness against them, that they are not washen from their filthiness?—Is the drunkard washen from his drunkenness? Is the whoremonger washen from his whoredom? Is the adulterer washen from his adulteries? Is the malicious man washen from his malice? Are not many become shameless in sinning, when the Lord is calling for mourning? “And in that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping, and to mourning, and to baldness, and to girding with sackcloth; and, behold! joy and gladness, slaying oxen, and killing sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine; let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die,” Isa. xxii. 12, 13. There were a pack that made a jest of dying, and made a mock of a future state: “Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we must die;” if we must have a short life, let us have a merry one. Here is atheism rampant: denial of their future state lying at the root of their brutish sensuality.—Many discover their gross immorality by mock-confession: like the French king that carried a crucifix in his hat, and when he had done any thing amiss he would kiss that, as a sufficient atonement. Many who call themselves Christians, when they have committed any gross sin, they confess it, with a “God forgive me;” returning with the dog to the vomit.—They evidence their immorality by their unreprieveableness; as is manifest from their carriage to them that admonish them; do they count them their best friends? Nay, their heart rises and rages against them. How stand they affected towards the word, when it reproves them, and rubs upon their lusts, and crosses their delights? They count it enmity and folly. They evidence their gross immorality by their filthy communications, and filthy conversations, Col. iii. 8; 2 Pet. ii. 7.

8. The eighth witness is carelessness about, and contempt of the means of purity. Doth the neglect of the means of purity witness against you? For example, prayer is a mean; secret prayer, social prayer, family prayer, fellowship prayer: do you live in the neglect of these? Yea; then doth not this witness your impurity. The word is a mean; hearing the word attentively, reading the word diligently, hiding the word in your heart carefully, like David; “Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.” Now, what diligent use do you make of the word? Are you careless in hearing, especially on week-days, notwithstanding.

of convenient opportunity? Are you careless in reading the bible from Sabbath to Sabbath? Why, the very dust of your bibles will witness against you. I have read of one, that presented Antipater, the king of Macedon, with a book that treated of happiness: he refused it, saying, "I am not at leisure." Many have the book by them; yea, presented to them by Christ, that treats of everlasting happiness, but they slight the present: "I am not at leisure," say they. They have opportunity of hearing the word opened on week-days, as well as Sabbath-days; but they are not at leisure. They have means of knowledge, diets of catechising, for clearing the same word; but they are not at leisure. They have many precious seasons of grace, seasons of prayer, seasons of duty: but they are not at leisure. They take leisure to their own work, their worldly work, yea, for idle conversation; but they have no leisure for God's work, their soul's work, eternal work.

What! are not these things so many witnesses against you, that you are impure? I might produce multitudes of more witnesses; but by the mouth of two or three witnesses, every truth shall be confirmed; and these witnesses that I have adduced at the time, are sufficient for proving the charge. O then, will you take with the reproof: and take home the conviction of your impurity and unholiness?

I shall close with two advices, in order to deliver you from this impurity that prevails.

Advice 1. Seek after the knowledge of Christ, and the things of Christ. Knowledge of Christ, in a saving way and manner, will strike at the root of all impurity, for, "Beholding his glory we are changed." And particularly seek after the knowledge of this purity and sanctity, that I speak of, in its agreement with and difference from justification: for, the confounding of these two, makes many legal dreams in the world. Wherein it agrees with justification, and wherein it differs, I have had occasion formerly to enlarge upon. They agree thus: 1. In their efficient; the God that justifies is also the God that sanctifies. 2. In their end; they are both for the glory of God. 3. In their subject; the elect sinner believing: the man that is justified is also the man that is sanctified. 4. In the instrument, namely, faith. Though in divers respects we are justified by faith, and also sanctified by faith, or purified; yet, in justification faith justifies as a passive instrument, as a vessel receiving the water; in sanctification, faith sanctifies and purifies as

an active instrument, as a root and a spring bullering up the water. In justification, faith is a hand receiving, a receiving hand; in sanctification, it is a working hand. Also, justification is first, in order of nature; sanctification is next: as the good tree is before the good fruit. In justification a man is reckoned righteous; in sanctification, he is made righteous: in justification, he is declared righteous, by a judicial sentence; in sanctification, he is fashioned and made righteous and holy, by a spiritual change. In justification, I have Christ for the Lord my righteousness; in sanctification, I have him for the Lord my strength. Our righteousness for justification is in him, as the author and worker of it: our strength for sanctification is in him, as the root and fountain of it, from whence it is communicate to us. In justification, he works all our works for us, and we do nothing! in sanctification, he works all our work in us, and makes us do, while he worketh in us both to will and to do.

Advice 2. Having thus been brought by the knowledge of Christ and his grace, to a renewed state, then, pursue your spiritual enemies and lusts, and be daily throwing stones at them, till they be killed. I allude to 1 Sam. xvii. 40, where David, in defeating Goliath, took five smooth stones out of the brook, and cast at him. In allusion to this, I will tell you of five stones that you should daily cast at your lusts. (1.) The stone of instituted means, and appointed ordinances. Is prayer a mean? is the word a mean? Use these means in the Lord's strength. (2.) The stone of scriptural argument; such as Joseph's argument; "Shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" David's argument; shall I do so and so? "Then would I offend the generation of the righteous." (3.) The stone of gospel-promises: such as that; "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean. I will give you a new heart and a new spirit," &c. "Having these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit." Plead the promises, and cry for the grace promised. (4.) The stone of Christ's mediation and prayer; John xvii. 15, 17, "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth. While they are in the world, keep them from the evil of it." Improve the intercession of Christ. (5.) The stone of Christ's death and passion. His crucifixion is that, in the virtue whereof sin is crucified. Improve his death, and look for virtue to come from thence.—Look to the Lord for grace and skill to cast these stones into the head of Goliath.

S E R M O N X I.

PROV. xxx. 12.—There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.

[The Fourth Sermon on this Text.]

CIVILITY is a very comely thing: but if it be not attended with sanctity, it but gilds a man over, and is not true gold. A man may have civility, and civil honesty, and yet go to hell: but sanctity and purity is the beginning of heaven. The one is not above the sphere of nature, the other is supernatural; for as the earth naturally can bring forth grass, but cannot bring forth corn, except it be ploughed and sown; even so, any man may naturally be civil, but he cannot attain to any life of grace, or true holiness, except God plough up the fallow ground of heart, sow the seed of grace, and make it to take root downward, and bring forth fruit upward. Therefore, trust not to common civility and sobriety, whatever external comeliness and excellency be in it; but rather be afraid of it, lest you mistake it for real grace; why, because the sober devil carries more to hell than the profane devil; for the profane man, being in a dirty way to hell, he is sooner convinced of his filthiness and misery, and more readily reclaimed: but the civil man, being in a more cleanly way to hell, is so conceited with an opinion that he has grace already, that it is harder to bring him to true repentance—"There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness."

It is a very sad and a very dreadful thing, for people to be dreaming that they are going to heaven, and fancying that they are in very good terms with God, and yet are in the straight road to hell, having God for their enemy, and enemies to God; "Enemies in their minds by wicked works." Yea, there are many such, that if ministers deal plainly with them, and tell them that they are enemies to God, and never had a spark of true love to him; all that we get of them is, "God forbid! we hope it is otherwise;" or else, say they, "We hope it will be otherwise, and God will have mercy on us:" and so there is no more of it, they remain hardened in their enmity, and yet hardened in a vain imagination, that all is well. O sirs, if that be your case, will you let the word of God sink into your conscience, for conviction; "There is a generation

that are pure in their own eyes ; and yet is not washed from their filthiness." I now come,

4thly, To another use of the doctrine, which shall be for trial and examination. Examine and try whether or not you have any share of this gospel-purity ; whether or not you be washed from your filthiness. It is a matter of great moment that you are called to enquire into. God calls you to examine yourselves, and prove your own selves : and seeing purity and holiness is the great preparative for everlasting happiness, a mistake in your search may make you miserable to all eternity. I shall here, 1. Offer some negative characters, pointing out those that are not washed from their filthiness. 2. Some positive evidences by which we may try, whether or not we be washed from our filthiness, and partake of this gospel-purity which we have held forth in the nature, necessity, and excellency thereof.

[1.] We are to offer some negative characters, pointing out those that are not washed from their filthiness, but are filthy still. Upon the last use, I offered several witnesses to be produced for testifying the impurity of the day we live in ; and shall not resume what I said, but offer some things further, by which we may try how impure we are, and the generation is. And, though some of the particulars I am to mention may take place, in some measure, with the godly that are washed, yet those who are under the power of these evils, the unmortified power, unlamented and unrepented dominion thereof, were never washed from their filthiness : the text says, "There is a generation that is not washed from their filthiness ;" though yet they are pure in their own eyes, and self-conceited, which is the particular sin that I reserve to be spoken to in the third and last doctrine : and therefore shall not insist upon it here. But, you see, besides this, all other sins and abominations, and impurities are included in the text ; and therefore it gives us occasion to speak of all manner of sin, while it says, "There is a generation that is not washed from their filthiness."

1. There is a generation of atheists, that neither fear God nor regard man ; that say in their heart, "There is no God ;" and vainly wish there were none. There is a generation of deists, which is but a second edition of atheism, whereby the providence of God is denied, and so the God of providence blasphemed : but beside the gross, contracted, and almost professed atheism of many, what a huge generation is there that was never purged from their natural

atheism ! And though they would take it ill to be called atheists, are evidently and practically so, while, though they profess to know God, yet in works they deny him. Surely these are not purged from their filthiness.

2. There is a generation of ignorant persons, that know not God, know not religion, know not the principles of Christianity ; they are grossly and stupidly ignorant, notwithstanding the means of knowledge : they are artfully ignorant, neglecting the opportunities of instruction, diets of examination, and other seasons of learning. They are ignorant of Christ, and the way of salvation through him ; ignorant both of law and gospel ; the covenant of works, and covenant of grace. Are these washed from their filthiness ? No ; “ It is a people of no understanding,” saith God ; “ Therefore he that made them, will not have mercy upon them ; and he that formed them, will shew them no favour.” And, beside the grossly ignorant, there is a generation that hath a smattering of knowledge, some notional views of gospel-mysteries ; but they never had the eyes of their understandings opened ; the God of this world having blinded their eyes : “ My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.” They are not washed from their filthiness ; no, the ignorant person is filthy still.

3. There is a generation of mockers, that despise all things, serious and sacred. If they come to church to attend ordinances, they but slight and despise these ordinances in their hearts. If they hear a preaching, they but despise and contemn the word that they hear, and know not what it is to hear to edification. If public prayers be an offering up, they but despise the same ; their eyes are roving, and they know not what it is to join in prayer with their souls. If public psalms be a singing, they despise that piece of worship, and can sit with their mouths close, when the mouths of others are opened, to sing praises to God. I have sometimes observed, with regret, how, while the congregation were professing at least, to praise God with open mouth, some will sit with such a close mouth, as if they were openly professing that they despised and contemned that heavenly exercise. They that love not to join with a congregation on earth, to praise God, how unfit are they for joining with the heavenly company, whose exercise is to praise him for ever ?—There is, I say, a generation of mockers and despisers : and some that slight and despise ordinances altogether, of whom God saith, “ Behold, ye despisers ! wonder, and perish !” Surely these are not washen from their filthiness.

4. There is a generation of hypocrites and formalists, that surely are not washen from their filthiness, that make a fashion of reading, and hearing, and praying, and praising, and singing; and rest satisfied, with the external performance of duty, and were never acquainted with the love, the power, the life of religion; that have a name to live, but are dead. Woe to you hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside; but are not washen from your internal filthiness: you are as whited sepulchres, having a fair outside; but within are full of rottenness and putrefaction.

5. There is a generation of legalists and moralists: they go about to establish a righteousness of their own, and will not submit to the righteousness of God. They are your pretenders to works, and holiness, and righteousness: but discover their want thereof, by their estrangement from, and ignorance of the righteousness of Christ. They seek heaven in a legal way; they seek to enter in, but they shall not be able, Luke xiii. 24. They seek salvation, but they seek it not by faith; but, as it were, by the works of the law. They pretend respect to the law, and yet affront it by refusing the only law-biding, law fulfilling righteousness of Christ. They profess holiness, and yet are not washed from their filthiness; for they are under the law. For that word "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for you are not under the law, but under grace," may be read just backward, with respect to them: Sin shall have dominion over them, because they are not under grace, but under the law.

6. There is a generation of superstitious worshippers and ceremony-mongers, who will worship God in ways not enjoined in his word. A heathen Socrates would say, "God will be worshipped with that kind of worship which himself hath commanded:" and surely, those that profess themselves Christians should fear and learn. Now, I not only here mean, all gross superstition, of whatsoever sort, but all impurity of worship. Surely they are not washen from their filthiness, who have no concern upon their hearts to stand up for the purity of religion, in its worship and ordinances, in opposition to all mixtures and corruptions whatsoever. Nothing exasperates a holy God more than this, that there should be defilements in his worship; for mixture in his worship, not only crosses his command, but impeaches his wisdom, as if we should supply the defects of his word, by our inventions; therefore, God condemns it as ill-worship, saying, "Their fear toward me [or their worship

of me], is taught by the precepts of men," Isa. xxxix. 13. Col. ii. 22, 23. In a word it makes God's worship a vain worship, "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men," Mat. xv. 6. As mixing copper with gold, debaseth the metal, it cannot pass : therefore, God giveth that awful certification, Rev. xxii. 18, 19. "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book ; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

7. There is a generation of erroneous persons ; that err in heart, and err in practice, and err in principle. Some have no principles at all, but Latitudinarian ; they are any thing you please. Other are of abominable and corrupt principles, subversive of the gospel, and destructive to pure religion and undefiled. It was an old principle long ago, which is yet living, "That the doctrine of free grace, and justification by faith, without the works of the law, was an adversary to the law of Moses, and to holiness." No wonder then, that some have this doctrine to defend against such a charge, when Christ himself had this ado ; "I am not come to destroy the law, but to fulfil it." It is a day of error ; and to speak of all the errors that are like to be imbibed and drunk in, were a task not to be managed in a passing word, but would take much time. Pollution in principle is a great pollution ; and where the error is fundamentals, surely the person is not washed from his filthiness.

8. There is a generation that makes no manner of bonds of offence ; to offend the generation of the righteous, is become a common and easy thing with many professors : and yet the Lord says, "Woe to the world, because of offences ; better that a mill-stone were put about his neck, and he thrown into the midst of the sea, than to offend one of those little ones. Offences must come ; but woe to them by whom they come." Surely, these that have no regard whether they offend, and lay stumbling-blocks in people's way, or not, they seem not to be washed from their filthiness.

9. There is a generation that are drowned in security and stupidity, having no sense of sin or danger : though sin be imminent and danger imminent ; they go on incorrigibly, in their own evil way ;

and live securely notwithstanding all the means of mercy, and motives of judgment, the Lord gives for their recovery. When the language of providence, and the alarms thereof cry, "Arise, O sleeper, and call upon thy God." While the stormy tempest threatens the shipwreck of the church and state: and particularly the storm of division and animosity threatens the overthrowing the church visible: yet they sleep on, saying, all is safe: "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep." When security is universal, surely it is a sign we are not washed from our filthiness.

10. There is a generation of apostates, who begin in the spirit, and end in the flesh; that begin like Nebuchadnezzar's image, with a head of gold, but end with the feet of the image, that were feet of clay. Apostasy, and backsliding, and defection are no rarity in our day, wherein the love of many waxeth cold; and the church hath left her first love; and many backslide with a perpetual backsliding; and are, it is to be feared, or will be of these who draw back to perdition. Concerning all such, the scripture speaketh very awfully: "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways. Whoso putteth his hand to God's plough, and looketh back, is not fit for the kingdom of heaven." Surely habitual apostates, who return with the dog to the vomit, and the sow that was washed, to the swallowing in the mire, are not washed from their filthiness. A generation that is making defection from God, his work, cause, and interest, are not washed.

11. There is a generation of lukewarm Laodiceans, who are neither cold nor hot, whom God threatens to spew out of his mouth; having no zeal for God, no public spirit, to witness faithfully for the cause and interest of Christ. Instead of this, carnal policy, under the false notion of prudence and moderation, doth carry many off their feet, while they follow the counsels of flesh and blood, and condemn, reproach, and discourage those who take other measures, and desire to be faithful. If any zeal for the declarative glory of God appear with this or the other person, in a day of general lukewarmness, no wonder that the particular person, who would make any appearance against the common defection, be flouted for singularity, as if they set up themselves, and would be reckoned eminent beyond all others: But calumny will never make zeal culpable, nor lukewarmness justifiable. However, the neutralising temporizer is abominable to God; he who cares not whether the ark or Dagon be

set up, whether Christ or antichrist prevail: "He that is not with me, is against me," saith Christ, upon this head. I have read of Anastatius the emperor, that he was, by the hand of God, shot to death with a hot thunder-bolt, because he was lukewarm in the catholic cause, and not zealous against the Arian faction, which became so universal, that it was said, The whole world was turned Arian.

12. There is a generation of profane persons, like Esau, who, for one morsel of meat, sold his birth-right. Many, for a little morsel of worldly good, will sell their souls, and sell their heavenly inheritance. Many, for fear of losing any little outward inheritance, or temporal advantage in the world, will make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. Many think they make a good bargain at a public market, (such as you have in view this week), though they cheat their neighbour with never so many lies and falsehoods, in buying and selling, if they may but gain a little worldly advantage upon them. They will quit with their conscience, before they quit with a sixpence. Surely these are not washed from their filthiness.

But what shall I say? There would be no end of speaking to this purpose. There is a generation that have no care of their own souls, nor the souls of others: they are running fast to hell; and by their ill example, drawing their children to hell with them: their friends and neighbours to hell with them. There is a generation of vile whoremongers, and adulterers, and unclean persons, that go on, without remorse or reformation: and to whom the custom of the sin hath worn out the conscience of the guilt. Most certainly they are not washed from their filthiness. There is a generation of drunkards and tipplers, that cannot mortify the lust of drunkenness unto drunkenness: it is their right hand and right eye; which, because it cannot be cut off, or plucked out, it is like to go to hell with them. They are not washed from their filthiness. There is a generation of horrid swearers, and profaners of the name of God, whether by broad oaths, or minced oaths: not to insist upon the open perjury, by the abominable use and abuse of state-oaths. O the perfidy and perjury of the nation! Surely the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor knowledge of God in the land; "By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood; therefore shall the land mourn," Hosea iv. 1—3. There is a generation of liars, who make no conscience of speaking the truth

to their neighbour : They are of their father the devil, who is the father of lies. Are they washed from their filthiness ? No : There shall in no wise enter into the new Jerusalem any thing that defileth, or worketh abomination, or maketh a lie. There is a generation of Sabbath-breakers, by whom God's holy day is as little hallowed and sanctified as any other day ; though they come to the church for the fashion ; yet they do not make conscience to abstain from thinking their own thoughts, speaking their own words, or doing their own works on the Lord's day : No, if it were not for the custom, they would not make so much as any outward mark of distinction. Are they washed from their filthiness ? No, by no means. There is a generation of malicious persons and fire-brands, living in the fire of contention and discord : not living in love, nor following peace with all men : but living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another : loving to have an ill tale to tell, and an evil report to make of one another ; pursuing idle clashes, and entertaining them. Surely they are not washed from their filthiness. There is a generation of unjust and injurious persons, who think nothing to build up their own worldly fortune upon the ruin of their neighbour's estate ; not remembering, that which is won by theft, robbery, injustice, or oppression, is won at the peril of their souls and the curse of God. Of the same nature is injustice in judging and determining of causes, at whatsoever court, whether civil or ecclesiastic, when friendship and courtesy is preferred above justice and equity ; and when the decision of judges goes not by justice, but by favour, or fraud, or bribery. Surely all such are not washed from their filthiness. There is a generation of rotten-hearted professors, that join in intimate society and close familiarity with stated enemies to God and religion, and monstrous swearers, profane, loose, abandoned, and malignant persons ; they reckon them perhaps to be good fellows, and honest neighbours, and have not the least reluctance at intimate fellowship with them : and, it may be, prefer their company to that of the godly and serious. They walk in the counsel of the ungodly, they stand in the way of sinners, and sit in the way of the scornful, and yet would be called professors. But it seems plain that they are not washed from their filthiness. There is a generation of prayerless persons ; they bow not a knee to God in their families, and perhaps as little in their closets. The prayerless man is an impure man ; he is not washed from his filthiness. There is a generation of proud and selfish persons ; if they pray, or bring

forth any fruit, they are but empty vines that bring forth fruit to themselves. Spiritual pride and self is as great an enemy as God hath: and even pride of duties, pride of prayer, pride of preaching, pride of grace, proud desires of being applauded, and thought better of than others, where it is in its reign, evidences the person is not washed from his filthiness. In a word, there is a generation of unregenerate persons, which include all the Christless and graceless world, that were never convinced or converted, never drawn to Christ in a day of power. Surely all they who were never born again, of water and of the Spirit, whose operations are like water, who were never saved by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, they are not washed from their filthiness.

[2.] The next thing proposed, on this use of trial and examination, was to assign some positive evidences of those that are washed from their filthiness, and made partakers of gospel purity. It is possible, some may imagine, if all be excluded that I have named, there will certainly be few behind of the generation, that is washed from their filthiness. Indeed, I own, they are but few; for all are excluded who are under the power, reign, and dominion of any of those sins that I have been naming. But, for the help of the few, that they may know they have something of gospel purity, and that others may further know that they have it not, and so may be humbled, and cry to the Lord for it, I shall offer but these two means, or evidences, at the time, by which it may be tried. Try this purity then, 1. By the root of it. 2. By the fruit of it.

1st, Let this purity be tried by the root and spring of it. And, 1. This gospel purity is rooted in a divorce from the law. This may seem a paradox to some, that purity, holiness, and conformity to the law, should be rooted in a divorce from the law: Yea, but it is a truth of the eternal God. Accordingly Paul declares of his own experience, Gal. ii. 29, "I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." No living unto God, in point of purity and sanctification, until we be dead unto and divorced from the law, in point of justification. We must renounce it as a rule of acceptance, before we improve it as a rule of obedience. We do not make it a standard of holiness, so long as we make it a condition of life: for, while we do so, we are under the law, and so under the power and dominion of sin, and strangers to the grace of God, which

only doth effectually teach to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly. Now have you ever been divorced from the law, by the killing stroke of conviction, and by the mortifying stroke of humiliation? Have you been convinced of the evil of sin, the guilt of sin, the power of sin; of the righteousness of God, though he should destroy you; and of the spirituality and extent of the law, so as the commandment coming, sin hath revived and you died?

2. This gospel purity is rooted in a marriage union to Christ; "Ye are dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye might be married to another, even unto Christ, that ye may bring forth fruit unto God," Rom. vi. 4. As there can be no lawful children before marriage, so, no acceptable fruit unto God, no true purity before marriage-union to the Lord Jesus Christ, without ingraftment into this blessed vine, without whom we can do nothing. Now, try your purity by this root of it. Know you nothing of a marriage manifestation of, and union to the Lord Jesus Christ, having been divorced from the law, by a work of humiliation laying you low? Have you got a discovery of Christ, in a gracious manifestation of his glory? For, beholding his glory, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory. Got you ever a view of the marriage contract? Did he never say to you, "I will be your God, and ye shall be my people?" Did he never say, "I will betrothe thee to me for ever, in loving-kindness, in tender mercies, and in faithfulness:" declaring that his covenant is your charter, his righteousness your garment, his spirit your guide, his fulness your treasure, and his faithfulness your security? Know you nothing of the marriage proclamation? Did the Lord never say to you such a word as that, Come unto me, and you shall find rest to your souls, poor, weary, and heavy laden creatures? Did he never court you by the gospel, saying, as Rebekah's friends concerning Abraham's servant, with relation to Isaac, "Will you go with this man?" Know you any thing of the marriage consent? "I will go with this man." Did he ever make you willing in a day of his power? Know you nothing of marriage embraces between Christ and your soul? Hath he ever embraced you by his love, and made you to embrace him by faith? Surely gospel purity is rooted here.

3. This gospel purity is rooted in the inhabitation and operation of the Spirit of Christ; "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes," Ezek. xxxvi. 27. Try then,

the Spirit is for accomplishing the forementioned effects. The Spirit maketh a clear revelation of the grace of God in the gospel. The Spirit having convinced of sin and unbelief, doth beget faith, even the faith of the word of grace, the faith of the death of Christ, the faith of the mercy of God in Christ, and the faith of the promise : and by faith the believer receives the Spirit ; that is, more and more of the Spirit. In the first approach of the Spirit to the heart, when he works faith, we are purely passive : but afterward the Spirit is received : " Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith ?" And now the Spirit dwelleth in the heart, as the root of all purity and holiness there ; and then he works, and operates, and influences : this is the sap which comes from the root of Christ. The poor soul finds, that without new breathing, new influences of the Spirit, there can be no good motions, desires, affections ; this is the well of water, put within the believer, springing up to everlasting life. Hypocrites may be fed with common influences, like pools from the clouds ; but believers have a living spring within them, springing up like a spring-well internally, even where there are no external motives many times.

4. This gospel purity is rooted in a principal of faith : so we read, Acts xv. 9, that their hearts were purified by faith : for faith doth not only justify the person, but also purify the affections and heart of the person justified. Faith is a working grace, 1 Thess. i. 3. In what works it ? It works thus, even working out filthy corruption. As unbelief and infidelity pollutes a man's heart ; and therefore Paul joins the unbelieving and the defiled together, Tit. i. 15 : so also, on the contrary, it is the work of faith to sanctify the heart : and therefore, as Paul, in the former place, joins unbelief and defilement together ; so 1 Tim. i. 5, faith unfeigned, and a pure heart are coupled together. Now, faith purifies by drawing water out of the wells of salvation ; having united the person to Christ, the fountain-head, it draws vital influences from all Christ's perfections and attributes ; from all his offices, from all his promises, from all his providences, from all his relations ; from his names, his righteousness, his fullness, his purchase, by its frequent actings through the help of the Spirit of Christ, which is given them.

And particularly, faith improves the death of Christ for this purpose. By his death he hath appeased the wrath, and satisfied justice, and hath obtained the communication of God's favour, and all the fruits of it, whereof this of sanctification and purification is

one. Christ, by his death, hath taken out of the way the great obstacle of our sanctification, and that is our conceiving of God as an enemy, and so being under the fear of God's wrath; for now, that Christ hath died, and this is revealed to us, this may beget in us kindly thoughts of God, and deliver us from our fears; and so should we understand that word, "There is mercy with thee, that thou mayest be feared." One would think if it were, There is wrath with thee, that thou mayest be feared: they would understand it better. Why, I tell you, while people fear the Lord and his wrath, that is no holiness: for devils fear him and his wrath: yea, they believe and tremble at his wrath, and yet have no holiness, no purity. But, while we fear the Lord and his goodness, as it is, Hos. iii. 3.; while we fear him in a filial way, from the faith and belief of mercy and goodness, this is purity and holiness. Now, Christ, by his death, hath removed the great obstacle, viz. a slavish fear, and introduced the greatest encouragement, even the declaration of God's greatest mercy, and richest grace to poor sinners: and faith's views hereof, doth encourage us to love and serve the Lord.

In a word, faith improves and embraces, and pleads the promise of sanctification; such as, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean; from all your filthiness will I cleanse you: I will put my Spirit within them; I will put my fear in their heart; I will subdue their iniquities; I will save you from all your uncleanness: All which are Yea and Amen in Christ.—Now, try your purity thus by the root of it.

2dly, Try your purity by the fruits and effects, parts and evidences of it; such as these following.

1. Gospel purity makes a man love God, because he is pure. Can you say, from the bottom of your soul, that how ever impure and unholy you are, yet you love God because he is a pure and a holy God; a holy God that hates sin? I look upon this as a sweet evidence of one that hath the stamp of God's holiness upon his soul. A hypocrite may love God, because he is good, merciful and the like; but can he love him because he is a holy God, that hates sin? No. Now, is that the language of thy soul, "Give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness?"

2. Gospel purity makes a man love the people of God, because they are pure. A man may love the people of God, because of some other reason, and yet have no purity but to love them because of their purity; and the more pure and holy they are, the more to

love them, this is an evidence of being passed from death to life. Many would rather choose to be in a drunken club and cabal, than in the company of those who fear God; they are kept under restraints while with them; but the man that is washed from his filthiness, "His delights are with the saints, the excellent ones of the earth," Psal. xvi. 3.

3. Another fruit and evidence of gospel purity is, it makes the man love the word, because of its purity: "Thy word is very pure; therefore thy servant loves it," Psal. cxix. 140. The word is the mean and instrument of purity; "Now are ye clean through the word that I have spoken. Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." Now, to love ordinances, and to love the word, for this very reason, because of its purity, is evidential of a person's being purified in part.

4. Gospel purity makes a man hate sin, because of its impurity, and stand at a distance from it, under that consideration. He hates sin because of its impurity, and because of its opposition to holiness: and therefore he hates every sin, "I hate every false way," Psal. cxix. 104. He hates secret, as well as open sin, "I hate vain thoughts," Psal. cxix. 113. He hates little sins, as well as great, if any can be called little, seeing there is no little God to sin against, no little hell to punish sin in. Little sins have brought on great punishments: as Lot's wife looking back to Sodom; Adam's eating the forbidden fruit; fifty thousand men of Bethshemish slain for looking curiously into the ark; and Uzzah for touching it. The saints know that the least sin cost Christ's precious blood; and therefore dare not think little of, or indulge themselves in any sin.—Further, gospel purity leads a man to stand at a distance from sin. It is true, the child of God may fall into sin; but his way of sinning is like the wicked man's way of serving God. A wicked man may go to duty, he may go to his prayers! but he is only a bungler at it; he has no habit of grace, no dexterity for duty before God: so, a godly man may commit sin, and try that work sometimes; but he is a bungler at it, he has lost his habit and dexterity of sinning through grace; and therefore it is said he cannot sin: "He that is born of God cannot commit sin."

5. Gospel purity inclines a man to make advances in religion; he forgets the things that are behind, and presseth forward; he can never be pure enough: he goes from strength to strength; "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and

more unto the perfect day." It is true, there are ebbings and flowings of grace; the person may be going sometimes backward, at other times forward: but his ordinary course is like the sun; it may be under a cloud, and out of view, as if there was no sun at all; but then it breaks out from under the cloud again, and always makes farther advances in his race. So, the child of God may be under a cloud; grace may be under a cloud and disappear, as if it was no grace at all; but then it breaks out again further advanced; for, the man grows in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ; hath more experience of the Lord's pity and favour; more insight into the mysteries of the gospel.

6. Gospel purity makes a man see and lament his own impurity and unholiness: he is afflicted with his want of purity, and with his own vileness and defilement, saying, with Job, "Behold I am vile;" and with Asaph, "So foolish was I, and ignorant;" and with Abraham, "I am dust and ashes;" and with Augur, "I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man;" and with Paul, "I am the chief of sinners." The man is humble under a sense of his own vileness, and of the plagues of his own heart. Tears, instead of gems and pearls, were the ornaments of David's bed, when he was fallen from his purity.

7. This purity makes a man to be afflicted even for the impurity of others: this was the case with David; "I beheld transgressors and was grieved: Rivers of water run down mine eyes, because the wicked keep not thy law," Psalm cxix. 136, 158. It had the same effect upon Jeremiah; "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" Jer. ix. 1. "And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof," Ezek. ix. 4. Why, the godly man, in other men's sins, sees the badness of his own heart: and by mourning for the sins of others, he comes to be pure, even from the sins of other men; whereas people are guilty of other men's sins, while they do not mourn for them, but rather approve of them.

8. This purity is evidenced by a conscientious and diligent use of the means of purity. The Lord works out, and carries on this work of sanctification; makes it go on by the means which he hath appointed us to use; and when we use his appointed means, though

the effect do not presently and discernibly follow and appear, yet we may conclude that the work is going on. Even as when the children of Israel were compassing the walls of Jericho seven days, and seven times upon the seventh day: some of them might possibly be disposed to say, What means our compassing the walls: they do not fall by our compassing them, or using this mean? However, every compassing of the walls was a bringing down of the walls, though they fell not till after the seventh times compassing on the seventh day, Joshua vi. Even so, the diligent use of means, in the way that the Lord hath appointed, is our indispensable duty; for, though it is not always evident that the means hath any success, for bringing down the walls and high towers of sin, yet every compassing of the walls, at God's command, is a sign the work is going on; and at last the walls shall fall flat to the ground.

SERMON XII.

PROV. xxx. 12.—“There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.”

[The Fifth Sermon on this Text.]

MANY, by a fair profession, a false conviction, and a bastard conversion, seem half way to heaven, who yet will lodge for ever in hell. He who sits down at half-way, and rests there, will never come to the end of his journey, but is still afar off. O sirs, it is to be feared that the most part of you, that even come so near to Christ, in approaching to his house and ordinances; yet you are as far from him as light is from darkness, or darkness from light; and we need not go far to prove the charge; for, if you be not washed, you are far from God and Christ; yea, you have no part in him; “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me,” said our blessed Lord to Peter. If you be not washed from the guilt of sin in justification, and from the filth of sin in sanctification, you have no part in Christ, and so are far enough from him; and this is the state, not of a few, but of a multitude; “There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.”

Having finished the doctrinal part of the subject, discussed so much of the application, we are now prosecuting an use of trial;

but in regard we have treated the negative part of this use more largely than the positive, we shall offer some things farther upon the last of these: not with a view so much to multiply particular marks, as for offering general rules, by which you may examine this matter. As it hath already been tried by the root and by the fruit of it; it may be farther examined by the parts of it, by the perfection of it, by the means of it, and by the end of it.

3dly, We proceed then, in the third place, to try this gospel purity by the parts of it. This purity, holiness, or sanctification, is twofold, either habitual or actual.

1. There is habitual purity, which lies in the infusion of all the habits of grace. And this habitual holiness may be tried by these two special parts of it; viz. the illumination of the mind, and the renovation of the will.

(1.) There is here the illumination of the mind: this is a special part of purity and sanctification; "Ye have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him," Col. iii. 10. The mere natural man, that lies in his natural state, he neither doth nor can perceive the things of God, 1 Cor. ii. 14. Here then is purity to clear the understanding. The pure and sanctified man is renewed in the spirit of his mind. We are a mass of darkness by nature; "We know nothing as we ought to know." We are blind as moles, and can give no subjection of understanding to divine revelation; nor give a full assent to the truths of God, having no subjective persuasion thereof: yea, we know nothing as we ought to know. Though we may have a form of knowledge, yet, in seeing we see not, while we want the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God. Sin, entering into the world, hath blindfolded us all: the devil, having got the victory over us, doth even throw glamor over our eyes, or beguile us with a false deception; and we are become fools: folly is bound up in the heart of every natural man.—And however some may seem to be exempted from this character, such as these who are called statesmen, and great wits, and politicians; yet, while in a natural state, their wisdom is but foolishness in God's sight, 1 Cor. i. 20. The profound philosopher, and high pretender to reason, is but a fool in the sight of God: professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.

Now, when the Lord purifies a man, he takes this poor man, who is so ignorant of God, even as blind as a mole in the things of

God, and as dark as a dungeon, and makes him light in the Lord : the light of the gospel shines in with evidence upon the man's soul, so as he is made to give full credit to the truths of God, and to the God of truth. The high reasoning that was in his mind, against the gospel of Christ, even his vain imaginations, whereby he exalted himself against the knowledge of Christ, these are brought down by the weapons of the gospel warfare, the sword of the Spirit, in the hand of Christ. These reasonings that he had before are silenced : the man sees a glory in God's perfections, in the face of Jesus Christ, that he saw not before : he sees a beauty in God's dispensations which he saw not before : he sees a majesty in God's ordinances which he did not see before, and could not perceive : he sees a loveliness in the precepts of God, nothing whereof could be perceived before : he sees a sweetness in the promises, which he thought very little of before : he sees an excellency in the saints whom he contemned before : he sees a reality in what was divinely revealed, which was but fancies to him before : he sees also a certainty in a life to come, and in a death and a wrath to come, which he never gave full credit to before : he knows now there is a God, whom before he only thought he knew, but was really ignorant of ; he sees him to be a just and holy God, a good and gracious God, a God in Christ reconciling the world to himself.

Now, all sanctification and purity enters in at this door of illumination ; and therefore you may try by this : for the grand difference between the saint and the hypocrite lies in this, the one is darkness, the other is light in the Lord. Let the hypocrite do what he will, profess what he will, he is still but a mass of darkness, and knows nothing of God. Whereas, let the saint, the believer, be at never such a low ebb, yet he is a person whose eyes God hath opened : though sometimes, indeed, he may be asleep, and so not actually beholding the light ; yet this habitual change is wrought, the eyes of his understanding is enlightened.

(2.) Another special part of this habitual purity and sanctification, is the renovation of the will and affections. The natural man is rebellion against the will of God ; his will by no means will stoop to the will of God ; and here is the work of sanctification in the will, that it makes it flexible, bends and inclines it to obedience to God's will : " he that is of God, and purified by him, he heareth God's word : and ye, therefore, hear them not, because ye are not of God," John viii. 47. Man's will is totally depraved, and desperately

wicked: by nature it is inclined to every thing that is bad, and averse from every thing that is good: it is the greatest enemy that God hath out of hell, and as great an enemy as he hath in hell; for every man that hath an unrenewed will, he hath a devil in his breast. The will unrenewed is the very picture of Satan; the man is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be: and whatever he may pretend of kindness to God, and the people of God, yet he hates God, and everything that hath God's image upon it.—His affections are totally vitiated, his desires being toward that which is dishonourable to God, and hurtful to himself: his delights are placed upon a thing of nought. His sorrows are especially because he cannot get his will; and his will is neither for God's glory, nor his own good. His greatest grief is because he cannot get his wicked will gratified, or his carnal affections satisfied.

But know, when the Lord purifies the man, and sanctifies him, he takes away the heart of stone, and gives the heart of flesh. This wicked will, is called the heart of stone, because it is inflexible, it will neither bow nor bend; you may sooner break the man than bow him; while this corrupt will remains, there is no possibility of the man's inclining to that which is spiritually good. Now, when the will is changed, the faculty remains, but the quality is changed; the cursed quality, whereby it was wholly inclined to evil: whereby it was so inclined to wickedness, that there was no drawing the man off from his own ways; yet God takes this away in sanctification, so that now, the man is inclined to good, as before he was inclined to evil.—The will is now subject to the will of God, and to the law of God, and made to say, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Let my will be submissive to thine; let it be as a weather-cock, to turn about with every blast of the breath of thy mouth; with every signification of thy will* in the word. The man is now inclined to seek the Lord, and to serve him: yea he hath a natural and native inclination to that which is good; and a native aversion from that which is evil, though his will be but in part renewed, and when he would do good, evil is present with him: there is flesh lusting against the spirit, yet he is really renewed, so as it is the habitual frame and disposition of his soul, to serve the Lord in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of his life. His affections are renewed: he now is made to desire God as the chief good; to delight in him as the only portion; to love him as his best friend; to hate sin as his greatest enemy; to be sorrowful for that more than for any other

thing ; to be angry at sin in himself and in others ; and to be well-pleased and satisfied with the revelation and device of salvation, through grace, by the righteousness of Christ : and that Christ should be made of God to him wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

And thus you see the parts of habitual purity : this is the habit of grace, though it be not always exercised and discerned, as it is in acquired habits ; *e.g.*—A musician hath the habit of music, or playing melodiously, though he hath not always the instrument or harp in his hand : so it is in infused habits ; a man hath the habit of grace, habitual purity, though it be not always drawn forth into actual exercise. And therefore,

2. There is actual purity, by which we ought to try ourselves. And this actual purity hath these two parts, viz. a dying daily to sin, and a living daily to God and righteousness.

(1.) In actual purity there is a dying daily to sin ; and that is called mortification ; he that is in Christ hath crucified the flesh, with the lusts and affections. Now, this dying to sin, is when one doth daily more and more fall out of conceit with sin ; when he is actually fighting against it, hating it, and endeavouring the crucifixion of it ; when his aversion from it, is more strengthened, and his inclination to it is more and more weakened. But perhaps one may say, How shall I know true mortification ? Why, it is universal, opposing all sin ; and it levels at the very root thereof in original sin : “O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?” It levels even at secret sins, as well as open ; “O cleanse thou me from secret faults.” It strikes at beloved sins ; it is a cutting off the right hand, and plucking out the right eye. It is also evangelical, flowing from a principle of love to God in Christ ; and acted in the virtue, and by the faith of the death and crucifixion of the Son of God ; and hence a man is said to be crucified with Christ, Gal. ii. 20.

(2.) A living daily to God, and to righteousness, is another part of actual purity, by which we ought to try our sanctity ; and it is usually termed vivification. This way of living, is when a man is so far alive to God, as that he is actually delighting in the Lord, and in his company more and more ; desiring to have more communion with God in Christ ; and when the Lord’s service becomes still more the man’s recreation and element ; and when not only the house of Saul is growing weaker and weaker, but the house of

David is growing stronger and stronger, by the man's growing in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and living by the faith of the Son of God.—Now, in true vivification, the man not only hath life, but is lively; not only engrafted into the true vine, but drawing sap and virtue from the same; not only married to Christ, but bringing forth fruit to him.

Now, these are the parts of purity and sanctification, by which we should examine ourselves: and, I fear the opening thereof may discover the total want of purity in the most, and the partial want of it in the best of folk; even the great want that believers themselves labour under, with respect to these things. But, however, though believers themselves may see their great want hereof, yet they may be in case to draw a comfortable conclusion therefrom, and it may be this, namely, "What I hear the minister tell me of these parts of sanctification, I know I have sometime-a-day understood it to my blessed experience, and therefore have good ground to expect that I shall know more of it, in the Lord's time and way; for, he that hath begun the good work, will perfect it; and therefore I will quietly wait his return."

4thly, Let us not only thus try our purity by the parts, but also by the perfection of it. I do not mean a perfection of degrees, which will not take place till the believer be in heaven; but the gospel perfection, which even takes place on earth, and by which the believer, in scripture language, is sometimes said to be a perfect and upright man. And this perfection of purity, I think in general, lies in this, When a man is pure in God's sight. This seems to be especially pointed at in the text, as the reverse of that self-conceited purity therein held forth: "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness." They are pure in their own sight, but not pure in the sight of God; intimating, that the gospel perfection of purity lies in a man's being pure in God's sight. Of this purity the apostle speaks, Col. i. 22, where Christ is said to present his people holy, and unblameable, and unproveable in his Father's sight.

QUESTION. What is it to be pure in God's sight, so as we may examine this purity by the gospel perfection of it?

ANSWER 1. This gospel perfection is that purity in God's sight, which implies internal heart-uprightness, evidencing itself in faith and love, which can act in the sight and presence of God, as being the product of his blessed Spirit.

I call it a heart-uprightness, or heart purity, because the man that is thus pure, is not only pure outwardly, in the sight of man, but pure in heart and spirit, in the sight of God, who is a spirit. Many pretend to holiness, but, like the Pharisees, they make clean only the outside of the platter: but the truly pious and holy soul is most careful to have the heart right with God, and solicitous how to be cleansed from all filthiness of the spirit as well as the flesh. He indeed finds much heart impurity; but the soul of him is grieved at it, and he most ardently desires to be cleansed: "Wash me, and I shall be clean. Create in me a clean heart." He is exercised about the heart, crying to heaven for more and more purity, and daily flying to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. They are much in secret, crying for purity; and even when they win not to a secret chamber; yea, perhaps when they are in the midst of company, they will, now and then, be darting up some stolen look to heaven, and their hearts praying, "O for holiness! O for conformity to the Lord! O to have heart enemies destroyed, and strong corruptions broken!"

Again, I said this purity in God's sight, evidenceth itself in faith; it acts in a way of believing, trusting to the faithfulness of God in the promise, and the power of God to accomplish the same; looking for help no other way but in and through our Lord Jesus Christ; receiving the word of faith, and putting to the seal that God is true; casting the burden of the soul upon the Lord by faith: also, the man believes as in the sight of God. It is not enough to be called and accounted a believer, and to reckon yourself such; but to be a believer in the sight of God is the main business: when the person, through faith, sees an excellency in Christ, so as to count all things but loss and dung for him: and when the poor soul can say, as in the sight of God, "Lord, thou knowest I have no other refuge to run to but thyself; and though thou shouldest kill me, yet will I trust in thee, for all the good things in the covenant, which is all my salvation, and all my desire; here will I rest, and here will I stay myself."

Again, This purity in the sight of God, evidenceth itself in love; and this is love in the sight of God, when a man can say before God, The desire of my soul is to thy name, even to the name of Christ. The man loves so as that the name of Christ is to him as ointment poured forth: he loves so, as to long for more fellowship with God in Christ: he loves so, as wherever he sees the image of God, he loves it: they love his image that shines in his

precept, in his promise, in his people. They love the Lord, so as to hold him: and they do not let him go; and to such a degree, as to break their heart when he goes away, saying, O! ten thousand worlds cannot fill his room! Many are the pretensions of love: O! whom should we love, but sweet Christ? will some say. But all is mere flattery; they care not whether he be absent or present. They pretend love to him; but they take other things in his room. They will say, "He hideth his face;" but withal they can say also, with the whore in the Proverbs, "The husband is away, come let us take our fill of loves." They can take pleasure in idols; they can take pleasure in other things, in the want of Christ. They are not like the blessed Psalmist, who said, "I remembered God, and was troubled; I refused to be comforted." Nay, but true love in the sight of God will make a man take no comfort or satisfaction in any thing, while the beloved is gone. And again, it makes a man have common friends and foes with him; and it makes his cause their cause: yea, it makes them more troubled at any dishonour done to him, than any affront offered to themselves. If they see Christ honoured, their heart rejoices; and if otherwise, their hearts are sore afflicted.

Further, I said on this head, that this purity acts in the sight and presence of God: the man sets God before him, acknowledging him in all his ways; desiring to do nothing without his counsel, and to do every thing by the direction and conduct of his blessed Spirit.

Finally, I affirmed upon this head, that this purity acts in the sight and presence of God, as being the product of his Holy Spirit. This is true purity in God's sight, that is the production of his Holy Spirit, in his gracious saving influences. Nothing passes current in heaven, but what is coined there, and comes out of it. The things that you do yourself, man, woman, it wants the king's stamp upon it: Whose superscription hath it? It is but the product of your own heart. But that only which is the fruit of the Spirit of God, is good and pure in his sight. If you bring false coin to a king, that you coined yourself, or if it be discovered that you have done it, you put yourself in hazard of death thereby; even so, your duties, that have not the right stamp, and wherein you have not been influenced by the spirit and grace of God, instead of saving you, they put you in hazard of death and damnation.

2. This purity in God's sight, which is its gospel-perfection, implies a man's having all the members of the new creature. The

child new born, if it hath all its members, it is a perfect child, though it is far from being perfect in all respects ; it is far from having perfect wit, perfect strength, perfect knowledge, perfect prudence, &c. ; but it is perfect, in respect that it hath all the needful parts of the body. So this gospel-perfection of purity, is, when a man hath all the habits of grace : and when faith, love, hope, humility, zeal, and all the fruits of the Spirit are planted in the soul : when all these members, which make up the new man, are perfect, then is a man pure in the sight of God. A man may have a great deal of fair outward show before the world, and yet have not one of these members of the new creature at all ; not one fruit of the spirit planted in the soul ; not one habit of grace : he acts from a natural conscience, and from a common conviction of sin and duty ; and though it be by common grace that he is enabled to do any thing, yet the strength of nature is still more than any strength of grace receiving, and so it turns all to itself. As when you cast clean water into a puddle, it becomes all puddle : so here, all is turned to self ; and the man acts from self as his principle, and for self as his end. The believer is perfect in this respect, as to the perfection of parts, in opposition to the unbeliever. And some believers, in this respect, are more perfect than others, even as to the perfection of parts : for, though all unbelievers have the habit of all graces, yet it may be such, as they have not the exercise of some graces ; like children that are born with their hands and legs indeed, but they are lame from the womb, have not the exercise of them ; and they continue so still. This imperfection even some believers may labour under. Here is one that hath strong faith, lively hope, fervent zeal, and some good works that discovers it : but it may be they are defective in point of humility, meekness, sobriety, brotherly-kindness, and the like. There is another, perhaps a gracious person, that hath much love, meekness, sobriety, brotherly-kindness, and the like. There is another, perhaps a gracious person, that hath much love, meekness, sweetness of temper, brotherly-kindness ; but extremely defective in zeal for the declarative glory of God, so as he doth not valiantly contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. But, when one hath all these habits, and, together with the habit, the exercise of them all, then that person may be said to have an evangelical perfection, and to be pure in God's sight.—Let this be another rule and help to try yourselves by.

3 This gospel-perfection implies a person's having all the

spiritual senses of the new creature, and the lively exercise of them; "Strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil," Heb. vi. 14. You may go to some places, and you will see very lively pictures, and as comely to behold as ever man or woman, with an excellent ruddiness in their face: and at a distance, you would think they have life: Well, but they have no senses: and far less have they any exercise of senses: "They have eyes, but see not; ears, but hear not; noses, but smell not:" they have no sense, no feeling. Here is a sad blemish and defect. Thus many idol Christians there are, that are merely painted images, and exactly drawn. Look to them, and compare them with some real Christians, you would think them far superior to, and beyond them. O! there is no comparison between that poor silly creature and this man, who is so much extolled for his wit, reading, gravity, sobriety, and the like. Yet the omniscient eye of JEHOVAH may see his blemishes and defects, and want of spiritual senses, which he only hath the appearance of before men; but the other hath in reality before God; yet this man, who is pure in the sight of God, may seem to be nothing in comparison of the other, that casts such a dash, and cuts such a figure. If one who hath many blemishes and defects in his body, stand beside a lively well done picture, what a base creature doth he appear beside that lively, well-proportioned image! yet notwithstanding he hath that perfection of life and sense, which the image wants; so, here is one that you would think he hath faith, love, knowledge, and all the members of the new creature; but, alas! the great matter is, the want of spiritual life and senses.

(1.) They have not their seeing; they have no true faith or spiritual discerning; "They have eyes, but see not:" they have eyes; that is, they have an image of faith, a form of knowledge; but, in seeing, they see not:" for they want the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God.

(2.) They want their hearing; they are deaf to the things of God: "they have ears, but hear not:" they have ears; that is, they have an uptaking of words; but, in hearing, they hear not. If you say to them, Did you hear? Yea, says the man, I am not deaf. Well, did you understand? Yea, perhaps better than yourself, say they. Yet, after all, they do not hear the voice of God in the law, so as to awaken their conscience; nor the voice of God in the gospel, so as to quicken their souls; they hear not his voice in

the rod, so as to humble them: nor in his mercies, so as to melt them, and engage them to himself.

(3.) They want their feeling; they feel not their sins that are sinking them down to the pit. Though, perhaps, they are called men of sense; yet they have no sense this way: they feel neither the sin of their nature, nor the plagues of their heart: they have no feeling, either of the guilt of sin, or the power of sin. They do not feel sin in the fact of it, the fault of it, the filth of it, the folly of it, the fountain of it, the fruits of it.

(4.) They want smelling; they find no sweet smelling savour in divine things: "they have noses, but smell not." They are all nose, as to other things; they smell what is most for their profit, credit, and honour: but they never find the ill smell that is upon error and sin. They can stay in the places where God's name is profaned, his truths wounded, and his people mocked, and not be affected with the ill-smell thereof. And, on the other hand, they can hear Christ tendered, grace proclaimed, and the gospel promulgated, and yet never be ravished with the sweet savour thereof.

(5.) They want their tasting; they see not the bitterness of sin, on the one hand, so as to see it to be an evil and bitter thing; nor the sweetness of the word of grace, on the other hand, so as to prize it more than their necessary food.

Now, if we try our purity by this rule, it will difference some believers from other believers, and all believers from unbelievers.

It will, in the first place, difference some believers from other believers: yea, the most of believers may find themselves defective, with respect to this piece of gospel-perfection, in purity and holiness. Here is a believer, I shall suppose, that hath got his eyes open; but, alas! he hath not a good discerning; he wants a quick understanding, so as to discern either between precious and vile, or between good and evil, truth and error; yea, he is readier to choose that which is wrong, than that which is right: his senses are vitiated; he hath not, so to speak, the taste of his mouth. Like a person under some disease, or indisposition, that calls every bit of meat that he makes use of bitter; and every thing he eats tasteless: even so, some that are believers may be so indisposed, and have their senses vitiated, that in the best of preaching, they find no good; in the soundest of sermons, they find no sweetness; in the most pleasant gospel-truths, they find no relish, especially in a day of controversy about truth. The discerning of some believers

is so small, that they know not truth from error ; but halt between two opinions, and, may be, suspect every word that is said, and walk in darkness ; and, perhaps, side with error rather than with the truth. But then it is, that gospel perfection takes place, when all the spiritual senses are present, and in a lively vivid exercise. Many, even believers, have their senses vitiated, by reason of spiritual indisposition, and want of spiritual health, which weakens every sense, and every member and limb of the new creature. Some believers, at some times, labour under a disease of the conscience, a disease of the understanding, a disease of the judgment, even about necessary truth ; lameness in hands and feet, and tongue, so as they are out of capacity to speak for God, work for God, and walk after God ; and this lameness and indisposition is sometimes observable by men : so Paul saw Peter walking with a crooked foot, when he symbolized with the Jews, and dissembled, insomuch that Barnabas was carried away with their dissimulation ; whereupon he reproved him, and withstood him to the face, because he saw that he walked not uprightly, Gal. ii. 11-14. But whether it be discernible to men or not, yet God sees and observes all the failures, in point of gospel perfection, in holiness and purity.

But, in the next place, it will, notwithstanding, difference all believers from unbelievers : for, though believers have their blemishes by sin, yet they are not under the power of sin, as unbelievers are ; and though they have their senses many times vitiated, yet they are not altogether destitute of spiritual senses, as unbelievers are. The graceless man may have his natural senses, his rational senses, and common senses ; but not gracious spiritual senses. The man hears, but he is a senseless hearer. It may be, indeed, when the Lord is much with the speaker, at certain times, the word may have such impressions, that the natural conscience may be roused, and the natural affections raised : but to have spiritual senses, and spiritual graces exercised, that he cannot have, being destitute of them ; and so, at best, is but the senseless hearer. Spiritual sleep, and deep security prevails mightily : so that, like a man in a sound sleep, he may be jogged up a little, and so open his eyes, as it were a little : yet he is incapable of discerning duty, for he falls over again. The man prays ; but his prayers are senseless prayers : he is senseless as to every spiritual exercise. The man sings in the family, or with the congregation, by raising the voice ; but he hath not sense to make melody with his heart to the Lord, Try your gospel purity and perfection by these things.

4. This gospel perfection imports a constant advancement from the perfection of parts to the perfection of degrees ; a pressing towards the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus ! a longing for a state of perfection, without being satisfied till we arrive at the height of it ; “ Let us go on to perfection,” Heb. vi. 1. The believer, the pure and holy man, he aims at perfect light, perfect knowledge of God, perfect delight in him, and perfect love to men ; this is what his soul aspires after : and the Lord reckons this man according to what he would be at, rather than what he is. He would be at perfection ; and God reckons him according to what he so ardently desires after. Legal perfection he hath not, in himself, but in his head, Christ, who is the Lord our righteousness : but this gospel perfection he hath from his glorious head, according to the measure of the communication of the Spirit, making him aspire after perfect sanctification. For, as his justification is perfect already, so shall his sanctification be perfect in glory, where all impurity and imperfection shall be done away, and where the image of Christ shall be visible in every saint ; for, they shall be like him, because they shall see him as he is. Now, towards this gospel perfection do all believers natively incline : whereas, unbelievers have no such high aim. By these things you may try gospel purity, as to the perfection of it.

5thly, This gospel purity may be tried also by the means of it. Besides what I said concerning the root of purity, examine your purity likewise by the means whereby the Lord brings it about, and in what method. I shall here but name these two or three things, that may be grounds for your trial and examination. The Lord brings about this gospel purity, by these and the like means.

1. By discovering the man’s impurity to him. Whoever are made pure in the eye of God, are first made impure in their own eyes. The text supposes, that those who are pure in their own eyes are impure in the sight of God : and it says, that when God washes them from their filthiness, they are not pure in their own eyes. A clear conviction of impurity, of sin, and uncleanness, is both a piece of purity, and also a mean thereof. It is a part of holiness to have eyes to see our own vileness and wickedness ; and the sight thereof is a mean of making the creature restless and uneasy till he be washed. The Lord, when he hath a mind to purify a person, lets him see what a devil he is ; and what a hell of wickedness, and what a black hoord of abomination is within. And,

2. He doth it by discovering his grace and mercy to him. The Lord purifies and sanctifies by the revelation of his grace and truth ; and indeed, grace and truth comes by Jesus Christ ; as a priest, he purchases this grace ; as a prophet, he reveals it ; and as a king, he applies it. And this revelation of grace brings sanctification ; “ 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,” Titus i. 11, 12. “ Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth,” John xvii. 17. In this revelation of the grace of God in Christ, the fountain opened is seen ; even the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness, Zech. xiii. 1. The merciful government of God in Christ is discovered. The soul looks on this King of Israel as a merciful king. “ And Benhadad’s servants said unto him, Behold, now, we have heard that the kings of Israel are merciful kings : let us, I pray thee, put sackcloth upon our loins, and ropes upon our heads, and go out to the king of Israel, peradventure he will save thy life,” 1 Kings xx. 31. The soul now counts these subjects happy, that stand before such a king ; “ Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom,” 1 Kings x. 8. Now the soul laments his bondage to other lords, Isa. xxvi. 13, and ardently desires to be the subject of this gracious and glorious king. And so thus the Lord brings to this sanctity.

3. He purifies by reconciling the heart unto God, from the sense of God’s being reconciled to us. The faith of God’s love and goodness makes the soul submit, in a loving way, and lay down the weapons of defiance. As a traitor, having found the gracious favour of his prince, in pardoning his treason ; his naughty heart, that before was full of treachery, is overcome with this undeserved favour ; and his hatred is turned into love : so it is here ; when the sinner, the traitor, comes to perceive the love of God, in pardoning such a traitor and rebel as he, his wicked heart is overcome with that kindness, the faith of the love of God venting itself in the death of Christ : and so the faith of the blood of atonement purifies the heart, and frees it from the natural enmity.

4. He purifies by continual supply of grace, and strengthening the soul to wage war against sin, and strengthening it against corruption. There are several ways whereby he strengthens the soul. I presuppose, that, by this time, the man is in Christ, and being in

Christ, strength and virtue comes from the glorious Head ; and that by these and the like means.—Sometimes he strengthens by making the soul look again and again to Christ, as having all fulness of grace, and a fulness to be communicated : and as being exalted of God for this end, to communicate gifts, and graces, and the spirit of grace, Acts v. 31. Sometimes he strengthens the soul, by helping it to plead the promise of sanctification. The believer sees, that as he is ready to distribute of his fulness, so he is faithful to accomplish his promise ; and the promises of sanctification are manifold. At these breasts the man sucks by faith : and as the child is strengthened and nourished by sucking the breast ; so the believer, by the prayer of faith, sucks from the promise of grace, *e.g.* the promise of the Lord pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin ; and so derives strength. Sometimes he strengthens by giving the soul some joy and comfort, and so encouraging it for giving battle to the enemies : Believing, we rejoice ; and rejoicing we are strong : for the joy of the Lord is our strength. The more heaviness, the more weakness ; but the more joy, the more strength, so the more purity.—Sometimes he strengthens by giving the Spirit of prayer, and helping to wrestle with him for the blessing : “ I will not let thee go, till thou bless me,” said the patriarch Jacob. Thus the Spirit helps our infirmities, and maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered. The psalmist experienced both the energy of the Spirit, and the effect thereof : “ In the day that I cried, thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul,” Psal. cxxxviii. 3.—Sometimes he strengthens, by shewing his name and office : by shewing that his name is JESUS, because he saves his people from their sins ; and that it is his office, his work, his business, to save by his grace, and sanctify by his spirit, and purify by his blood.—In a word, sometimes he strengthens, and so carries on the begun work of purity and sanctification, by restoring the soul, and granting manifold recoveries after falls ; by bringing the man out of this and the other horrible pit into which he hath fallen by his iniquity : for this work of purity is carried on through many vicissitudes and changes : through many cross winds, and many a severe battle, and sad victory obtained by enemies : through many fears and faintings. Sometimes the man falls down, and then he gets up again : sometimes he is plunged, as it were, into the bottom of hell, in respect of the power of sin, and the blackness

of the pollution, in which he sees himself so mired as that he cannot get out; and at other times he is lifted up to the mountain top, and his feet set upon the high places of Jacob. Sometimes he is ready to give clean over: at length hope doth revive again; for the Lord encourages the man to hope, by speaking into the heart, or sounding into the soul such a word as that, There is hope in Israel for all this: or such a word as that, "Fear not; for the Lord will not forsake his people, for his great name's sake, because it hath pleased the Lord to make them his people," 1 Sam. xii. 20-22,—By these, and the like means, the Lord encourages the soul to return, after his lowest falls; and raises him up, as Peter was raised from his shameful downfall. The Lord looks toward the man with a tender, merciful, and compassionate eye; and then he is strengthened to lament his sin, to weep bitterly, to look up to the Lord for grace and forgiveness.

Now, by these, and the like means, doth the Lord purify the soul, and carry on the work; and so here is another large field, wherein you may roam, to try and examine whether you know these things to your experience, or not; whether the Lord be working them, in a saving manner, in your soul; if he hath purified, and is purifying you, by discovering your impurity, viz. by the revelation of his grace, by killing your enmity with his love, and by strengthening your soul, in the manner I have shown.

6thly, Let us now examine this gospel-purity by the end of it. As we have already tried this point by the root, the fruit, the parts, the perfection, and the means of it; we may now examine this gospel-purity by the gospel end of it. I shall not enlarge upon this here, but rather refer it to be more fully spoken to in a motive upon the use of exhortation. Only, in so many words, the true end of gospel purity and sanctification, is not to pacify conscience, nor to satisfy justice, nor to purchase heaven, nor to work out a righteousness for our justification: all these ends are legal, and the proposing of them is no end of purity, or mark of holiness: But the true end of gospel purity, and sanctification is, to glorify God, to edify our neighbour, to testify our gratitude to God, and to evidence our justification.—Let me touch a little at this point.

The great end, I say, of purity and sanctification, is not to be a ground or cause of justification; but to be a fruit and evidence thereof. The gross ignorance of this point of doctrine, in the present generation, makes it necessary to inculcate and establish it.

1. The great end of gospel purity, or sanctification, is not to be a ground or cause of justification. They who think to be justified, pardoned, accepted, or admitted to God's favour, by any purity, goodness, righteousness, or holiness, whether done by them, by the strength of nature, or wrought in them, by the strength of grace, they overturn the gospel, and discover themselves to be strangers to the nature of true purity, which doth not work a righteousness for justification ; but flows from justification, as streams from a fountain. If men could fly to heaven, by the wings of their own works ; or get up there, by the ladder of their own righteousness, what need was there that God should set up another ladder to heaven for us ? If we consult Gen. xxviii. 12, we will find that Jacob gets a discovery of a ladder, the foot whereof did stand on the earth, and the top of it did reach heaven. Which pointed out both the person of Christ, being God-man, who was both to stand on earth and reach to heaven, in his human and divine natures united : and also the office of Christ, that, as Mediator, was to reconcile God and man, by the sacrifice of himself : and so join heaven and earth together, the most distant extremes, by the blood of his cross. Heaven is accessible only by ascending up this ladder, viz. CHRIST, the Lord our righteousness. O sirs, it is a great word, JEHOVAH our righteousness ! and it may give us honourable thoughts of the alone ground of justification. The merit and righteousness of Christ, which is the alone ground of justification, is infinite merit ; because of the eminency of the person, being God-man, JEHOVAH in our nature, fulfilling the law by his obedience to the death. The law, violated, was but a creature ; but he that is made subject to it, is the Creator. The holiness of the obeyer, in this case, exceeds the holiness of the law. What a noble ground of justification is here ? The transgressor of the law is but a man : but the satisfier is God-man, whose obedience brings in more honour to the law, than if men and angels had obeyed for ever. Hence the justification of believers is perfect ; as perfect in time as ever it shall be in glory ; because the righteousness of Christ, which is the matter of our justification, is the same for ever : and perfect in every true believer, whether his faith be weak or strong ; even as a thousand pound received by a palsified hand, is a thousand pound, as well as a thousand pound received by a healthful hand. O the security, unchangeableness, and perfection of justification ! Indeed, the sense of justification is according to the degree and exercise of faith ; but the truth of it is according to the truth of faith.

Now, this righteousness of Christ, and no purity, no obedience, no grace, no holiness of ours, is the ground and cause of justification. And if you have gospel purity indeed, you will never, if you be in your right senses, propose this as the end of it, namely, that you may be justified; for that belongs only to the righteousness of Christ: "In him shall all the seed of Israel be justified," Isa. xiv. 25. But,

2. This purity is the fruit and evidence of justification: and as we know a tree by its fruit; so may we know justification by sanctification: "Shew me thy faith by thy works," James ii. 18. We are to shew our faith of this righteousness of Christ, for our justification, by our works of purity and sanctification: "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ," Rom. viii. 1. What is the fruit and evidence of this? Why, they walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit. The man that is a good tree, a justified man will bring forth good fruit. The good fruit doth not make a good tree; but the good tree maketh the good fruit: so, the fruit of sanctification doth not make a man to be justified; but justification maketh a man produce the good fruit of sanctification. Herein lies the difference between works in the new covenant of grace, and works in the old covenant of works, or, herein differs legal and evangelical purity. In the legal way, work is first: and then justification thereupon: but in the gospel way, justification is first; and the works follow thereupon. So, in the old and new Sabbath: the Sabbath instituted in Paradise was the seventh day in order after the six working days; and was suited to man's state of innocency, and did most properly belong to the covenant of works, which promised life and rest, after perfect works of righteousness wrought by us: "The man that doth these things, shall live by them," Rom. x. 5: But the Christian Sabbath is the first day of the week, before our six working days: and so is fitted to the new covenant, which promised rest to the conscience, in a way of believing, and that before they do works of righteousness: but these works, and this righteousness, do necessarily attend and follow upon justification. As the same day that the waters went off from the earth, and were gathered into the sea, the earth was adorned with grass, herbs, flowers, and trees, and was fruitful, Gen. i. 9. 11; so when the deluge of wrath goes off from the soul, in justification, it is presently adorned with the graces of the spirit, and called a tree of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified. Wherever a man is justified, there also he is sanctified and purified. If you be justified, you will

shew it so, as it may be evident to yourself and others, by your study of purity. And if you be purified, you will endeavour through grace, to make this one of the ends thereof; and this will be your design, that you may shew to others, and be convinced yourself, by having certain evidence of your being justified: for, where there is no purity at all, there is no evidence at all of justification and pardon: even as the body without breath is a body without life, James ii. 20. Where there is little purity, there is little evidence of justification; where there is much purity, there will be the clearer evidence of justification. Though the Lord can, and doth sometimes make the believer's justification evident to him, in other ways than by the evidence of it in sanctification; and though justification is not up and down, according to the changes in sanctification; nay, justification is always equal, constantly the same, always perfect in the believer: like the sun in the firmament, always full, whatever waxings and wanings there may be in the moon of sanctification, and whatever changes take place in it: and he ought to be assured of this, even when his purity and sanctification is at the lowest; yea, like the moon, disappearing for a while out of view. Surely, he is not to doubt; he ought not to doubt of his justification, by Christ's righteousness imputed, because of the waning of his sanctification by a righteousness imparted: but where there is no imparted grace at all for sanctification, that a man can either see in himself, or reflect upon, as what he hath seen sometimes, or lamented the want of; where there is nothing of all this, I say, there can be no comfortable evidence of sanctification. Try yourselves then by these things, and look to the Lord to assist you in the trial.

I sum up all this use of examination with these questions. If you be washed from your filthiness, I ask you, Was you ever shaken out of your refuges of lies, your old rotten natural faith and good works? Have you ever been brought in to Christ, and made to close with him for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption? Have you ever been begotten again to a new and lively hope, through faith of him? Have you ever known what it is to have Christ dwelling in your heart, and reigning in your soul, by his word and Spirit? Have you ever known what it is to have faith working by love? And this love discovering itself by a love and respect to all the commandments of God, and by a hatred to every false way? If you can, in the sight of God, answer YEA to these questions, then I can say, you have been washed from your

filthiness, and made partakers of gospel purity: but if you be in a doubt about it, and at a loss what to say, O live not contentedly in a doubtful state, but seek that the Lord would resolve your doubt, and that you may find the matter resolved to you by the Lord himself. If you never found any of these things, and are an absolute stranger thereto, O man, woman, who are in that case, however pure you are in your own eyes, yet you are not washed from your filthiness; and, while the filth of sin remains, the guilt remains also; and, while the guilt remains, the wrath of God abideth upon you; and, therefore, as you regard the glory of God, and your eternal salvation, fly for your life out of that state; take no rest there, but go immediately to God, and cry earnestly to him, "That he may pity you, and purge you, and wash you for his name's sake." Tell him, "Lord, what will all things avail me, if I live and die in my sins, and perish for ever?"—May the Lord himself direct you.

S E R M O N X I I I.

PROV. xxx. 12.—"There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness."

[The Sixth Sermon on this Text.]

THE judgment of God is according to truth; and it is by the judgment of God we stand or fall. It is not what this or that man judgeth us to be, or what we imagine we are ourselves, that will contribute to our safety, or bear us out; for we cannot judge right unless we judge of ourselves according to the word of God; and to judge of ourselves thus, is to judge according as God judgeth. What God takes us to be, that we are: but we are not always what we take ourselves to be. Some take themselves to be Christians, who are yet but Antichristians. Some take themselves to be friends to God, who yet are enemies: "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness."

A generation of sinners, that live in sin impenitently, do make room for a deluge of wrath. One Achan troubles the whole camp of Israel: and what wrath then may multitudes of sinners bring upon a church and people! The text speaks of a multitude;

and, perhaps, multitudes of impure and unsanctified sinners were never greater than at this day wherein we live; and hence it is a day of wrath: for it could never be more truly said in any period, than of our day, "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not wished from their filthiness."

We have already improven this doctrine in an use of information, lamentation, reproof, and examination: we now proceed to another use of the point.

The fifth use that we make of the doctrine shall be for terror to all that are not washed from their filthiness; but are filthy still, impure still; were never renewed, never purified, never sanctified: but remain under the power of sin and corruption; and are utter strangers to all that purity that hitherto I have been speaking of. There is ground of terror to all the wicked of the world, that are altogether filthy, and to believers, who are partly so, and do not watch, but indulge themselves much in impurity.

1st, This doctrine affords ground of terror to the wicked, that never were washed from their filthiness, but are going on in a course of sin, drunkenness, whoredom, revelling, and all manner of immoralities. Alas, sirs! consider how miserable you are, and are like to be. Look to your sad and dismal case in life, in death, and at the day of judgment. And O if the Lord would awaken your conscience, seriously to ponder your dangerous situation.

[1.] Look to and be persuaded of it, that you are truly miserable in life. And,

1. While in that impure state, you are an utter stranger to God: "At that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world," Eph. ii. 12. You are without God, the author of hope; without Christ, the foundation of hope; without the covenant of promise, the ground of hope; without the grace of hope; you are in a hopeless case, while you refuse to fly for refuge to the hope set before you; to Christ, for wisdom, righteousness, and sanctification.

2. You are contrary to God, and God is contrary to you; your nature is contrary to God, and God's nature is opposite to you. Your principles, your practice, your nature, your aims, your mind, your affections, are all opposite to God, while you are altogether filthy.

3. You are out of case for communion and fellowship with

God. What! communion between light and darkness! Nay, you have communion and familiarity with the devil: The strong man armed keeps the house. The whole world lieth in wickedness, in time, in the arms of the wicked one. You are, as it were, fast lulled asleep in the arms of the devil.

4. You are a slave and a drudge to every lust. And, alas! what base degeneracy, that now, your immortal soul is a drudge to the devil, a slave to lust, a servant of sin, and an associate with the wicked.

5. You are under the curse while in that situation. See what a number of dreadful curses you are under, mentioned Deut. xxviii. 15-20. "Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Cursed shall thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shall thou be when thou goest out," &c. Cursed in your name, it shall rot; cursed in your house, it is the habitation of the wicked; cursed in all your religious performances, for your prayer is an abomination to the Lord; and cursed in all your civil actions, for the very ploughing of the wicked is sin.

6. You are under all the dismal evils that attend this impurity; such as, to be abhorred of God, a torment to yourself, unless in the world, an apostate from God, an object of wrath, and at last excluded from heaven.

(1.) One evil attending this impure state, is, that the man is abhorred: he is an object of God's abhorrence, if he be filthy still; for, "God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity;" and he cannot behold it so as to take pleasure in the sinner. Do you think that God can take pleasure in a man who is wallowing in his sin? No! there must be a covering from the eyes of God's holiness: and I know no covering and mantle but one of two, either the red scarlet covering of the Redeemer's blood; or the dark and black mantle of avenging wrath to eternity, to veil it from the eyes of the omniscient and omnipotent God.

(2.) Another evil, beside what hath been mentioned, is, that this impurity is a torment to the man. So much defilement, so much vexation; and the more purity, the more peace and inward serenity; "Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them; but no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

(3.) There is this evil in it also; this impurity makes a man

useless in the world. A man that is wallowing in wickedness, he is the most useless creature in the world; that which the Psalmist calls altogether filthy, the apostle quoting it, Rom. iii. 12, calls it altogether unprofitable; to let us see, that the man is altogether filthy or defiled, he is as useless as a vessel, the nastiness of which is so incorporated with it that it can never be used again.

(4.) This defilement makes way for apostacy. The man that is destitute of gospel purity, is in a state wherein he is capable of total apostacy. The true gold will abide the fire; but the furnace carries off the dross. The good wheat will abide the wind: but the wind carries away the chaff. "They altogether filthy are; they all aside are gone." What makes so much defection and apostacy in our day? Why, men abandon their profession, abandon their principles, grow remiss in their practises, relinquish their first zeal, and leave their first love; why, they are defiled; they are not washed from their filthiness.

(5.) This defilement makes way for wrath and judgment to be poured forth; "For these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience," Col. iii. 6. Trouble and anguish to every soul of man that doth evil; for, "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of man," Rom. i. 18. A day of wrath, a day of calamity is threatened, because of the impurity of the generation that are not washed from their filthiness.

(6.) This defilement excludes from heaven. No pollution can dwell in the higher house: when it began to enter, the authors of it were cast down into hell: There shall in nowise enter into it any thing that defileth, or that worketh abomination, or maketh a lie," Rev. xxi. 27. Is not all this most terrible!

[2.] As you are miserable in life, so you will be miserable at death; then conscience begins to roar; for its black book is opened, and the long roll, the black roll of sins appear; and then the devil who lulled you asleep in sin, and tempted you to sin, will present the heinousness thereof, and tempt you to despair. Then your friends, relations, comforts, and enjoyments of the world, will bid you an eternal adieu: and then no more offers of Christ, or grace, or salvation. Sin, the sting of death, not being taken away, death will be most terrible and dreadful. When the awful messenger approaches with his dismal appearance, armed with his mortal dart, ready in an instant to strike through the miserable creature, with

what amazement will the poor soul be filled! How unwelcome will the near approach of this mighty conqueror be to the poor sinner!

[3.] The polluted soul will not only be miserable at death, but also at the day of judgment: for Christ will be revealed from heaven, taking vengeance on them who know not God, and obeyed not the gospel. Then the awful and final sentence will be pronounced, "Depart from me, ye cursed!" Ah! terrible sentence! "Depart from me!" Depart from the chief good and happiness, to be miserable to eternity! In this sentence is wrapt up all misery; and what will frustrate all the vain expectations of the wicked at that day. If you should say, O! let us not go far away: Nay; depart from me, out of my sight and presence; and that is far enough to them; for ever banished from the presence of God, the presence of bliss. O! if we must depart, let us depart with a blessing: No, depart from me, ye cursed; depart with the curse of God, the wrath and vengeance of God! O! if we must thus depart, let us go to a good place: No, depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire; the place of torment, the place of perdition, the place of burning. O! if it must be to fire, let it be but for a short time: No, no; depart to everlasting fire, to dwell there through an endless eternity; depart to everlasting fire, fire that cannot be quenched; "Where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." O! if it must be so, let us depart with good company; let us have some heartsome company with us; No, by no means, depart with the devil and his angels. Oh! the miserable case of those who live and die in their sin! They must be sent to the devouring Tophet; to swim for ever in the river of fire and brimstone! Ah: dreadful state! You will appear before the judgment-seat in the devil's livery; and must share of his misery to eternity. Inconceivable and permanent misery.

2dly, This doctrine affords ground of terror also to believers, who, though they are washed habitually from their filthiness, yet lie under much actual pollution, without due application to the fountain; there is ground of terror from this doctrine to such. Though we cannot preach the same terror to them, as to the wicked; and cannot say they shall be condemned, or go to hell, or yet become liable to the curse of the law; yet the Lord hath a rod for the back of his children: If they break his law, though he pardon their sin, yet he may take vengeance on their inventions. And we are not to think light of the rod of correction and chastisement, which the Lord

may use with his children, who are unwatchful ; for there is something very terrible therein, whatever way we view it, either with respect to temporal, spiritual, and eternal matters.

[1.] There is something very terrible in the chastisements of God with respect to temporal concerns. And,

1. The rod may be upon your body, in sore sickness, fevers, gouts, gravels, tormenting pains ; such as these we read of, Deut. xxviii. 58, 59, and ver. 22, 27. The Lord may put you upon the rack day and night, with excruciating pains, and agonising torments. Is not this a dreadful rod ?

2. The rod may be heavy in respect of your families, heavy sickness and afflictions upon your husband, wife, and children. The Lord may make your children a cross to you, your relations a burden to you, and your most intimate friends and concerns a trouble to you. He may take away the desire of your eyes with a stroke, and leave you desolate and destitute. This is a sore trial.

3. The rod may be grievous in respect of your name. You may be trysted with great reproaches, and be made a by-word among your neighbours ; to the Psalmist it was a sword within his bones, when he was reproached. This sword may pierce you ; you may be left to fall under infamy and disgrace. Yea, the Lord may so far leave you, as to let you fall into scandalous evils, and become a reproach to the Christian name. And is not this a heavy chastisement ?

4. The rod of correction may be sore with respect to public calamities ; such as these we read of, Ezek. xiv. 21, " For thus saith the Lord God, How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast ? " Sword, famine, pestilence, and captivity, are heavy judgments. What a terrible thing is the sword ? It may be bathed in the blood, and sheathed in the bowels of your dearest friends ; and, perhaps, in your own bowels. What a sad rod is the famine ? Hereby tender mothers have been made to eat their own children ; and men obliged to eat their own fingers, and the flesh off their own arm ; one part of the body to maintain another. What a dreadful rod is the pestilence ? See it described, Psal. xci. 3, 6, 10. See also Deut. xxviii. 59—61. What a sore chastisement is it to be led away into captivity ? Thou mayest be carried away to a strange land ; from father, mother, friends, and acquaintances ; where thou

knowest not a face, Deut. xxviii. 48, and to fears of still greater judgments, ver. 65—67.

[2.] The rod of correction has something very terrible in it, when we view it with respect to spiritual matters.

1. The Lord may give loose reins to your lusts, and let you be overpowered with corruption, so as iniquity shall prevail. He may give you up to the lusts of your hearts; a most mischievous and pernicious enemy.

2. The Lord may let the devil loose upon you; that roaring lion to buffet you, and to do what he can to devour you. This was a correction which Job, Paul, Peter, and many others, were trysted with.

3. You may be tossed with doubts and fears about sin and duty; and neither know what way to go, nor which course to steer. You may be quite wrapt up in darkness and perplexity.

4. You may be deserted of God, and left to go mourning without the sun: and though you would give all the world for a sight of his face, yet not be favoured with it. This was the case with Job; "I go forward, but he is not there; backward, but I cannot perceive him, &c. O that I knew where I might find him!" Job xxiii. 3, 8.

5. You may be brought under terrors, as Job was: "The arrows of the Almighty are within me; the poison whereof drinketh up my very spirit, Job. vi. 4. Thine arrows stick fast in me," Psal. xxxviii. 2.

6. You may be left to despair and to distraction, through the terrors of God; "The terrors of God do set themselves in array against me, Job vi. 4. While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted," said Heman, Psalm lxxxviii. 15.

[3.] Chastisements are terrible, with respect to the fears concerning your eternal state. You may be brought to the very brink of despair, as was just now observed concerning Heman: to be in doubts and fears about your everlasting welfare: your hope may be perished, in a manner, from the Lord, Lam. iii. 18. The Lord may carry towards you like an enemy and a stranger: your spirit may be sunk, and your heart faint; yea, any thing but hell, and the breaking of the covenant. Yea, the Lord may even take a child by the neck, as it were, and shake him over hell, as if he was designing to throw him into the flaming lake. He may drop in hot wrath into the conscience, and kindle a little hell within him. And

though all be but fatherly chastisement, and in love, yet no views of love may the person have: but apprehend God as an enemy, being left to this unbelieving fear of his vindictive wrath. God may break him with breach upon breach; and run upon him like an enemy. Yea, the rod may be heavy in its nature; the sickness, *e.g.* may be a sore sickness; it may be extraordinary in its kind, so that you may be ready to say, No sorrow like your sorrow. It may be manifold in its number; one messenger of evil tidings after another; breach upon breach. It may be growing in its degrees still worse and worse. And it may be long in its continuance, perhaps; so long as that you may lie under it all your days. O what ground of holy fear then hath even the child of God, if he be not watchful and circumspect!

The sixth use that we make of this doctrine, shall be for consolation to the godly, who are exercising themselves to godliness, and students, actual students of purity; growing and advancing in purity. Here I would lay before you, 1. Some marks and evidences of those that are growing in holiness and purity. 2. Point out some grounds of consolation for such.

1st, We propose to lay before you some marks and evidences of advances in holiness, and a man growing in purity.

1. Spirituality in the intervals of duty, as well as in the performance of duty, is a true mark of growth in holiness; spirituality between duty, as well as in duty. If a man should seem never so religious in duty, if he gives latitude to himself in the intervals, he looks not like one that is growing and advancing in purity. Moses' face shined as much when he came off from the mount, as when he was on the mount.

2. Conflict with spiritual sins, and spiritual evils, is an evidence hereof. When a man is helped to conflict against heart-sins, which lie most hid and remote from the eyes of the world; and obtains some spiritual victory and conquest over them, it is an evidence of purity. When the heart rises, with all its strength, against spiritual pride and self, and self-ends, it evidences some advances in holiness.

3. When a man is exercised in spiritual duties, and in internal duties of religion: not only busied about external duties, but especially is exercised about those and the like internal ones, viz. meditation, mortification, self-examination, self-resignation, self-loathing, self-judgment, self-condemnation; praying in the spirit

watching over the heart, applying the blood of Christ, the death of Christ; applying the promise and the word to his own soul: when it is thus with a person, it is an evidence of his making some progress in purity and holiness.

4. When a man is carried on to religious duties by spiritual principles and internal motives: when a person is acting, from a sense of divine love, from a sense and desire after Christ's spiritual presence, and from the sweetness and excellency of communion and fellowship with a God in Christ.—These are some evidences of a person's growing in purity and holiness.

2dly, We proceed next to point out some grounds of consolation for such persons.

1. The more purity you have, the more like God. And, O what comfort accrues from this, to be like to God; to be conformed to the Son of God! The more likeness, the more love. The Lord cannot but delight in his own image: He himself is holy; and cannot but delight in the holiness and purity of his people.

2. The more purity, the more ripe for heaven: you are thus made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light; for no unclean thing can enter into the heavenly Jerusalem. And, O what comfort arises from this, that you are a candidate for the glory of the new Jerusalem!

3. The more purity, the more communion and fellowship with God; "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. If any 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," John xiv. 21, 23. The godly person, by his impurity, may greatly mar his fellowship with God; but by advancing in holiness, his communion is promoted.

4. The more purity, the more communication of good things from God: the more holiness you are possessed of, the more will God give you: "He will give grace and glory; and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly," Psalm lxxxiv. 11. When he gives this grace to walk uprightly, he will be still adding more: And every new addition of grace, and communication of love, will make the babe of grace leap cheerfully in the soul; for they that walk in the fear of the Lord, will walk in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, Acts ix. 31.

5. The more purity, the more will the truth and reality of all your other graces be notified to you : particularly these three cardinal graces, Faith, Love, and Hope, 1 Cor. xiii. 13.—Faith, in its sincerity is hereby notified ; for, if it be true faith, it will purify the heart. The man that says he believes, and yet walks on in a course of sin, it shows his faith to be but a fancy. Love is, in its sincerity, notified hereby ; for, true love proceeds from a pure heart : “ The end of the commandment, is love out of a pure heart.”—Hope also is notified and made known : “ He that hath this hope, purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”

6. The more purity, the more sense of pardon and justification. —There is comfort, that your sanctification does not affect your justification : and that failures in purity, doth not diminish your justification. And as it is the property of sovereign grace, that it is neither moved by any good in the creature ; nor hindered by any evil in the creature : so, it is the property of justification, that neither the believer's sins makes him less justified ; nor his holiness makes him more justified. This is indeed the privilege of all justified believers : but the more pure that the believer is, the more comfortable sense has he thereof.

Believers, by justification, stand in the favour of God, upon the same ground on which Christ, as Mediator, stands in his favour ; for you are accepted in the Beloved. Christ, as Mediator, is beloved for his righteousness sake : “ The Lord is well-pleased for his righteousness' sake.” He is highly exalted of God, and honoured of him, because he gave himself to be obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Christ is beloved and accepted of God, upon this ground ; and you are accepted in him upon the same ground. Why then, if Christ and you stand upon the same bottom, upon the same ground, consider how sure that ground is ; surely, there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus ; no liableness to condemnation. If any will assert that the believer, after all, may become liable to condemnation, while he remains in mystical union with the Son of God, which is for ever, and remains favoured of God, or accepted upon the same ground that Christ is, let them answer for the dishonourable thought that this imports concerning the Son of God himself. Can the ground upon which Christ stands in the favour of God ever fail ? Nay ; it were blasphemy so to imagine : Neither can the ground upon which the believer stands in the favour of God ever fail ; for they stand upon the same ground,

namely, the mediatory righteousness, which is as much imputed to the believer, as if he himself had, in his own person, fulfilled it: It is reckoned to the believer, as if he himself had, in his own person, satisfied divine justice, and fulfilled the divine law: And hence, whatever can be said of the happiness of the saints now in heaven, in point of security from vindictive wrath; I say not his holiness, but his happiness: in this respect, the same may be asserted of the believer on earth, in point of justification.

Why, then, say you, the believer may do as he pleaseth, and sin as he listeth; for there is no fear of him. The world, truly, mistakes matters, with respect to the true believer. A carnal heart, never renewed by grace, may indeed deliberately argue thus; "If I was secure as to that event, viz. that I would never go to hell, but shall infallibly be brought to heaven, then I would drink, and debauch, and sin as I please." Such a disposition, and such a way of talking, is very agreeable to a man that is in a carnal, natural state; but it is cross to the very nature of a believer. And, if any say they are believers, and yet would use that doctrine of grace at this rate: why, their very speech bewrays them, and says they are not believers; because no believer, as a believer, can say so.

But it may possibly be urged, May not the corrupt part of the believer say so? Yea: and if it do, it shall be destroyed for so saying: for that which defileth the temple of God, that will God destroy. If the old man of corruption thus defile God's temple, God will destroy that old man: he will destroy it with the fire of his vindictive wrath and vengeance: for the old man of sin in the believer may indeed be said to be under the law, and shall be condemned. Though the believer, as he is a believer, is ever freed from condemnation! yet his sin and corruption is, and shall be condemned; and God takes many ways to do that: yet so as vindictive wrath shall never touch the person of the believer in Christ.

But let us take the believer at himself, and see if this be consistent with the grain of the child of God. Your sin is pardoned: therefore, go and take your fill of sin. God hath delivered you from hell; therefore, go and walk in the way of hell. God hath loved you with an everlasting love; therefore, vent your enmity against God to the uttermost. He acts like a God of love to you; therefore act you like a devil against him. God will honour you with the enjoyment of himself for ever in heaven; therefore, go your way and dishonour him as you can. Oh! no, no. Such expres-

sions would offend the generation of the righteous, and of true believers: it would make the hairs of their head to stand, if we may be allowed the expression, and their bowels to tremble: for the quite contrary is ingrained in their new nature: Shall we thus requite the Lord? Shall we render hatred for love.¹

The more sense of justification, the more purity; and the more purity, the more sense of justification; and yet neither your purity or sanctification, nor failing therein, doth influence your justification, or affect it; for it remains still perfect, and invariably the same.—So much for an use of consolation to the godly.

S E R M O N X I V .

PROV. xxx. 12.—“There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.”

[The Seventh Sermon on this Text.]

IF we knew what a pure and holy God we have to do with, our own impurity would be hateful to us. “God is of purer eyes than he can behold iniquity:” we are of such impure eyes that we cannot behold his purity. Yea, though our eyes were purer than they are; yet God is so perfect, that we cannot see his perfection; even as the sun is so bright, that we cannot see the brightness of it. But, as the stronger the eye, the better the sight will it get of the sun; so, the purer the soul is, the more clearly will it see the holiness and purity of God; “Blessed are the pure, for they shall see God!” O! what is the reason that God is so little seen, and is so far out of sight, with the generation? Why, the generation is impure and defiled: and what aggravates the matter prodigiously, is, they do not know so much: “There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.”

We have already made a very copious improvement of this subject, the excellency of gospel-purity: it only remains now, that we conclude the subject, with a particular address to the conscience.

The seventh use, therefore, that we make of the doctrine, is for

(1.) The reader may see this point of doctrine copiously handled, by consulting the Sermon intitled, Law-death, Gospel-life.

exhortation and direction. Is it so, as has been said. That gospel-purity is so excellent a thing? Then let me exhort you, in the words of the prophet, "Wash you, make you clean," Isa. i. 16. O seek to be washed and purified from your filthiness. Seek to be partakers of this gospel purity and holiness. I have already preached several sermons upon this one doctrine; and they may not only be as many witnesses, that the doctrine we inculcate, is a doctrine according to godliness, tending to advance holiness, and not to encourage licentiousness, let reproachers say what they will; but they may be so many witnesses against a polluted generation, that neither are washed from their filthiness, nor have any desire to be washed, but are filthy still.

Let me now exhort both the wicked to seek after purity, and the godly to seek after more of it. As we have already insisted so long upon the applicatory part, I shall put both these together, for gaining of time. And to enforce the exhortation, we shall, 1. Ad-duce some motives. 2. Offer some directions.

1st, By way of motive to the study of purity, consider, that this gospel-purity eminently tends to the following things. 1. The glory of God. 2. The honour of Christ. 3. The credit of the gospel. 4. The good of both ourselves and others.

[1.] This gospel purity and holiness eminently tends to the glory of God. And it cannot fail to do so, in regard God himself is holy: holiness is an essential quality of his nature; impurity is the very reverse thereof: sin is that abominable thing which his soul hates. The more impurity that there is in the world, the more is God dishonoured; but the more purity and holiness, the more is he glorified. As impurity is an open dishonour done to God; so external purity is a glorifying of God before the world: therefore says our Lord, "Hereby is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit."—And he positively enjoins, that we should make our light so to shine before men, that they seeing our good works, may glorify our heavenly Father.

Further, this gospel purity tends to the glory of God, in as much as it is the end of our election; for he hath chosen us in him, that we should be holy, and without blame. He hath called us hereunto: for, he hath not called us unto uncleanness, but holiness. It is agreeable to his will; for, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." It is the livery in which his servants serve him; for they serve him in the beauty of holiness. It is obedi-

ence to his commands, because it is written, "Be ye holy, for I am holy:" and again, "Be ye perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." It is the badge and spot of his children; for, holiness becometh his house for ever.

In these, and many other respects, gospel purity tends to the promotion of God's glory. Why, in one word, the great and ultimate end of gospel-purity, is just this, That whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God. And this is one of the marks and characteristics, whereby it is distinguished from the finest painted hypocrisy.

But, perhaps, some may be ready to say, How shall I know, if the glory of God be my great end, in my purity and holiness, and all that I do?

I confess, this is the great question that determines the controversy between two great competitors, the one a pretender, the other a lawful sovereign, viz. whether self, or the great JEHOVAH, be the God to whom the devotion of our purity is paid: whether God or self be our ultimate end. I shall offer a few thoughts in answer to the question.

1. The man that entirely acts for the glory of God, in the study of purity, he can trample upon his own happiness, when it comes in competition with the glory of God: he sees this to be of more worth than a thousand heavens; and therefore, the self-denied believer, before the glory of God should suffer, would in a manner, venture his all, though the venture would never be to his loss. "Blot me out of thy book," says Moses. "Let me be accursed," saith Paul. Why, the thing that prompted them to this, was zeal for the glory of God.

2. If the glory of God be your great end, in the study of holiness, and all you do, all your duties, then your desire will be to wait on the Lord in time of absence, as well as in times of presence. Out of the depths will you cry unto God: and out of the belly of hell will you look again to his holy temple. "I will wait upon the Lord that hideth himself from the house of Jacob, and will look for him," Isa. viii. 17. When self hath no encouragement in its hand, even then to glorify God, be waiting on him obedientially, evidences that the glory of God is the end aimed at: even when the soul is content to live by faith, when sense is gone.

3. When one hath God's glory for his end, in the study of holiness, then the more assurance he hath of the love of God in

Christ, the more earnest is he in the pursuit of purity and holiness. As he grows in God's favour, so will he grow in likeness to God. Assurance will not make him slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. It is otherwise with the selfish hypocrite; his false assurance weakens his hand, and slackens his diligence in duty; because he thinks his state secure he takes his nap. Why, so far the glory of God is not his end, but self-love. Something of this may take place indeed in the believer: but I speak of the natural fruit of his assurance; and especially the more clear it is, the more earnest will he be in pursuit of holiness, and the more diligent in the Lord's work, knowing that his labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

4. If the glory of God be your great end, in seeking after gospel purity, then you will have a constant conflict with self: you will find self creeping in, and intruding itself into all duties; into your prayers, hearing, reading, praising, communicating, &c. It will be a burden to you: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death?—The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these two contrary the one to the other."—O therefore study holiness, seek after gospel purity, because it so much tends to the glory of God.

[2.] Consider, for motive, to seek after this gospel-purity, that it greatly tends to the honour of Christ.—Christ's errand into the world was to save sinners from their impurity and sin: He came to seek and save that which was lost; and to finish transgression, and make an end of sin. He shed his precious blood, to be a laver for washing away all filthiness of the flesh and spirit; for, his blood cleanseth from all sin: and he suffered without the gate, that he might sanctify the people. The more purity and holiness that abounds in the world, the more doth Christ see of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied. The more impurity that prevails the more is his blood trampled upon; but the more purity that takes place, the more is the virtue and efficacy of his blood manifested: and consequently he is the more honoured. The impure person is a dishonour to Christ; but the holy man bears a resemblance to him, and so puts honour upon him.

Further, That gospel-purity, wherever it takes place, tends mightily to the honour of Christ, will appear if we consider the following particulars.

1. This gospel-purity is just an imitation of Christ as an

example; for, "He gave us an example, that we should follow his steps." It is an answering of the design of that copy, pattern, and example which he set before us: it is a following of the Lamb whithersoever he goeth; a cleaving to him in tribulation and adversity, as well as in prosperity.

2. Because it flows from love to Christ, and an high estimation of him: I say, this purity flows from love to him. And those who love this purity, however unholy they see themselves to be, they love him the better, on account of the holy pattern he has given them; the better, that he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separated from sinners. It is a good sign of some gospel-holiness, when the soul can say he loves God because he is a holy God; and loves Christ, because he is a holy Christ. This purity flows from an high estimation of Christ, whatever those who have it may lose for his sake, and for cleaving to his truth, cause, and way, in pursuit thereof. It is a good sign of gospel-purity, when a man is losing his honour, credit, riches, wealth, and outward advantages for Christ, and yet retains an high esteem of him; such a man is selling all for Christ, the pearl of great price; and esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. He hath the glory and honour of Christ in view, and wants to promote it.

3. This gospel-purity tends to the honour of Christ, because in the study and pursuit of it, the soul desires nothing more than perfect conformity to him, and full enjoyment of him. The breathings of the soul, under the influences of this gospel-purity, are, "O to have that which is in part done away! O to be like unto him in humility, patience, zeal, and unblameableness! O to be like him in holiness, and to see him as he is!"

4. This purity tends to the honour of Christ, because all the believer's efforts in prosecution of it are in a dependence on Christ's strength: "We are not sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God. When I am weak, then am I strong. I can do all things, through Christ strengthening me." And so the believer subscribes, with heart and hand, to the truth of these blessed words, that proceeded out of his mouth, John xv. 5, "For without me ye can do nothing." And to that precious promise, 2 Cor. xii. 6, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in thy weakness."

5. This purity tends to Christ's honour, because that in prosecution thereof, and the duties that advance it, nothing short of

Christ himself will satisfy the believer. The man can distinguish between Christ in a duty, and liberty, or a frame in duty ; between Christ in prayer, and a frame in prayer. The hypocrite, if he gets the frame, there he rests content, without any other Christ : but the believer, though he loves a good frame, and desires liberty and duty, as the chariot in which Christ is conveyed to his soul, yet he will not satisfy himself with the chariot, if Christ be not therein. " O, says he, it is not a frame only, but Christ that I am seeking, and Christ that I must have ! Give me Christ, or else I die ! " To be content with any enjoyment, temporal or spiritual, without Christ, is selfish, and derogating from the glory of Christ, which is the ultimate end.

6. This gospel-purity tends to the honour of Christ, inasmuch as the students of holiness wrap all their holy duties in the robe of his perfect righteousness. They see and are persuaded that their most holy duties cannot justify them before a holy God ; and therefore they cast all their tears, prayers, and duties into the ocean of Christ's infinite merit ; and there they dye them red in the precious blood of the Lamb, that they may fly up to heaven with acceptance, in pillars of smoke, perfumed with the sweet odour of his sacrifice unto the death.

Many other things might here be added to enforce this motive : such as, the predestinated conformity of the subjects of this sanctity to Christ, Rom. viii. 29 ; the sameness of mind in them that was in Christ, Phil. ii. 5 ; with other particulars : but we insist not. Let this motive have weight with you to study purity, that it tends so much to the honour of Christ.

[3.] Consider, by way of motive, that as purity greatly tends to the glory of God, and the honour of Christ, so also to the credit of the gospel. Impurity brings a reproach on religion ; and an unholy professor is a discredit to the Christian name. Nothing can bring a greater reproach upon the gospel of Christ than the immoral lives of its professors. The very end and design of the gospel is to promote holiness and sanctification ; and when purity and holiness does not take place, it is an evidence the gospel is doing little good ; and those who profess it is a discredit unto it. The gospel revelation of the grace of God was designed to teach men to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly. And it ought to be the study of all who hear it, to evidence, by their holy deportment, that it hath come to them, not in word only, but in

demonstration of the spirit, and with power. Hereby the professors of the gospel will be a credit thereto.

Further, That purity will tend to the credit of the gospel, will be evident, if it is considered that this evangelical purity is, 1. The purity of such as are in a gospel state. 2. Purity that flows from gospel principles. 3. Purity that is influenced by gospel motives. 4. Purity that is directed to a gospel end.

1. This holiness and purity is for the credit of the gospel, inas-much as it is the purity of such only as are in a gospel state. For, as it is only a good tree that brings forth good fruit; so, none but the true believer, that is in a good state, can bring forth the fruits of true holiness. By a gospel state, I understand a spiritual state, a state of union to Christ, a justified state, an adopted state, a renewed state: without this, no right sanctity, no evangelical purity.

2. It is purity that flows from gospel principles. The proud legalist's sanctity flows from legal principles, the principles of his own inherent strength, self-sufficiency, and the like: but gospel purity flows from gospel principles. The believer's holy duties are performed in the strength of gospel grace, promised grace: the strength of Christ laid hold on by faith: "Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit," 2 Cor. vii. 1.

4. This purity is influenced by gospel motives. The greatest gospel motive of the believer's holiness, is the will of God in Christ, and the love of God in Christ. The will of God in Christ, through whom the will of God is conveyed, he being the channel of divine authority: whereas, the legalist's motive to holiness is the will of an absolute God, God considered as Creator, out of Christ as Redeemer. The love of God in Christ, and the believer's love to a God in Christ, is also the great gospel motive to holiness, and not slavish fear of the threatenings and of hell, nor the mercenary hopes of heaven and happiness, which are the motives that legalists are acted by.

4. This gospel-purity is directed to a gospel end. The believer's end in this purity is not to obtain life, to procure pardon, and merit the enjoyment of God: but to evidence his gratitude to that God who hath provided all these valuable blessings freely to him. The end of this purity is not to satisfy conscience, appease wrath, or the like: but to glorify a God in Christ, and express our thankfulness to him for Christ, his unspeakable gift, and all spiritual blessings in and with him.

From these, and the like considerations, it is evident that this purity is for the credit of the gospel. Let them, therefore, have their proper weight with you, to excite you to press after holiness, and to be actual students of gospel purity.

[4.] In order to excite to the study of holiness and purity, let it be considered that it greatly tends both to our own good, and that of others.

1. Consider how much this purity and holiness tends to your own good and advantage, in order to influence you to be students of it. A variety of particulars might here be taken notice of; but we shall study brevity.—Consider, that the more of this evangelical purity you have, the more will God give to you; for, “The Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly,” Psalm lxxxiv. 11. The more of this purity, the more joy and comfort will you have. It will make you walk to heaven comfortably. In the path of holiness you will still see more and more of the love of God; which will make your souls to rejoice, and you to walk in the fear of the Lord with cheerfulness: For they that walk in the fear of the Lord, walk in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, Acts ix. 31.—The more gospel-purity, the more intimate acquaintance with God’s secrets; for, “The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant,” Psalm xxv. 14.—The more evangelical purity, the more pleasure and delight will you take in the duties of religion, and the more acceptable will your services be to God: “He will purify the sons of Levi; then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant to the Lord,” Mal. iii. 3, 4.—The more of purity, the more boldness and courage will you have in the work and cause of God; for the righteous is bold as a lion. It will inflame your soul against sin, and for God. It will make you trample on temptations to sin; saying, with Joseph, “How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”—It will contemn and despise all dangers, rather than stain your purity by sinful compliances: as Ezra, Nehemiah, Daniel, the three children, and many others did.—In a word, the more of this gospel-purity you have, the more fellowship with God here, and the meeter for enjoyment of him hereafter; for, “Blessed are the pure in heart, and life, for they shall see God,” Matth. v. 8. Let these particulars have their proper influence upon you, to press you on to further and higher degrees of this evangelical purity and holiness.

2. In order to excite you to the study of purity, consider likewise the tendency it hath to the good and advantage of others.—Why, the more gospel-purity, the greater stock you have ; and the richer of this grace you are, the more will it tend to the benefit of your friends and acquaintances, and to your neighbours around you ; as your holy work may induce you to the practice of it. The more holy you are, and the richer of gospel-purity, the greater influence will your holiness have, in making the wicked stand in awe to sin, and keeping them back from dishonouring God ; nay, exciting them to a profession of religion, and something of the practice of duty. You see what influence this way the sanctity of holiness of godly Joshua, and his co-temporary elders, had upon the children of Israel, Judges ii. 7. And what influence Jehoiadah's sanctity had upon Joash, king of Judah, 2 Chron. xxiv. 2.—Nay, further, consider that eminency of purity is sometimes a blessed mean to recommend the ways of God and religion to such as are strangers thereto : “ For what knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband ? or, how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife ? ” 1 Cor. vii. 16 ; see 1 Pet. iii. 1, 2.—Besides, eminency in gospel purity tends to ward off judgments, or protract them from falling on persons and places where the godly live : accordingly, the Lord declares to Abraham, that, if there was found in Sodom but ten righteous persons, he would not destroy it for their sake, Gen. xxxviii. 32. Nay, the amazing conflagration was not kindled upon Sodom, so long as righteous Lot lingered in it : “ Haste thee,” says the angel to Lot, “ Haste thee thither [namely, to Zoar], for I cannot do any thing till thou be come thither,” Gen. xix. 22. And presently, upon Lot's departure out of it, the flames of hell from heaven began to burn upon the cities of the plain ; as you see in the following verses. Sometimes this gospel-purity tends to draw down blessings on persons and places where the godly live : accordingly, we find that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house, [viz., Potiphar,] and all that he had, both in the house, and in the field, for Joseph's sake, Gen. xxxix. 5. Nay, Pharaoh's family, court, and all the land of Egypt were blessed for Joseph's sake ; for while wasting famine spread devastation among the surrounding nations, there was plenty in the land of Egypt. Were not temporal strokes averted, and blessings, for a time, bestowed on Babylon, while the captives of Zion were in it ? And, therefore, the prophet exhorts them to seek the peace of the city, and to pray to the Lord

for it, Jer. xxix. 7. A candle, you know, enlightens a room; but the sun enlightens a world: so, the more eminent you are in purity, and holiness, the brighter doth your lamp burn, and the more extensive doth the light thereof shine. John the Baptist was eminent in holiness: and hence we have that testimony of our Lord concerning him, namely, that he was a burning and a shining light, John v. 35. And that concerning the disciples, "Ye are the lights of the world," Matth. v. 14. That is, would our Lord say, not only by your doctrine, as ministers; but by your purity and holiness, as Christians and saints. Nor is it to disciples only, but to all, that our divine teacher comes from God and addresses himself in that interesting admonition, ver. 16,—“Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” Nay, what if I should say, that by your purity and holiness, you may increase the joy of men and angels in heaven; and, if so, the greater degree of this purity you attain, the greater tendency it will have this way. Why, this holiness and purity tends to, and, through the blessing of God, is a mean of the conversion of sinners from the error and evil of their way, James v. 19, 20. And the conversion or repentance of one sinner, or one lost sheep, affords joy in heaven to the inhabitants of the celestial mansions, Luke xv. 7—10.

From all which it is evident what tendency this evangelical purity hath to the good of others; and that the higher measure thereof you have, the greater tendency it will have this way. Let this motive, therefore, serve to excite you to press after further and higher degrees thereof.

2dly, We proposed to conclude this use of exhortation by giving some directions. We might here, 1. Offer you some general directions how to attain this gospel purity. 2. Some more particular directions how to maintain it.

[1.] The general directions we offer for attaining this gospel-purity, are these following.

1. If you would attain this gospel-purity, O labour to be sensible of your absolute impotency, weakness, and inability for the duties of religion: be convinced of your natural impotency, and moral impotency; be persuaded that you are altogether without strength; and that, if God would give you a heaven, a paradise, a Christ for one thought, you would not command it; no: “Of ourselves, as ourselves,” says the apostle, “even though converted, we

cannot think anything," 2 Cor. iii. 5. I warrant you, Paul was a better philosopher than many now-a-days, pretending to great things : no doubt he knew that the soul was ever thinking ; and yet, saith he, One thought I cannot command ; I cannot bring it forth till the almighty grace of God do it. Let people talk of man's power as they will, and lay aside the Bible, which is full of argument to the contrary ; I am sure, if they have any experience under heaven, they will find they want power to perform many thousand duties which God hath called them to practise. The Arminians are so far convinced of this, that they are driven to several shifts ; and talk of a remote power, and not an immediate power, to some things. It is plain that man, by nature, is without strength ; and it is express scripture, "Without me ye can do nothing," John xv. 5. It is said to the disciples already in a state of grace, that without him ye can do nothing ; much more may it be said of all the unconverted. Be sensible of this then, that you cannot believe, you cannot repent, you cannot pray, you cannot mortify sin of yourselves. And this impotency is not only a mere want of power, but a want of will ; it is a cursed moral impotency, a wilful impotency.

2. Seek regeneration. If you be not good trees, you cannot bring forth good fruit : if you be not converted, if you be not united to Christ, if you be not born again, if you have not the habit of grace, you cannot bring forth good fruit : you must be united to the Son of God, and derive strength from him. The foundation of gospel-purity must be laid in union to Christ, and a new nature : for they that are in the flesh cannot please God. It is true, that one knows himself to be in a state of nature, is not to neglect duty and means ; such as reading, praying, hearing the word preached, and the like, which God calls all unto : but let none content themselves with these performances, without a new nature ; for, as sure as God lives, this way of doing will never bring you to heaven : "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," John iii. 3. Therefore cry, "Lord, create in me a clean heart ; and renew a right spirit within me," Psalm li. 10.

3. Make and keep friendship with the Holy Ghost, if you would attain this gospel purity : he is not only called Holy because of his essential holiness ; for thus the Father is the Holy Spirit, and the Son is the Holy Spirit : but he is called Holy also for his office ; because it is his special work to make people holy. Be at friendship with the Holy Ghost : do not quench him ; do not grieve

him; do not resist him; do not rebel against him; do not withstand him in his motions, &c. Beware, lest by these, or any such means, the Holy Ghost and you be set at odds. O sirs, should you not live near him who can make you holy?

[2.] The particular directions I would offer, especially with respect to the maintaining of this gospel purity, I shall sum up in these two generals: 1. Rightly to use the rule of gospel purity. 2. Diligently to ply the means thereof.

Direct. 1. In order to the maintaining of gospel purity, rightly use the rule of it. The rule of it is the LAW. If it is asked, How are we to use this rule? We might reply, You are to use it fairly and evangelically.

(1.) You are to use this rule fairly. If the law do its proper work upon you, sirs, it will drive you to the gospel as a remedy; and if the gospel deal savingly with you, it will lead you to the law as a rule: but many misplace this rule, and do not use it fairly.

1. Some judge of themselves by the half of the law, and not by the whole; they love one part of the law, but not another; and they are sure to look to that part of the law, that they think makes for them and overlook that part that makes against them: but this is not fair dealing; for people are to judge themselves by the whole of it. It was the false mother that was for dividing the child: so, the false Christian is for dividing the part of the law from another.

2. Some again, judge themselves by the outside of the law, and not the inside thereof; by the letter, and not by the spirit of it. This was the error of the man who said, "All these things have I done from my youth up." He did not consider the inside and spirituality of the law, otherwise he would have cried out, with David, "I have seen an end of all perfection; but thy commandment is exceeding broad:" it reaches the thoughts of the heart, as well as the actions of the life. And therefore, ye do not use it fairly, unless you make use of the inside as well as the outside; both sides of the law.

3. Some again they bring down this rule to their practice, but will not bring up their practice to the rule; and these do not use the rule fairly: thus many make God's law to justify their corrupt practices and sins. They, if we may be allowed the expression, make a nosewax of the law, and mould it to their own corrupt fancy.

4. Others again, they justify themselves before they apply the rule, but do not apply the rule before they justify themselves. They have a good opinion of themselves; they are determined already about their state, before they come to the rule; they are settled on their lees, and so cannot believe a word that the law says against them, because they justify themselves before they apply the rule. This is not a fair using of the law: let us use it fairly, and look on it, not as many do, as a fountain of justification, but as the rule of action. And this leads me,

(2.) To the other particular, viz. to use the rule of gospel purity evangelically. It may possibly be asked, How shall we use the rule evangelically? To this we reply, in the following particulars,

1. If you would use the law in a gospel manner, attempt not obedience to it in your strength. Under the covenant of works, indeed, we were to obey by the strength of inherent grace: But now we are called to lay hold on Christ, as our strength; and to obey by the strength of derived grace assisting us.

2. If you would use the law in a gospel manner seek not peace by your obedience and sanctity; when you have done all you can, even through grace, you must go out of your own obedience to the obedience of another for peace. Believers themselves are oftentimes tickled with their own performances, even though they profess to abhor justification by works.

3. If you would use the law in a gospel manner, let not the duty the law requires, or the discovery the law makes, hinder you to embrace the offer that the gospel makes. The gospel offers Christ as a husband; the law saith, Thou art a black sinner an unfit match for such a husband. The gospel offer is, that you buy the eye-salve, white raiment and tried gold. The law tells thee, thou hast nothing to buy with. Now, you use the law evangelically, when you say, Black as I am, I embrace the offer of such a husband; he can make me beautiful through his comeliness. Poor as I am, I embrace the offer of his eye-salve. There is riches enough in Christ for me; and I see he invites me to buy without money, and without price, and to take the water of life freely.

4. If you would use the law evangelically, then look not on the law as a fountain of justification, nor yet as the fountain of strength, but only as the standard of duty; and therefore you will use it in a gospel manner, if you make a constant journey between

Christ and the law ; looking to him for righteousness and strength, who is the fountain of both : righteousness, for your acceptance : and strength, for your assistance, in every piece of obedience to the law. Here is the short road to glory : the law forces the man to Christ, to be sheltered by him ; and Christ sends him back again to the law to be ruled by it ; and the man, in using this rule, looks to Christ in the gospel, for righteousness and strength. In a word, let the main stress be laid upon the gospel, especially when you are brought to an extremity ; when there seems to be a contrariety between the law and the gospel. When the law says, “Thy hope is perished from the Lord :” and the gospel saith, “There is hope in Israel, concerning thee ;” and shews the ground of hope to be in Christ, as the Lord our righteousness and strength : it is safest, in this case, to hearken most to the voice of the gospel ; for there is a possibility of salvation this way, but not the other. Though you should have no more, but a may-be ye shall be hid ; venture upon the may-be, upon the peradventure which the gospel affords : for, hope is a duty, but despair is a sin : the one honours God, the other dishonours him.

Direct. 2. Our next direction is, diligently to ply the means of this gospel-purity. We shall offer a few of many that might be mentioned, and so close.

1. One mean is, to live by faith on the Son of God, by deriving continual supplies of grace and strength from him, saying, with David, “I will go in the strength of the Lord, making mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only,” Psal. lxxi. 16. Plead, by faith, the promise of sanctification ; that having these promises, you may cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.

2. Another mean is, to set the Lord always before you, and set a watch over yourself. This was David’s resolution ; “I said, I will take heed to my ways.” Security will betray you into the hands of enemies ; but, “Blessed is the servant whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find watching.”

3. Another mean is, to take care of discharging the sacred duties that he calls you to. The scripture gives great encouragement to this : “They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength.” The more that a man minds divine ordinances in secret, private, and public, in obedience to God’s command, and dependence on God’s promise, the more strength shall he receive to conquer his

spiritual enemies, and discharge his spiritual work. God could preserve your bodies without food ; but he will not, when he affords ordinary means : so, God could preserve your souls without ordinances ; but he will not, when he gives opportunity to enjoy them. Let me say to you, as Jacob to the patriarchs, " Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt ; get you down thither and buy, that you may live and not die." So, behold you have heard that there is spiritual food in the gospel ; our Joseph has his granary full of corn, go you thither daily by sacred duties, that you may live and not die ; for, in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And particularly,

4. Another mean is, Give yourselves unto prayer : the praying Christian is readily the holy Christian. Pray, with David, " O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes : Thy Spirit is good, lead me to the land of uprightness." By daily prayer in secret, and in your families, you may get daily incomes for helping you to this gospel purity.

5. Another mean is, O set about subduing your predominant sins, through grace ; for sin doth greatly mar your sanctity. Cast the Jonah overhead ; throw the Jezebel over the window ; and stone the Achan to death ; and, for this end, call in the aid and assistance of the Spirit of God ; for, " If ye through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

6. In a word, Labour to live under a constant sense of your own spiritual wants, and of the defects of grace and holiness ; and a sense of Christ's fulness : the persuasion hereof will induce you to come and receive out of his fulness, grace for grace.—If these means of gospel purity are diligently used, it is more than probable you shall be successful.

Now, go home : and this evening cry to the Lord, that he would help you to reduce the preaching into practice. Mind the good man's saying, who, coming from sermon, was asked, If all was done. He fetched a deep sigh, and said, All was said, but all was not done. Our preaching is not practice, your hearing is not practice ; these are only certain means unto gospel practice. What is your coming to church on the Lord's day ? It is like servants coming to their master in the first morning of the week, and saying, " Now, tell us what shall be our week's work, what shall we do this day, and the next day, till the next week come ?" You should come thus to Christ to get your orders ; for, if you rest merely in

the hearing, you confound the means with the end, and overturn the nature of things.

What do you mean, sirs? Why stand you here all the day idle? Some of you have done nothing for God, nothing for your souls, for the generation, since you came into the world. Perhaps you have treasured up a cursed conquest for your children, or for your wife; and God may blast it when you are in the grave, and may punish your children for your sin; your children on earth, and you in hell, at the same time, and for the same sin. What have you done for God? what have you done for the church of God? what have you done for advancing holiness in your place? and the interest of Christ in your station? Many of you have done nothing; some of you have done something, but it is little; and some of you will neither do nor let do; you hinder others in the way of religion and holiness.

O see to it, man, woman! You are no friends to Christ; nay, you are enemies to him, if you have nothing of this gospel purity that I have been speaking of. O pray, pray that the Lord may bless to you what hath been said on this subject, for directing you to, and promoting you in true gospel holiness, and may the Lord hear your requests, and fulfil your desires; and to his great name be all the praise.

SERMON XV.

PROV. xxx. 12.—“There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.”

[The Eighth Sermon on this Text.]

THE greatest step towards Heaven is to step out of our own door, and over our own threshold: to go wholly out of ourselves, and wholly in to Christ. Instead of going abroad, and out of ourselves, by self-denial, we naturally stay at home, by self-conceit and proud imagination of our own excellency; “There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.”

It is idolatry to worship an holy angel, as well as a cursed devil. To make our virtues our God is idolatry, as well as to make our belly our God: nay, it rather adds to the idolatry; because

that is used to rob him of his glory, which should have brought him in the greatest revenue of glory. If a man boasts of his vices and sins, he pulls down the throne of God and worships a devil: if a man boasts of his virtues and graces, he pulls down the throne of God with that wherewith he should build it up; and worships a golden image, a golden calf: yea, worships himself, while he trusts in his own beauty and purity. "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes; and yet is not washed from their filthiness."

Having prosecuted the two first observations we took notice of from these words, we now proceed to the third proposition which we observed from them, namely,

DOCTRINE 3. That self-conceit is incident to a multitude of professors.

Many, who are most impure, look upon themselves as pure; and labour under a sad, a woful delusion, a gross and damnable mistake about the state and case of their immortal souls.

The method we lay down for prosecuting this observation, through divine assistance, shall be the following.

- I. To prove and clear the truth of the doctrine.
- II. Touch a little at the nature of self-conceit.
- III. Inquire into the grounds, causes, and springs of it.
- IV. Point out the evil of it, both in respect of the sinfulness and danger of it.
- V. Deduce some inferences from the whole.

I. The first thing, then, to be essayed is to prove and clear the truth of the doctrine, viz., That self-conceit is incident to a multitude of professors. This point is evident both from scripture and experience.

1. It is clear from a multitude of scriptures. Not only the words of the text, but many other scripture passages confirm it; such as Isaiah lxxv. 5,—“Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near, for I am holier than thou.” Chap. lvi. 2, 3,—“They seek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinances of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice: they take delight in approaching

to God. Wherefore have we fasted and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge?" They were much in duty; much more than the generality of professors in our day; but they had an high conceit of themselves and their duties. Self-conceit is self-deceit; "For, if a man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself," Gal. vi. 3: or, he that conceiveth of himself highly, deceiveth himself greatly. "How canst thou say, I am not polluted, I have not gone after Baalim? See thy way in the valley; know what thou hast done," &c., Jer. ii. 23. They said they were not polluted; and yet they are called to see their way in the valley. It is observed by the prophet Hosea, chap. viii. 2, 3, concerning Israel, that they cry, "My God, we know thee;" and yet they cast off the thing that is good. Why are you saying "My God, we know thee?" You are all mistaken, saith God; you have neither part nor portion in me. If you consult the parable of the ten virgins, Mat. xxv., you will there see that the foolish virgins had an high profession, and very high pretensions to religion: they entertained an high opinion of themselves and their lamps; though yet they had no oil in their vessels. Yea, it is told of many, Mat. vii. 22, that they shall say, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works?" To whom Christ will say, "I never knew you, depart from me." And here it is plainly implied that they will expect to be rewarded with eternal bliss for the same. We are cautioned to this purpose; "Let no man deceive himself: if any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise," 1 Cor. iii. 18. "If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know," chap. viii. 2. "If any man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself," Gal. vi. 3. All which supposes that many think something of themselves, who yet are nothing, and are but cheating their own souls; and of all deceit this is the most terrible.—In a word, we find a whole church labouring under a soul-ruining disease and distemper, namely, the church of Laodicea; "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked," Rev. iii. 17.—Is it not plain from these scriptures that many look upon themselves to be pure, who never yet were washed from their filthiness? But,

2. Let us next compare these scriptures with experience. We may see this doctrine abundantly clear from experience. Are we not exceeding ready to judge ourselves better than indeed we are; and to magnify ourselves, our states, our virtues, above what they are? We act very differently in respect of our good things from what we act in respect to our evil. As to our sins and evils, we have a trick of extenuation that, though our sins be exceeding many, yet we can, like the unjust steward, write down fifty instead of an hundred. Though our sins be great, we can lessen them. But, on the contrary, in our good things or graces, whether real or supposed, we have a trick of aggravation, to make them greater and more than they are; here write an hundred for fifty. And here we have the art of multiplication. It is with many as it was with Simon Magus; they deceive themselves as he deceived the people of Samaria, Acts viii. 9, 10. He made them believe that he was some great man; yea, that he was the great power of God; whereas, indeed, he was but a base sorcerer; and one that wrought lying miracles by the power of Satan. So many conceit themselves to be great men, to be the dear children of God, and that the power of Christ dwelleth in them; when, indeed, they are nothing but Satan's vassals.

Is it not evident from experience, that many are dreaming that matters are well enough with them? They have a good heart, they think; and they trust in God, they say; and hope to be saved as well as others, that seem to be more strict.—Is it not evident from experience that there are more proud professors than poor converts? And hence, in a day of trial, multitudes of professors apostatise: they are offended at Christ and his cross; they fall off from the faith like leaves from the trees in the time of harvest. They had only an high pretence to devotion, and an high conceit of themselves, but were never truly washed from their filthiness.

II. The second thing proposed was, To touch a little at the nature of this Self-Conceit. Why, in general, "It is a false apprehension, whereby a man hath an over-weening and over-valuing of himself and his actions, judging of himself more highly than he ought to do." This self-conceit may be considered, either as it takes place in the godly, who may apprehend themselves to be in a better condition than they are; or as it takes place in the wicked, who may judge themselves to be in a good condition while yet they are in a bad one.

1. It may be considered, I say, with respect to the godly; they may imagine themselves better than indeed they are, when they think their smoking flax is a blazing flame; when they look at their graces through a magnifying glass, and think them great, when indeed they are but small. They may look upon their own graces as parents upon their own children, and think them the fairest of all others; James and John seem to be thus affected, when Christ tells them, "Are ye able to drink of my cup, and to be baptised of my baptism?" Matth. xx. 22. Yea, say they, "We are able:" while yet, alas! they were scarce able to see Christ drink that cup; and therefore fled away while it was coming near. Thus Peter also seems to be too high-minded about his grace and strength, when he said, "Why cannot I follow thee now? Yea, though all men forsake thee, yet will not I."

2. It may be considered with respect to the unregenerate, and all the wicked and ungodly, who judge themselves to be in a good state, when indeed they are in a bad one. And here this self-conceit hath especially these two parts, or two things in it. 1. When men apprehend that they want that evil which indeed they have. 2. When they imagine they have that good which indeed they want.

[1.] When men suppose that they want that evil which indeed they have; or think they are not so bad as indeed they are. Thus the Pharisee talks how free he is of common vices, Luke xviii. 11; that he is not unjust, nor an extortioner: and yet our Lord Jesus, who could not be deceived, charges that whole tribe with manifold enormities, Matth. xiii. 4—39; Luke xi. 29—44, and elsewhere; how they devoured widows' houses, through colour of long prayers; by teaching their children to starve their own parents, to offer to the altar, which, in effect, was just to fill their purse. Here was injustice and extortion; and yet, because it was more covertly carried on, and not so evident as that of the publicans and common thieves, therefore they bless themselves, as if they had been no extortioners, no unjust persons. Thus many will free themselves of pride. Why? Because they do not exceed in their apparel; and yet they may be swelled with pride and self-conceit; and discover it in many other respects. Thus many natural men think themselves free of many sins and gross immoralities which take place in the generation; and so, who more religious than they? They think they have not such and such corruptions, because they feel not the

powerful operation of them ; and it is only God's restraining hand, but no renewing grace, that makes it so ; but a lion is no less a lion when in fetters, than when he is loose.

This self-conceit, whereby men judge that they are not so bad as they are, it looks not only thus to present circumstances, but it looks sometimes backward to former times, saying with the Pharisees, " If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have murdered the prophets," Matth. xxiii. 30, when yet their bloody persecution of Christ discovered the same spirit to be in them. Even so many will say, " Fie upon the persecuting high priests that crucified Christ ! Fie upon Judas that betrayed him ! if we had been living, we would have taken Christ's part against the Jews ; we would have taken the martyrs part against their persecutors." And yet, their spiteful and malicious mind against the people of God, whom they mistake, reproach, and misrepresent, shews that they would have been as ready as the forwardest to execute all these villanies and butcheries. If one had asked Herod concerning the conduct of Ahab and Jezebel toward Elias, and what he would have done in the case, no doubt he would have condemned them, and declared he would never have been guilty of the like ; and yet he did the same thing to the new Elias [viz. John the Baptist], that came in the spirit and power of Elias ; and so discovered that he would have done the same thing to the old Elias.

Again, sometimes it looks forward to future times, saying, with Hazael, when the prophet told him he would cruelly rip up the women with child, and dash their children against the stones, 2 Kings viii. 13, " What, am I a dog ?" He thought better of himself than that ever he should break out into such wickedness. All the sons of Adam are, in their vicious qualities, worse than dogs, bears, and tigers ; and there is no sin so odious, to which we are not inclinable ; for, original sin hath in it the seed of all other sins : hence it is that Christ addresses that admonition, even to disciples, that they take heed of surfeiting and drunkenness, Luke xxi. 24. For they had in them the common poison of nature, and so were obnoxious, even to the most shameful and reproachful evils ; and yet many think themselves far enough from these and such like enormous sins. What ! am I a dog, to do so and so ! Men persuade themselves, through self-conceit, that their nature is not so far venomed, that it should break forth into such wickedness. Indeed, there may be some sins that we are not so much tempted to as

others : so Luther said of himself, " That he never was tempted to covetousness." Yet there is no sin but we may both be tempted to, and, through temptation, even fall into, if the everlasting arms do not under-prop ; this is supposed in that motive adduced, Gal. vi. 1, " Brethren, if any man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness ; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." We need to suspect our own hearts, if we knew our nature : however they may be tamed by education, civility, good example, and the like. As you would readily suspect a bear, or wolf, or lion, or any such like beast, and be loth to trust yourself to it, though never so well tamed, knowing its natural voracious disposition : even so, " He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool : and he that leaneth to his own understanding is not wise." Fear even those sins which ye least suspect, and to which you find not yourselves so prone carried.

[2.] Another part of self-conceit is, when they suppose they have that good, which indeed they want : and when they imagine themselves in a good state, when they are in a very bad, miserable one. This is a very sad deceit : " He that thinketh himself to be something, when he is nothing, deceiveth himself," Gal. vi. 3. And, as was formerly observed, self-conceit is self-deceit. And here we might condescend on a variety of persons who thus deceive themselves.

(1.) The rich worldling deceiveth himself, because of his outward prosperity : but, though riches be the gift of God, yet we must consider with what God reaches them, whether with the right hand, in his love, or with the left-hand in his anger. I have read of a king that heaped up riches upon those whom he most hated ; that, together with their riches, he might crush them with a heavy burden of cares. God puts some into fat pastures, that he may feed them for a day of slaughter.

(2.) Civilians deceive themselves, and think their state good, because they live honestly without scandal, saying, Whose ox or ass have I stolen ? Whom have I wronged ? But, what sort of religion is that, which consists only in honesty towards men, while there is not also devotion towards God ? A negative and external religion, without something positive and internal, will never bear a person out in the sight of God : " Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven."

(3.) Libertines deceive themselves; even these who turn the grace of God into wantonness, and apprehend their case to be good. Why, they have been born in the church, and enjoy the privileges thereof: they have been washed with holy water, and fed with the spiritual manna of the word and sacraments; they cry, "The temple of the Lord:" we have gone to church and heard sermons: yea, we believe, say they; though yet the means of faith, the word, and powerful ministry thereof, are what they despise.

(4.) The temporary believer deceives himself with a false faith, repentance, and obedience; apprehending it to be true faith, true repentance, true religion; nay, hence concludes he shall be saved: and this is more dangerous than the former, because he thinks his argument is certain, and agreeable to the word. And, indeed, his graces may be so like the true believer's, that the most discerning Christian cannot distinguish between them: although in fact his faith fails both in the knowledge and application of it. It fails in the knowledge of it, in that it is not grounded and rooted in the testimony of the word and spirit: and in experience, in that it is not a heating and warming knowledge, working love in the heart to the truth known; and in that it is not humble and abasing, making him to loath and abhor himself. Yea, his faith fails in the application of it; in that the application of it is not mutual; the believer takes hold of Christ, because Christ takes hold of him. True faith conflicts with unbelief; the believer finds much ado to believe, and to live by faith. The hypocrite finds it very easy: Satan doth not try his faith: for he begat that presumptuous faith in him. The true believer believes against sense; and like the woman of Canaan, can pick comfort out of the reproachful name of a dog; and with Jonah, even in the whale's belly, look towards God's holy temple: can see heaven in the very extremity of misery. But, in such a case, the temporary believer's jolly confidence fails him. And so I might instance how his repentance and obedience fail him. But however, herein the man apprehends his state good, while yet he is in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity.

There are two extremes of judging of ourselves. Some judge their state worse than it is; as when the children of God judge themselves to be Satan's: and their faith to be no faith, their repentance to be no repentance. Some again, are in the other extreme, and judge better of themselves than they are, even to be the children of God, when they are Satan's; to have faith, when it is

but presumption ; to have religion, when it is but hypocrisy. So men may be puffed up with a conceit of knowledge ; as of faith, repentance, love, and other graces : and surely, of these two, the last is most dangerous, as well as the most common deceit and error. It is better for a good man to think he hath no faith, no religion ; than, on the contrary, for an ill man to judge that he hath them : for to judge the worst of ourselves, is a mean to awaken us out of security, and to stir us up to make our calling and election sure ; but to judge we have grace, when we have none, this lulls us asleep, and sends us securely to hell.

III. The third thing proposed was, To speak of the grounds, causes, and springs of this self-conceit. The grounds of this great and epidemical distemper are many ; such as,

1. The deceitful and desperately wicked temper of the heart ; for, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," Jer. xvii. 9. As Jacob cheated Esau out of his earthly inheritance ; so doth the hearts of the children of men cheat them out of their eternal inheritance. There are many deceitful things in the world ; riches are deceitful, favour is deceitful, beauty is deceitful, enemies are deceitful ; but the heart is deceitful above all things ; yea, above the devil himself : and this doth in nothing more palpably appear, than in making people believe that they are going to heaven, when they are going the straight road to hell. O sirs, do not trust your own hearts.

2. Ignorance is another cause of self-conceit. Many, through ignorance, cannot distinguish between good and evil ; but take common grace for saving grace, as Saul took the devil for Samuel. Many do not know or consider what it is that brings the soul to heaven ; that they must be born again, and go through the pangs of the new birth, and the hardships of mortification. We must not think to lie in Delilah's lap all our days : and then betake ourselves to Abraham's bosom when we die. Ignorance is so far from being the mother of devotion, as the Papists affirm, that it is the mother of pride and presumption. "Thou thoughtest that thou wast rich, and increased in goods : Why ? Thou knewest not that thou art poor, wretched, miserable, blind, and naked," Rev. iii. 17. Men are proud because they know not their misery ; it is impossible that a man, who truly knoweth his misery should be proud. True, the apostle saith, "Knowledge puffeth up : " that is, unsanctified knowledge, notional knowledge ; but true knowledge humbleth ;

and none more proud and arrogant than the brutishly ignorant man. I will get you an ignorant man, that will truly imagine he can keep the whole law ; “ All these things have I done from my youth up ; what lack I yet ? ”

3. Negligence and sloth is another cause of pride and self-conceit. Many are at no pains to consider where their landing shall be, when the shadows of the everlasting evening will be stretched over them. Truly, the whole world are either atheists, or downright mad ; either they believe not that there is a heaven and hell, and that the scriptures are the word of God, whereby they may know how it is between him and them : or, if they believe that there is a God, an heaven, and an hell, they are mad and distracted, if they consider not where they are going.—Spiritual sleep and security is the great cause of self-conceit. As natural sleep, so spiritual sleep is full of dreams : “ It shall even be as when a hungry man dreameth, and behold he eateth ; but he awaketh and his soul is empty ; or as when a thirsty man dreameth, and behold he drinketh ; but he awaketh, and behold he is faint, and his soul hath appetite,” Isa. xxix. 8. A man may dream of riches, and treasures, and crowns, and kingdoms conferred on him, but he awaketh, and no such matter, though he truly thought in his dream, that he was possessed of all. So, in spiritual sleep, people may have strange dreams ; they may dream of heaven, and that they have faith, and repentance, and Christ, and salvation, and a crown of glory ; when, alas ! all is but a dream ; and the man awakes, either in time or at the day of judgment, and finds himself deceived ; and the sweeter the dream, the sadder the disappointment. For, as in natural dreams, it is better, when they are false, to dream of fearful things than of joyful : as for instance, it is better for a king to dream that he is a beggar, than for a beggar to dream that he is a king ; for the king, when he awakens, his grief is gone, and his joy is redoubled, seeing the vanity of his dream ; but the beggar, when he awakes, his joy is gone, and his grief redoubled, in regard of the false joy of his dream. So it is in spiritual matters ; it is safer to be in some fears about our state, than to be filled with presumptuous hopes. Christ tells us, that few shall be saved : but if all were saved, that dream they shall be so, surely there would be few that should be damned ; but, “ Narrow is the way that leads to life, and few there be that find it.”

4. Another cause of self-conceit is Satan, who hath a great hand herein. This is one of the great wiles of this cunning so-

phister. He takes all methods to deceive people : he persuades them that their state is better than it is : and makes them look upon themselves as really good enough, and safe enough : The god of this world hath blinded the eyes of them that believe not. While the strong man armed keeps the house, the goods are at ease. And we are not ignorant of his devices : he hath great skill in deceiving souls. He deceived our first parents when sinless ; how easily must he deceive us, who are sinful and ignorant ? He deceived them, by making them think they should be as gods, to know good and evil : and he deceives us, by making us think, that we are gods, knowing all that we need to know : and so, lifting them up in pride, they are pure in their own eyes, though remaining in their impurity.

5. Another cause of self-conceit is judging the goodness or badness of our state by false rules. Many form very erroneous opinions and mistakes of a good condition : and they frequently mistake a bad state for a good one, by reason of the false rules by which they judge themselves.—Sometimes they judge themselves by the opinion that others have of them : they are held in reputation by others in the world who know them, for persons of wisdom, knowledge, prudence, discretion, &c. ; and accordingly form such sentiments of themselves.—Sometimes they judge themselves by their affections, whether of hatred or love : it may be they hate some of the evils of the day, and some of the sins of the times ; and shew some zeal against these : but Judas may preach against the Pharisees, and preach up Christ, and yet be a traitor. It may be, they have a love to the godly ; but not because they are godly, and for the holiness and purity they perceive about them.—Sometimes they judge by the false rule of an erring conscience ; and many apprehend that matters are right with them, because of storms and calms in the conscience ; but people may have storms in the conscience, like Judas ; and calms in the conscience, like the peace of justification ; and yet it is but carnal security, saying, “We shall have peace, though we walk after the imagination of our own evil hearts.” Sometimes they judge by the false rule of the audience of their prayers. God may hear the prayer of people, with respect to some blessings that they need : and yet give leanness to their soul.—Sometimes persons judge by the false rules of the law, misunderstood ; as when they judge either by a part of the law, or judge by the outside of the law, and not the inside and spirituality of it. Indeed, the application of the law, is one great cause of self-conceit ;

so it was with Paul ; “ I was alive without the law once : but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died,” Rom vii. 9. Sometimes persons judge themselves by the false rules of the gospel, mistaken ; such as that word, “ If there be a willing mind, it is accepted : ” which belongs only to believers, that are accepted in the Beloved.

6. Another cause of self-conceit is self-righteousness ; Rom. x. 3, “ Being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, they have not submitted ” their over-proud conceit of their own righteousness ; it flows from their being possessed with a legal righteousness of their own, and this makes them so proud and selfish, that they will have nothing ado with the righteousness of the God-man. Some have a righteousness of disposition ; a good natural temper that they lean to, and deceive themselves with. Some have a righteousness of education ; they have been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and have had a good example ; and this hath had much influence upon them, to restrain them from many evils ; and this deceives them. Some have a righteousness of profession, as Paul ; one of the strictest Pharisees, of the strictest side ; one that sides himself with those who make the most splendid profession. Some have a righteousness of intention : they have good resolutions ; “ All that the Lord hath commanded we will do. Some have a righteousness of reputation : they are of good repute among others, and held in high esteem amongst those of distinguished abilities. Some have the righteousness of reformation : they do many things, and reform in many particulars, and keep themselves from many grosser and more open violations of God’s holy law. Some have the righteousness of common spiritual operations ; common enlightenings and tastings of the heavenly gift, Heb. vi. 5, 6 ; a common work of the Spirit upon the understanding, will, affections, conscience, and conversation. In a word, some have a natural righteousness, a cradle-faith ; they never did any thing amiss. Some have a negative righteousness ; they are not as other men. They are not guilty of this and the other gross violation of God’s holy law. Some have a positive righteousness ; they read, and pray, and fast, and give alms, and attend upon ordinances. Some have a comparative righteousness ; they imagine they are better than others ; “ I am holier than thou.” Yea, some have a superlative righteousness ; they say and do their best. And I know not how many kinds of righteousness might be

mentioned. Some have an active righteousness ; they do what they can ; nay, they do many things. Some have a passive righteousness ; they have suffered losses and crosses for a good cause, and the sake of religion. Upon these, and the like, many professors build : and hence they conceive highly of themselves, and are pure in their own eyes ; and yet, after all, are not washed from their filthiness.

IV. The fourth general head of the method was, to speak of the evil of this sin of self-conceit. We may view this, 1. More generally. 2. More particularly.

1st, We may view the evil of self-conceit more generally. Where self-conceit is, in its power, it is an evidence and plain indication of being a stranger to religion, and of being a gross hypocrite : for, he that lifteth up his heart, is not upright : Hab. ii. 4, " His soul that is lifted up in him is not upright," He that hath a conceit of his own purity and attainments is but a dissembler, is not what he pretends to be.

2dly, Let us take a more particular view of the evil of self-conceit. The evil of it will appear in these six respects : 1. In respect of ourselves. 2. In respect of others. 3. In respect of Christ. 4. In respect of graces. 5. In respect of duty. 6. In respect of danger.

1. The evil of self-conceit will appear in respect of ourselves. Where self-conceit is in a person, there is pride ; and you know, " God resisteth the proud, but he giveth grace to the humble." Where self-conceit is, there is carnal security ; and " Drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags." Where it is, there is contempt of means. Self-conceit produces either a despising of the means, or a not using of the means that God hath appointed. The man being self-sufficient, he is, in some manner, above means : the means of grace, the means of knowledge are undervalued.

2. The evil of self-conceit will appear, if we take a view of it with respect to others. The evil of it is such, that it produces either a contempt of others ; " Blessed be God, I am not like this man ;" he undervalues them, and looks down upon them as below him : or, it produceth uncharitableness, if not contempt. None are so uncharitable as the man that hath a conceit of himself. I think the apostle Paul seems to hint at this, Gal. vi. 3, compared with the first verse : *q.d.*, I know none will stand in opposition to this duty of charitable carriage towards their neighbour, but those that are puffed up with an high conceit of themselves.

3. The evil of this self-conceit will appear in respect of Christ. Such people condemn him : and they despise his fulness, righteousness, and blood.—They despise his fulness for their supply : why, they are full of themselves ; they are rich and increased with goods. and stand in need of nothing. They come rich and go empty away, —They despise his righteousness for their justification : while they are pure in their own eyes, they content themselves with a righteousness spun out of their own bowels, out of their own duties. —They despise his blood, his Spirit, his grace, for their sanctification : why, a person that thinks himself already pure will not make application to the fountain where unclean souls are made clean.

4. The evil of self-conceit will appear if we view it in respect of graces. The evil of it is such, that it stands in opposition to every grace : particularly to that mother-grace, Humility : “ God giveth grace to the humble, but he resisteth the proud.” Humility is such a grace that, without it, a man cannot be a Christian. Now, this pride is opposed to humility and self-denial, which Christ enjoins on all his disciples ; it is opposed to that self-loathing that he requires. The selfish man will not be covered with the vail of blushing : no ; he seldom takes a look of his failings. He looks more on his beauty than his defilement. He will not cry out with Agur, in the context, “ I am more brutish than any man ; I have not the understanding of a man.” The motto of the humble man is, “ I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.” The motto of the self-conceited man is, “ God, I thank thee, I am not like other men.” He looks on anything of attainment through a magnifying glass ; but upon his sins in a diminishing one.

5. The evil of self-conceit is great in respect of duties. The evil of it will appear very great, if we consider the following particulars, among several others.—For it produceth rashness in adventuring upon duty, even the most solemn duty ; because, being pure in their own eyes, they stand upon no duty ; while the poor, humble, and self-abased creature is afraid lest he mismanage his work. It produceth a superficial performance of duty : though they think very much of their duties, yet they perform them but overly ; for they imagine any sort of service for them is enough. And yet it produceth a kind of meritorious opinion of their duties : “ Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not ? Wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge ?” Isa. lviii. 3, 4. As if God had been faulty in not taking notice of their performan-

ces.—We might mention a variety of other things to the same purpose.

6. The evil of self-conceit will appear in respect of danger. The evil of it is exceeding great. Why so? Here is great deceit; for, "He that thinketh himself to be something, when he is nothing, deceiveth himself," Gal. vi. 3. And this is the worst of all deceit. To deceive another is certainly a great fault; but to deceive ourselves, what a terrible evil is it! For a man to kill and destroy another is a sad thing; but to kill and destroy himself is yet more dreadful! The self-conceited person imagines he can perform any duty; that he can read, pray, communicate, believe, repent; but he deceives himself. To be deceived about earthly things is ill; but to be deceived and cheated out of our immortal souls, alas! that is worst of all. When a self-conceited person hears the threatening of the promise, he misapplies all: that threatening is not to him, he thinks, and yet that is his portion: that promise is to him, he imagines, and yet he hath no part in that matter. Again, as such people are never likely to get good of ordinances, so, they are not easily convinced of their mistake: and no wonder, for we are told, Jer. vii. 5, "They hold fast deceit," when we say all we possibly can say to them. They will still declare, that they have a good heart towards God, and that they have a great love to Christ; though yet they never saw their ill heart, nor their strong enmity: "They hold fast deceit." Self-conceited persons will come under a sad disappointment in the issue; for "Fearfulness shall surprise the hypocrite in Zion. Who among us shall dwell with devouring fire? Who can abide with everlasting burning?" Why will they be surprised with fear and terror? What is the matter? Why, they had a good hope of heaven; and so the higher their hope, the more dismal their fall and disappointment. O! how many ride triumphantly to hell in a chariot of soul-destroying delusion! They imagine they are right enough, and that all is well; while it is quite otherwise with them.

S E R M O N X V I.

Prov. xxx. 12.—“There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness.”

[The Ninth Sermon on this Text.]

THIS text assigns two or three differences between the godly and the wicked. 1. They differ from each other in their number ; there is a generation of wicked men and hypocrites, a multitude of them : whereas the godly are but a little flock, an handful, a remnant, a few. 2. They differ from each other in their judgment : particularly in their judgment about themselves. Wicked men and hypocrites are proud, and pure in their own eyes : whereas the godly are humble, and vile in their own eyes. 3. They differ from each other in their real qualities. The wicked and hypocritical generation are really vile and polluted, never washen from their filthiness ; whereas the godly are purified in part, and cleansed from their filthiness ; at least, it is their exercise to get their defilement daily washed away with the blood of Christ.

It is remarkable, that as self-abasement and purity go together : (for, they that are impure and vile in their own eyes, are a people washed from their filthiness ;) so, on the other hand, self-conceit and impurity go together ; for, the generation that are pure in their own eyes, are not washed from their filthiness. The former look upon themselves as impure, and yet are pure ; the latter judge themselves pure, but are impure.

The doctrinal part of the subject having been finished in the preceding discourse, it remains now that we make some practical improvement of the point.

V. The fifth thing we proposed in the method, was the application of the doctrine ; which we shall essay in several uses.

The first use that we make, shall be of Information. If it be so as has been affirmed, That self-conceit is incident to a multitude of professors, then we may infer the following things.

1. Hence see the degeneracy of our nature, by reason of the fall. Alas ! how corrupt is our nature now ! The devil made our first parents fancy, that they should be as gods ; and now he makes them dream that they are as gods ; for this self-conceit is a deifying of ourselves. Self is the god that we adore naturally. Instead of lawful self-love, unlawful self-conceit takes place. There is a lawful

self-love enjoined; "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself; where you see it is our duty to love ourselves; and then our neighbour as ourselves. And if the generation had a right and lawful love to themselves, either soul or body, they would not destroy their bodies by intemperance and insobriety, and ruin their souls by wilful sin and impenitency: but, instead of lawful self-love, sinful self-love takes the throne. Self-conceit and self-admiration, self-will and self-satisfaction prevail.

2. See what is the great tendency of true gospel-preaching; namely to discover and diminish all self-purity and self-righteousness, that Christ alone may be exalted: yea, the design of it is to level and dash down all that self-conceited purity, whereby people are pure in their own eyes, that it may advance gospel-purity, by which we may be pure in God's sight. Some make a vast noise about preaching up good works, and of their being friends to holiness and the law; while yet the tendency of their doctrine may be only to make people pure and holy in their own eyes, and in the eyes of men: but that which a gospel-minister especially aims at, is, to get people pure in the sight of God. He cannot satisfy himself merely in preaching up good works, and charity, piety, devotion, mercy, tenderness, honesty, civility, morality, &c., which is very commendable; and would to God there were more of these; but he goes farther and labours principally to get the foundation of true holiness laid in the heart, self-purity mortified, the principles rectified, and Christ formed in the heart: otherwise, they build, without laying a foundation. It may be observed, with regret, there never was less morality amongst persons of all ranks, than since so many ministers laid aside evangelical preaching, and made the inculcating moral duties their principal theme. And many who extol moral virtues, are themselves the most immoral persons. The Pharisees set up for great friends to the law, when Christ appeared on the stage; and they flouted at him, as if he had been an enemy to good works, when he was telling them that they were but hypocrites: "Think they (saith he), that I am come to destroy the law? Nay, Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Why, they were pure in their own eyes; they verily imagined they were friends to holiness: yet they made clean but the outside, and were not internally washed from their filthiness. The doctrine of the Pharisees was much about washings,

and legal purification : Yea, saith Christ ; but I tell you, you must be pure in heart, otherwise you cannot see God. Why, say the Pharisees, you must do good works, and bring forth good fruits : Yea, saith Christ ; but make the tree good, otherwise the fruit cannot be good. The principles must be changed, the nature renewed, and the soul implanted into Christ ; then, and not till then, can any do what is spiritually good. Till there be both a spiritual habit of grace, wrought by the efficacious power of the Spirit of God ; and a spiritual communication of heavenly influences, to excite that habit into exercise, there can be no pure act, no holy work acceptable to God : and whatever doctrine doth not aim at this, it comes so far short of pressing holiness, that it may indeed make hypocrites ; but can never direct people how to go one step beyond hypocrisy and self-conceit : for, without this radical change, a man may well be pure in his own eyes, and in the eyes of others ; but is not pure in God's eyes, nor washen from his filthiness.

3. Hence see the difference that there is between believers and hypocrites. The hypocrite doth the same action externally that the sound believer doth ; he may pray, and praise, and read, and hear, and what not. What doth the best believer that I do not ? saith the hypocrite. What can they do but I will do ? Yea, he may exceed the believer in the multitude of duties. But, behold ! all the while he is a mass of impurity and pollution : and only pure in his own eyes. He may indeed affect holiness, and seem to be one that is freed of self-conceit : but yet self is still his principle, and self still his end. Whereas the true believer, as such, hath no self-conceit, but what is his burden ; no self-motive, but what is his grief ; no self-ends or aims, but what are his exercise either sooner or later. And, in a word, there is as great a difference between the most refined hypocrite, and the poorest believer, as there is between a painted image, and a living man ; yea, as there is between an angel of light, and a devil transforming himself thereunto.

4. Hence see ground to lament this common distemper and epidemic plague of self-conceit that hath seized the generality of professors, whereby they are pure in their own eyes. There are few or none that we come to close converse with, but they would fain make us believe that they are as clean and pure as can possibly be. Say they, " We are all sinners ; and who can say otherwise, but they have sin about them ? But God be thanked, I am not guilty

of such and such a gross wickedness ; you must not have such ill thoughts of me : I was never a liar, nor a cheat, or a murderer : I have always had a liking to the best way ; I have a good heart, and do good duties ; and wherein I fail, I hope I will be better." Alas! sirs, profanity kills its thousands, but delusion kills its ten thousands: and this delusion kills its twenty thousands, while they fancy themselves to be right, and in a good condition, and yet are in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity. What is the bane and disposition of the generation? Even a settled contentedness in their sinful state; a presumptuous confidence that natural men have of their good condition. Every man is so full of self-love, that he is loth to pass a sentence against his own soul ; loth to become a judge and self-condemner, and so an executioner of all his vain hope and false confidences, that he hath been building upon. If people were once come to see their sinful state, so as to cry out, Oh ! I am unclean, unclean ! and to see their miserable state, so as to cry out, Alas ! I am undone, undone ! there would be more hope in Israel concerning them : but while they are content with their present condition, there is no hope of their seeking out for another.—Or, if any happen to see something of their sinfulness and misery ; yet, how doth their self-conceit lead them instantly to accept help and supply from their own sufficiency ; for this Arminianism is natural to us all. We hope, that either by our natural ability, common graces, or beautiful performances, we may help ourselves out of the horrible pit ; not knowing that we have destroyed ourselves, and that in Christ only doth our help lie : and therefore we will scramble for our comfort, and try the utmost of our strength, rather than be obliged to him to help us ; and consequently when the body or conscience is brought to trouble, men are so ready to resolve, and apt to promise and profess amendment, saying " O, I will be a renewed man : you will see that I will take up myself, and reform all that has been amiss." But, behold ! when their fear and horror is over, all comes to nothing : they either fall back into the same, or greater abominations ; or else waste away into a wearisome formality and hypocrisy.

5. Hence we may see matter of comfort to all whom the Lord hath humbled and separated thus from a generation of self-conceited sinners, who are pure in their own eyes. It is ground of comfort, if the Lord has killed your pride, and made you vile in your own eyes : for, " Thus saith the Lord, the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy ; I dwell in the high and

holy place, with him also that is of a humble and contrite spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the spirit of the contrite ones." Isa. lvii. 15. Yea, "To this man will I look, (saith the Lord;) even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word," chap. lxvi. 2. Hath the Lord brought you to the valley of humiliation? It is ground of comfort; because he has given this valley of Achor for a door of hope.

6. Hence we may see matter of terror to those that are still filled with self-conceit, and are pure in their own eyes; so stuffed with pride, and puffed up with the wind of self-confidence, supposing themselves to be good, and honest, and upright, that the word of conviction makes no impression, but falls upon their hard hearts, as water upon a rock, that cannot enter, nor prevail, nor profit at all. May not this doctrine dash the hopes, and sink the hearts, of all haughty and hard-hearted sinners? If your hearts were never humbled, God never dwelt there: dwell you where you will, God doth not dwell with you; for, though he has respect to the lowly, yet he knoweth the proud afar off; yea, resists the proud. You may be pure in your own eyes, and draw the eyes of others after you; but God will not come near you, nor cast his eye toward you, but with abhorrence. Hear and fear, then, you that are stout-hearted, and far from righteousness: whose consciences can attest, that the day never yet dawned, where you found not your sins a pleasure to you. You are so far from being humbled or troubled for your sins, that it is your only trouble that you cannot commit them with content, and without control: and you are only troubled with admonitions, counsels, commands, threatenings, scriptures, and sermons that cross you.—Know for certain, if you be never humbled, and broken for your abominations, you must burn for them one day. Your proud hearts were never abased and laid in the dust; and if they remain so, the Lord will ruin both you and them.—There are few in the world, whose hearts fail them, under the weight of their abominations; and who lie low in the dust for their sins: but you, being pure in your own eyes, and never humbled for your heart and life-abominations, deride and scorn these humbled and broken ones, and look down upon them, with a supercilious eye, as silly and despicable men: But yet a little while, and you shall see them exalted to glory, and saved for ever: when such self-conceited, proud, and presumptuous wretches, as you are, shall be turned into hell! O sirs, "Be not high-minded, but fear."

The second use that we make of the doctrine is for Dehortation and Caution. 1. To the wicked. 2. To the godly. 3. To all in general.

1. To the wicked and ungodly. Is this self-conceit so incident to a multitude of professors? O sirs, do not draw this inference from it, as if there were no real Christians in the world, because many pretend to be so, who yet are not so. Nay, God hath his own remnant in the world; his Nathaniels, who are Israelites indeed, in whom there is no guile, no allowed or unlawful guile. In the church-visible there is a heap of chaff; but there is some wheat among the chaff. In Zion there is a heap of stones; but there are some diamonds among the stones. Though many satisfy themselves with a form of godliness without having the power thereof, yet there are some to whom the gospel hath come, not in word only, but in power, and that understand the power of godliness.

2. To the godly there is this Caution. Do not think that you ought not to profess religion, because so many professors do deceive themselves; and profess very solemnly, who yet are impure indeed. The possession of Christ in the heart is the principal thing, but the confession of Christ with the mouth is also a duty; "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation," Rom. x. 10. Give not over your profession of the name of Christ; although many have but a name to live, and are dead; but endeavour, through grace, to prove your profession before the world, by your practice before God and Christ, by the principle of faith, in love to, and zeal for a God in Christ, moving you thereunto.

3. To all in general. The caution and dehortation we tender is, seeing this abominable evil doth so much prevail and abound, and that many pretend to call themselves by the God of Israel, and take great titles to themselves in the church of Christ, and are pure in their own eyes, who yet are nought in reality; O then, sirs, "Be not high-minded, but fear." What reason have we to fear, lest we be amongst the number of self-conceited persons, and self-deceivers? For, if we survey our hearts, we will find what a high conceit of ourselves we have entertained. Beware of this sin; for it is a dangerous evil, as I have already shewn on the doctrinal part, and might here resume, were it not for gaining of time.

The third use of the subject is for reproof. This doctrine

teaches a reproof to all that are pure in their own eyes, and filled with self-conceit.

1. Some have an high conceit of their own persons. They are proud, perhaps, of a white skin, amiable features, and a handsome shape; little remembering what a few days' sickness will produce, and that all will moulder into dust in the issue. They that are proud of their bodily excellencies, or yet of their soul accomplishments, do not duly ponder, that their body is but a piece of clay, and their soul a piece of hell, by nature.

2. Some have a high conceit of their possessions and attainments; puffed up because they have an opulency of worldly things, and some natural and acquired abilities: not knowing that they are without life, without light, without holiness, yea, without God, and without hope in the world; really poor, miserable, wretched, blind, and naked, Eph. ii. 12; Rev. iii. 17. Surely the best of us want more than we have.

3. Some have a high conceit of their performances; while yet they do little or nothing for God, or for the generation; nothing for their own souls; nothing for their families; nothing for the spiritual good of the neighbourhood that are about them. They have the leaves of a profession, the flourish of resolutions, and the appearance of fruit; but it never ripens to a spiritually good work.

4. Some have an high conceit of their own power and ability; they think they can repent, they can believe, they can pray, they can meditate, they can mortify sin when they please; they think they can communicate as well as the best; they can love God and their neighbour: while yet they are wholly without strength, and can do nothing: yea, are not sufficient of themselves, to think any thing as of themselves.

5. Some have a high conceit of their own sufferings, as well as doings. Some will speak very boastingly of their suffering that they have undergone, and what persecutions they have endured for religion, and a good cause; and, perhaps, think more of these than they do of Christ's sufferings for them; but they are not of Paul's disposition; "God forbid (saith he) that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ," Gal. vi. 14.

Many are pure in their own eyes; and why? Because they judge amiss concerning themselves.

(1.) Some judge themselves pure, because of their profession, their eminent profession; who yet may be cursed with the barren

fig-tree. Such a sandy foundation many build upon, that they take a profession of religion for true Christianity. What! say they; ministers talk of conversion, regeneration, the new birth, and we know not what unintelligible things; but, God be thanked, we are not papists, neither are we atheists, nor infidels, without the church; we are within the very bosom of the church, and even enjoy the privileges of the church. Alas! sirs; mistake not your own shadow for a bridge, and so, venturing thereupon, drown yourselves for ever.

(2.) Some judge themselves pure, because of their gifts. One may have the gift of prattling, and be able to speak well of religion, and recommend religious things; and think, who but he. Another may have the gift of prayer, while he is a stranger to the grace of it; yet he may suppose the gift to be sufficient; and being thus eminent above many others, he may think he is well enough. But gifts and graces are not the same: many have gone down to the pit of hell with their great gifts, and with all their wisdom and learning, that they valued themselves so much upon.

(3.) Some judge themselves pure because of their common graces, which they mistake for saving graces. There is many times such a resemblance between common and saving grace, that they take counterfeit coin for true, because of its likeness to it. As Saul took the devil for Samuel, because of his mantle: so many take a common work of the Spirit, for the true saving work, because of its good appearance.—In the understanding there may be a common illumination, as well as a saving one, Heb. vi. 4; though there is a vast difference between the two. For the common illumination doth only adorn and beautify the soul; but the saving doth irradiate, enlighten, and warm the soul. The one is informing, the other is transforming: the one is barren, the other fruitful.—In the conscience, there may be common convictions and qualms, as well as those that issue in saving conversion. Some may have had such a work upon their hearts, as that the relating of it may procure them ample testimony among ministers and Christians: and no doubt but the disciples would have given a good testimony of Judas, before he was discovered: though Christ gave him none. But what though he had a testimonial written, with an ample recommendation from men or angels; if Christ's hand be not at it, God will reject it: and the blessed Redeemer of sinners will say, I never signed it.—In the affections, there may be common desires and delights, as

well as special ; there may be false joys and sorrows, like the joy of the stony-ground hearers ; and like the sorrows of Esau for losing the birth-right.—Yea, in the will, there may be a common change as well as a saving one : Men may take on good resolutions, and starts of devotion, as if they would take heaven by violence ; and yet the will never renewed, or made willing in the day of God's power.—O then, sirs, let us take heed that we be not deceived in this matter.

(4.) Some judge themselves pure, because they have escaped the pollutions of the world. They have, it may be, forsaken some sins, that only time and circumstances changing, have tired them out of. They may imagine that their abstaining from the gross evils of the generation is true sanctity. But there is a two-fold sanctification ; one of the flesh, and another of the spirit ; I take the former to be an abstaining from gross and scandalous sins, like those spoken of, 2 Pet. ii. 20. They may come this length, and yet be strangers to purity, or true sanctity of heart or life. But there is sanctification of spirit, when God gives the promised new heart and new spirit. Now many take the former for the latter : they take restraining grace for renewing grace. God restrains Pagans, yea, devils also, from doing a thousand ill turns that they would otherwise do. What is the motive that makes them abstain from these sins ? Is it the love of God, or the fear of God ? Nay, take away public shame and reproach, they would go forward to all manner of wickedness : and yet because they are outwardly pure, they are ready to conclude themselves innocent. But man, what though you had not a tongue ? yet you can curse God in your heart. What though you had not eyes ? yet you can commit adultery in your heart.

(5.) Some judge themselves pure, because they side with the strictest party, like Paul ; an Hebrew of the Hebrews. But it is not siding with the truth, though that be commendable ; but being sanctified by the truth, that will do the business. Judas was a son of perdition though he joined with the truth for a while.

(6.) In a word, many judge themselves pure, because they have no disquiet or disturbance in their consciences ; whereas it may be but the devil that is keeping all his goods in peace : " While the strong man armed keepeth the house, his goods are in peace," Luke xi. 21. When the conscience once becomes seared, or sopited, it ceases to be God's faithful deputy ; and then there is nothing but an entire calm.

The Fourth Use that we make of the doctrine is for Trial and Examination. Well, sirs, O put yourselves to the trial, lest you go down to the grave with a lie in your right hand. When God is saying, "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, yet not washed from their filthiness;" a generation of self-conceited people, that are but deceiving themselves; it should put us to say, "Master is it I?" And if we should suspect ourselves, were it said, "One of you shall betray me;" one of you shall deceive yourself; how much more, when it is said, a whole generation is thus set to deceive themselves about eternal salvation. Try if ever you have been humbled for, and delivered from this self-conceit. You may examine it by these things following.

1. Try it by the end you propose in doing any good action, or going about any good duty. The proud self-conceited man is always vain-glorious: "How can you believe, that seek glory one of another;" saith Christ, John v. 44. The man that seeks his own praise and applause: thus Jehu, as you may see, 2 Kings x. 15, 16, "Is thy heart right as mine?" saith he to Jehonadab. Whereas the humble man hath always a better conceit of another person's heart than of his own, being always suspicious of himself; and so would rather say, when he meets with one like Jehonadab, O! is my heart right and upright as his is. Again, says Jehu to Jehonadab, "Come, see my zeal for the Lord:" yea, but true zeal desires not to be seen of any, but him who seeth in secret. If our lamp will not burn without the oil of men's praise, it is a sign that self-conceit hath the predominant. I read of one, who, when in a monastery, fasted whole days together with ease; but in the desert he could not hold out till noon, but his belly would crave presently: when he demanded the reason of this, he had the following answer given, That in the monastery the praise of man was instead of meat to him, he fed there upon it: which sustenance failing him in the desert, his fasting strength failed also.

2. Try it not only by the end you propose in doing good actions, viz. the glory of God, not daring to seek yourself, if truly humbled; but examine it also by the manner of doing the duty; not daring to trust yourself, but affected with a sense of your own infirmity, resting wholly upon the power of God, to be perfected in your weakness. Self-conceit will venture upon any duty without fear, saying, with Peter, "Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I." But humility will venture upon nothing, without looking

for the promised supply, saying, with Paul, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God," 2 Cor. iii. 5.

3. Examine it by the issue of your religious duties; or your deportment after the doing thereof. Self-conceit will take the praise of the duty done, saying, with Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. iv. 30, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built?" But humility sends it back to the Lord, saying, with David, "Not unto us, not unto us, but to thy name be the glory," Psalm cxv. 1.

But, perhaps, it may be asked, Where will you find a man on earth that is not tainted with this pride and self?

To this it might be replied, thoughts of pride and vain-glory may rush into the heart of an humble saint; yea, but they rest in the heart of a hypocrite. Again, if the saint sees himself in the doing of anything proud, then he is twice as humble afterwards, because he was not humble. There may be some kind of humility in an hypocrite, and some remains of pride in a saint; but here is the difference; the hypocrite's humility makes him proud, whereas the saint's pride makes him humble. The hypocrite's humility is followed with pride, and the saint's pride is followed with humiliation. The hypocrite is proud because he is humble, but the saint is humble on account of his pride. Thus Hezekiah's heart was lifted up, but it is said of him, 2 Chron. xxxii. 26, that he humbled himself for the pride of his heart. In a true believer there is either the fore humility, helping him to do the duty right; or the after humility, exercising for the doing the duty wrong, which is the most severe of the two. "He hath either," as one saith, "the directing humility for the right manner, or the correcting humility for the erroneous manner of doing." If we can follow the sway of our own pride and vain-glorious affections, without all respect to God's glory, and yet never be truly humbled afterwards, this is evident hypocrisy, and an incontestible proof that we have not the least grain of sincerity. And, indeed, gospel-sincerity is many times more humbled for such mixtures of defilement in duty than for some actions simply evil in themselves.

4. Try this point by your severity against sin in yourselves. An hypocrite cannot endure sin in others: no, not so much as a mote in his brother's eye, though yet he can endure a beam in his own. A true believer is ready to throw the first stone at himself; he will be ready to say more against himself than any other can say

against him : he cannot wink at sins in himself, nor in his nearest and dearest relation. As he loves good in his greatest enemy ; so he hates sin in his dearest friend.

5. Examine it by your rejoicing at the graces, and grieving at the sins of others, as well as your own. The man that is pure in his own eyes, and selfish, if he can grieve for his own sins, he is not careful to grieve for the sins of others : this is suspicious, as if he grieved not for God's cause, or for the dishonours his own sins hath done to him ; for, were he truly affected for the offence he himself hath done to God, then would he grieve also, that the sins of others dishonour God, and stain his glory : but he is grieved for his own sake, for fear of some evil procured to himself by his sin ; which argues self-love rather than love to God.—Again, the man that is pure in his own eyes and selfish, if he rejoices in his own graces, yet not in the graces of others ; or, when he sees the glory of God set forth by others, when he hath no hand in it himself ; he is like the men of Ephraim saying to Jephthah, “ Wherefore passedst thou over to fight against the children of Ammon, and didst not call us ? ” Judges xii. 1. But the humble soul, in whom self is broken, can rejoice, and give praise and thanks, to hear or see that God is glorified, though he himself was not the instrument thereof. This appears to be the frame of Paul, Phil. i. 8. Though some preached Christ out of envy and vain-glory ; yet, for the matter, sound, though for the manner unsuitable ; what was that to Paul, that Christ was truly preached ? “ Therein,” says he, “ I do rejoice ; yea, and will rejoice.”

Examine yourselves by these things : judge and try yourselves, that you may not live in the dark, and still remain uncertain whether you are in a state of nature or grace.

The fifth use that we make of the doctrine, shall be for exhortation. O sirs, seek that the Lord would deliver you from self-conceit, and proud thoughts of yourselves. Here we might address three different kinds of persons.—We might exhort the proud, to receive a word of terror ; but having dropt a word of this nature, on the sixth inference on the use of information, we shall not here insist farther upon it.—We might also speak a word to the humble, and advise them to receive a word of comfort : but having likewise insisted a little on this, on the fifth inference, on the above use of information, we shall refer to what was there offered.—We might address ourselves to all in general : but as we offered something of

this nature on the third particular on the second use, viz. of caution, we shall pass this by at the time also.

It is the easiest thing in the world for a man to flatter himself, and dream that he is rich, and increased in goods, and stands in need of nothing : and to think the best of himself : but yet nothing is more dangerous. It is dangerous to be flattered by another ; “ A man that flattereth his neighbour, spreadeth a net for his feet,” Prov. xxix. 5. : but, yet, it is more dangerous to flatter ourselves ; for self-flattery spreads a net for our souls : and many souls are caught at last in this net. It is a great evil for a man to deceive another ; but much more for a man to deceive himself : even so, it is a terrible thing for a man to kill another ; yet it is still more dreadful for one to kill and destroy himself. But the evil and danger of it I opened before.

Let us take heed then, and be jealous and suspicious of ourselves, especially when we find good conceits of ourselves arise in our hearts. And that we may not be self-conceited, and pure in our own eyes, let us take these following directions, by way of antidote, with which I conclude the subject.

QUEST. How may a man avoid this self-conceit, of judging of himself better than indeed he is ?

ANS. The first antidote against self-conceit, is, “ To look well to ourselves, and our foul faces, in the glass of the holy law.” Many may vainly imagine their faces fair and clean, till they come to look in a glass ; and they no sooner look therein, but they see many spots and defilements which before they thought not of. So let us do here ; let us examine ourselves by the law ; examine what, and how much the law requires ; and how far short we come of that purity, grace, and holiness that is there required : and then you will find little cause of falling in love with your Ethiopian face, or dote upon yourselves, when you see that you are so ugly and deformed : a sight of your deformity would keep you from self-conceit. When, in the glass of the law, you see your own defiled and deformed visage and monstrous shape, you will find little cause to be enamoured with your own beauty. Men are pure in their own eyes, because they do not make use of this looking glass. When the commandment came, and Paul saw himself in this glass, then sin revived, and he died to all conceit of his own purity. When you view yourself in this glass, it will make you say the quite contrary to the young man in the gospel, None of all these things have I kept from my youth.

The second antidote against self-conceit, is, "To take a look of Christ's fair face in the glass of the gospel." This would be a mighty preservative: "Beholding as in a glass the glory of God, we are changed," 2 Cor. iii. 18. When Job saw this sight, then he cries out, "Behold, I am vile: now, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." A sight of Christ's matchless beauty would make us lothe our deformity. A sight of his perfect righteousness, in its glory, would make us see and be humbled for our own guiltiness and sin.—If a foul faced person, who thinks himself handsome enough, set himself with a very beautiful person, to look into a glass together, the beautiful face, which he sees beside his own, will make him think very little of himself, when compared with the other. O! how infinitely more, if, with one eye we look at our deformed picture, and with the other at the infinite perfection of beauty that is in Christ! we cannot but abhor ourselves. Never any man saw Christ's beauty, but he looked upon himself as a monster, and sank into nothing in his own conceit. O then, sirs, seek a sight of the glory of Christ.

The third antidote against self-conceit, is, "To compare ourselves with those that are before us, and not behind us." A block-head is but a blockhead still, though he hath more learning still than a ploughman: though, perhaps, comparing himself with a clown, he thinks himself to be a learned man; but compare him with a learned man, and then, notwithstanding his high opinion of himself, he will appear but half an idiot. So it is here; the civil honest man when he compares himself with the swinish drunkard, the foul adulterer, the prodigious swearer, he begins, in a manner, poor man, to saint himself, as if he was the only man that should be saved. And thus the proud conceited Pharisee raises himself on his tip-toes, by comparing himself with the Publican; "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men; nor as this Publican:" so saith the civil man; I am not such a drunkard, such a swearer, as such a man is; and so, because they are not so bad as others that are worse, hence they conceive themselves to be wonderfully good. But now, the way to measure yourselves is not to look backward, but to look forward: not to consider how much you are behind drunkards and swearers, but to look forward, and see how far short you are of them who are truly zealous and religious, truly godly and gracious. Compare yourselves with them; have you that measure of knowledge, faith, experience, mor-

tification, zeal, and obedience, which they have? Are you as conscientious in secret devotion, and other parts of religion? Alas! how far short do you come of them! and yet the best of them are far short of what they should be: and if you be short of them, who are but short-comers themselves, how far short do you come! What grounds have you to think well of yourselves, who are beyond a drunkard, when, in the meantime, you are far short of a good Christian? Therefore, to keep down this spiritual pride, look not at publicans, but gracious persons. And if you find yourselves like to swell with this conceit, "I am not as this publican;" then, on the other hand, humble yourselves with this meditation, "I am not as this gracious person."

But some will think that even gracious persons have their blemishes; and so they compare themselves and their sins with the gross sins of Lot, Noah, David, Peter, and other godly men; and so still they conceive a good opinion of themselves, and think all is well. But you would consider, that the falls of the godly did serve for their own humility, and for our warning. God knoweth how to chastise his own who offend, giving repentance unto life and salvation: but he will justly condemn those who wittingly stumble at their falls, and wilfully lie in their sins, being fallen. We are not to follow the best of men in all their actions. As the cloud that guided the Israelites had two sides, the one bright and shining, the other black and dark, such is the cloud of the examples of godly men: those that will be directed by the light side thereof, shall, with the children of Israel, pass safely toward the heavenly Canaan; but those that will follow the dark side of it shall perish, with the Egyptians, in the Red sea of destruction.

The fourth antidote against self-conceit is, "To think upon that exact and strict judgment and estimate that must be taken of you at the great day of judgment." Then must you be judged, not by what you judge yourselves to be, but by what you are indeed. Meditate with yourselves, "Now, I am pure in mine own eyes; I think I may be content with the purity I have: but am I now, and will I then be pure in God's sight, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, to penetrate through and try all the most retired wickedness, and hidden dross and corruption, which lies in my heart and nature, thoughts and affections, as well as in my life and actions?" Will you be able to stand that exquisite trial of the impartial Judge? No, by no means. The faith and meditation of this would mortify the

elevated conceit you have of yourselves. Remember you must come to judgment.

In a word, if you would not die of this disease, then trust not your own judgment in your own case. He that would be wise, in the scripture-sense, must become a fool, that he may be wise, 1 Cor. iii. 18. He must deny himself, and not lean to his own understanding, Prov. iii. 5. There is pride of understanding that takes place, both in humbled sinners, who dare not come to Christ; and in hardened sinners, who will not come to Christ.

There is a pride of understanding, I say, and a pride of wisdom that takes place in humbled sinners, who dare not come to Christ. Why do they not come to Christ? Truly they judge themselves so vile, that they think they should not come: what pride is here. O! if I was pure, then I would come! What is the language of this? If I were pure and holy, then, you think, Christ would love me. Indeed, it were well, poor humbled soul, if there be any such here; it were well if you were pure and holy; but to imagine that he will not save you, because you have no goodness, or worth in you, to induce him to love you, is an evidence of the greatest pride: is it not pride, that you would be at something in yourself, for which Christ should cast his love upon you? But know, that Christ will save you, not because you are good, but that he may make you good: not because you are pure, but that he may make you pure. And therefore, if the sense of your impurity keep you back from coming to him, it is but stinking pride. Though, perhaps, you did not think it was pride, yet it is so: for though you be vile in your own eyes, yet, the thing you would be at, in this matter, is, you would be pure in your own eyes, and then you think you would be pure in his eyes too. Come to Christ, though you have nothing of your own to bring with you to him; for you must come to him empty, and stript of all your own proper good, that you may get all in him, and from him.

Again, There is a pride of understanding and opinion that takes place in hardened sinners, who will not come to Christ. They trust their own judgment in their own case: they are both judge and party, and their judgment is not according to truth, for they judge themselves not to be so bad as they are. Yea, they are pure in their own eyes; and therefore they will not come to Christ to be purified, justified, or sanctified; and so, no wonder that they are not washed from their filthiness.

Therefore, I say, do not trust your own judgment in your own case. Let the word of God judge you: and judge yourselves, not by your own understanding, but by that word of God that will judge you at the last day.—Examine yourselves by the word; self-examination would bring down your self-conceit. And pray that God would search and try you, saying with the psalmist, Psal. cxxxix. 23, 24, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my reins: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

SERMON XVII.

NON-CONFORMITY TO THE WORLD ENJOINED; OR, THE EVIL AND DANGER OF SYMBOLIZING WITH THE WICKED, OPENED.¹

ROM. xii. 2.—“Be not conformed to this world.”—

It is the character of the children of God, that they have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God, 1 Cor. ii. 12. They are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world. But it is the character of the wicked, that they are the men of the world who have their portion in this life, Psal. xvii. 14. Conformity to Christ is the great mark and character of saints; “Whom he did foreknow, them he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son,” Rom. viii. 20. But conformity to the world is the great characteristic of atheists and wicked persons; and therefore the apostle here dissuades all the children of God from such conformity; “Be not conformed to this world.”

The apostle having at large treated the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, in the preceding chapters, he comes now in this to press home, upon the conscience, the principal duties thereof. True religion is not only designed to inform the judgment; but also to transform the heart, and reform the life. But the foundation of Christian practice must be laid in Christian knowledge: and hence

(1) This Sermon was preached by our Author, in his own church at Dunfermline, in the year 1723. And from the beginning of the Sermon itself, as well as from the place it has in the note-book, we learn, that it was delivered immediately after these on Prov. xxx. 12.

the apostle, having discoursed at large, of justification by faith, through the imputed righteousness of Christ, and of the riches of free grace, carnal wisdom might be apt to infer, therefore we may live as we list, and walk in the way of our own heart: No, that doth not follow; the faith that justifies is a faith that worketh by love; having understanding how to receive Christ Jesus the Lord, we come to understand how to walk in him. Hence this chapter is joined to the foregoing discourse by the word therefore; "I beseech you, THEREFORE, brethren:" intimating, that the practical application of doctrinal truths is the life of preaching.

The first verse of the chapter is a general direction; and that urged with the strongest motives and arguments and in the most affectionate and pathetic manner: "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." It might be useful to offer some explication hereof; but it is not what I propose at the time; and therefore I go forward.

The apostle proceeds to give more particular directions: and that which the text bears is set down both negatively and positively. The positive direction is last set down, though first in the order of nature and operation, before the former; "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove [or understand] what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Concerning this renovation of mind, I propose not at present to treat; especially as it is much the same, in other words with that holiness and purity, or being washed from our filthiness, which I insisted so much upon from the last text of scripture we prosecuted in your hearing.¹ Now the negative direction is, "Be not conformed to this world." By World here, we are to understand the men of the world, the wicked of the world, the lusts of the world, the way and course of the world, &c. And by not CONFORMING thereto, we are to understand, our not fashioning ourselves according to the world. All the disciples and followers of Christ must be non-conformists to this world, or unlike the wicked therein. And for the further explication of this text, I shall prosecute this doctrinal proposition.

OBSERV. That the people of God must not be like the world, or the wicked therein: They must not be conformed to the wicked world.

(1) Alluding to the preceding Sermons, from Prov. xxx. 12.

The method we propose to observe, for illustrating this observation, through supernatural aid, shall be the following :—

- I. Prove and clear the truth of the doctrine.
- II. Inquire what it is in the world we are not to be conformed to.
- III. Point out what this disconformity to the world imports.
- IV. Give the reasons why we are not to be conformed to the world.
- V. Make application of the whole subject.

Now, as I suppose, this subject is not unseasonable : so, I think, it is not unsuitable to the last we insisted upon from Prov. xxx. 12.

Having of late, 1. Spoken of the FATHER's exhibition of Christ, saying, "I will give thee for a covenant of the people." 2. Of the SPIRIT's operation, in order to his being known ; "He shall testify of me." 3. Of the SON's declaration of his own excellency, saying, "I and my Father are one." 4. Of the WORLD's disapprobation of this glorious person, and the harsh treatment he got among them ; Behold, I and the children which the Lord has given me, are for signs and wonders in Israel." 5. Of the REASON why so many, even in Israel, pour contempt thus upon Christ and his followers ; why, "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness." Here is the set of the world. We now come, 6. To inquire what is our DUTY in a suitability to this, even not to be conformed to this world.

I. The first thing proposed, on the general method, was, To prove and clear the truth of the doctrine, viz., That the people of God must not be like the wicked world, or conformed thereto. We shall prove this, both by scripture precepts and precedents.

1st, There are scripture precepts both in the Old and New Testament, to evince the truth hereof ; and I would have you to consult them carefully in your Bible, and there see what is the mind of God to you in this matter.

1. There are Old Testament precepts that enjoin this duty : such as these and the like : "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil," Exod. xxiii. 2. "Enter not into the path of the wicked ; and go not in the way of evil men : avoid them, pass not by them, turn from them, and pass away," Prov. iv. 14, 15. See also, Lev.

xviii. 24-27; Deut. xii. 30, 31, 32; Ps. i. 1; Prov. i. 10, 11, 14, 15, 16.

2. There are likewise New Testament precepts enforcing the duty, such as these following; "And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation," Acts ii. 40. This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that henceforth ye walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind:—"Be not partakers with them," Eph. iv. 17, v. 7. "Keep yourselves unspotted from the world," James i. 27. See also Matth. v. 46, vi. 31, 32; Luke xii. 29, 30; 2 Cor. vi. 15, 16; 1 Thess. v. 5-8; 2 Pet. iii. 17.

2dly, There are scripture precedents to influence us not to be conformed to the wicked world. I shall instance in the following persons. (1.) In Noah, Gen. vii. 1,—“And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.” (2.) In Lot, 2 Peter ii. 7, 8, “And delivered righteous Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked; for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul, from day to day, with their sinful deeds.” (3.) In Joshua, chap. xxiv. 14, “And, if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served, that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” (4.) In Nehemiah, chap. v. 15, “But the former governors that had been before me were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver: yea, even their servants bare rule over the people: but so did not I, because of the fear of God.” (5.) In David, Psalm xxiv. 4, 5. “I have not sat with vain persons; neither will I go in with dissemblers; I have hated the congregation of evil doers; and will not sit with the wicked.”

The Lord would have his children to act flat contrary to the world, and not be like other men. That part of the Pharisee's prayer, Luke xviii. 11, wherein he thanks God that he was not like other men, was not amiss for the substance of it, if it had not come from a vain-glorious, proud, and lying spirit; for he thought that he was better than others, whereas he was worse than all others to whom he preferred himself: but yet every one should labour to be that truly, for which he gave thanks falsely; even not to be like others. Others neglect prayer, whether secret, family, or social:

others neglect Christ, and despise his word and institutions ; yea, many others, they drink, and swear, and whore, and cheat, and defraud and oppress, and lie, and break the Sabbath, and give way to all manner of impieties and immoralities. Either they are not subject to his law, and so walk in all manner of wickedness ; or they are not subject to his gospel and so will not submit themselves to his righteousness, to be saved by grace through Jesus Christ. Therefore we must not be like others. Others are without ; and without are dogs. And indeed, we find others, and without are equivalent terms in scripture, Mark iv. 11. "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom, but to them that are without, all is in parables." And compared with Luke viii. 10. "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom ; but to others in parables." Mark hath it, To them that are without ; and Luke hath it, To others. Others then, I say, are without, and belong not to God. It is dangerous, therefore, being with others ; for they are without, and shall be without ; it is better to be within alone, than without with others.—So much for clearing and confirming the truth of the doctrine. We must not be like the world.

II. The second general head was, To inquire what it is in the world that we are not to be conformed to. In short then, we must not be conformed to the things of the world, the fashions, worship, principles nor trade of the world.

1. We must not be conformed to the things of the world ; for they are mutable, and the fashion of them passeth away. What are the things of the world that we must not be conformed to ? The apostle gives us a sum of these things ; "All that is in the world, the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world ; and the world passeth away, and the lusts thereof," 1 John ii. 16, 17. We are so far to avoid being conformed to the sinful things of the world, that, in our several places and stations, we ought to witness against them ; nay, even in the indifferent things of the world, which are not in themselves sinful, we must so far not conform ourselves to the manner of the world therein, as not to act by the world's dictates, as our rule : nor to aim at the world's favour, as our end. True Christianity consists much in a sober singularity.—Here we might shew a variety of things in the world that we ought not to be conformed unto, or thirst after : such as the profits, the honours, preferments, pleasures, and applause of the world ; but we insist not.

2. We must not be conformed to the fashions and customs of

the world ; “Not fashioning ourselves according to the former lusts,” as the apostle speaks, 1 Pet. i. 14. There is a novelty of disposition prevails, that makes multitudes fall in with every new, vain fashion. There are vain fashions of gesture, ways of carrying, that discover nothing but levity, and expressly condemned in scripture, Isa. iii. 16. There are vain fashions of apparel, inconsistent with, and unsuitable to the rules of modesty, that many affect: contrary to the word of God, Isa. iii. 18-23, 1 Tim. ii. 9, 1 Pet. iii. 3. This is the epidemical disease of both sexes ; and even too much affected by those who ought to be exemplary to others, of modesty and sobriety. There are vain and foolish customs, even in matters of religion ; and many are fond of what is fashionable, though it be never such an ill fashion. Hence,

3. We must not be conformed to the worship of the world ; for the world worship they know not what ; they worship an unknown God ; they worship God in a carnal, hypocritical, and superstitious way. But we are to worship him in spirit, and in truth ; and in the way and manner that he hath appointed in his word, that we may not be puzzled with that question, “Who hath required these things at your hand ?” but may have it to say, “He by whose authority I do these things, is neither pope, nor prelate, nor civil potentate ; but there is my warrant in the word of God, Hence,

4. We must not be conformed to the traditions and rudiments of the world ; “Beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy, and vain deceit, after the invention of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ,” Col. ii. 8. See also, ver. 20, 21, 22, where God teacheth us our freedom from all abolished ceremonies, and ritual observances ; and that subjection to ordinances of human invention and appointment, in the worship of God is highly blameable and contrary to the freedom and liberty of the gospel ; and invading the authority of Christ, the head of the church, on which account we are exhorted to stand fast in the liberty where-with Christ hath made us free ; and not to be entangled again into the yoke of bondage. But I must here pass many things, which would natively fall in, for want of time.

5. We must not be conformed to the principles of the world. There are many doctrinal principles that we are not to be conformed to which would lead to a large field to speak of:¹ but to confine

(1) The reader, if he pleases, may see some of those Doctrinal Principles, by consulting the Sermon under the use of Reproof.

myself to this point, namely, What are the principles of the unregenerate world? Why, they are even naturally of devilish and hellish principles. By nature we are all Arminians, Pelagians, Socinians, yea, and Atheists, without God in the world; and therefore suspect the principle that is most natural, and that is most easy for you to fall in with. Every principle that favours corrupt and depraved reason is suspicious; for the gospel is a mystery that vitiated nature cannot fathom. There are political principles that the world is filled with. Many, for example, are of that principle, that it is better to sin than to suffer; better to make such and such compliances, than expose ourselves to the fury of men, or the loss of some worldly substance: better an uneasy conscience than an empty purse. Many are of that principle, better a bird in hand than two in the bush, as we use to speak: better a palace in Paris, a portion in this world, which we see and have among our hands, than a palace in Paradise: and hence many say, "Who will shew us any good?" and few, "Lord, lift upon us the light of thy countenance," Psal. iv. 6. We must not be conformed to the world herein.

6. We must not be conformed to the practice, course, and way of the world: "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience," Eph. ii. 2. God would have his people cross the world in their life and conversation. This was pointed out by his forbidding Israel to eat and touch some things which other nations did eat and touch; and his allowing them to eat what other nations did not. For example: the Egyptians did eat, for the most part fish, and some few kinds of birds; but of the flesh of beasts they eat no other but only swine's flesh; and this one kind of flesh is directly forbidden the Jews, Lev. xi. 7, 8. By this was pointed out, that God would have a kind of contrariety between the world, and such as make a profession of his name; and that his children must be as far from the manners of the world as may be. The way of the world is downward; he will have his people to walk upward: the course of this world is hell-ward; he will have his people's course to be heaven-ward: the world walk in the broad way; he will have his people walk in the narrow way.

In a word, we are not to be conformed to the world in their thoughts, words, actions, desires, delights, loves, joys, affections, or passions. But on all these we cannot insist at the time: and must therefore proceed,

III. To the third thing proposed, which was, To shew what this disconformity to the world imports. Not to multiply particulars, it fairly imports the four following things.

1. It imports more than a contrariety to the world. What is said of the flesh, may be said of the world, with respect to the believer. As the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these two are contrary one to another : so, the world fights against the believer, and the believer fights against the world ; and these two are contrary one to the other : and this is the victory whereby he overcometh the world, even his faith.

2. This disconformity to the world imports a despising of the world. They that are not conformed to the world are not in love with the world ; they are not taken up with the gaudy vanities thereof. They that are saints indeed, have got a sight that makes the world appear nothing. The natural sun shines upon this world and enlightens it : but the sun of righteousness, when he shines upon the soul, darkens this earth, and all the excellencies thereof, and makes them all appear but loss and dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. Hence the believer doth not admire the world : it is not silver and gold that he calls true riches ; it is not worldly advancement that he calls honour ; it is not carnal delight that he reckons pleasure and happiness ; it is not human learning that he esteems solid wisdom : he can be rich, honourable, happy, and all without them ; and all in Christ. He values worldly and earthly things no more than a picture drawn in the sand, which the least wave will wash away.

3. This disconformity to the world imports a forsaking of the world ; "Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house ; so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty," Psalm xlv. 10, 11. The child of God is made to forsake the world, and to come up from this world leaning on the Beloved : this seems to be the import of that call to the church, Song iv. 8,—*"Come with me from Lebanon : look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon ; from the lions' dens, and from the mountains of leopards."* We profess to renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh ; to forsake the world, and follow Christ. Now, this forsaking of the world, viewed negatively, it is not to go out of the world by a hasty death, that were double iniquity ; nor is it to vow a voluntary poverty, as the Papists do ; nor is it to be idle and improvident about the things of the world : but, affirmatively, to forsake the world, is to do it in

point of use ; to use this world as if we used it not ; that is, moderately, to forsake it in point of service, we are not to be slaves to it, for we cannot serve God and Mammon ; to forsake it in point of confidence ; we are not to trust in, or depend upon outward enjoyments, and we are to forsake it in point of adherence, so as not to be glued to it ; it should not be like the hair of the head, or skin of the hand, which cannot be pulled off without pain : but like a hat on the head, or a glove on the hand, that we can take off when we please ; we must keep a loose grip of it. And,

4. This disconformity to the world imports an actual crucifying of the world : “ God forbid that I should glory,” saith the apostle, “ save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ ; by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” The world cares not for me, and I care not for the world ; the world is dead to me, and I am dead to the world. But I insist not, and therefore proceed,

IV. To the fourth thing, which was to inquire why, or for what reasons the people of God must not be conformed to the world. Why, in general, because they are of another world : they are subjects of another kingdom ; they are people of another state ; they are persons of another principle : they are recipients of another spirit ; they are directed by another rule ; and they are aiming at another world than the rest of the world : but, concerning these and other things of this nature, we will have occasion to speak upon more fully afterwards. We shall only, in the meantime, observe that there are two great contending parties that powerfully draw all men after them ; namely, God and the world ; and there is an irreconcilable enmity between them : those who are on God’s side are against the world ; and those that are on the world’s side are against God, and, therefore, it is the duty of all the followers of Christ not to take the world’s part against him ; and, consequently, not to be conformed to the world. When the three children, Dan. iii. 12, refused to fall down and worship Nebuchadnezzar’s image, he was full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against them, ver. 19. It is so with the men of this world ; if the friends of Christ will not bow down and worship this golden image, and join in with the vanities and follies thereof, why, then, the worldlings run mad at them. It is true, the world would agree with the godly if they would bow down to them ; but that they cannot do, they dare not do, because the Lord forbids it : “ Be not conformed to the world.”

Now the reasons of the doctrine may be classed under these four heads. The children of God must not be conformed to this world, 1. In respect of God. 2. In respect of the world. 3 In respect of their brethren. And, 4. In respect of themselves.

1st, In respect of God ; there are many reasons might be given, why the people of God are not to be conformed to the world. For,

1. By being conformed to the world, you tempt God, and lead yourselves into temptation : if any of God's people entertain unnecessary communion with the wicked of the world, like Peter in the high-priest's hall, they tempt God, to let them fall into mischief, contrary to his express command, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." They run upon a dangerous precipice, where, if God take away his hand, they may fall and break all their bones.

2. By being conformed to the world, they so far forsake God, and so forsake their own mercies, and run into idolatry : hence covetousness is called idolatry ; for it is making the world our God. Whatever we love most, and serve most, and depend upon most, that we make our God ; and so do we, when we love, serve, and depend upon the world so as to juggle God out of doors : But, why do we dote upon the creature, or upon the world ? For, whatever the world hath of goods, it hath it from God. Your food, raiment, comforts and conveniences of the world, as they are, any way good to you, it is from God : and therefore, if you forsake God, and follow the world, from a desire after these things, you forsake the full fountain, and follow the fading streams ; you depart even from the true good, that is in the world itself, while you go to the world for it. "My people have committed two great evils, they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters ; and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water," Jer. ii. 13.

3. God and the world are at odds ; there is a disagreement between God and the world, between Christ and the world : all the time that Christ was in the world it mocked, reviled, opposed, and persecuted him, and at last killed him ; and Christ, by his life and death, did fight against the world, and overcome it : and he hath put enmity between his people and the world. All the prophets, and apostles, and saints, in all ages, have been at hot war with the world, and contended with all the wicked in it ; "They that forsake the law, praise the wicked ; but such as keep the law, contend with them," Prov. xxviii. 4. They have been men of contention in the

world: Why? the world is in arms against their God; therefore the Lord hath sworn that he will have war with it, as with Amalek, unto all generations; and with all who shall join it; yea, or stand neutral: they are cursed, because they rise not up to the help of the Lord against the mighty, Judges v. 23. Christ hath given encouragement to his people, that they shall be more than conquerors, through him who hath overcome the world.

4. The love of God, and the love of the world, are contrary! "He that loveth the world, the love of the Father is not in him." God's work is, to draw our affections from the world: the world's work is, to draw our affections from God: and both God and the world seek the whole man. If a man desire to be religious, God must have his whole heart: and he through grace must give it, and make a continual trade of religion: if a man desire to be rich, the world will oblige him to rise early, and sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness; yea, and employ his head and heart, and all about the world. And therefore God and the world cannot be served by one and the same man. Yea, the love of the world leads to the hatred of God: because there is a contrary nature between God and the world; the Lord is pure, the world is polluted; the Lord is good, the world is evil: the Lord hates the world, though not as his creature, but as it is our Lord's rival, usurping his room in our hearts.

2dly, In respect of the world itself, many reasons may be given, why the people of God are not to be conformed to it. And here if we view the men of this world, the god of this world, and the whole complex frame of it, we will see grounds and reasons why we ought not to be conformed thereto.

1. The men of this world is a reason, why the people of God should not be conformed to this world, or to the practice of the men that are in it. Why? it hardens the wicked in their wickedness, when they see professors of religion, and those that have the reputation of godly persons, join with them, or too familiarly converse with them: and so this their conformity to the world, is hurtful to the wicked of the world: they will applaud themselves in their wicked courses, when such as are applauded for godly persons do associate with them. Thus, after Saul had spared Agag, Samuel refused to return with him; "And Samuel said unto Saul, I will not return with thee; for thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel,"

1 Sam. xv. 26. So should the godly say to the wicked, Ye have rejected the word of the Lord ; therefore I will not return with you, I will not join with you. If you join with the vicious, you do vice too much honour. If you join with the sinner, you give sin too much encouragement. And therefore, it is sometimes the greatest act of love towards wicked men, to deny them our countenance, and withdraw from their society : yea, to refuse to keep company with them, may sometimes be a means to reform.

2. The god of this world is another reason why the people of God ought not to be conformed to it. The god of this world is the devil : and, to be conformed to this world is conformity to the devil, and to love the world is to worship the devil ; therefore, as covetousness is called idolatry, so the devil tempted Christ to worship him, by offering the world to him, Mat. iv. 9. This world is the devil's walk where he goes to and fro ; yea, goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour ; and, like a crooked serpent, whom he may deceive : and when we are upon the devil's ground, among the wicked of the world, joining in fellowship with the wicked, in their unfruitful works of darkness, it is one to a thousand, if Satan do not cheat us through his subtilty ; and, by little and little captivate us. As thieves usually first put in a little one at the window to open the door to all the rest ; so Satan presents us an apple, a wedge of gold to the eye ; or a whispering tale, a polluting word, or suspicion to the ear ; these are the doors of the house ; and these little thieves will open the door, and let in adultery, whoredom, theft, malice, murder, &c. Satan's request seems mannerly and modest at first. As Semiramis desired of Ninus only to reign one day, and that day to do what she pleased, what she listed ; which being granted, behold in that day she cut off his head : even so, the devil, the god of this world, will desire only to reign a day, or to have you dedicate a day to him and to the world, and the vanities, and follies, and vices thereof ; but, behold, in that very day he may cut off your head, cut off your soul, by drawing away your heart and affections from God.

3. The whole complex frame of this world, and things thereof, affords a complex reason why we are not to be conformed to this world. Why, the whole world lieth in wickedness ; for, All that is in the world, the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life, are nothing but trash and trumpery of hell.—In a word, the world is but a contemptible thing ; Christ poured contempt

upon it, and disgraced it, when he said, "My kingdom is not of this world." It is nothing to be contemned and disgraced by the world; nay, sometimes it is a man's glory to be so; but Christ's disesteeming and despising a thing, rubs a real infamy upon it: and why then should we be conformed to it?—The world is a vanishing thing, the clock of time is almost run out; and, in a little, it will be wound up in eternity. If a man had a tack of a house, or a farm, but for two or three days, and should fall a building and planting, would he not be judged very foolish: so, when we have such a short and uncertain time here, and death calls us presently off the stage, to thirst immoderately after the world's pleasures, profits, honours, and vanities, is it not extreme folly? It is doomed to destruction; and will be all in a flame and red low ere long.—The world is but a vain thing: "Man in his best estate is altogether vanity;" even in his most prosperous state. Prosperity, in scripture, is compared to a candle; and many have burnt their wings about this candle. This world cheats all that dotes upon it; it promises pleasure, but cannot perform; for no solid satisfaction can be found in it. The world's votaries are but a pack of cheated fools: "Wherefore do they spend their money for that which is not bread; and their labour for that which satisfieth not?" When the world speaks you fair, believe it not; for there are seven abominations in its heart; its greatest glory is but a fading shadow.—The world is a hurtful thing; and we little need to be conformed to it; the customs of it choke the seed of the word, that it cannot grow. The things of this world is the false deception the devil casts over our eyes, that we do not see the glory of the Lord; "The god of this world hath blinded the eyes of them that believe not;" it is the bait that draws so many fish into the devil's net, whereby he bewitches them, and allures them into the pit of ruin.

3dly, In respect of their brethren; there are many reasons also, why they are not to be conformed to the world, lest their brethren in Christ be either grieved or offended; for your conformity to the world and joining with the wicked, is both grieving to the strong, and offensive to the weak believer.

1. It is grieving to the godly; and, is it nothing to you to grieve the generation of the righteous? The sin of the wicked is a grief to the godly; and, how unnatural is it for any of God's children to add to their grief, by joining issue with the wicked! It is said of Lot, that his righteous soul was vexed from day to day with

the unlawful deeds of the wicked ; but for such to be vexed, not only with the ungodliness of sinners, but with the untenderness of saints also, is an additional vexation, and grief upon the back of grief.

2. It is offensive to the weak believer ; it lays a stumbling-block in his way, over which he is ready to fall : either by discouraging him in the way of duty, or encouraging and leading him into sin, or any other way leading him into some snare, with respect to his own soul : " When ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak consciences, ye sin against Christ," 1 Cor. viii. 12.

4thly, In respect of themselves : and that, 1. Because of their circumstances. 2. Their safety requires that they be not conformed to the world.

[1.] Because of their circumstances. They are quite in other circumstances than the rest of the world. Why ?

1. They are people of another world than this, and therefore are not to be conformed to this world ; they are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world. They are of another kingdom ; for Christ's kingdom is not of this world. They are of another country ; for they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly. They are of another city ; even the city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. They are of another world ; for God hath chosen them out of the world.

2. They must not be conformed to this world, because they are persons of another state than this world. The world is in a state of condemnation, but they are in a state of justification ; therefore they are to walk like those that are in favour with God. They are in a state of adoption ; therefore to be followers of God as dear children. They are in a state of grace, they are the children of the light and of the day ; therefore they are not to sleep as others do.

3. They must not be conformed to the world, because they are acted by another principle than the rest of the world.—They have a principle of faith, and this faith worketh by love : while the world lieth in unbelief ; and this their unbelief worketh by enmity. They have a principle of love ; and the love of Christ constrains them to serve the Lord : while the enmity of the world constrains them to dishonour God. They have a principle of holy fear ; while the world hath no fear of God before their eyes.

4. They must not be conformed to the world, because they are directed by another rule than the rest of the world. The rule that

the world walks by is their own will, their own corrupt wicked will ; and hence they say with the people of old, We are lords, and we will not have this man to reign over us : but the rule by which the children of God do walk is the word and will of God : and this is the will of God, even our sanctification.

5. They must not be conformed to the world, because they aim at another end than the rest of the world ; whether we consider the end propounded by them, or the end designed upon them.—The end propounded by them. Why, the last end, and chief end of the world is self ; to live to themselves : but the great and chief end of the godly is to live unto God : the principal end they profess is God's glory, and Christ's honour. And those who differ so far in their end, good reason they differ in their way. Again, as to the end designed upon them : why, the world will come to a dismal issue ; for, the wicked will be turned into hell, and tormented with the devil and his angels : but the godly, being chosen out of the world, will shortly enter into the joy of their Lord. And seeing their ends are so different, surely they cannot both walk in the same road. If one goes east, another west, surely they cannot walk the same way.

6. They must not be conformed to the world, because they are objects of another love than the rest of the world ; they are loved with an everlasting love, and so drawn with loving-kindness ; and being drawn with the cords of love, they are to run the way of God's commandments, while others run in the broad way to destruction : the world is the object of God's hatred ; " Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated," Rom. ix. 13.

7. They must not be conformed to the world, because they are servants of another master, than the rest of the world. The world serves the devil, and serves their lusts, and serves other gods ; but every believer is a Joshua in this ; " As for me, and my house, we will serve the Lord." Now, a man cannot serve two masters ; and the believer cannot serve both God and Mammon ; Christ and the world.

8. They must not be conformed to the world, because they are partakers of another spirit than the world : " They have not received the spirit of this world, but the spirit which is of God." The world is led by an ill spirit to the land of darkness ; whereas they are led by the good spirit to the land of uprightness.—The world is led by a poor, pitiful, low, and mean spirit ; whereby they are easily put off with trifles, and satisfied with shadows and vanities ; but the

godly are led by a noble, high, and heavenly spirit : whereby they aspire after divine and celestial things.—The world is led by a blind, ignorant, foolish spirit ; whereby they are mad upon their idols : the children of God are led by a spirit of wisdom, knowledge and understanding : whereby they are wise unto salvation. And thus the circumstances of the people of God yield all the reason in the world, why they ought not to be conformed to this world.

[2.] Their safety requires it also, that they be not conformed to the world : (1.) The safety of their names, that are in danger to be disgraced. (2.) The safety of their consciences, that are in danger to be defiled. (3.) The safety of their graces, that are in hazard of being marred. And, (4.) The safety of their persons, that are in danger to be punished by their conformity to the world.

1. The safety of their names requires, that they be not conformed to this world ; for their names are in danger of being disgraced, by such a conformity. Because when they become like unto the wicked, and conformed to the world, they give occasion for their being suspected of the world, and so shame and disgrace their own name and their father's name ; “ He that is a companion of riotous men, shameth his father,” Prov. xxviii. 7. So the believer shames his heavenly Father by conformity to the world ; for what agreement is their between God and the world ? He shameth his earthly father also, whether he be a graceless or a gracious man ; if he be a graceless man, he shameth him by giving occasion to say, he is like him ; Like father like son : If he be a gracious man, he shameth him, by being so unlike unto him. But he especially shameth himself ; for, whereas a good name is as precious ointment ; so his conformity to the world, in any measure, is the dead fly that causes the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour, Eccl. x. 1. They lose their credit and esteem.

2. The safety of their consciences require that they be not conformed to the world : because, by conformity to the world, their consciences are in danger of being defiled, and their souls to be depraved ; for the sin and way of the world is of an infectious nature : can a man touch pitch and not be defiled ? “ Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes be not burnt ? Can he go upon hot coals, and his feet be not burnt ?” saith Solomon. We are told of the Jews, Psal. cvi. 35, that when they were mingled among the heathen, they learned their works, and served their idols, which was a snare to them. The finest looking-glasses will gather dust and

defilement; even so may the children of God themselves gather dust and defilement, by mingling with the world: for sin is a plague and infection. And the haunting of sinful company will defile a saint: Joseph, in Pharaoh's court, learned to swear by the life of Pharaoh; Peter, in the high-priest's hall, swears and denies his master; the Israelites, being used to the Egyptian furnaces, framed an idol. They that lie down with dogs, shall rise up with fleas; they that dwell in the kitchen will smell of the smoke.

3. The safety even of their graces, that are in danger to be marred and weakened, require that they be not conformed to the world. There is not such a gracious person on earth, but if he cast himself, by untenderness and unwatchfulness into the company of a carnal world, he will find their conversation abate the edge of his zeal, and cool the fervour of his devotion; yea, enervate, debilitate, and weaken every grace; and, by little and little, transform him to their manner, in a great measure, till sovereign grace reform him again: "When iniquity abounds, the love of many waxeth cold." This new-planted colony of grace in the heart, is in great danger when opposed, not only by the native; (I mean, our corruption,) but also by the auxiliary help and aid of the corruption of others.

4. The safety of their persons require that they be not conformed to the world: for they who are conformed to the wicked world are in danger of being punished therewith. Though all that are in Christ are freed from condemnation and eternal wrath; yet they are not freed from affliction and temporal judgments, especially if they shall associate with the wicked. If Lot had not come out of Sodom at the command of God, he had perished in the flames; if Noah had not made the ark at God's command, he had perished in the flood with the world. And hence the command of God to us is, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that he receive not of her plagues," Rev. xviii. 4. "A companion of fools shall be destroyed," Prov. xiii. 20. And again, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord; and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you," 2 Cor. vi. 17. "Shouldst thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord," 2 Chron. xix. 2.

Thus you see many reasons why the people of God must not be conformed to this world, and that in respect of themselves: their circumstances and their safety every way require it.

V. The Fifth thing proposed in the method was, To make application of the subject, which we shall essay in a use of information, reproof, examination, and exhortation, enforced with some motives ; and then conclude the subject with some directions.

Use I. Let us improve the doctrine in an use of information. If, then, matters be so, as you have been hearing, That the people of God must not be conformed to the wicked world, we may hence learn,

1. What are the rules by which our conversation in the world is to be squared, and how our conversation in the world is to be cautioned. This non-conformity to the world doth not exclude all conversation whatsoever with the world: for, in several cases, we may lawfully converse with them.

QUEST. In what CASES may the godly converse with the world?

ANSW. (1.) In case of necessity ; when we are compelled and obliged to live amongst them. This was David's case in Kedar ; " Wo is me that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar ;" Psalm cxx. 5. So it was with the church of Pergamos ; " I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is," Rev. ii. 13. Where God hath a chapel, Satan hath a throne.

(2.) In case of policy, traffic, trade, and merchandise : in this respect we cannot live without the wicked of the world. It is lawful to have commerce with them, provided always we do not mingle with their vices.

(3.) In case of courtesy and civility. As this non-conformity to the world doth not exclude lawful traffic, so neither doth it exclude or impeach civil courtesy. It is not only lawful, but laudable to do any courteous offices towards them that are without, whereby to gain them.

(4.) In case of charity ; hence we are called to do good to all, but especially to the household of faith. Though the household of faith, in poverty, be the special objects of charity, yet we are not to exclude others : " Do good to all."

(5.) In case of piety ; and thus it is lawful to converse with the wicked as far as, by gentle and reasonable reproofs, we may, through grace, be useful to reclaim them. We are to walk wisely towards these that are without ; to visit them in their distress when they are in affliction ; and to do all the good we can to their souls.

(6.) In case of affinity ; this non-conformity to the world doth

not take away natural affection ; neither will it extend to a separation between husband and wife for the sake of religion : it is lawful for the believing wife to converse with the carnal husband, as Abigail with Nabal : nay, for religion's sake, such as are called to converse together : " What knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband ? or, what knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife ?" 1 Cor. vii. 14—16.

In all these, and the like cases, converse with the wicked of the world is lawful. But the meaning of non-conformity with them is, we must not chose them for our daily companions, delight in their discourse, or frequent their haunts ; " Now, I have written unto you, not to keep company ; if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such a one no not to eat," 1 Cor. v. 11. We are not to affect their society, nor to savour their wickedness ; but keep ourselves unspotted from the world, James i. 27.

Thus we see, I say, the rule by which our conversation in the world should be squared. In things which are absolutely moral indeed, all rules of art should be affirmative : but in this point, a man may give a negative rule, which may be safe and good. Do not as the world doth : do quite contrary to them. It is a good rule to live by, to mark the courses of worldly men, and to do the quite contrary. Worldly men will give themselves to covetousness, to worldly pleasure, worldly lusts, worldly affections : now, it is a good rule of walk, to observe what they do, and to do the quite contrary.

2. Hence we may see, if it be the property of a true Christian, not to be conformed to the world, how few true Christians there are in the world. There are many professors indeed, but few godly persons : why ? because they are like the world ; they live as others in the world do : they live as atheists and infidels. Look to yourself, man, woman ; do you not even the same things that the rest of the profane world do ? Do you not live after the same course, and at the same rate ? They restrain prayer before God, both in secret, and in their families : they neglect the word ; they regard it not, they obey it not ; they swell against it, they snarl at it : they break and profane the Sabbath ; they omit the proper duties of it, and do those things which are in themselves unlawful on that day : they are malicious : they are deceitful in their dealings ; they live contentedly without Christ : though they be poor, they live con-

tentedly without the tried gold of his grace : though they be blind, they live satisfied without the eye-salve of his spirit ; though they be naked, they live peaceably without the white raiment of his righteousness. Now, what is your life ? What contrariety is there between you and the world ? Do you not live the very same way ? O then, you are conformed to this world with the rest : and, how few are otherwise ! Therefore there are but few saints indeed ; because the most part are conformed to the world, and taken up with the vanities of it.

I understand there is to be a remarkable meeting here this week : an idle, vain rendezvous ; I know not upon what pretence : but I fear the motto of it be, Vanity and Folly ; if not Wickedness and Debauchery in the issue : and in case that prove the issue of it, I must exoner myself on the head. True ; some may be thinking, it is better that the minister hold his peace ; for, say what he will, the company will but laugh at it, when they are convened : But I do not value that ; I must answer to God for what I say, and you must answer for what you hear and do at his tribunal ; and see who will laugh there.

I have only a few questions to propose to all that design to countenance that convention of idleness and folly. 1. Will it be no conformity to the world, and fostering of its vanity and idleness, to give countenance thereto ? 2. Will it be with a view to glorify God, or edify any poor immortal soul, that this meeting shall gather together ? 3. Will it be of such a nature, that any, who countenance it, dare go to God and pray for a blessing upon it ? 4. Will it be of such a nature, as shall not counteract and contradict the call of providence, at this day, which calls us rather to mourning and weeping, than to joy and gladness ? 5. Will it be a meeting of God's approbation, and such as they shall be able to account for, at his awful tribunal, without fear or shame ? 6. Will it be such a meeting, as that your countenancing it, will give ground of joyful reflection, when your eye-strings are breaking, and your souls flying out of your bodies into eternity ?

If these questions can be answered in the positive, and that it be indeed a meeting of this nature, then I have no quarrel with it : but if otherwise, and that none of these thing can be said of it, then I protest against it, in God's great name ; and take instruments, in the hand of your consciences, that I do so. And I would earnestly exhort all, that desire to be followers of Christ, that they would be-

ware of it, as they would not offend God, nor grieve the generation of the righteous, and be guilty of conformity to the world: for, before ever it come, it hath no savour of heaven about it; and, I fear, the interest of hell be advanced, and the vanity of the mind prompted by it.

Why, say you, it is but designed for a little diversion and recreation. Indeed, it is easy for persons to put a fair face upon a foul design: but I fear the promiscuous dancing and revelling that I here is designed, together with the drinking and carousing that may take place, will discover that the god of this world will be the great master-convener, and the lusts of the world will be the great diversion; even the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life.

A meeting for prayer and humiliation would be more suitable for the sad state of the souls of many of those who have such designs in view: for, it is to be feared, some will give countenance to that vanity, by whom the ordinances of Christ have been little countenanced these twelve months; and some who will find more pleasure in such merry caballing, than ever they found in God's sanctuary all their days; which says, that they have more need that God set them to their knees, to deprecate the vengeance that is hanging over their guilty heads, than that the devil set them on their feet, to dance away merrily to hell.¹

3. Hence see, that it is no wonder that religious persons be cried down for niceness and singularity. Indeed, religion must be cross, and contrary to the world. If this be singularity, not to walk as those do that make no conscience of duty, but mock and jest at better things than they will imitate, then we must be singular: If this be to be vile, as David said in another case, then we shall be more vile. Why, say you, shall we expose ourselves to be traduced as proud, precise, and singular persons, who think none so good as ourselves? Why, sirs, it is better that the world speak ill

(1) These notes have relation to a remarkable BALL in Dunfermline, in which much promiscuous dancing, levity, and wantonness, took place.—If there was at that time so much occasion for our Author to inveigh so severely against such promiscuous assembling and caballing, drinking, and revelling, how much more reason now, in these days of profanity and prodigality, when these practices are become so universal among all ranks, and carried to greater extremes, especially in populous cities and places of public resort, to the dishonour of God, the discredit of religion, the consumption of precious time, the wasting of the substance, fostering the vanity of the mind, and the ruin of the soul in the issue.

of us without cause, than that God should be angry at us, and proceed against us on just reason.

4. Hence we may see, what a weak argument it is, that is only drawn from multitudes and universality. Most men do so and so; yea, all men do so and so; and why shall we not follow their example? But the apostle's argument is quite of another nature, Eph. ix. 17-20,—“I testify, in the Lord, that henceforth ye walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, &c. ; but ye have not so learned Christ.” See 1 Thess. iv. 5, where we are told, that it is but a poor, vain, weak argument for one to urge, Others do so and so; and therefore why not I? Why, Paul's argument is quite the reverse: “Let us not sleep as others do:” let us not drink and tittle as others do; “but let us watch and be sober,” 1 Thess. v. 6. Non-conformity to the world saith, on the contrary to this carnal reasoning, “Let us not sleep as others do; let us not swear as others do; let us not profane the Sabbath as others do; let us not commit uncleanness as others do; let us not lie as others do; let us not steal and cheat as others do; let us not live in the omission of religious duties and ordinances as others do; let us not live without God and Christ, and in the neglect of eternity, as others do.” It is a weak argument for one to say, “Lord help us, if all others be in the wrong but you; if all those that have authority, numbers, and multitude on their side be in the wrong, and you only right.” This way of reasoning crosses the very scope of the text, “Be not conformed to this world:” which supposes that the world is all wrong, and that very few in it are right: even a few that are not of the world.

5. Hence see, that the wicked world need not quarrel with the saints for refraining their company; why, God encourages them to do so; yea, commands them to do so: “Now, we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw from every brother that walketh disorderly,” 2 Thess. iii. 6. Why, should we esteem them as dogs, and trample upon them? No; we are to withdraw from them, in pity to their souls; we are to mourn for their sins, to pray for their conversion, to use all proper means to reduce them to their duty, and to exercise all manner of hospitality and civility towards them: but, in the meantime, to withdraw from intimate society and fellowship with them, saying, as Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, “O, my soul, come not thou into their secret; and unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united,” Gen. xlix. 6. For God hath commanded us not to be conformed to them.—Where

by-the-bye, we see also how low an esteem the Lord hath of the wicked world; he will not allow his saints to keep company with them.

6. Hence see the vanity of all those shifts and excuses whereby people cover their deformity to the world. But, to speak of these shifts will fall more natively in upon the following use; only, I would observe here that many indulge themselves in entertaining fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, and communion with the wicked, and conformity to them, and yet never think it is ill done; they have never the least check or challenge for it; while they do not see their own guilt in associating with the wicked, nor can they charge themselves with the fault of their associates. Many wilfully delight in such company, whom they know hath no relish for religion; whose discourse is not seasoned with salt; and whose ill breath discovers that their lungs are infected; being depraved in their morals, dangerous in their communication, scandalous in their lives, erroneous in their principles, and wear their faults upon their foreheads, so as to be pointed at by common observation, as notorious and flagitious, and despisers of God, his word, his people, and his ordinances, Psalm i. 1.

Use 2. Again, the doctrine may be improved for reproof to all that are conformed to the world; and particularly to all that, having a profession of religion, and yet keep company with the loose and wicked of the world, notwithstanding the call of God, Eph. v. 11,—“Have no fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them;” notwithstanding the danger that is in such fellowship: the danger of infection; for, as he that walketh with the wise shall be wise, so he that walketh with fools will learn of them their folly: the danger of punishment and suffering; for, the companions of fools shall be destroyed: and the danger of scandal; so Jehosaphat’s joining in affinity with Ahab did eclipse his honour, and became scandalous; “Shouldst thou help the ungodly and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord,” 2 Chron. xix. 2.—How doth this doctrine condemn all such as profess the name of God, and yet say, as the Israelites to Samuel, “Nay, but we will be like other nations,” 1 Sam. viii. 20. Tell many a man, You must not do so and so, for thus do Turks and Tartars, and the barbarous nations of the world: you must not join in affinity with the people of these abominations; you must not walk in vanity and idleness; you must walk honestly as in the day,

not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness : for thus much the secure people of the world do : urge them with this argument, and what will they say ? Why, this is to be too strict and precise ; this is to be contrary to all the world ; and this is to be singular ; yea, this is but proud, hypocritical superstition of ourselves from all the rest of mankind. Alas ! what carnal reasoning is this against the clear command of God ? “ Be not conformed to this world.”

QUEST. Who are they that conform and fashion themselves according to this world ?

ANSW. Those that take the example of men, and not of the word of God, for the rule of their actions. The greatest and most eminent have their infirmities, and are subject to manifold failings. We are to be followers of none but as they are followers of Christ, 1 Cor. xi. 1.

2. Those that make their ancestors the pattern of their religious services : “ Our fathers burnt incense to the queen of heaven, and so will we.” Our forefathers were of such a religion and persuasion, and so will we be. We see no ground to differ from the religion of our predecessors.

3. Those that follow a multitude to do evil ; and walk in the broad way of wickedness, for the sake of company : but when vice becomes general, singularity becomes a virtue. When any error in judgment or practice, becomes universal, then singularity becomes a necessary duty.

4. Those that rule their actions by the will of their superiors ; so Israel followed Jeroboam : while yet great men are not always the best men. Those are chargeable with conformity to the world, who, to please great men, will make bold with light and conscience directing them another way.

5. Those who hing their faith to the belt of human wisdom and learning ; that follow those whom they think the wisest men, the deepest divines, the most learned doctors. It is the devil’s policy to seduce the world by such blazing light, as the serpent beguiled Eve, and the Pharisees misled the people, saying, “ Have any of the rulers and Pharisees believed on him ? ” Have any of the learned Rabbies fallen in with that man ? “ But this people who know not the law are accursed.”

6. All that are chargeable with other men’s sins, by countenancing them : whether it be the sins of forefathers, looking back-

wards ; or the sins of posterity looking forwards ; or the sins of the present generation we live among, looking round about us. And people may be chargeable many ways with the sins of others.

QUEST. How is a person chargeable with the sins of others ?

ANSW. We are chargeable with the sins of others, more generally two ways ; either by imitation or interpretation : when we imitate others in their sinful practices, or put too favourable glosses upon their vicious courses. More particularly, we are chargeable with the sins of others, when we command others to sin ; as Pharaoh commanded to murder the Hebrew children, and Herod to kill the babes of Bethlehem, and Nebuchadnezzar to worship the golden image ; they were guilty of all that murder and idolatry.—When we counsel others to sin ; so Balaam did the children of Israel.—When we consent to the sin of others : So Saul consented to the death of Stephen.—When we conceal the sins of others, and do not reveal them, and reprove the committers of them, and use all proper methods to bring them to condign punishment for them. When we constrain others to sin, either by compulsion, provocation, or enticing of them. When we seduce others into sin, by sly artifices, ensnaring suggestions, and taking arguments ; and so gain their assent to our vicious ways.—When we commend and praise others for their sinful courses, and applaud them in their sin. When we wish them success in their evil courses ; for, “He that biddeth them God speed, is a partaker of their evil deeds.”—When we do not correct and punish people for their sins as we have access, in our capacities ; whether as magistrates, parents, masters, or otherwise related.—When we defend and justify sin, and call evil good, and good evil ; and not to condemn sin, nor hinder the commission of it, when it is in our power to do so.—In a word, when we give or take an ill example in sin ; or when we learn at others, and others learn at us any sinful ways. And finally, when we rejoice at the sins of others, and take pleasure in them that do so.

In all these cases we are chargeable with the sins of others, and so with the conformity to a sinful world. And, indeed, as I had occasion lately to observe on another subject, this may let us see, that many will have sins to answer for, that they never dreamed of ; not only their own sins, but all the sins of other men, that ever they countenanced in this manner, and never seriously reprovèd and mourned over.

It is possible one may say to a reprover of his sins, “What

have you to do with me?" you will not answer for my sins. What hath the minister ado with my faults, my particular failings? Why does he take upon him to rip up my sores?" O man! do you not consider: We must answer not only for our own sins, but for all the sins we countenance and encourage: and for all the sins that we do not reprove, lament over, and repent of. Alas! little do the world consider, what need they have of Christ as a Saviour and Redeemer, to ransom them from the guilt, not only of their own sins, but their guilt of other men's sins. Little do the companions of drunkards, swearers, fornicators, Sabbath-breakers, and such-like, consider how they lie involved in the guilt of all the sins of those, with whom they associate themselves, and whose wickedness they connive at, and consent unto, or make a jest of.—However, all these now are guilty of fashioning themselves like unto the world.

But carnal reason will produce manifold pleas why people should be like their neighbours. And if any ask, What are these pleas and shifts? We might reply, by condescending upon the four following, amongst many others.

Plea 1. "I must conform myself, saith one, to the company I converse with, that I may not be reckoned morose, ill-natured, and unsociable; but become all things to all men."

Reply. You must know, if you be religious at all, you must not be neuters in religion: you must be either hot or cold; either wholly for God, or wholly for Baal. Where courtesy will not comply with religion, and yield to it, it becomes cruelty to the soul. To comply with a course of idleness and vanity, out of a pretence of good nature and sociableness, is to bewray the want of a new nature, and of sweet fellowship with Christ. It is true, civil society is no where forbidden, unless it degenerate into levity, vanity, idleness, chambering, and wantonness; but intimate society with those that have no fear of God, no smell of religion, or of Christ, in their words and actions, can never be justified, whatever shift or plea be made use of for that end.

Plea 2. "Why, saith another, I must conform myself to, and join with such a drunken company, sometimes; for they are my customers, with whom I buy and sell, and on whom my livelihood depends: and, I hope, it is not unlawful for me to go and drink with them."

Reply. Though I said before, that non-conformity to the world doth not exclude traffic and merchandise; yet I shall add here, that though it be not unlawful, but necessary, on many accounts, both

to drink and eat with moderation, and to trade and traffic with honesty ; yet, I hope, none will thence infer, that it is lawful either to make unnecessary society with the wicked, or drunkenness a part of their trade. Your livelihood doth not depend upon these, but upon the providence of God : it is his blessing that maketh rich : and the Lord needs no sinful shift of ours, to supply his course of providence. As Christ saith, " Which of you, by taking thought, can add a cubit to his stature ? " Matth. vi. 27. ; so, who can add a penny to his estate by drunkenness, or conformity to drunkards ? yea, though he should gain the whole world, you lose more than you gain, by every sinful compliance ; for, " What is a man profited, though he should gain the whole world, if he lose his soul ? " Matth. xiv. 26. He makes a dangerous adventure that hazards his precious soul to gain the trifles of a perishing world.

Plea 3. " Why, saith a third, may not I associate with the wicked, that I may reclaim them ; for so did Christ ? "

Reply. Christ's office was a physician to save and heal diseased sinners. Take heed it be not zeal in you, but presumption : be sure of a call.—And again, Christ could not be infected with any man's vice : if you had such a preservative, then you might go in peace through the midst of plagues.—Indeed, the nature of grace is to diffuse itself, and communicate good to others : yet many, who make this their pretence, to convince or convert others, do not consider the deceitfulness of their own hearts, and what sinful by-ends they are led by, even under this colour. But, indeed, if a man had a clear call to join in, for a while, with a company of vain persons, and to sit with them, which the Psalmist owns he shunned, saying, " I have not sat with vain persons ; " I say, though a man had the clearest call to join company with such, he had need to do as the physicians, when they go into an infected place, they arm themselves with some antidotes ; so should we do, if we go into such company ; we have need to be armed with faith, and prayer, and holy resolution, and heavenly wisdom, such as may work more strongly than the plague of sin and subtilty of Satan, which we are to encounter with.

Plea 4. " Some will plead the violence of importunity ; such a company doth urge and press me ; and if I refuse to join with them, they will scoff and scorn me. "

Reply. If you can never resist a temptation to sin, you have no evidence of being a child of God : but by resisting such assaults as

these, providence gives you an occasion both of opposing sin in yourselves, by your refusal; and of destroying it in others, by your example. If they scoff and scorn, do you pity; and bless the Lord that hath given you better counsel, than to run with them into the same excess of riot. The more they show themselves to be scoffers and scorers of religion and grace, the more they are to be resisted, with this meditation, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful," Psalm i. 1. Make not their violent importunity your excuse: for when they call you one way, and Christ calls you another, you need not be at a loss to know what hand to turn to. They say, "Come with us," Prov. i. 11. Christ saith "Come with me," Song iv. 8. And, "whether is it better to obey God or man, judge ye," Acts iv. 18. When they are saying, Follow us; remember that Christ is saying, "Follow me: and, "The grace of God that bringeth salvation, teacheth us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world," Titus ii. 11, 12.—But I proceed to another use from the doctrine.

USE 3. This doctrine may be applied for trial and examination. You may try your state by this doctrine, whether you be conformed to the world or not.

QUEST. How shall I know whether I be conformed to the world or not.

ANS. You may know it these three ways. 1. By your state and condition. 2. By your frame and disposition. 3. By your life and conversation.

[1.] You may know whether or not you be conformed to the world, by your state and condition. If you be not conformed to the world, then your state is such as that word describes: "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world," John xvii. 16. And if it be still inquired by any, How shall I know if my state be so changed, that I am not of this world? We may reply to this as follows; If you be not of this world, let me ask you, How came you out of it? There are three things which contribute to bring a person out of this world; see if you know these. Were you ever brought out of this world, 1. By regeneration: 2. By consent: 3. By compulsion and force.

1. Were you ever brought out of this world by regeneration, or the new-birth. If you be not of this world then you are born

again ; hence we have that expression, "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh ; and that which is born of the spirit, is spirit." If you have been born of God, then you are not of this world : If never born of God, then you are of the world, and conformed to it. If you never knew any other birth yet, but the natural birth, the sinful birth ; you are yet of this world. By generation, we are of the world ; but by regeneration, we come to be not of this world, John i. 13. "Of his own will begat he us, with the word of truth," James i. 18. If you have been regenerate, God himself hath been the efficient cause ; you could never effectuate it by the power of nature. The will of God hath been the impulsive cause ; "For it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." The word of truth hath been the instrumental cause. Try then if ever, by the means of the word, the power of God hath been put forth, for making you a new creature, and bringing you to a new world.

2. By consent also is a man brought out of this world : For, in the day of God's power, the man is made willing to forsake the world, and all the vanities thereof ; to forget his own people, and his father's house ; to look upon this world as not his home, and upon himself as a stranger and pilgrim in it ; and to desire a better country, that is, an heavenly : he is made to look for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. He is dead to the world, and the world is dead to him : as we bury dead things out of our sight : so he is content to be rid of the world, and the world is content to be rid of him : he cares not for the world, and the world cares not for him.

3. By force ; 1 John iv. 1. "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them : because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." If you ask then, how they come to be not of this world ? It is even by force they overcome the world : and that partly by the price of his blood, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, and so we overcome by the blood of the Lamb : partly by the power of his spirit ; they receive not the spirit which is of this world, but the spirit which is of God, which is a spirit of power, as well as of love, and a sound mind ; and stronger is the spirit that is in them, than the spirit that is in the world. They overcome, not by might nor power, but by his spirit, breaking the power of sin in them, and mortifying the love of the world in them ; and making them count

all things but loss and dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.—Thus a man comes to be not of this world; and so you may try your non-conformity to the world by your state, viz. your being not of this world. For, if you be not of this world, then you are not conformed to it.

But, on the other hand, if you be of this world, then you are conformed to it. And there are three ways that discover people to be of this world.

(1.) They that are of this world, could be satisfied to live for ever in this world: and would care for no other heaven, no other Paradise, but the pleasures, profits, and honours of this world. Look into your heart and thoughts, man: if you be content with this world for your portion; if you could possibly live and enjoy it for ever: if you could be satisfied therewith, and desire no other heaven, it is an evidence you are of this world.

(2.) They that are of this world, look upon the comforts of this world as realities; but upon the promises of God's covenant as fancies. And hence they dote upon the things of this world, and take pleasure in them; but dare not trust God with his promise, nor take comfort therein.

(3.) They that are of this world, they look upon men as happy or miserable, according to the things they enjoy of this world: yea, though they see them to be wicked men: yet if they enjoy the outward things of this world, they judge them to be happy. Is it thus that you judge? It is an evidence that you are of this world; and consequently are conformed to the world.

(4.) Try whether or not you be conformed to the world by your frame and disposition. If you be not conformed to the world, then your affections will be habitually set upon things that are above: but if you be conformed to the world, then your affections will be habitually set on things below; and so you mind earthly things. Here I will offer you a few marks of a person who minds earthly things, and consequently is conformed to the world,

1. When a man looks upon earthly things as the most beautiful and eminent things, that is an evidence that he minds earthly things, and consequently is conformed to this world. The heavenly-disposed man looks upon celestial things to be the most beautiful and eminent.

2. When a man's greatest thoughts are busied about earthly things, it is an evidence that he is a worldly man. A man may

know himself better by his thoughts, than his words and actions : for the thoughts are immediately from the heart : even as we may know better what the fountain is, by the immediate bullering of it near the spring than by the streams afar off : “ For, as he thinketh in his heart, so is he,” Prov. xxiii. 7. A man is as he thinketh in his heart, when earthly thoughts are sweetest. I speak not of those thoughts which a person, through weakness or temptation, may be subject unto ; but of those which are sweetest unto the soul ; such as are the habitual delight of his heart.

3. The man minds earthly things, whose heart cleaves to the earth. Discourse to such a man never so much of the vanity of this earth, he may give you a hearing but his heart still cleaves to the earth : talk to him never so much of the glory of heaven, and the happiness of the saints : yet still his heart cleaves to the earth : yea, he himself may comment and flourish in his discourse, concerning the vanity of all things in the world ; and yet still his heart cleaves to the earth.

4. The earthly-minded man is filled with distracting cares about the things of this earth. If he be disappointed as to these things, he looks upon himself as undone : God, and Christ, and the promises, none of them can give him any contentment or comfort, if his idols on the earth be removed : if he miscarries there, he is undone : “ They have taken away my gods, and what have I more ?” His greatest business, and strongest endeavours, are the adequate object of his earthly mind ; they take up the whole strength of his soul.

5. In a word, an earthly man passes through many difficulties, about earthly things, and is never weary, because he is in his element ; he is like the fish in the sea. A man is soon weary of swimming in the water, because it is not his element ; but the fish is not weary, because it is its element. An earthly man is quickly weary of spiritual duties : whereas a spiritual man calls the Sabbath his delight. An earthly man will not go through with his work, because his heart and mind is elsewhere. If you mind earthly things at this rate, as I have shewn, it is a shrewd evidence of a worldly frame ; and this worldly frame and disposition is an evidence of conformity to the world.

(3.) You may know whether you be conformed to the world or not, by your life and conversation, by your words and actions. They that are of the world, they speak of the world, they deal with

the world, their whole conversation smells of the world; "They savour not the things that are of God, but the things that are of the world." Worldly discourse goes best away with them: worldly converse is their pleasure; worldly wisdom is their disposition; and worldly company is their delight: but their delight is not in the saints, the excellent ones of the earth. And, indeed, those that can take pleasure in vain, wicked, light, and lewd company, but never affected fellowship with the saints, nor company with the godly, about soul-matters, they discover their great conformity to the world, and their want of conformity to God and Christ.

USE 4. This doctrine may be improved for exhortation or dehortation, in the words of the text: O sirs, be not conformed to this world. Some sober heathens have sometimes expressed the greatest dislike to the vanity of this world. Socrates thought it one of the greatest torments of men, in another life, to be bound to commit those sins wherein they most delighted in this life. Seneca said of himself, "I am too great, and born to greater things, than that I should be a slave to my body." And Tully thought him not worthy the name of a man, that could spend a whole day in carnal pleasure. And surely they do not deserve the name of Christians, who spend a whole day in worldly carnal pleasure and recreation. How will those heathens rise up in judgment against us, if we live in conformity to the world!

In order to enforce the exhortation, we adduce the following motives. Consider, that conformity to the world is adultery, idolatry, enmity, and contrariety to the power of religion.

1. It is adultery, spiritual adultery. If a man's heart goes after another woman, more than his wife; or a woman's heart more after another man than her husband, it is adultery: so, if our heart go a whoring after any thing in the world, more than our Maker, who is our husband, it is spiritual adultery.

2. It is idolatry. As covetousness is called idolatry; so, conformity to the world, is worshipping of idols. If a man should carnally affect a queen, or an empress, though the most beautiful woman in the world, instead of his own wife, it is a great sin: but if he forsake a queen, a most beautiful person for a dung-hill raker, a nasty scullion, it were a greater evil: so here, to forsake him who is altogether lovely, for the empty things of the world, Oh! what an evil is it! It is to depart from the fountain of living waters, and hew out to ourselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

4. It is enmity; for "The carnal mind is enmity against God:" the carnal man is enmity against God; and to embrace a carnal company is to embrace God's enemies, and those that are enemies to all spiritual good.

4. It is a contrariety to the power of godliness. Grace and godliness tend to alienate and disengage the heart from the world, and from all things under God: but this conformity to the world is directly contrary to this end. And, indeed, let a man have the sweetest and most awful impressions made upon his heart by the word, and let him go straight into a carnal company: behold! how quickly will his impression be removed, and conviction stifled thereby!

We shall now conclude the subject with a few directions; and we shall just name them in so many words.

1. Seek to be regenerated and born of God; born from above: for, he that is born of God is not conformed to the world; but is transformed by the renewing of his mind.

2. Seek the Spirit to bring you by force out of this world; and to conquer the world for you. But concerning both these, we spoke at some length on the use of trial: and shall now pass them.

3. Be aware of wicked company: and let your delight be in the saints, the excellent ones of the earth; and this, by the blessing of God, will be a mighty preservative from being conformed to the sinful courses and practices of the wicked world.

4. Be restless till you attain conformity to the Lord Jesus Christ; and, in order thereto, seek discoveries of his glory, that, beholding it you may be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, 2 Cor. iii. 18. There is a smitting favour in the face of Christ; they who see him cannot but be like him, and desire to be like him: so it is with those about the throne; "They shall be like him, for they shall see him as he is." Conformity to Christ is the best cure of conformity to the world: for it makes the man to count all things but loss and dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ.

SERMON XVIII.¹

PREVENTING LOVE; OR, GOD'S LOVE TO US THE CAUSE OF OUR
LOVE TO HIM.

1 JOHN iv. 19.—“ We love him because he first loved us.”

THE great design of the gospel, gospel ordinances, and sacraments, is to commend the love of God in Christ. The sacrament of the supper is a love-feast; and they that have their senses spiritually exercised therein, will find readily all their senses filled with love. What do they hear, but love! What do they see, but love! What do they taste, but love! What do they feel, but love! What do they smell, but love!—It is a sweet account we have of God, ver. 16. “ Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.” O happy they that have so learnt the gospel-catechism, from their experience, as to be able to answer to that question, What is God? and to say, “ God is love!” He is essential, boundless, bottomless, infinite love. It is true, if we look to him in the glass of the law, we will see him to be all wrath; a consuming fire out of Christ; but look to him in the glass of the gospel, and you will see him all love; a God in Christ reconciling the world to himself; and the sight thereof produces love; for, “ We love him, because he first loved us.”

The text gives us a short account of the whole business betwixt God and a believer; they love one another. Here is love descending, God in Christ loving his saints; and here is love ascending, the saints in Christ loving God; and the former begetting the latter. When love hath descended from heaven to earth, it hath finished the half of its course; but when it ascends from earth to heaven again, then the circle is completed.

Here is, 1. A description of God's love; he loved us first. 2. A description of our love to God; we love him for this cause. And,

1. We have God's love described; “ He FIRST loved “ us.” If we were to make a critical division, we might notice how it is

(1) This Sermon was preached after the administration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper at Portmoak, June 3rd, 1723.

described. 1. In the act, loved. O wonder that ever the heart of God should have acted that way towards any sinner of Adam's race. 2. The subject loving; "He loved;" O! a glorious He, the infinitely holy and just God. 3. The object loved; "He loved Us;" poor wretched apostate Us. 4. The quality of this love; He loved us, and first loved us: intimating, both that it is an ancient love, for it is in the preterite time, He loved; yea, loved from eternity: and also that it is antecedent love; "He FIRST loved us," before we had a being, before we were capable to love him; yea, while we were yet enemies.

2. We have the saints' love described; "We love him, because he loved us;" which is also described in these four: 1. The act, Love; and indeed this love of ours is but a drop of the ocean of his love. 2. The subject loving, We; we believers, we that got a taste of his love. 3. The object beloved, Him; we love Him, who deserves our love above all things in heaven and earth. 4. The rise and source of this love of ours, "We love him, because he first loved us;" his love is the incentive and productive cause of our love. But I refer the further explication of the text to the prosecution of a doctrine. Many things might here be observed: As,

1st, None can truly love God, but such as are beloved of him. Many speak of the love of God, as if it were natural to them: but as true love is a spark of heavenly fire: so there is no love natural to man but the love of sin.

2dly, That God hath a people in the world that love him. There is in God a common love, whereby he loved the whole world; and a special love, whereby he loves the saints: and so there is in the saints a common love, by which they love all God's creatures; and a peculiar love that belongs to God only, whom they prize above all other things.

3dly, That divine love works freely. God does not trade with us upon any terms, conditions, or valuable considerations in and about us. We can neither buy heaven nor beg it; it must be given. Let not the greatest civilian presume; let not the greatest prodigal despair: God's love is first on the field.

4thly, That as God and his saints love one another, so the reason of saints' loving God, is God's loving them: there is no reason of God's love, but because he loves. But there is reason enough for our love, because HE loved us. The believer loves God upon God's account, and for good reason; God loves us without

any reason, or any cause from without himself; but we have all the reason in the world, why we should love God. Many say, they love Christ, but they have not any reason for it; they that love him know why they do so. There are three things create love, viz., Beauty, interest, love. 1. Beauty; and O, but Christ is white and ruddy, and altogether lovely. 2. Interest; the more a man sees Christ to be his own, the more he loves him. 3. Love; the love of God is the great parent of love; it begets love; "We love him because he first loved us."—But having taken this short view of the text, the doctrine I fix upon is this.

OBSERV. God's love to the people is the source of their love to him. Their love is influenced by the faith of his love; his love is the cause of theirs; "We love him, because he first loved us."

Now the general method that seems most native is,

I. To speak of God's love to his people.

II. Of the saints' love to God.

III. The influence his love hath upon theirs as the cause of it

IV. Apply the whole in sundry uses.

I. To speak of God's love to his people: and indeed, to speak of it is to speak of that which is unspeakable and inconceivable, for it passeth knowledge; only we may notice a few things that the scripture says of this love. I would offer some remarks concerning this love of God; and then shew more particularly, the import of this expression, "He first loved us."

1st, I would offer some remarks concerning the love of God.

Remark 1. That the fountain of this love is God the Father. Love begins in order of nature with the Father: hence, says Christ. "I will not say, that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you," John xvi. 26. Christ prays for all the fruits and emanations of the Father's love to his people; but not for the Father's love itself. You mistake greatly, sirs, if you do not think that Christ doth purchase and pray for the Father's love to his people; nay, it was the Father's love that sent Christ to purchase all the fruits and communications of his love. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son." The love of God cannot be purchased; there is no need of any mediation here;" I will not say, that I will pray the Father, in this respect, for the Father loves you." Here is the fountain of the love. But,

Remark 2. That the channel through which the love of God does run from this fountain, is the LORD JESUS CHRIST. God's love does not vent itself towards any sinner, to the disparagement of his infinite holiness and justice ; and therefore it vents and flows in and through Christ, " Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, for the remission of sins that are past," Romans iii. 23. God hath taken a marvellous way to manifest his love : when he would shew his power, he makes a world ; when he would shew his wisdom, he puts it in a frame and from that discovered vast wisdom ; when we would manifest the grandeur and glory of his name more, he makes a heaven, and puts angels, arch-angels, principalities, and powers therein and when he will manifest love, what will he not do ? It is a pity we should deny this love ; because God hath taken such a great and mysterious way of manifesting it in Christ ; his death, his blood, his righteousness ; here is the channel.

Remark 3. The streams of divine love that flow from this fountain, in this channel, are vastly great ; viz., pardon, peace, safety, adoption, justification, sanctification, audience of prayer, a blessing on all providences, and everlasting triumph in heaven. I cannot enlarge upon these, or any other of the streams that flow from this love of God ; the streams are so many, so great, that we should lose ourselves there, as well as in the fountain, if we were to dive thereinto ; only we are blessed in Christ with all spiritual blessings ; and this love of God, and all the fruits of it, is to be enjoyed in the fellowship of the Spirit, 2 Cor. xiii. 13. ; where we read of the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Spirit ; where Christ is first mentioned, because he is next to us, as being the channel through which the love of God is vented ; and this love of God, and grace of Christ, is enjoyed in the communion and fellowship of the Holy Ghost : and that this love is from the Father, as the fountain ; in the Son, as the channel ; by the Holy Ghost, as the immediate conveyance.

Remark 4. The vessels into which these streams are vented, or this love is poured, are sinners ; even to them it is declared that he is the Lord, " The Lord God merciful and gracious, pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin ;" and that " God is love." This motto, that " God is love," is inscribed on the gates of heaven ; and none will think strange of that, because the love of God, in bringing any sinner of Adam's race there, is manifested to the highest. But

we would think strange, if one should say, that this is even the inscription written upon the gates of hell, that "God is love," why? his love to himself, and his own justice, is manifested there; yea, not only so, but millions are damned, because they slight redeeming love; and their conscience galls them, for contemning all the offers of love. But that which concerns us especially, is, that we may read this inscription daily upon the beautiful gate of the temple: I mean, in gospel ordinances, that "God is love:" for therein he manifests his love to sinners, even to sinners of Adam's family, in the general dispensation of the gospel: and particularly to the vessels of mercy, in the especial operation of the Spirit upon them in the fulness of time: wherein he hath designed to pour out his Spirit, and so to pour out his love. But to omit many things here, I come,

2dly, To shew the particular import of this expression, "He first loved us." And,

1. It says, That his love is eternal love, and from everlasting: "He first loved us. I have loved thee with an everlasting love," Jer. xiii. 3.: as it is to everlasting, so it is from everlasting: and it will never have an end, so it never had a beginning, but it is as ancient as the eternal God is. O! what an amazing thought is this, that God should have the thoughts of love towards any poor sinners, like you and me, from the beginning of his Being, which is without a beginning!—But, to prevent mistakes, you would know that the love of God is twofold: his love of destination, and his love of approbation: his love of destination and purpose, whereby he is said to have chosen us in Christ, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy: "Having predestinated us to the adoption of children," Eph. i. 4. 5: and this love he is said to manifest even before a man's conversion, 1 John iv. 19. "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved him, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sin."—Again, there is his love of approbation and friendship: such as that spoken of, John xiv. 23. "If a man love me, and keep my words, my Father will love him; and we will come to him, and make our abode with him." Now, the object of the former love, to wit, the love of destination, is every elect soul, and that from all eternity, as well as in time even before their conversion and union to Christ; the object of the latter, to wit, his love of approbation and friendship, is every believer

united to Christ, to whom he begins to manifest his everlasting love personally ; for, though he loved and approved of them from eternity in Christ, yet they cannot be said to be actually loved and approved in their own persons, till once their persons are united to Christ. Though God's love be everlasting and immutable as himself is, yet there is a time wherein he begins to manifest his love : there is no variation or shadow of turning in God's love ; all the change is in the person beloved, not in God. It is mere blasphemy to say, that God begins to love them whom before he hated, in a proper and strict sense. It is true, the elect are children of wrath, even as others, by nature, whatever they are by divine destination, being ever the object of God's love in this sense ; yet in some sense, he begins to love them, in respect of the manifesting of his love to them, and the outletting of his love upon them ; while his love is taken, not so much for his immanent act, as for his transient act, not for any thing in himself, but for what flows from him to them ; the love that is in himself is still the same, but the acts of love that flow forth to them, these begin to appear, when he manifests himself to them, as he does not to the world ; when he comes to them for their salvation, and reveals his Son in them : and here also he is still beforehand with them : " He first loved us."

2. " He first loved us ;" it says, that his love is antecedent love ; as it is first in point of time, yea, from all eternity, so it is first in point of order of time. We cannot manifest our love to him, till first he manifest his love to us. Men may feign love to God and Christ, before they know any thing of God's love in Christ towards them, but they truly have no love to him ; even the elect themselves have no love to him by nature, they are enemies, and without God, and without Christ in the world ; buried in the grave of sin and corruption even as others ; dead in trespasses and sins, and slaves to divers lusts ; the devil dwelling in them, working in them, reigning in them, as a man dwells in his house, or works in his shop, or reigns upon his throne ; they have no more acquaintance with him, or love to him, than others, till by grace they be regenerated, and made to come to God in Christ, and be raised up to a new and lively hope. Common favours indeed, they may have, and God is always sure to notice his elect, and to have a care of them ; and many remarkable deliverances will they meet with, even while unconverted. You will find few grácious persons but they will have even good things to tell of the Lord's kindness to them in their youth ; but yet love and hatred cannot be known by these

things that are seen ; for bad men have had the like deliverances, and manifold common mercies, and common grace perhaps also : but all this while they are strangers to true love to God, till once some rays of his everlasting love go before them, and make way for the breaking of their enmity, and engaging them to love him.

3. "He first loved us:" It says, that his love is absolutely free love. If he first loved us, before we had any love to him, or loveliness in us, O how free is it ! His love is free in several respects. It is free love in that it is without force or constraint ; we must even put ourselves in his reverence, and not think to compel God, as if he could be obliged to do it : nay, if we get any thing, we must be in grace's debt, and lie at grace's door, as poor beggars, for an alms for Christ's sake.—It is free love in that it is without reluctance : it is with all his heart. There are some objects come to our door, and though we give them alms, yet it is with some reluctance : we are not so free-hearted towards them as to others whom we have a kindness for ; these we will give to, with all our heart : we give them with as much pleasure as if we were getting to ourselves ; so God's special gifts are given with all his heart ; he takes pleasure in giving ; he delights in shewing mercy.—It is free love, in that it is without merit and motive ; his love is neither desired nor deserved, and yet he loves : "I will love them freely:" I will do it undeservedly, even while they deserve to be thrust down to the lowest hell ; "Not for your sakes do I this, be it known unto you." It is free love, in that it is without price ; he seeks nothing for what he gives, he takes nothing for it ; nay, he deals with us as poor beggars that have nothing to offer for what he gives, and nothing wherewith to recompence his kindness, after he hath given.—It is free, in opposition to all proper terms and conditions. Papists tell us of the merit of congruity, and the merit of condignity ; and many ignorant Protestants think they do enough, when they exclude the word merit, but in the room of merit they bring in a world of conditions ; and tell us, upon condition you do so and so, then God will do this and that to you ; telling us, God hath made a covenant with us, not like the covenant of works, but upon easier terms, requiring only some little things accommodated to our weakness : "It cannot be called merit, say they, for there is no proportion betwixt what we do and what we get ; it is, say they, but as if one should hold out a penny, and get a kingdom for it." Many such subtile reasonings of men there are, that tend to exalt self, and self-righteousness, which would

all vanish before the light of this very text, if viewed in a spiritual and evangelical manner. "He first loved us."

4. "He first loved us;" it says, that his love is a preventing love; it prevents our love, and all the good that can be about us; for he prevents with the blessings of his goodness. I might here illustrate this by shewing, 1. The object of his love, whom he prevents. 2. The time of his love when he prevents them. 3. The dawning of his love upon them, whereby he prevents them. 4. The fruits and effects of his love in them, wherein he prevents them.

(1.) The object of his love whom he prevents. If we view whom he loves, we cannot but see it to be preventing love. The love of God lighted upon fallen men, not fallen angels, though much more noble and spiritual beings; and why? even because he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy: his love falleth upon the poor, foolish, weak nothings of this world for ordinary; not upon the wise, noble, and mighty; not many such are called; he reveals these things to babes, not to the wise and prudent of the world. We must not think, that outward things, such as wisdom and learning, and worldly advantages, move God to set his love upon any; "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight:" Yea, his love vents ordinarily upon the most stubborn and rebellious sinners in the world, more than upon the most civil and moral persons, that had led a better life than the generality of their neighbours; who have had more of the righteousness of the law than other people; who have been better-natured, in respect of their pleasant natural disposition, than others; and who have had a liberal education, so as to be trained up, not only in manifold arts and sciences, but in manifold religious duties from their childhood. Grace many times passes by such persons as these, and falls upon more knobby, rugged persons. The young man in the gospel may be put to say, "All these things have I done from my youth up," and yet go away from Christ, when a bloody Manasses, and persecuting Paul, are received into favour and mercy. In a word, whomsoever he makes the object of his manifested love in time, they are persons unworthy of his love: they are full of enmity against him, and bent to backsliding from him, and wofully averse from returning to him. That God should love sinners, and great sinners, O what preventing love is it!

(2.) The Time of his love, when he prevents them, does also illustrate this. Many a time he makes his grace to reach them, not when they are in their best frame or mood; but behold a Paul

going to Damascus, with the knife in his hand, ready to cut the throats of the saints: grace out-runs him, seizes him, lays hold upon him, and the love of a God in Christ overcomes him; he is made Christ's prisoner, vanquished, and brought to subjection. I do not say, that it always holds, that a person gets the revelation of grace, when going on in sin, but the first efflux of grace, towards them in many times, when in a very bad case: the Lord arrests them, many times, when they have been about some wicked act of sin: the Lord will fall in at such a time upon their conscience, fill them with terror, and humble them under his mighty hand; and never leave them till he hath quickened them, and made them live; "When thou wast in thy blood, I said unto thee, Live." But what need we say more concerning the time of his love, to show the preventing nature of it, than what God himself says, Rom. ix. 11, "Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated; the children being not yet born, neither having done good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth?" Before the man was born, or had done either good or evil, behold he is an object of divine love; "Jacob have I loved."

(3.) The dawning of his love upon them, whereby he prevents them, may further illustrate this, That he first loved us. By this Dawning of his love, I understand, not only the love and grace that is objectively displayed in the glorious gospel; but especially in the first glimmering of the subjective light, or the dawning of the day of power, wherein the person is made willing when the gospel comes, not in word only, but in power; when he girds his sword upon his thigh, even his glory and his majesty, as that word may be read, Psal. xlv. 3., for the display of the glory of his grace and love, is the sword whereby he subdues and conquers his enemies; and till this will-conquering day of power take place, what is in the will but impotence and insufficiency, to think any thing as of ourselves? and not only impotency, but aversion from everything that is good; and not only aversion, but opposition and contrariety to the holy nature and will of God: "The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." This Dawning then of the day of power, to make them willing, must take place before there can be any gracious motion in the soul towards God; for all the legal conviction and humiliation that goes before this, works only from a principle of self-love, and self-preservation, till this great master-faculty of the soul, the will being conquered, carry the rest of the faculties of the soul towards God.

(4.) The fruits and effects of his love in them, wherein he prevents them. And here I will tell you some of these things that his love prevents, in regard that they are fruits of his love. And,

1. His love prevents our holiness ; for that is a fruit of his love. I hope you know that sanctification and holiness is a work of God's free grace, and so an effect of his free love : and yet, I fear, you bewray your ignorance of the gospel in thinking, O must I not be holy before ever God love me ? Must not a man be somewhat holy, and therefore God will love him, and give him more ? O great ignorance to think so : " What hast thou but what thou hast received ? " Is not the very first beginning of holiness from God ? Is it not he that infuses the habit of grace, and takes away the heart of stone, and gives the heart of flesh : and so his love prevents our habitual holiness, and also our actual holiness, and all our good works ? Surely you may know this ; for you have learned to say, that as it is by his free grace, that we are renewed in the whole man, after the image of God, so it is by the same free grace that we are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness. If any good work, truly good, be wrought by you, is it not the fruit of God's creating power ? " For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, unto good works."

2. His love prevents our faith ; for that is a fruit of his love. You will say, it is true, he must make us holy, but must we not come to him for it ? Is it not upon condition that we believe, that he loves us, and saves us ! My dear friends whence is it that we get faith ? If ever we have any true faith, is it upon the account of foreseen faith that God loves any man ? that is rank Arminianism. Is it because we had faith before ? O ! does faith come out of our own shop ? Or, is it spun out of our own bowels, and forged upon our anvil ? Can we bring faith out of our own head or heart ? Can dry bones live, or raise themselves out of the grave ? Nay, it is as impossible for us to believe, and raise ourselves up to the life of faith, as it is for a carcase of clay to put life in itself ; nay, is not faith the gift of God ? Is not Christ the author and finisher of faith ? Who says, " When I am lifted up, I will draw all men to me ? " It requires the same power that raised Christ from the dead. O then ! Let not your imagination in this matter cross the very first principles of religion, so as to think that your faith, if you have any, is the cause of God's love, while his love is the cause of your faith, " He first loved us."

3. His love prevents our repentance : for that is a fruit of his love : Why, say you, must we must not repent and reform, before God set his love upon us ? And ought we not, by the exercise of our common gifts and abilities that God hath given us, to work up ourselves to something of this, in order to our obtaining the favour of God ? Alas, for such ignorance, and such a gospel-darkening religion, as is like to come in fashion in this generation ! O ! is not repentance as much the gift of God, and fruit of his love, as any other graces and fruits of the Spirit ? Acts v. 31, " Christ is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, by the right-hand of God, to give repentance to Israel, as well as remission of sin." We have a great deal of noise made about the necessity of gospel-repentance before, and in order to justification, and that even as a condition and qualification : here is indeed a new scheme of divinity, of which there is no foundation in our standards of doctrine. It is true, repentance is so necessary that none can expect pardon without it ; and so say I, holiness and sanctification are so necessary that none can expect pardon without them : but is therefore holiness and sanctification necessary in order to justification ? I think it is hard to maintain this without running to Rome, and making sanctification before justification, and in order to it ; for if actual gospel-repentance be not a part of sanctification, I know not what it is ; yea, as described in our Catechism, it comprehends the whole of sanctification.—But to return ; why, may one say, may we not repent of our sins, in some measure, and reform our lives, and humble ourselves, and mourn ? At least, can we not shed a tear ? Can we not leave off our tippling, and quit our lusts, and think upon death, judgment, and eternity, so as by the meditation of these we shall get ourselves wrought up to a strong and strange mortification to all things in the world : yea, become as eminent in this as any saint in all the country, for all their boasting ? Well, much good may your repentance do you ; and would to God that you were doing more than you do. But I would have you suspect your repentance : yea, I tell you assuredly, that even by the utmost use of the highest common gifts and graces, you cannot repent ; and, when you have brought yourself, by these means, to the greatest measure of legal repentance, yet there is no promise in all the Bible to that repentance ; " For all the promises are yea and amen, in Christ Jesus : " and, till you get in to Christ, by a faith of his operation, your common legal repentance is a sinful repentance ; " For whatsoever is not of faith, is

sin;" and so it is a god-displeasing repentance; "For, without faith, it is impossible to please God." In a word, your repentance, which you so much magnify in your heart, for I suppose you are not so destitute of sense as to speak thus before the world; this repentance, I say, is so far from disposing you for Christ, that it tends effectually to make you oppose Christ; why, you find heart-melting and mourning, tears and sorrows, great flashes and love-floods of affection, and then you think all is right; you see no more need of Christ, and come short of him, instead of being drawn into him. "A man in this case," as one fitly expresses it, "is like one that comes to court a lady; but, having got a sight of the handmaid, he falls in love with her, courts her, and marries her, who yet was but the person who should have led him to the lady he was proposing to match with: so here, Christ is the match, the law and duties thereof are the handmaid; well, thou falls to duties, sorrowing for sin, and the like: you have fallen in love with that, and seek no further." Why, you will say, by this means you would have no preparatory work at all. It seems, by this doctrine, say you, a man must come to Christ at the first leap, reeking out of his sins, before his life be reformed; nay, sirs, I must tell you, in the Lord's name, that the design of right preparatory work is to force you out of your feigned repentance and reformation, and out of your false hopes and confidence, and to sweep away your refuge of lies: and if ever God prepare you for Christ, he will bring you to say, "O, I cannot repent, I cannot reform, I cannot mourn; and give me a world, I cannot command a hearty sigh, or a sob for sin; I can do nothing I am hard like a stone, and black like a devil; and unless Christ help, I am utterly and eternally undone." And this tends to give the soul a great demonstration of the freedom of his love, that it prevents our repentance: "He first loved us."

4. His love prevents our prayers; for that is also a fruit of his love. You will say, though we cannot attain to be holy, and cannot believe and repent, yet we must pray, and seek, or else we cannot get his favour and love. Wo is me that people should have such dark and dangerous notions of the method of salvation! Pray, whence comes your prayers, if they be worth the name of prayers? Do they not come from heaven, and from the Spirit of grace and supplication? If you have any desires that are worth the naming, they come from above: and if they come wholly out of your heart, or head, they are not worth; yea, whatever desire you have out of

Christ, and whatever prayer is not put up on this altar, the name of Christ Jesus, and by the help of the Spirit of Christ, there is no promise made to it: for, however, several promises are made to God's ordinances and institutions, which oblige you to be about his hand in the use of means; yet no promise is made to your performance out of Christ. Expect then no favour for, or upon the account of your duties; for if that be your way of doing, you need to pray that God may force you out of your prayers. Let none think now that I am discouraging any from the use of means, and the performance of duties; nay, I take witness, that, in God's name, I call you to the use thereof: and declare you are obliged thereto by the command and authority of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. But, in the same name, I call you to the right use of the means, the Gospel use of the means; for that legal notion of praying and seeking, that I find for ordinary among people, as if their seeking would prevent God's love, and procure his favour, is derogatory to the goodness of God; and hath a tendency to make a Christ of their prayers, yea, more than a Christ; in regard it would be ascribing a casuality to our prayers, which is not even done to the merits of Christ in this matter: for, as I said before, the love of God in itself, cannot be procured: Christ himself did not procure it; for God's love prevented Christ's mission, and sent him to procure all that he did procure and purchase: and therefore, if you think your prayers will purchase God's love, you make more than a Christ of your prayers; and they are offensive to God, dishonouring to Christ, and prejudicial to your own souls. The saints themselves know that it is not by their duties that they obtain his love; but in duty sometimes they get a sense of his love. Why, nay some say, we need pray none at all, if we get no good by our prayers. Really, man, these prayers of yours, which you make your righteousness, and for which you expect to be loved, and justified, and saved, they are the most abominable to God, and unprofitable to you in the world, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices? Therefore bring no more vain oblation; your incense is abomination to him; he cannot away with it, it is iniquity, even your solemn meeting," Isa. i. 11. 13. See Isaiah lxvi. 3. Therefore you have need to pray, that God would learn you the mystery of prayer; for you will never find it a pleasant, comfortable, and profitable exercise, while you set it before his love, as a cause of it; whereas it follows after his love, as a fruit of it. Hence all that ever prayed to pur-

pose, or wrestled with him for the blessing, have found that they could not pray, more than they could move the earth from its centre, until his grace prevented their prayers; and they can all set their seal to that word, Isa. lxv. 1. "I am found of them that sought me not." None ever sought him aright, till free grace sought them out, and found them in some respect.

Quest. But it is not said, Ezek. xxxvi. 37, "For these things will I be inquired of by the house of Israel?" True, betwixt gracious seeking and finding, there is a certain connexion; for gracious and spiritual seeking pre-supposes grace to seek, and that his love hath already prevented our prayers; and when he gives grace to seek, to be sure he will give more and more, not for our seeking, but for the sake of his promise in Christ Jesus, and upon his account. But if we understand that word as an encouragement to all, whether gracious or graceless persons, "For this will I be inquired of by the house of Israel," then the meaning is not, I will give you none of these things, viz., the new heart, the new spirit, there promised, and the Spirit to be put within you; I say, the meaning is not, I will give you none of these things, but for the sake of your prayers, and till your prayers produce them; nay, that exposition would be cross to the very context, which says, "Not for your sake do I this, O house of Israel; be it known to you, and be ashamed, and confounded for your own ways;" you may be ashamed of your prayers and duties, as well as your sins and iniquities; and therefore it is not for the sake of your persons or prayers either, be it known unto you; and therefore the meaning of the word is, that as all Israel hath a right of access to all these promises; and all poor sinners that hear tell of them, may come to a throne of grace, and plead for the accomplishment of them to themselves, in a way of free grace; so in the diligent use of all these means and ordinances of my appointment, they shall find that I will yield myself exorable and easy to be entreated; and so it is an encouragement to prayer, in expectation that God will confer the promised blessings, and not that our prayers will obtain them; and therefore the more that a man turns such a scripture to a covenant of works, as if he were upon terms with God, that upon condition that he pray and seek, God will give him the promised blessings; the more he does so, I say, the further is he from all these blessings; whereas the less hope and expectation that a poor soul hath from his prayers, he will always find, that he will come the more speed.

In a word, the prayer you speak of, man, is either, a natural or spiritual prayer; if it be a natural prayer, then, as the natural man is bound to pray, and yet hath nothing to expect, but of sovereign free grace, so there is no connection betwixt his prayer and the promise, unless we turn rank Arminians: If it be a spiritual prayer, then to be sure, the promise hath prevented his prayer; for to say that none of these promises are given, till a man pray in the Spirit for them, is cross to the whole current of scripture, and spiritual reason: for, how can a man pray in the Spirit, till that promise be accomplished in some measure upon him, "I will put my Spirit within you?" Thus his love prevents our prayers, it prevents our desires and endeavours; "He first loved us."—And so much shall suffice for the first general head.

II. The Second thing proposed was, to speak of believers' love to God and Christ; "We love him:" This is but a small stream that flows from, and runs again to the ocean of his love. We may take up this love of the saints towards God in the following considerations.

1. We may consider this love in its Nature. It is not a spark of natural kindling; it is not from natural reason or common grace, no; it is from the saving operation of the Holy Ghost, circumcising the heart to love God: the fruits of the Spirit are faith, love, and the rest of the graces: it is altogether supernatural; for the natural mind is enmity against God: we naturally hate God. Sirs, though the worst person in the world will say they do not hate God, yet they really do it; and their hatred appears in their aversion from him and his ways, their opposition to his commands and counsels, their contempt of his promises, and neglect of his salvation, and his Christ; for they will not come to him, that they might have life. It is God's prerogative to turn the heart from enmity to love, from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God: no man can turn himself, more than the Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard his spots, Jer. xiii. 23. Men, by their improvement of their natural faculties, and by common grace, which most part of men have something of, come to a sermon, and go to their knees, carry somewhat of morality and modesty, but they are not able to command themselves to love God: nay, duty is a burden; the word is a weariness to them; they are mad upon idols; they make the Lord to serve with their sin; and their duties to serve as a covering to their lusts; and make use of duty for this, that they may be looked upon as good men, and not Atheists; but let them

do their best, they cannot expel that cursed habit of enmity, nor introduce the contrary habit of love, till the power of God come along discovering the beauty and glory of Christ, and transforming the soul after the same image; for this love imports a saving knowledge of this glorious object beloved, a high esteem of the object thus known, a hearty choice of him whom we thus esteem, and a sweet recumbency in this choice. The understanding is made to see, the judgment to esteẽm, the will to chose, and the soul to acquiesce in him.—But these things I cannot enlarge upon.

2. We may consider this love in the kinds of it. And here I would speak only of two kinds in general, namely, a more common, and a more special love.

(1.) There is a more common love, which even hypocrites may have, and may have it as a fruit of God's Spirit in this common operation, while yet they are not renewed in the whole man. As they may have a temporary faith, so they may have a love proportioned to this. The seed of the world falls into the heart, as into stony ground, and it quickly springs up in some flashes of affection, and fair flourishes of a profession, so as they may seem, to themselves and others, to be among the best of Christians, while yet it is not any special work of God's Spirit, but a common gift and grace. The Lord designs to tame and civilize some, as well as to save and convert others. Now, this love, however great and vehement it may be in appearance, yet it is but a land-flood at the best: it hath not a spring; it is nourished as a pool of water, not as a well of water; the water which the Lord gives to his people, it is in them a well of water, springing up to everlasting life, John iv. 14. But the hypocrite's love is a returning to the Lord, but not with the whole heart. It is a love as is described in the Jews, "They served the Lord, and they served Ashtaroth:" To pacify their consciences, they will serve the Lord; but to satisfy their affections, they will serve their lusts: they never sell their ALL for the Pearl of great price; they never rest upon him as their present, only, and greatest good, nor find full satisfaction in him. They never come to that with it, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none in all the earth that I desire besides thee." There is something beside Christ that they desire; they have some esteem of him, when he smiles on them in his providences, when they get ease to their consciences; and, by their false hopes of heaven, apprehend matters to be well-enough with them. But when the Lord begins to frown,

and the course of his providence is turned, then their love is turned into hatred; and the hatred wherewith they hate him, is greater than the love wherewith they loved him. As John's hearers rejoiced in his light for a season, and but for a season; and Christ's hearers cried this day, Hosanna, and the next day Crucify him; and, as many people followed Christ for the loaves, because he fed them; so many still follow Christ, some for outward things, and because of his general merciful dispensations: yea, some for inward things: O, say they, ordinances are pleasant; it is a sweet thing to get a tear at a sermon, and to be ravished with something of the glory of heaven, and privileges of the saints: no doubt the joy with which the stony-ground hearers received the word, had its sweetness and pleasure, and thereupon their hearts are aloft, and they think they love Christ above all things; but yet their root is rottenness; they never truly come to Christ, to get rest to their hearts and consciences from the filth and guilt of sin. But,

(2.) There is a special love, whereby the whole soul is carried out towards the Lord, as the chief, present, and only good, and whereby the soul sees nothing in heaven or earth desirable in comparison of him; and that acts towards a present Christ, in rejoicing in him; and towards an absent Christ, by lamenting after him: it acts by cleaving to him, when they have the greatest temptations to go away, and it appears most when Christ threatens to depart; and it cleaves most to him, when many are departing from him; "To whom shall we go, thou hast the words of eternal life." It counts all but loss and dung for him: Christ gets the throne of their hearts, the cream of their affections, the very soul of their souls, their most vehement love; whatever other things they love, it is but in a subordination to him; whatever other things they rejoice in, he is their chief joy; "I will go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy," Psal. xliii. 4. Their joy in him exceeds the joy that they have in any thing else in a world.

We may consider this love in the degrees of it. I would not be for the breaking of a bruised reed, or quenching a smoking flax; my heart's desire is, that all that love Christ, even in the weakest degree, if it be a special love, may go away rejoicing in him; therefore I tell you of these four degrees of this love.

(1.) There is a love of desire after Christ, that is not yet arrived at a full complacency in him: "The desire of our soul is to thy name," says the Church. A poor creature may have a rooted

desire after Christ, that is not yet come the length of a rooted delight in him; because through unbelief they question their special interest in him: but, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled." If a gracious desire after Christ be rooted in the soul, there is true love. Yea, further, this desire hath several degrees also: sometimes the desire is like a smoking flax, hardly can one discern the spark of red fire, only they see smoke as a sign of fire; a smoking flax.—This desire may be strangely choked, sometimes through the prevalence of unbelief: even the children of God, that have sound and saving desires, may become so heartless, as that they have no boldness to come to the Lord, and express their desires; all they can say is, that there is something about the bottom of their heart of an earnest wish, that the Lord would come to them, when they cannot come to him: all they can say is, O, when will he come to me! or, when will he give me a visit! O, there is none in the world needs a visit. so much as I!—Sometimes their desires are more vivid and lively, more bright and shining, and break forth in ardent prayers and pantings of soul after him: "As the hart pants after the water-brooks, so pants my soul after thee, O God: my soul thirsts for God, for the living God. With my soul have I desired thee in the night, and with my spirit within me, will I seek thee early." Sometimes, again, their desires become so strong, as that the person is made to put on a resolution, as David did, "I will neither give sleep to mine eyes, nor slumber to mine eye-lids, till I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob. Lo, we heard of it at Ephrata, we found it in the fields of the wood," Psalm cxxxii. 4, 5, 6.—Their desires may be such as to make them restless, till they get their hearts made a fit habitation for him; they may be such as to carry their souls aloft above all temporary enjoyments, and make them mount up on wings as eagles; and to look down upon all the enjoyments of time, and sublunary comforts, as altogether contemptible. But then,

(2.) As there is a love of desire, so of delight and complacency, whereby they take up their rest and satisfaction in him, saying, "Though the fig-tree should not blossom, nor fruit should be found in the vine, &c.; yet will I rejoice in the Lord; I will joy in the God of my salvation." Indeed, they that have found saving desires after the Lord, are unsatisfied till their desire be turned to delight, and till they attain this, "Whom having not seen we love; in

whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." When the Lord manifests himself to them, as reconciled in Christ, when he manifests his love to their souls, and opens the flood-gates of his Spirit's influences, O then they cannot but delight in him, and be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; for then they have a feast of fat things, and of wines on the lees, well refined. O sensualists, that never had a more pleasant hour all your days, than when you sat down to a hearty meal of meat or drink, you are but a miserable creature; there is meat to eat that you know not of, and joy that you intermeddle not with. O the joy and triumph that there is in the enjoyment of a God in Christ; "Thanks be to God, which always causes us to triumph in Christ;" ALWAYS CAUSES TO TRIUMPH. It is true, the souls of believers may sometimes wander from the Lord, even after they have experienced this enjoyment; and never more readily than on the back of a sweet communion: their desires may wander after other things, they may fall asleep; they are not yet perfect, nor delivered from a body of death; and, therefore, after that they may come under doubts and great fears; and these may bring them very low, and may much alienate their hearts from the Lord: yea, but they are as the needle in the compass, that can never rest or settle till it comes to the right point. They can never rest till they get into his bosom; and they find their case a wilderness case, where they are wandering from mountain to hill, and then they say, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul;" and are made again to return to him, and take more delight in him than ever; and, by delighting in him, get an earnest penny of heaven.

(3.) There is a love of benevolence and good-will towards Christ, and his interest in the world, that all his concerns in the world may go right, and that no weapon formed against Zion may prosper. By this love, all these things whereby God makes himself known, his word, his ordinances, his people, his precepts, his truths are precious. And to this we may join,

(4.) The love of beneficence, whereby we do all we can for the honour of Christ, the good of his church, the credit of his truths, and for bearing down every interest opposite to his.—But these things may perhaps fall under another head.

4. We may consider this love in the dimensions of it: as God's love towards his people hath height, and depth, and length,

and breadth, so there is something like dimensions of that sort in their love to him.

(1.) Their love is a high love, it hath a height; it is a transcendent love: they love him above all things: they love him more than father or mother, sister or brother, profit or pleasure, credit or preferment: yea, doubtless they count all things but loss and dung in comparison of him. The language of their soul is, None but Christ: in all things he hath the pre-eminence.

(2.) Their love hath a depth: for it is rooted in the heart: and does not float in the fancy. The love of many is but like a thaw, that will sometimes be on the face of the ground by the heat of the sun, while there is a hard frost below in the earth: so their love is but superficial, upon the surface of the soul: there is some thaw, but the heart is hard; true love hath a deep root.

(3.) Their love hath a breadth: they not only love his mercy and grace, but his faithfulness, justice, and holiness: they love not only his covenant-promises, but his kindly threatenings; not only his favourable promises, but also his fatherly chastisements: they love every thing that hath any thing of God in it; his people, because they are his image; his ordinances, because they are his galleries; they love the place where his honour dwells; and every thing that hath a divine stamp and superscription.

(4.) Their love hath a length in it, as well as a height, and depth, and breadth. It is not like the hope of the hypocrite that perisheth. Their hope and love, who are hypocrites, is built upon an airy fancy and empty imagination; it is built upon sand, and so it falls to the ground; but the believer's love is built upon the faith of the promise, and the faith of the love of God; it is built upon the rock of ages, and so the building stands. Some will have a love to a thing to-day, and quit it to-morrow; but love to Christ will never go quite out. It is true, their love is not always exercised, or always equal in its exercise; for sometimes it is like a coal below the ashes, yet all the power of hell cannot quench it; for many waters cannot quench love: it may be over-topped with the weeds of corruption, and out of view; for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit; and the flesh may be strong, and the Spirit of grace weak, but still the root remains, and shall grow up to perfection.

5. We may consider this love in the properties of it. Some of them have been touched in the preceding heads, therefore, in short,

(1.) True love to God in Christ is a free and voluntary love.

Some people force themselves up, as it were, to an esteem for Christ, by using manifold arguments; and after all, it is but imaginary and mercenary love: they are not under the constraint of legal hope; expecting some reward for their love and service: but here the person loves the Lord for himself, and serves him without legal compulsion or co-action; or by legal fears of hell, or legal hope of heaven. As he loves them freely, in opposition to merit, so they love him freely, in opposition to legal compulsion.

(2.) True love is a sincere love; "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." It is a loving the Lord with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength: it is hearty, and hath its abode in the inner chambers of the heart. It does not lie in the tongue or lip, or the outward profession only, but in the heart, and affection, and soul of man.

(3.) True love is an ardent love: it is compared to fire that hath a most vehement flame: it is like fire for light; it is the discovery of Christ that makes the soul to love him, and it makes the man's light to shine before men, so as his heavenly Father is glorified. It is like fire for heat: it heats the breast, and warms the affections, and flames towards Christ when he is seen. It is like the fire for its consuming quality; it consumes lusts and corruptions: Many waters cannot quench it; no water of sin, of affliction, or desertion, or temptation.

(4.) True love is active love; it makes the soul to act for God, and for Christ, saying, O what shall I do for him? "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits?" It constrains to services and sufferings for Christ.

(5.) True love is an uniting love: it carries out the soul towards union and communion with God in Christ; he affects communion with him in his thoughts and meditations; "My meditation of him shall be sweet." Communion with him in his ordinances, communion with him in his grace, and communion with him in glory.

(6.) True love is a solicitous and careful love: it is careful to avoid whatever is offending to God, careful to provide whatever is pleasing to him; careful and solicitous lest it should lose his company; careful and solicitous to recover a sight of him when he absents himself.

(7.) True love is a bold and venturing love: it will adventure upon reproaches, persecutions, dangers, difficulties, yea, and death

itself, for the sake of the Lord Jesus. When there are greatest difficulties, true love will cleave most to Christ: when there is a general apostacy, true love will appear most for Christ, as the two witnesses, Rev. xi. 3. When men make breaches upon the truth of God, the true lover of Christ will cast himself into the breach, as Pergamus did, Rev. ii. 13. In a word, when love cannot stand in the breach, it will mourn for the dishonour done to Christ, and weep in secret places for it. All these proceed from the invincible valour of love.

8. True love is a persevering love: when faith and hope, in some respect, will carry us no further than the grave, love will go over the border of time, and remain in heaven for ever.

(9.) True love is a conjugal love, a marriage love: and as conjugal love is a loyal love; so is true love to Christ: It calls Jesus LORD and KING: "He is thy Lord and worship thou him," Psal. xlv. 11. As conjugal love is a chaste love; so true love to Christ cannot endure a rival: it allows no mate, no lust, no Delilah, to come in Christ's room, without the utmost abhorrence. As conjugal love is a reverential love; so true love to Christ carries towards him with holy fear and reverence, and filial regard. And as conjugal love is a fruitful and fruit-bearing love; so true love to Christ, is a love that bears fruit to him: "Ye are dead to the law by the body of Christ, and married to another, even to Christ, that ye might bring forth fruit unto God."—Again,

(10.) True love is an assimilating love: it changes the person in whom it is, into the image of the glorious and beloved object, and makes him desire, above all things, to be like unto Christ; saying, O to be holy! O to be free of sin! O to be full of God! O to be conformed to the image of Christ! yea, the more love, the more likeness.

(11.) In a word, sometimes it is an extatical love, as if the man were beside himself, and out of himself: hence that proverb, *Amantes, Amantes*; like that of the apostle, "If we be beside ourselves, it is to God," 2 Cor. v. 13. It carries the soul out of itself, saying with the church, "The voice of my beloved, behold he cometh;" it is an abrupt kind of speech, like that of a person transported, ravished, and in rapture: "The voice of my beloved, behold he cometh:" sometimes there is a ray of glory, a bright glance of the Sun of righteousness.

6. We may consider this love in the effects of it.

(1.) This love vents itself in prayer and supplication ; “ O God thou art my God, early will I seek thee,” Psalm lxiii. 1.

(2.) It vents itself in praise and condemnation ; “ My beloved is white and ruddy, the chief among ten thousand,” Cant v. 10.

(3.) It vents itself in wonder and admiration ; “ Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.”

(4.) It vents itself in obedience and observation of his law ; “ If you love me, keep my commandments.”

(5.) It vents itself in hatred of sin, and every false way ; “ Ye that love the Lord, hate evil.”

(6.) It vents itself in loving every thing that belongs to God.— And this might lead me to show how,

7. We may consider this love in the object of it, and in the extent of its object : why, the true lover of Christ he loves a whole Christ.

(1.) He loves him in his person, as he is the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person, Heb. i. 3.

(2.) He loves him in his natures, as he is God-man ; “ IMMANUEL, God with us.”

(3.) He loves him in his offices ; as he is a Prophet, to take away his darkness ; a Priest, to take away his guilt ; and a King, to take away his sin, and to subdue his lusts.

(4.) He loves him in his relations ; as he stands related to God, being his eternal Son ; as he stands related to the covenant, being the Mediator, Witness, Surety, and Testator, and all of it ; and as he stands related to his church, being their Head and Husband, and all relations to them. You see what a large field I might here go through.

(5.) He loves him in his righteousness, both active and passive, as having fulfilled the law, and satisfied the justice of God in our room.

(6.) He loves him in his merit and purchase ; he loves him in his Spirit and grace ; he loves him in his commands, promises, and comforts ; he loves him in his work and wages ; he loves him in his ministers and people ; he loves him in his gospel ordinances ; he loves him in his crown, honour, and glory ; he loves him in his cross, his reproach, and suffering ; he loves him in every thing about him, and especially in himself, as being altogether lovely. And this leads to another consideration.

8. We may consider this love in the grounds of it. Indeed it is a God in Christ they love : more particularly, if you ask, what are the grounds of the saints' love to Christ? Why,

(1.) Their love to him is grounded upon his worth, beauty, and excellency : the soul loves him, because of his own amiable excellency. When the soul gets a view of Christ's own beauty, and of the glory of God in him, his power, wisdom, holiness, grace, mercy, and other properties, his heart is ravished with love within him. O the thoughts of his worth, and his fulness of grace and good-will is overcoming? "Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee," Song i. 3.

(2.) Their love to him is grounded upon his undertaking for them, and accomplishing that undertaking : they love him because of what he did undertake from eternity, and perform in time : "Who loved me, and gave himself for me!" They love him, because he put himself in their nature, for their good ; they love him, because he put his name in their debt-bonds and bills : they love him, because he put their names in his last will, and in the book of life : they love him, because he put his Spirit, his nature, and his Father's image into them.

(2.) Their love to him is grounded upon his Father's love to him, and satisfaction in him : "The Lord is well-pleased for his righteousness sake, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And, O but Christ be deservedly the object of the saints' love, because he is the object of the Father's love, who loves him, both as he is his Son, and as he is our Surety ; and therefore as the sum of all.

(4.) Their love to him is grounded upon his love to them : "We love him, because he first loved us." This leads me to

III. The third general head, viz., The Influence that his love hath upon theirs as the cause of it. And here I would, 1. Clear and demonstrate it, that his loving us is the Cause of our loving him. 2. Inquire what Influence his love hath upon ours.

1. As the first of these, to clear this point, we would offer the following considerations.

(1.) Consideration is, That a natural man, that looks upon God, can never have a heart-love to him, whatever he pretends. It is true, many fancy God loves them, and pretend they have a love to him, like some in the church at Ephesus, who said, they were

apostles, and were not, but were found liars ; so many pretend they know God, and love him, who yet in works deny him ; and by their practice are found liars ; and the vision of their heads is like to end in utter darkness. It is true also, that all that have a love to God, have not the full assurance of God's love to them : some may live under his frowns, who are yet in a state of favour : there may be some true love, where yet there is but little joyful assurance : yet, I say, these who have no faith at all of God's love in Christ, but look upon God as an implacable enemy, they can have no hearty love to him ; nay, consciousness of guilt, and fear of wrath make them run away from God as an enemy : the spirit of slavish fear, which all awakened sinners are naturally possessed of, till God shew them his love and favour in Christ, will rather harden men in their enmity, than melt them into love. If there were nothing but the terror of the Lord to be known, conversion would be impossible.

(2.) Consideration is, That the greater the sense of God's love in Christ is, the stronger will our love to him be. Hence there are such different degrees of love to God among the saints, and even in the same saints, or believers, at several seasons, according as they have more or less of the comfortable apprehension of the love of God in Christ ; for, although the love of God be not variable, yet our views and apprehensions of it are. Every believer hath his dark and gloomy days, as well as his bright and pleasant days ; and the less sensible views he hath of God's love and favour, the more sensible deadness in duty, and decay of love to God takes place. When the believer wants the faith of God's love, his wings are clipt ; but when his heart is fraughted with a large measure of the faith of God's love, then he mounts up on wings as an eagle : then the love of Christ constrains him : and his heart is enlarged to run the way of God's commandments.

(3.) Consideration, That the love of God discovered, breaks the power of all these things that hinder our love to him. Is self-love a snare to keep us from the love of God ? Well, a display of God's love breaks the power of self-love. When Job got a discovery of the glory of God's grace, then he abhors himself. When we know that God is pacified towards us, it makes us loathe and abhor ourselves, Ezek. xvi. 63. A sinner is never so odious in his own sight, as when he is persuaded of his being precious in God's sight. Does the flattery of the world allure men from the love of God ? Well, but the displays of God's love make the world to be crucified to us,

and us to the world.—Christ's love discovered, obscures all the seeming glory of the world, as the sun darkens the lesser lights, and as the works of nature spoil the reputation of the works of art. Do the frowns of the world scare us from the love of God and his way? Well, but the display of God's love to us is a noble security against this temptation; for little matter who be against us, if God be for us; "His loving-kindness is better than life;" therefore, though the rage of men should reach our lives, yet what comparison is betwixt the breath of our nostrils, and the favour of an eternal God? We do not love God in Christ, because we do not know him; but when his love is displayed, then he is known in the light of the Spirit, "As a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ;" the Spirit comes as a Spirit of light: and thus the love of God is shed abroad upon the heart by the Holy Ghost.

(4.) Consideration. When God displays his love, he at the same time transforms the soul to whom he discovers himself, and makes it a new creature. Now, the new nature is a grateful and loving nature; depraved nature may reward evil for good, and hatred for love; but it is not so with the new nature, it natively renders love for love; it is native to the soul upon the discovery of God's love, his everlasting love, to be constrained to his service and obedience; "If you love me, keep my commandments." Now this love, that is the product of God's love, is virtually all obedience; and therefore love is said to be the fulfilling of the law; and when love takes place, his commandments are not grievous, but, pleasant; yea, when the love of God is in the heart, then the law of God is in the heart.—But then,

2. To inquire more particularly what influence God's love hath upon ours: "We love him, because he first loved us:" our love is just the reflex of his, as the sun shining upon a glass. Why, how does his love to us influence our love to him? (1.) It hath a moral influence, in point of motive. (2.) A physical influence, in point of power.

(1.) It hath a moral influence, in point of motive; and so it is the moral cause of our love; the incentive, the argument. What will move us to love, if the display of this infinite love does it not? We cannot but love such a good God, who was first in the act and work of love; that loved us when we were both unloving and unlovely: that loved us at such a rate, as to seek and solicit our love at the expense of his Son's blood. O amazing love! Is there

any motive can be stronger to engage us to love him again? What in all the world will endear a soul to God, if the love of God do it not?—So much as we see of the love of God, so much we love him, and delight in him, and no more. Every other discovery of God without this, will but make the soul to flee from him. If the faith and apprehension of his free love, of his ancient love, his antecedent love, his preventing love, such as I have spoken of, be no motive or argument to influence us to love him, there is no argument in the world will prevail.

2. It hath a physical influence, in point of power; and so it is not only the moral, but the productive cause. There is a power in his love that conquers, captivates, and overpowers the man, so that he cannot but love: God's love hath a generative power: our love is brought forth by his love, James i. 18. "Of his own will he begat us;" that is, of his own free love and good-will. Divine love makes such an impression, that it instamps love upon the soul. As his love hath a generating power, so it hath a creating power; his love infuses and creates love in the person. Beloved, it works good in the man that is the object of it: his power and will are commensurate: what he wills, he works: and when the time of love or of manifesting love comes, the time of power comes: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." His love hath a constraining power: "The love of Christ constrains us:" and his love hath a drawing power: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness will I draw thee." He draws with the cords of love, and thereby draws the heart towards him in love: and hence never a soul tasted the sweetness of his everlasting love, but at the same time he felt the power of it warming the heart, and kindling a fire of love there. O how does his mighty love break down the power of their mighty enmity! Was ever pardoning mercy and love intimated, but the pardoned soul behaved to read the pardon with tears of joy; and to love much when much was forgiven? Can they choose but love him, "Who are the called according to his purpose of love?" Rom. viii. 28.—"We love him, because he first loved us."

IV. The fourth general head, was the application. Is it so, that God's love to his people is the source and cause of their love to him? Then we may apply it for information; and

1. Hence see the difference betwixt God's love to the saints, and the saints' love to God. It is true, their loves agree in several

things : his love to them is a love of complacency, he delights in them : and their love to him is a love of complacency, they delight in him : he loves them in Christ, and they love him in Christ ; but yet vastly great is the difference betwixt his love and theirs. 1. His love is eternal, their love is but of yesterday's date. 2. His love is the original cause, their love is the native effect of his. 3. His love is an antecedent love, it goes before theirs, as the father loves the child, when the child knows not the father, much less loves him ; yea, they are by nature haters of God. And surely all must begin on his side ; " Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that God loved us : " yea, his love not only goes before our love, but everything that is lovely in us ; " God commends his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. " Sin imports all unloveliness and undesirableness that can be in a creature ; yet he loves ; but then our love is a consequential love. 4. His love being free and eternal, is always equal and unchangeable ; for, " The Strength of Israel is not a man that he should repent ; " but our love to him is unequal and changeable, up and down : his love is like the sun, always the same in its light, though a cloud may sometimes interpose ; our love is like the moon, hath its waxings and wanings : his love, I say, is like the sun, always the same in its light. It is true, as the sun is sometimes under a cloud ; so the fruits and manifestations of God's love may change : now he shines, now he hides his face, as it may be most for our profit ; but still his love in itself is the same.—Whatever changes affects the saints, whether as to sin or sufferings, yet God's love to them is unchangeable. Why, were it not blasphemy to say, that God loves his people in their sinning, as well as in their strictest obedience ? If so, who will care to serve him more ? To which it might be replied, The love of God in itself is no more changeable than God himself ; and what then ? Loves he his people in their sinning ? by no means ; he loves his people, not their sinning. Alters he his love to them ? No : not his love, but the discoveries of his love : he smites them, rebukes them, and fills them with a sense of indignation. But wo would be to us if he changed his love ; nay, he is God, and changes not ; therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed. " These very things which seem to be demonstrations of the change of his affection, do as clearly proceed from love to them, even his chastisements, as any other dispensations. Well, but will not this encourage to sin ? " O sure he never tasted,

as one says, of the love of God, that can seriously make this objection." The doctrine of grace may be turned into wantonness, but the principle of grace cannot. His love, I say, being free, eternal, and preventing love, is in itself always equal and unchangeable; but our love to God is an ebbing and flowing love. We are scarce a day at a stand. This hour we may be at this, "Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I!" And the next hour at this, "I know not the man." When was ever the time that our love was equal one day to an end?

2. Hence see the difference betwixt justification and sanctification: and the priority of justification to sanctification: We may here notice the difference betwixt the one and the other. Many are the differences betwixt them, but I confine myself to what the text imports. 1. In justification, God loves us, and shews his love in Christ; in sanctification, we love God, and shew our love to him: for the comprehensive sum of active holiness is love, which is the fulfilling of the law. 2. In justification, we have the favour of God; in sanctification, we have the image of God; and the special part of his image is love. 3. In justification, we are passive, as when God set his love upon us; but in sanctification, we are active, while his love causes us to act in loving him. 4. Justification is God's act of love without us, in and through the merit and righteousness of Christ imputed to us; sanctification is God's work of grace within us, by the Spirit of Christ imparted to us as a Spirit of love, as well as of other graces. 5. Justification is perfect, equal, and always the same, like the love of God, the original cause, and the righteousness of Christ the meritorious cause of it; but sanctification is imperfect, unequal, and changeable; for the love of the saints, as I said, is up and down. 6. Justification is the cause; sanctification the effect; even as God's love is the cause of our love. 7. Faith in justification is an instrument receiving Christ, as the Lord our righteousness, and apprehending the love and mercy of God in him; but faith in sanctification is an agent, employing Christ as the Lord our strength, to enable us to manifest our love to him. Thus we see the priority of divine love and favour, and acceptation and justification before any work of ours; and so, how can any maintain, that actual gospel-repentance, which must be a work of ours, and a piece of sanctification at least, doth go before, and is necessary in order to justification, let the judicious consider, without receding from our standards, and binding their faith to the belt of any fallible

creatures, councils, or acts. That legal repentance, or humiliation and conviction, and sense of sin, does go before justification, in order of divine operation, is plain ; and that habitual sanctification, or regeneration, and the infusing of all grace into the soul, is also precious is not denied : But the gospel-repentance, or any part of actual sanctification, is necessary in order to justification and pardon, I do not see how it is possible to maintain that, without running into the Roman camp, and fighting with Popish weapons, and inverting the order of our text, making any part of our love to God necessary first in order to God's loving us. But sure God's method of doing, will stand in spite of hell and earth : " We love him, because he first loved us."

3. Hence we may see, that as the persuasion that is in the nature of faith lies in the apprehension of her love and mercy of God in Christ to a man's self in particular ; so this doctrine of faith does not make void the law, but establish and fulfil it, if we consider love as the fulfilling of the law ; for the language of this text, when read in the singular number is, " I love him, because he first loved me :"—" He first loved me," there is faith's apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ. It is true, a believer may say, I know not whether he loved me or not ; but sure I am it is not his faith that says so, but unbelief ; but the stronger that his faith is to be sure the more will he be able to say, " He loved me : " And the more he can say this, the more he can say the other also, " I love him : " And there is obedience, gospel-obedience, the obedience of faith, which is a loving obedience ; for the law of Christ is the law of love : it is blasphemy against the love of God to reproach it, as a mother of licentiousness, and a nurse of carnal security. They that have the love of God in their eye, can take no encouragement from thence to sin ; for sin tends to cloud that light wherein they rejoice. If it were possible for a believer to think that God loves him, and thereupon should take encouragement to sin, then I am bold to say, it is not the faith of God's operation takes place at that time with him, but only a fancy, and a strong temptation of Satan, working upon that fancy : for a true faith of God's love, brings holiness, love, and obedience along with it, as natively as the rising sun brings light. God's love of bounty displayed, does as natively bring in our love of duty, as it is natural for the fire to bring heat. Is it possible that God's communicating his thoughts of peace to a child, will embolden him to new acts of treason ? No ;

if the sense of God's love did not wear off, and security and unwatchfulness wear on, the believer's love would always be flaming in the fire of God's love. They have no experience of the love of God, who think that the discovery thereof would give them a license to transgress.

4. Hence we see, that as the believer is perfectly free from vindictive wrath, from the curse and penal sanction of the law, so his gospel obedience is not influenced by slavish fear of hell, but by the love of God. How can the man that is actually justified, and accepted in the Beloved, and so the actual object of God's everlasting, unchangeable love, ever fall under his vindictive wrath, which is the threatening and sentence of the law as a covenant of works? And, how can the believer that is obliged to believe this love, be ever obliged to serve from a fear of hell and vindictive wrath? That he may, through unbelief, apprehend God's vindictive wrath, and fear to be thrown into hell, is plain from common experience: but that the fear of hell should be either a gospel-grace, or a believer's duty, is some of the new divinity of our day. Filial child-like fear, which is the believer's duty at all times, is every way consistent with love, yea, supposes and imports the faith of God's fatherly love; but slavish fear of hell, and vindictive wrath, excludes and opposes it. See the context, verse 18, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out (slavish and tormenting) fear."

5. Hence we may see, the difference betwixt the covenant of works and the covenant of grace. The order of the covenant of works is, in some respect, quite cross to the order here set down in our text; for, in the covenant of works, our love of duty was first to take place, and after that, God's love of bounty, as the reward of our perfect love and obedience, according to the old covenant paction; whereas, in the covenant of grace, God shews first his love of bounty, and then follows our love of duty: Never does the soul turn his affections towards God, if the heart of God be not first set upon him. Herein differ works in the new covenant (for love, as I said before, is the sum of all work and obedience) from works in the old covenant. In the legal covenant, our love and work is first, and then favour and justification; but in the gospel-covenant, God's love and favour in justification is first, and then our love and obedience follows. As the same day that the waters went off from the earth, and were gathered into the sea, the earth was

adorned with grass and flowers, and was fruitful; so when the deluge of wrath goes off from the conscience, and the favour of God appears in justification, then it is presently adorned with the graces of the Spirit, and love among the chief of them, springing up: whatever other motives engages to obedience here, yet love is the most prevalent motive; and here gratitude influences to obedience. In a word, the covenant of works was properly conditional to us, but the covenant of grace, however conditional to Christ, who hath performed the whole condition, in his obedience to the death, yet to us it is absolutely free and unconditional. Upon what condition have we God's love and favour? Does not his love prevent all conditions? "He first loved us:" His love prevents the true proper condition itself, namely, Christ's obedience; for his love sent him to perform the same; much more does it prevent all that men call conditions. O! how far is our obedience, even the obedience of faith, from having any casualty, or proper federal conditionality in obtaining salvation, seeing our imperfect love and obedience here is not the cause, but the effect of God's love and favour partly displayed, and our perfect love and obedience in heaven will be the effect of the full vision of his glorious grace in heaven, where we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is!

6. Hence we may see the blasphemy of those who say, they are believers in Christ, and yet are not lovers of God; and who pretend to believe the grace of God, and yet turn his grace to lasciviousness, by continuing in enmity against him, and discover their enmity by their ungodly practices: the grace of God, that brings salvation, teaches us quite the contrary; what the law teaches preceptively, the gospel teaches effectively, viz., "To deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly," Titus ii. 11, 12. She is not the spouse of Christ, but an adulteress, that impudently abuses his love. They can have no true evidence of God's love to them, who hath no love to him; for our love to him is the native result of his love to us; "We loved him because he first loved us." The love of God discovered, knocks down the natural enmity, which is the root of all disobedience; and influences to love, which is the sum of all obedience.

7. See hence the eminent privilege of the saints, whatever low thoughts the world may have of them. 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 God,

and enjoy his bosom-love? The queen of Sheba pronounced a blessing on the servants of Solomon, who stood before him and heard his wisdom : how much more blessed are they who stand continually before the God of Solomon, hearing his wisdom and enjoying his love? As they are happy, so they are safe. Here is a safe and sweet retreat to the saints in all the trials, reproaches, and misrepresentations they undergo in the world. When a child is abused in the street 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 and tongue-persecutions which the saints meet withal in the streets of the world, they may run to their Father, and be comforted; his love can counter-balance all the world's frowns. O! how are they privileged beyond all the hypocritical world! Hypocrites for the most part, cannot be known or differenced from saints, in regard of their external duty and enjoyment; but while they are living in the love of their lusts, the saints are sweetly wrapt up in the bosom of God's love; they have this meat to eat, and refreshment in the banquetting-house, wherein others have no share.

8. Hence see where it is we may get our enmity killed, and our love quickened: it is even in the love of God. What is the reason that the world have no love to God? Why, they cannot believe his love and good-will through Christ; and so they live in enmity. What is the reason that believers have so little love to God? Even because their faith of his love is so weak. It is by faith we know that God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself; it is by faith we see the King in his beauty, and so cannot but love him; it is by faith that we hear his voice, and understand his words of grace, and say, "It is the voice of my Beloved:" it is by faith we embrace the promises, which are so many messages of his love: it is by faith we receive out of Christ's fulness, and grace for grace; or, as the word may be rendered, "Love for love." Faith breaks the shell of the promise, and then eats the kernel of God's love and grace that is there. Faith is the bucket wherewith we draw, Christ is the well; God is the fountain, and love is the water that we draw: O! what get you in Christ, poor soul, whenever you go to him? Can you not say, O, I get more love to God than I had! I never approached near him but I got a large draught and ample fill of love to God: "Out of his fulness, we receive grace for grace," and love for love. In a word, by faith we behold the glory of the Lord as in a glass, and are changed into

the same image; and the image of God is love. O then, the little faith that takes place in our day, makes little love to God and his people; faith and love are like twins that are born together, and live and die together. Go to the root of all our backslidings, and you will find it unbelief; an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.

USE of Examination. Try your state by this doctrine, whether or not you be in a state of favour with God, and the objects of his love in a special manner. How shall I know if he hath loved me? You may know it by that fruit and evidence of it in the text: if he hath manifested his love savingly to you, then you will love him, because he hath loved you.

QUEST. How shall I know, if I have that love to him, that is the fruit and effect of his first loving me?

ANSW. 1st. If your love to him be such as is the fruit of his love to you, then you have been convinced of your natural enmity, and that you never had any love, nor could have it, unless the Lord in love had, in some measure, manifested himself in his grace. Many speak of their loving God all their days, as if it were natural for them to love God; poor creatures, they never saw or considered, that they were born with a dagger of enmity in their hearts against God. These that truly love him have seen their want of love, and something of the power and strength of their enmity; and got it, in some measure, broken in a day of power.

2dly. If you have such love to him, as is the fruit of his love to you, then you have seen his glory, and particularly the glory of his grace, and love to draw out your love towards him: "Shew me thy glory," says Moses to God: Yea, says God, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee." His goodness and his love is his glory. If you have seen his glory, surely you count all things but loss and dung, in comparison of him.

3dly, If you have such love, as the fruit of his love, then his loveliness and excellency hath engaged you to choose him; to choose himself, for your God; his Christ, for your husband; his covenant, for your charter; his precepts, for your rule; his people, for your companions; his purchase, for your jointure; his Spirit, for your guide; his promise, for your cordial; his glory, for your aim. If you have chosen him thus, and resolve to abide by your choice, it is a fruit of his choosing you from eternity: "You have not chosen me [first], but I have chosen you."

4thly. If you have such love to him, as is the fruit of his loving you, then it is the faith of his love, that, in a special manner, will influence you to obedience, in all the duties of religion; "If you love me, keep my commandments:" Yea, the faith of his love will influence you to such a love to him, as will bring forth all the fruits of true love. And here I will tell you of some of the fruits of true love to God, by which you may try your love to him.

1. One fruit of true love is this; true love will make you love to be with him on earth, and long to be with him in heaven.

(1.) On the one hand, true love will make you love to be with him on earth; and this love will make you rejoice when he is present, saying, "O! my soul shall rejoice in God my Saviour:" And it will make you lament when he is absent, saying, "O! that I knew where I might find him!" You will love to be with him in your desire, saying, He is the desire of all nations, and the desire of my soul. You will love to be with him in your delight, saying, "A bundle of myrrh is my Beloved to me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts." You will love to be with him in your walk and conversation, desiring to have your conversation in heaven, and to walk with him. You will love to be with him in your esteem, saying, "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I desire beside thee." You will love to be with him in your thoughts, and meditations, saying, "My meditation of him shall be sweet." You will love to be with him in your duties and performances; in reading and hearing, and singing; in communicating in praying. You will love to be with him, and to have him with you: particularly to be with him in prayer, is the most frequent thing with the believer: how does he love to unbosom himself to God! The legalist may do the duty, but to be with Christ in it, is what he is not much taken up with; the believer is taken up with prayer, as a mean of communion with God. O! I cannot stay away from him, though he shut the door upon me, and cover himself with a cloud, that a prayer cannot pass through; I cannot be absent from him. It is one of the main things that makes earth tolerable to the believer, that he hath sometimes access to God, in Christ, by the Spirit in prayer. If it were not for some sweet meetings that he hath with the Lord this way, he would even be crying, O what a weary place is this earth! O let me out of it! I say, the true lover loves to be with God, and to have God with him. How does he love to have God with him, by his sanctifying grace,

by his enlightening, enlarging, enlivening, and comforting grace? True lovers love one another's company. And,

(2.) As the true lover of Christ loves to be with him here, so on the other hand, he longs to be with him hereafter. O to be in the place of perfect love, where there will be an eternal emanation of the love of God! O to be in the place of perfect likeness to Christ! "For when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Though they are reconciled to his will, and made content to abide here, while he pleases, yet they are even longing for that day, when they shall have the immediate fruition of him, and be delivered from all sin: they desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, which is best of all. A carnal man may say, O to be out of an evil world! but the heart of the true lover says, O to be with Christ? It is true, when the believer's love is in fresh exercise, he will even sometimes be willing to abide in this world, notwithstanding of all the troubles and trials that are in it, if so be he may glorify God in it; whether by suffering for him, or giving a testimony against sin, and for the truth and honour of the Lord Jesus. O! if I may be of any use to any of thine; if I may be of any service to thy Majesty, and glorify thee by doing or suffering; if thou wilt help me to serve and honour thee in my life, let me even beg from door to door in the wilderness; through grace I will cheerfully endure any trouble, and glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. This submission is not inconsistent with his longing to be with the Lord.—Thus, I say, true lovers of God, they love to be with him on earth, and long to be with him in heaven.

2. True love will make you long to be like him, saying, O to be holy, as God is holy! O to be conform to the image of his Son! O to be like unto Christ! Indeed, the man that hath most of the image of God, will readily see himself the most unlike to him: and look upon himself as the most unholy person on earth. O! my understanding is like a dark dungeon, my will is like a devil, and my heart like a hell; and yet something of the light of God it is that thus discovers him to himself, so unlike to God: and something of the love of God it is that makes him love to be like him, and desire above all things to be quit of sin, which is the devil's image, and to be endued with holiness, which is God's image.

3. True love will make you love to live upon him: you will love to live upon God, the fountain of living water; and love to

live upon Christ, for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. The lover of God is one that loves to live by faith on the son of God; to him to live is Christ: Christ is the Alpha and Omega of his life; the food and medicine of his life; the Author and Restorer of his life; and the whole business of his life. Many have little business with Christ; but the true believer, the true lover, Christ is the whole business of his life: like the woman that, they say, took the body of her dead husband and ground it to powder, and drank the powder in her daily drink, and so made her body a living tomb for her dead husband. The believer is to live still upon a dead and crucified husband.

4. True love to God will make you to reverence him: godly fear is a true mark of love; you will have a holy fear of displeasing him; you will have a jealous fear, lest your deceitful heart lead you aside from him: "We receiving a kingdom that cannot be moved, let us have grace [or, let us hold fast grace] whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire," Heb. xii. 28, 29. All this is inconsistent with the slavish fear of hell: for the faith of receiving the kingdom that cannot be moved, and the fear of hell, which is a being excluded from that kingdom, are contradictory; but let us fear our God in Christ, who hath discovered himself in Christ to be even a consuming fire; for this fire of infinite justice took hold of the man Christ Jesus. When God dwelt in the bush of our nature, the bush burned in the flame of divine wrath, and justice was satisfied this way: herein God gave a more awful sentence of his becoming a consuming fire, in taking vengeance upon sin in the Surety, than can be given by all the flames of hell, in which the wicked burn for eternity. But here God being in the bush, the bush burnt, but was not consumed: "He that was dead, is alive; and, behold! he liveth for evermore." But we may turn aside, and see this great sight, the bush burning, Christ satisfying divine justice: and what in the world should more influence to a holy fear than this?

5. True love will make you to think well of him, and think no evil of him: "Love thinketh no evil," says the apostle. You will entertain good thoughts of God; and construct all he does in the best sense: though, in affliction, a saint may have harsh thoughts of God, and under a fit of temptation, yet habitually he entertains good thoughts of all God's dealings towards him. This or that dispensation or affliction, however severe, is either to mortify some

lust, or to exercise some grace, or to discover some corruption, and remove it. "O! how good is he that will not let me alone in my sins, nor let me go with my faults, nor cease to be a reprovcr! Love thinks no evil."

6. True love will make you love what he loves, and hate what he hates; and also love as he loves, and hate as he hates.

[1.] True love will make you love what he loves, and hate what he hates; and particularly to love his friends, and hate his enemies.

1st, To love his friends; his friends in office, and his friends in heart.

(1.) His friends in office; his ministers, whose office it is to commend Christ: surely they that love God, will love his friends; they that love Christ the Bridegroom, will love the friends of the Bridegroom, whose work it is to set them forth: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, that bring glad tidings of good things, that publish salvation!" Isa. lii. 15. Rom. x. 15. The reason why they love such is, because it is their work to open Christ's love-letter that is sent to his bride, and to read it, and explain it to the bride; and because they love the sweet doctrine of the gospel. Some pretend a great love to the precepts of the law, but for the doctrine of the gospel, and free justification without the works of the law, they suspect that as Antinomian stuff, opposite to the law; they will mock at Christ's messengers when they preach the doctrine of grace. But I seek no further evidence of an enemy to Christ than that. Some love all preachers, and all preaching alike: they cannot discern betwixt the one and the other: if you preach the doctrine of the gospel to them, they love that; if you preach the covenant of works to them, and desire them to do so and so, and thereupon they shall be justified before God, they love that too; all is fish that comes in the net with them: but the sheep of Christ know his voice; and the voice of the shepherds, that convey his voice and mind to them, is sweet, and beautiful, and lovely to them.

(2.) They love his friends in heart, as well as his friends in office; the saints, the excellent ones of the earth, are these in whom is all their delight. "He that loves him that begat, loves him that is begotten." They love the brethren, as in the verse following the text; "How can he say that he loves God, whom he hath not seen,

when he loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen?" He that loves the parent, will love the child: they that love God, will love his children, that have his image, as a man will love the very picture of the person whom he loves: they love the saints, though poor, as a man will love gold, though in a rag; and also will love them, though afflicted, even as metal in a furnace may be loved.

2dly, As the true lovers of God will love his friends, so they will hate his foes and enemies, whether it be his open enemies without, or his secret enemies within.

(1.) His open enemies without, even all the wicked and ungodly world; "Do not I hate them that hate thee; and am grieved with them that rise up against thee?" They that can delight in fellowship with these that are drunkards, swearers, and blasphemers of the name of God, surely they cannot have the love of God at least in exercise: the true lover of God hates the wicked as such. It is true, as they are the children of Adam bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh; as they are poor miserable creatures like themselves, they love them with a love of pity; but as enemies to God, and in rebellion against him, they can have no delight in them; their company is a burden to them.

(2.) As they hate his open enemies without, so they hate his secret enemies within; and these are their own lusts and corruptions. They hate sin, who love God; and are engaged in a warfare against sin, and hate their own lusts. He that loves God hates sin, whether in himself or others; he hates sin as God's enemy, and as that which is displeasing and dishonouring to him; and as that which mars communion with God, that provokes him to anger, and unfits them for his service. O that loathsome, ugly thing sin! that evil of evils, and devil of devils! The man pursues it unto death, and cannot rest till he gets his hands imbrued, as it were, in its heart's blood: they have taken up arms against it in the name of the Lord, and resolved never to lay them down till it be mortified and killed. They find indeed sometimes sin very lively and strong in them, and themselves led captive by the law of sin; but this animates them so much the more to pursue it to death. And, as they hate sin in themselves, so also in others; "I beheld transgressors, and was grieved." I would not give much for your pretensions to love, if you have no zeal against sin; love is the fire, zeal is the flame: they that love the Lord will shew forth indignation against sin.—Thus, I say, true lovers of God will love what he loves, and hate what he hates.

[2.] True love will not only hate what he hates, and love what he loves, but hate as he hates, and love as he loves.

1st, They will hate AS he hates; they will hate sin as God hates it; I speak not of degrees, but of similitude.

(1.) God hates sin with a natural hatred, as opposite to his nature, will, and law, and dishonouring to him: so the true lover of God will hate sin with a natural hatred; I mean by virtue of his new nature, he will hate it as opposite to God's nature and will, and dishonouring to his God.

(2.) God hates sin with a perfect hatred, and so does the true lover of God; they say of God's enemies within them, as David, Psalm cxxxix. 21, "I hate them with a perfect hatred:" their hatred is going on to perfection.

(3.) God hates sin with an everlasting hatred; he will never be reconciled with it: so the true lover of God hates sin with an everlasting hatred; a durable hatred; they will never be friends with it.

(4.) God hates sin with a grievous hatred: sin grieves his Spirit; and is, as it were, a burden to him: he is pressed under it as a cart under sheaves: so the true lover is grieved with the body of sin and death, and pressed under it.

(5.) God hates sin with a parting, separating hatred; he casts it away with loathing and abhorrence, being of purer eyes than that he can behold iniquity: so the true lover hates sin so as to part with it and separate from it: and, while he cannot get himself rid of it, he loathes himself for it.

(6.) God hates sin with an avenging hatred; he takes vengeance upon it wherever it is: even when it is found but imputatively in Christ, he took vengeance upon it in the Surety: so the true lover of God hates sin with an avenging hatred: yea, what revenge does he meditate against it! 2 Cor. vii. 11. He would sometimes be at Samson's work, to pull down the house of that tabernacle upon the Philistines, to be avenged upon it, and cannot rest till it be destroyed: he looks upon himself as wretched, so long as it remains with him: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this sin and death?"—Thus he hates as God hates.

2dly, They love AS God loves. It is true, God's love to them is infinite, their love is but finite; his love to them is the love of a God, their love to him is but the love of creatures; yet their love bears some resemblance of his love.

(1.) God's love to his creatures is a remembering love: he never forgets them; "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, she may; yet will I not forget thee, saith the Lord." So, true love to God is a remembering love: they cannot forget God; they remember his love more than wine. "I will never forget thy precepts, for by them thou hast quickened me." I can never forget such a word, such a glance, such a visit, such a day, such a sermon, such a bank, such a valley, such a chamber, where God manifested himself.

(2.) God's love to his people is a hearty and cordial love; he loves them with all his heart; so, where true love is, it will be with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength: as with the heart man believes, so with the heart the believer loves.

(3.) God's love to his people is a manifested love; he does not conceal his love, but discovers it: so true love to God will be a manifested love; it will manifest itself, and vent itself in prayer, in praises, in zeal, in obedience; "If ye love me, keep my commandments." The true lover will vent his love by desiring to keep Christ's words, keeping them in the heart; "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I may not offend thee;" keeping them in the practice, by ordering the conversation aright.

(4.) God's love to his people is an uniting love; it brings them to union with himself; so true love to God is uniting; desires union, and cleaves to the Lord; it affects nearness: more and more nearness: and still more and more nearness.

(5.) God's love to his people is a prevailing love; it had many hindrances in its way: mountains of guilt, mountains of sin, mountains of provocation, yet he did not call back his love again: even so, true love to God, notwithstanding of hindrances and opposition from earth and hell, and corruption within, yet is not drawn back, but labours to prevail: and will, through grace, fight its way through all difficulties: "For love is strong as death."

(6.) God's love to his people is a rejoicing love; he rejoiceth in his love; so where true love to God is, the man will rejoice in his love; delight in God and Christ, and be joyful in the God of his salvation.

(7.) God's love to his people is a resting love, Zeph. v. 17. "He rests in his love;" when it comes it never thinks of removing any more; "This is my rest, here will I stay:" so where true love to God is, it is a resting love; it stays, "Return to thy rest, O my

soul." The true lover of God hath no resting place but a God in Christ.

(8.) God's love to his people is a communicative love; his love inclines him and engages him to make over himself, and all that he hath, for the good of his people: so, where true love to God is, it is such a communicative love, that it makes the soul to give himself, and all that he is, and hath, to the Lord; he commits his soul, body, and all the concerns of his salvation to him.

(9.) God's love to his people is a distinguishing love; he loves them above all others: "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable; and I have loved thee," Isa. xliii. 3, 4. So their love to him is superlative love: they love him above all things: and in all things he hath the pre-eminence.

(10.) God's love to his people is in Christ; they are accepted in the Beloved: so, true love to God is a love to God in Christ: out of Christ they cannot love him, but fear and flee from him: but in Christ he is amiable and lovely to them.—Now, by these things you may try whether you love God, so as your love is a fruit of his first loving you.

Use of Exhortation. Is God's love to his people the cause of their love to him? then be exhorted, 1. To seek the view of God's love to you. 2. To render him love for love.

1. Seek a view of God's love to you; say not in your heart, Alas! all are not loved of God, and it may be not you; but rather say, Many are the objects of his love, and why not me? Why, say you, the first object of faith cannot be to believe that God hath loved me. Indeed you cannot know God's love to you, till he manifest the same; and he does not manifest his love but in Christ, in whom is proclaimed peace on earth, and good-will towards men, because Christ hath brought in glory to God in the highest; and therefore the way to know the love of God to you, is to believe his love and good-will in him: and in coming to him, the love of God is known and believed. How do the saints get to know the love of God to them? It is even by believing his love in Christ, 1 John iv. 16. "We have known, and believed the love that God hath to us." If you look to God out of Christ, you never see his love to you; or any sinner like you, but wrath and vengeance issued out against you; but if you look to God in Christ, then you may see good-will towards men; for God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself.—Why say you, I cannot find any love in my heart

towards God; and therefore, how can I believe his love or heart to be towards me? Indeed, man, you will never love God till you take up something of his love and good-will towards you; your way of doing is a preposterous course, and a way to rob God of his glory, to think you must love him first, and then expect that he will love you: lay down your carnal reasoning, and seek grace to apprehend the mercy of God in Christ, and that will open your soul to let your love towards him.—Why, say you, I see no ground why he should love me! there is no cause, no reason in the world, but all the reason in the world, why he should not love me; and therefore, how can I be persuaded of his thoughts of love towards me? To this we might reply, That God speaks love, mercy, and good-will towards you man, you woman, by this gospel, as particularly as ever he did to an elect soul, the day before he met with the day of power; for the general tenders of grace in the gospel are to all: and as for a cause of love, he hath as much cause to fix his love on you as ever he had upon any of the children of men; that is, he had no cause at all without himself: and if you can attain to believe his grace and good-will towards you, and that by faith of his own operation, you shall not be deceived. When I call you to believe thus, I am not calling you to fancy that God loves you, or to persuade yourselves in a natural way; nay, I call you to a saving faith, which I know you can never attain unto without a pull of omnipotency: and if that power accompany the call, then the duty called to will be put in practice, and not otherwise: therefore, O seek the power of God to persuade you of the good-will of God in Christ. All that hear me are obliged to receive Christ, as a token of God's love; "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him, and receiveth him, might not perish, but have everlasting life. He that believeth, shall be saved: he that believeth not, shall be damned." If there be insuperable difficulties and objections in your way, I cannot help it; the God who calls you can remove them; but it is at your peril, if you reject his call: you shall never have it to say in hell, that the good-will and favour of God was never proclaimed to you; for I take the mountains and hills that are in your view, to witness, that I proclaim, through Christ, "Peace on earth, and good-will towards men;" and that "God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself." Why, would you have the greatest sinner, and vilest debauchee among us all, to believe the good-will of God towards

them? To this we reply, Whilst you are in a sinful state, you are indeed under the wrath and curse of God; and if you continue therein, you will be damned for ever, as sure as God lives; and you will continue there for ever, unless you come to get the apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ; but whenever you get this apprehension of God's love, then I defy you to continue in a state of sin, or in a course of sin and enmity. Will a man receive Christ, and believe the love of God in him, and yet keep fast hold of his lusts? No, I defy him, it is not possible; and therefore it is to kill your enmity and destroy your sin, that God would have you to believe his good-will in Christ. I remember that story of a godly man that said to a witch, when nothing else could soften her heart, "I do, says he, in the name of the Lord Jesus, charge you to come to Christ for salvation; to come to him for faith, repentance, and remission of sin, and you shall have acceptance, and be received into the favour of God in him." The poor witch was made to say, "O, Sir, shall I believe your word?" "My life for you," says he, "if you rely on Christ." Immediately her bands were loosed; and the Lord brought her to a deep humiliation for sin, and sense of the favour of God, so as she gave clear evidence unto every discerning person, that the Lord had shown mercy to her. O if you knew how the Lord is saying to his servants, O fy upon you! will you not compel those people to come in and close with Christ, as the great pledge of God's love? O! go to God when you can get an opportunity to be alone, and say, Lord, I have been called to believe, but my heart is hard, and thou only can break it; O! come and save the chiefest of sinners, whereby thou wilt get more glory than ever thou had by any of Adam's posterity; cry to him, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief."

2. I would exhort you to render him love for love; and this exhortation concerns believers particularly. O, love him, because he first loved you. What a shame is it for you, believer, if you do not love him who first loved you! And to engage you, consider,

(1.) Whose love it is: it is the love of him, who in himself is all sufficient, who hath no need to go forth with his love to others; the love of a God, O what a vast consideration is it!

(2.) Consider who you are that are the objects of his love; so wicked, so wretched, so unworthy of his love; That God should love the glorious angels is no wonder; for they are messengers and ministers executing his pleasure: that he should love inanimate

creatures is not strange; for hail, snow, vapour, and stormy wind fulfil his word: but to love you is a wonder; and to love you while enemies.

(3.) Consider what sort of love it is. It is eternal love; before the foundation of the world, his delights were with the sons of men, from eternity: the very thought of this is enough to make all that is within you, like the babe in the womb of Elizabeth, to leap for joy, that you lay in the bosom of his love from eternity: and will you not love him!—His love is a free love; if you deserved his love, his love would be of less value; but that which is eternally antecedent, must be absolutely free.—His love is unchangeable love: though you change every day, his love is unchangeable. Could any provocation turn away his love, it had ceased long since; but as he set his love upon you, notwithstanding all the faults you were, and he knew you would be guilty of, so it continues notwithstanding all.—His love is a distinguishing love; why should he have fixed on you, and passed by millions from whom you differ not by nature? Why hath he passed by your father, mother, brother, sister, and set his love upon you? And, O! will you not love him?—His love is a bountiful love; with his love he gives himself, his Christ, his Spirit, his grace, his glory, and all. See how the psalmist extols this love, Psalm. ciii. 1, “Bless the Lord, O my soul, who pardons all thine iniquities, who healeth all thy diseases, &c. Who pardons all thine iniquities!” O it is no small thing to forgive or to pardon three or four sins, but it is yet more to pardon three or four thousand sins: Who can conceive of that love! but to forgive many millions of faults, O what love is here! And so he deals with these whom he loves; “He multiplies to pardon;” yea, more, “he heals all your diseases.” O poor sinner, have you not many plagues, many diseases, yea, more than you are aware of? If you know the plagues of your own heart, you will be crying out, O the plague of my mind, the plague of my will, the plague of my affections! O my atheism, unbelief, hardness, blindness, &c. O what innumerable evils compass me about, say you! O what horrible evils! yea, why do I call them evils, they are so many devils within me; yea, but for as many as they are, He heals all thy diseases; and for as grievous as they are, He supplies all your wants: such also is his bountiful love, “My God shall supply all your wants.” Are you not made up of wants? Do you not want light, life, love, faith, repentance, joy, assurance,

peace, communion with God? Yea, but sometimes even on earth he supplies all wants, so as to make you say, I have enough. O does not this bountiful love, call for love?

(4.) Consider the channel in which this love runs: Christ is the means of the communication of the love of God; you have the love of God the Father, in the Son, by the Holy Ghost: Christ is the channel. Love in the Father is like the honey-flower it must be in the comb, before it be for our use: Christ must extract and prepare this honey for us. And, O how sweet is that love, that runs through such a glorious channel!

In a word, consider the excellency of the grace of love. Love to God is the fulfilling of the law; all that it requires is love; love is the great qualification of the saints above; the more love you have, the more like heaven you will be; and the more love, the more meetness for heaven: heaven would be a burden, and a weariness to you without love; if you had not love, you would throw yourself out of heaven into hell. If you have love, you will find it make every duty pleasant; the obedience of love is sweet obedience. Yea, love will make all your crosses to be comforts; where there is little or no love, the cross is insupportable: the man cries, O a bitter cross! O the gall and wormwood! yea, but love would be like the tree cast into the waters of Marah, to make them become sweet. If you have much love, it will make you say of affliction, O this is the cup that my kind Father hath put in my hand, and shall I not drink it? Welcome whatever he sends.

O love the Lord, ye his saints, and manifest your love by your obedience: will you render him hatred for love? O let his love to you warm your heart with love to him; and in order thereto,

1. O do not doubt of or question his love to you; beware of renouncing that which engages you to love him; it is the devil's great aim to have you mistrusting God's love, that so you may not love God again.

2. Attend all his love-visits, and thankfully receive them; think not little of his ordinary visits, when in any measure he manifests his love through the lattices of ordinances; despise not the day of small things; and especially, O make much of his extraordinary love-visits, when he mounts you up at any time into the chariot paved with love!

3. Take heed of abusing his love: beware of spotting your garments with the flesh, after God has spread his skirt over you. To

sin against love is a dreadfully aggravated sin. It was a sad blot upon Solomon, that his heart was turned from the Lord, "After that the Lord God of Israel had appeared to him twice," 1 Kings xi. 9.

4. Beware of confidence in the flesh, and expecting that your love should influence God to do you good: the love of Christ must constrain you; think not that your duties and obedience should constrain him: O beware of inverting the gospel at this rate, and turning it up-side down! If his love excite you to love and obedience, then your love and obedience does not excite him to love you. We might fear every day, that the heart of God would be turned to hate us, if our hopes of abiding in his favour were built upon our best love and obedience.

I would send away the haters of God with a word of terror. Know that if you cannot be persuaded to the love of God, if his love does not break you in time, his vengeance will break you to eternity: The enemies of the Lord shall be like the fat of rams, they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away." If you love not Christ, know what the apostle says, "If a man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema." I will tell you what is sad; the day is coming wherein you shall say to the rocks and mountains, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand? You will lie for ever under the fiery mountain of divine vengeance. I will tell you what is yet sadder, and you will think strange, what can that be; in short it is sad, that before this day eight days, all that I am saying will be forgotten; yea, before the morrow at this time, the impression of all will be gone.

I would send away the lovers of Christ, the lovers of God, with a word of comfort. You love God, and God loves you, and God's love to you is ground of comfort—Comfort in what you have; what you have in possession, you have it with a blessing; what you have in expectation in the promise, is in love; and therefore the promise is free, because of God's love in it; the promise is firm, because of his love in it.—Comfort in what you want; since you have God's love, you shall not want.—Comfort in what you fear; you need fear no evil.—Comfort in what you do; all your services will be accepted; all your sins pardoned, though he should take vengeance on your inventions.—Comfort in what you suffer; you shall be sustained and supported; and though you may suffer

the loss of gifts, goods, liberty, life, yet you cannot lose God, Christ, the Spirit, grace, heaven, or God's everlasting love.—O go away with the comfortable sense of his distinguishing love !

In a word, Are you lovers of God ? O go away rejoicing in it, that he first loved you : he is not behind hand with you ; “ He loved you before you loved him.” You were elected by the grace of God from eternity ; you were redeemed by the blood of Christ, you are certainly effectually called ; “ For they that love him, are the called according to his purpose ;” and the day comes, when you shall enjoy the object of your love in a full manner. If you be true lovers of Christ, I certify you, the time is coming, when you shall see Christ as he is, and be for ever with the Lord, and enjoy him for evermore ; and love without decay, and love without wearing shall be your everlasting exercise : you shall rejoice in an immediate enjoyment of him. You were upon his heart from eternity ; you are upon his heart this day in heaven : for you his eternal Son came to the world ; for you he lived, for you he died ; your love to Christ is a reflex of his and his Father's love to you ; and there is not a true lover of Christ here, but hath as good ground to say as ever Paul had, “ He loved me, and gave himself for me.” Your love to him is an infallible pledge of his ancient love to you, a pledge of his present love to you, and a pledge of the future enjoyment of him. O let your heart, and life, and tongue, and all that is within you, and about you, vent love to him, and say, “ We love him, because he first loved us !”

SERMON XIX.¹

THE MILITANT'S SONG ; OR, THE BELIEVER'S EXERCISE WHILE
HERE BELOW.

PSALM ci. 1.—“ I will sing of mercy and judgment ; unto thee, O Lord, will I sing.”

I HOPE the subject I am here in providence directed to will natively lead us, if the Lord bless it, to a suitable exercise upon a thanks-

(1) This Sermon was preached at Carnock, on Monday, July —, 1723, being a thanksgiving day, immediately after the celebration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper there.

giving day after a communion ; even with gratitude of soul to sing the praises of a God in Christ, and that whether we have met with a smile or a frown from heaven, or both, at this occasion. If any here have got a smile, or found him to be a smiling and a present God, they may sing of mercy ; if any here have got a frown, or found him to be a hiding God, they may sing of judgment ; or, if any here have got both a smile and a frown, they may sing of both, and say, I will sing of mercy and judgment : unto thee, O Lord, will I sing."

The words contain the Psalmist's holy resolution to praise and glorify God for all his dispensations towards him, now that he was advanced to the kingdom of Israel ; and in them you may shortly notice, 1. The sweet work that is resolved upon, namely, To sing. 2. The sweet singer that thus resolves, namely, DAVID ; "I will sing." 3. The sweet subject of the song, namely, mercy and judgment. 4. The sweet object of this praise, and the manner in which he would sing it ; "Unto THEE, O LORD, will I sing."

1. The sweet work that is resolved upon, namely, to sing. It is the work of heaven, and a very fit work after a communion, to sing a song of praise to God, in the manner which we may afterwards explain.

2. The sweet singer ; "I will sing." The title of the psalm shows it was David's, the man after God's own heart ; the man anointed by the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel ; for so he is called, 2 Sam. xxiii. 1.

3. The sweet subject of the song, or the matter of it, namely, mercy and judgment. God's work towards his people is chequered work ; a mixture of mercy and judgment : and, when he exercises us with both, it is our duty to sing of both, and to be suitably affected with both ; whether our circumstances be joyful or sorrowful, still we must give glory to God ; and in every thing give thanks : neither the laughter of a prosperous condition, nor the tears of an afflicted condition must put us out of tune for the sacred songs of praise.

4. The sweet object of this praise, and the manner in which he resolves to sing it, "Unto THEE, O LORD, will I sing." It is in the most solemn manner that he addresses the Lord JEHOVAH, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and dedicates his song to the praise of a God in Christ ; "Unto THEE, O LORD, will I sing." But I refer the further explication to the prosecution of a doctrine from the words.

OBSERV. That, as the people of God hath both mercy and judgment in their lot in this world; so, from both they may have matter of a song of praise unto God.

They have occasion in this world to sing both of mercy and judgment. We find the psalmist frequently singing both of mercy and judgment; as Psalm xxx. 6—9. Psalm xlii. 7. 11. You have an elegant description of the lot of God's people, while here, as consisting both of mercy and judgment, and so affording occasion to sing of both, 2 Corinthians vi. 8, 9, 10.; where you will see the blink and the shower; the mercies and judgments that are in their lot; how God hath set the one over against the other; by honour and dishonour, by evil report and good report, &c. Thus they have occasion to sing both of mercies and crosses, while they find the Lord supporting them under trials, and remembering mercy in the midst of wrath, and making all things work together for good to them; "I will sing of mercy and judgment; unto thee, O Lord, will I sing." The Chaldee paraphrase of this text is remarkable, and suitable to the doctrine I have raised from it, namely, it is as if the psalmist had said, "If thou bestowest mercies upon me; or if thou bringest any judgment upon me; before thee, O Lord, will I sing my hymn for all."

The method I propose for prosecuting this doctrine, through divine aid, is the following.

- I. I would speak a little of the mercies that the people of God meet with; and what it is in these that affords them matter of a song of praise.
- II. I would speak a little of the judgments they are trusted with; and what it is in judgment that may be matter of a song of praise to God.
- III. What this singing imports; and how we are to sing of mercy and judgment: where we may notice what is imported in the psalmist's resolutions, and the manner of expressing it: "I will sing of mercy and judgment; unto thee, O Lord, will I sing."
- IV. Why it is so ordered of the Lord that his people are made to sing both of mercy and of judgment.
- V. Draw some inferences for the application.

I. I am first to speak a little of mercy, of which they ought to

sing; and here I would shew, 1. What this mercy is; and, 2. What it is in mercy that may be matter of a song, or afford ground of singing.

1st, What this mercy is. Mercy, in God, signifies a propensity or readiness of mind to help and succour such as are in misery: and it carries in it an inward commotion and moving of bowels, as God says of Ephraim, "My bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him," Jer. xxxi. 20. God, to accommodate himself to our capacity, speaks after the manner of man, ascribing human affections to himself. I might here speak of the general mercy of God towards all, both just and unjust: for "He is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works," Psalm cxlv. 9. He makes his sun to shine, and his rain to fall upon good and bad: and all should sing of his mercy, if it were no more but for life, and health, and strength from him. There are some common gifts that all men have from him, and some common graces that some have more than others; but I speak especially of special mercies; and, indeed, there are of these that the visible church hath, besides the rest of the world, even the wicked among them; and, if they could, they should sing of these mercies; such as their hearing the gospel and the joyful sound; their getting the offer of Christ, and salvation through him: but I speak mainly of the special mercies, that bear the stamp of his everlasting love towards his chosen and hidden ones: mercy bred in God's breast from all eternity, whereby he made choice of some of the fallen mass of mankind in Christ, who is the channel wherein this mercy doth flow in various streams: and I shall mention a few of these, for there would be no end of speaking, to mention on all that might be said, or yet to enlarge all that may be mentioned.

1. There is the mercy of God in sending Christ to be the Saviour. We find the angels singing of this mercy, Luke ii. 11, 14, saying, "To you is born, in the city of David, a Saviour: Glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, and good-will towards men." Good-will and mercy towards man, because there is peace on earth, and reconciliation through Christ, who brings in glory to God in the highest; "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16. It is indeed a so without a SUCH; a love without a parallel: here mercy shines.

2. There is mercy in the death of Christ; see how the four and

twenty elders sing of this mercy : "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation ; and hast made us to our God kings and priests : " and the angels join issue with them, to the number of 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," Rev. v. 9—12.

3. There is mercy that he shews in raising Christ from death, and in raising and quickening us together with him. We find the apostle singing of this mercy ; "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he hath loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," Eph. iii. 4, 5. If Christ must die he must conquer death, that his people may be more than conquerors in him over death : both spiritual death, whereby we were under the guilt of sin ; and legal death, whereby we were under the guilt of sin, and sentence of the law. In opposition to both these, the life of regeneration, and the life of justification is connected with this merciful quickening together with Christ ; as you see, Col. ii. 13, "You, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him : having forgiven you all trespasses." O how does the psalmist sing of this mercy ! "Bless the Lord, O my soul, who forgiveth all thy sins, and healeth all thy diseases," Psalm ciii. 2, 3.

4. There is mercy that he shews in cleansing the soul from the filth of sin, as well as the guilt thereof, till it be washed and made quite clean at last. See how the saints do sweetly sing of this mercy, Rev. i. 7, where, I think, they sing both of pardoning and purifying mercy ; "To him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever, Amen.

5. There is mercy that he shews in adopting such heirs of hell by nature, to be the children of God by grace : and you may see how believers sing of this mercy ; "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God !" 1 John iii. 1. He makes them his children, and gives them the Spirit of adoption ; "Because ye are sons he hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, ABBA,

Father." He gives them the mark and seal of his children, even the Spirit as a Spirit of prayer, and as a Spirit of faith, and a Spirit of love, working the love of God in our hearts, who are by nature enemies: and, O what mercy is here!

6. There is mercy that he shews in conferring the high dignity of priesthood and royalty upon them; see how they sing of this mercy; "To him that loved us,—and hath made us kings and priests unto God, and his Father [or, to God, even his Father]: to him be glory," Rev. i. 5, 6. "Kings unto God," how? Even to fight for him against sin, Satan, and the world, and conquer all our enemies in his name. "Priests unto God," how? Even to offer spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ; to offer our prayers and praises, souls and bodies to him, on our altar, Jesus Christ. Thus they are made kings and priests: and therefore called a royal priesthood: a priesthood of kings, or a kingdom of priests.

7. There is mercy that he shews his people, in abiding and standing by them in all difficulties, so as nothing shall ever be able to separate them from the favour of their God. See how sweetly the apostle Paul sings of this mercy; "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distresses, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?—Nay, I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord," Rom. viii. 35,—39. But though neither death, nor life, nor angels do it, yet may not sin separate me from the mercy and love of God? Indeed it may separate, so as to make a fearful desertion, but never so as to make a final separation; for, "His mercy endures for ever:" and he hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. He will visit their iniquity with the rod,—but his loving kindness will he not take away. My mercy will I keep with him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him," Psalm. lxxxix. 28, 32, 33.

8. There is mercy that he shews, in giving many merciful experiences of his goodness and mercy following them all the days of their life; such as the psalmist sings of, Psalm. xxiii. 6. It is true the leading mercy of all is God himself, Christ himself, the Spirit himself; one God in three Persons, is their God; made over to them in that word, "I will be your God." Here is the fountain-mercy of all mercies, of which they may sing, saying, "This God is our God

for ever and ever, and will be our guide even unto death." And indeed to sing of mercy, is to sing of a merciful God : but as we know the nature of the fountain by the sweetness of the streams, so we may take a view of some more of these streams, under the notion of merciful experiences ; and I name these following, by which a song of mercy may be excited.

(1.) There are merciful intimations and communications that they sometimes get, to make them sing of mercy. Sometimes he intimates his love, saying, " I have loved thee with an everlasting love : " Sometimes he intimates pardon, saying, " I, even I, am he, that blotted out thy transgressions, and will remember thy sins no more : " Sometimes he intimates acceptance, saying, " O man, greatly beloved ; " and the intimation sets them a wondering and praising : Sometimes he communicates his mind and his secrets to them, " The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew unto them his covenant : " Sometimes the secrets of his providence ; he will tell them what he hath a mind to do with themselves, and what he hath a mind to do with such a friend, and such a child, and such a land or church ; " Shall I hide from Abraham that which I do ? " Sometimes he communicates himself to them, saying, " I am thy God, I am thy shield ; fear not, for I am with thee : " Sometimes such intimations and communications are given, as make all their bones to say, " Who is like unto thee ! "

(2.) There are merciful visits after desertion, and after backsliding, that they sometimes get to make them sing of mercy, when they have been heaping up mountains of sin and provocation betwixt him and them ; yet, after all, he hath come and given them occasion to say, " The voice of my Beloved, behold he cometh skipping upon the mountains, and leaping upon the hills, Cant. ii. 8. " The voice of my Beloved ! " O an exceeding sweet and powerful voice ! It hath a sound of heaven ; I thought the mountains would have kept him away, but I heard the sound of his feet upon the mountains, that made my heart warm toward him again ; I had departed from him by an evil heart of unbelief, and I thought he would never return ; but, O he restored my soul, and helped me anew to wrestle with him : " We found him in Bethel, and there he spake with us. "

(3.) There are merciful accomplishments of promises, that they sometimes get, to make them sing of mercy. The Lord sometimes lets in a promise with life and power, and gives them a word on

which he causes them to hope. It may be, he will give them a promise for themselves, and it may be a promise for their children ! such as that, "I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed;" and sometimes a promise for the church ; such as that "Upon all the glory there shall be a defence : " and sometimes he gives a wonderful accomplishment of promises, like that of Hezekiah ; "What shall I say ? he hath both spoken, and himself hath done it : " He hath come to my soul, and made me see that he is as good as his word ; and that faithfulness is the girdle of his loins.

(4.) There is a merciful grant of all their desires, that they sometimes get, to make them sing of mercy. As the desire of their soul is towards him, and the remembrance of his name ; so he satisfies the longing soul, and fills the hungary with good things ; and gives them sometimes a Christ in their arms, who is all their salvation, and all their desire : "Delight thyself in the Lord, and he will give thee the desire of thy heart. Some have got their desires satisfied abundantly, now and then ; they have got all that they could desire with respect to temporal mercies ; all that they could desire with respect to spiritual mercies ; yea, all that they could desire within time, till they get an armful of him before the throne.

(5.) There is merciful instruction and illumination, that they sometimes get, to make them sing of mercy ; "The path of the just is as the shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day. And therefore he gives them to learn some lesson more and more ; some gospel-lesson, and gospel-mystery, that they were in the dark about : and one great lesson that he teaches them is, even the difference betwixt the law and the gospel ; he teaches them, that the law is holy, just, and good ; and how the gospel crowns the law in all these respects : he teaches, that the law is holy in its commands, commanding perfect holiness, perfect obedience ; and how the gospel shews where this perfect obedience is to be had, even in Christ, in whom they have not only strength to answer it as a rule of duty in part, but perfect righteousness to answer it as a covenant of works completely : he teaches them, that the law is just in its threatening, the threatening of eternal death ; and how the gospel shews where this threatening hath vented itself, even in demanding and getting complete satisfaction from Christ the Surety ; and therefore may the soul say, Well is me, for the shower of wrath is over my head, and hath lighted upon the head of my Cautioner ! He teaches them, that the law is good in its promises, namely, its

promise of eternal life to perfect personal obedience : but withal he teaches them by the gospel, how they hold their title to life, only in Christ, to whose perfect obedience now all the promises are made, and in whom all the promises are Yea and Amen. O what a mercy is it to learn these lessons in a saving way ; "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God. He hath hid these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them to babes ; even so, Father, for it seemed good in thy sight."

(6.) There are merciful sensible enjoyments, which they sometimes get, to make them sing of mercy : sometimes they get sensible sights of his glory, and that in a way of believing ; "Said I not unto thee, If thou wouldst believe, thou shouldst see the glory of God ?" O, says the man, I found faith to be the hardest thing in the world, and yet he made me find it to be the easiest thing in the world, when he carried me on the wings of the spirit of faith ; and by faith I saw his glory, and the glory of God in the face of Jesus. When I speak of sensible sight, do not mistake me ; for I know that faith and sight, or faith and sense, differ in several respects, which I am not now to open ; and yet faith brings in a kind of sense, it being the evidence of things not seen, and the substance of things hoped for ; and therefore, by a sensible sight, I mean, the spiritual sense of seeing by faith, and seeing clearly ; for sometimes the man gets a sight of Christ, as clearly as if he saw him with his bodily eyes : O, says the man, I have seen his fulness and sufficiency ; I see his fitness and suitableness for me ; I see his worthiness and excellency in himself. O none but Christ, none but Christ ; as once a martyr, standing at a post, and having matches kindled upon him, and the flames about his finger-ends, he clapped his hands together, and cried, "None but Christ, none but Christ."

Some men they get sensible tastes of his goodness : "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste." O how sweetly did I feed upon the apple-tree, and plucked off the apples that grew upon this tree ; the apple of imputed righteousness ; the apple of imparted grace, the apple of peace, the apple of pardon, the apple of assurance, the apple of joy, the apple of contentment, the apple of love, the apple of liberty ! O the sweet fruit, the sweet apples that grow upon this tree of life ! "I sat under his shadow with great delight," &c.

Sometimes they get a sensible hearing of his voice ; like that in the Song, "It is the voice of my Beloved that knocketh," Song

v. 2. He knocked by his voice, saying, "Open to me, my sister, my spouse." O sweet was his voice, when he said to me, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee!" How sweet was his voice, when he said, "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee!" When he said a word like that of the angel, "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favour with God! Did not my heart burn within me, when he talked with me by the way?" In such a word, and at such a sacrament, and such an ordinance, and such a duty? "Never man spake like this Man." It was the voice of a God that I heard; for it was with such a glance of glory, as set my heart all in a flame of fire.

Sometimes they get a sensible smell of his ointments. O! his Name had a smell of heaven; for, "Because of the savour of his good ointment, his name was as ointment poured forth." O! his garments had a smell of heaven; "All his garments smell of aloes, myrrh, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces." The garment of his righteousness had a smell; it is a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour; and the perfume thereof puts away the stinking smell of sin: the garment of his graces had smell, when the Spirit breathed upon them, and the north and south wind awakened, the spices sent forth a pleasant smell; when the Spirit warmed my cold heart in duties, and the fire from heaven kindled the sacrifice, then it mounted up to heaven, like a pillar of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, and all the powders of the merchant.

Sometimes they get a sensible feeling of his power; they have felt a sweet power coming along with the word, the sacrament, the prayer, the duty, that hath set a lawful captive at liberty, and loosed their bands; "Truly I am thy servant, thou hast loosed my bands," Psalm cxvi. 16. O, says the man, at such a time, I am quit of the band of fear, I am quit of the band of unbelief, I am quit of the band of doubts, I am quit of the band of corruption: a power hath come, and knocked off my fetters: I felt his hand passing through the hole of the door of my heart, and my bowels were moved for him; he said to me, as it were to unbelieving Thomas, "Reach hither thine hand, and put it into the hole of my side," and let my wounds silence all your faithless fears, discouragements, and jealousies; and I was obliged to cry out, "My Lord, and my God." I thought he took me, as it were, by the hand, as he did Peter upon the water, ready to sink, saying, O why didst thou doubt? He shed abroad his love upon my heart so sweetly, that I

could doubt no more. I could have been content that the valley of vision had been my burial-place, and that I had never gone back to the world again ; for his love ravished my heart, and struck the bottom out of all my doubts and fears : I got all my backslidings healed ; I got all my prayers answered ; I got my burdens eased ; I got grace to pour out my soul into his bosom ; I got grace to bring all my corruptions to him, to be dashed to pieces ; I got grace to creep into his heart, and hide myself in his wounds ; I got grace to cast all my burdens over upon him, and my heart was lightened : and my soul was more eased and pleased, than if I had been a crowned emperor of all the kingdoms of the world.—These are some of the most merciful experiences that sometimes they will get, to make them sing of mercy. I might have mentioned many more to this purpose, both of ordinary and extraordinary mercies ; but I go on,

2dly, To the second question here proposed, What is IN mercy that affords ground of singing ?

1. The freeness and undeservedness of the mercy, makes them sing of mercy : when the man deserves hell, and the just sentence of the law to be past against him, mercy comes and takes hold of him. What is the cause of mercy ? There is nothing in man to merit it but misery ; which is indeed the occasion that God takes, to manifest his mercy through Christ ; but yet misery cannot be the cause of mercy ; for neither merit nor misery can be considered here to have any casual influence, it is just absolute sovereignty ; “It is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.” Sovereign mercy is a thing that can neither be obtained by any good, nor hindered by any evil about us ; he gives no account of his dealings : “I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.” He loves, and we shall be loved ; let all our high imaginations and proud reasonings strike sail to the sovereignty of free grace. O shall I not sing of mercy, that when I deserved a hell, I got a heaven ! I deserved eternal death, and I got a sweet view of eternal life. This accents the praises. “O ! what am I, that thou hast brought me hitherto ?”

2. The unexpectedness of the mercy makes them sing of mercy. O ! when I was expecting a frown I got a smile ; when I was expecting nothing but wrath, I got a glance of love ; instead of a stroke of vengeance, I got a view of glory. Hezekiah got a message of death, and was looking for it, when he got the news of life, and it

made him sing of mercy, Isaiah xxxviii. 15. The mercy of God is surprising mercy ; some have gone disconsolate and cast down to an ordinance, and, ere ever they were aware, their souls have got something which hath caused them to cry, "O ! is this the manner of man, O Lord?" Some have gone to a closet, or a field, or a barn, or perhaps to a dyke-side, with little or no expectation ; but behold they have been surprised with an armful of heaven ; perhaps at such a sermon they have been surprised with a word of love on the back of deep humiliation or desertion : a word, like a live coal, hath been cast in, and set their breast on fire, and their heart on a flame.

3. The seasonableness of the mercy makes them sing of mercy, for he comes with grace to help them in time of need : "I was brought low, and he helped me ;" I was brought to the brink of ruin, and the border of despair, when mercy stept in for my relief and comfort : when I was at the lowest extremity, he stept in and made it the sweetest thing that ever I saw ; "He brought me out of the horrible pit, and set my feet upon a rock, and put a new song in my mouth, even praises unto our God. He pitied us in our low estate, for his mercy endureth for ever."

4. The greatness and riches of the mercy makes them sing, saying, "O how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee, which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee, before the sons of men !" Psalm xxxi. 19. We read of the riches of his mercy ; the exceeding riches of his grace ; his people sometimes meet with exceeding rich favour ; such as not only exceeds their worth infinitely, but even exceeds their sense, exceeds their thoughts, exceeds their words, exceeds their desires, exceeds their prayers, exceeds their praises, exceeds all they can ask or think ; and this makes them sing. We read of his abundant mercy ; it is abundant in respect of its fountain ; for his mercy is his nature, and must be infinite : it is abundant in respect of its streams, as it is let out abundantly towards the object thereof : it is abundantly great in respect of its various kinds, temporal mercy, spiritual mercy, eternal mercy ; temporal mercy makes them sing, and say, "I am less then the least of all thy mercies:" spiritual mercy makes them sing, and say, "He hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:" eternal mercy makes them sing and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. O how abundant are they in their kinds, outward and inward mercies ! Outward mercies are abundant : O the mercy that attended my birth, my educa-

tion, the place of my situation in the world, so as to be brought under the drop of the gospel; my preservation from innumerable dangers; my protection, my provision; he hath fed me all my life long. Inward mercies are abundant: the mercy that appeared in my being awakened, convinced, humbled, converted, confirmed, comforted, called, justified, adopted, sanctified. O what ground of singing of mercy! It is great and abundant in respect of the qualities of it: O what matter of singing might be gathered out of the views of mercy, as it is preventing-mercy, sparing-mercy, condescending-mercy, covering-mercy, tender-mercy, waiting-mercy, constraining-mercy, restraining-mercy, restoring-mercy, following-mercy! Even when I fled away from mercy, mercy and goodness followed me. But the bare mentioning of all would be impracticable: O the greatness of the mercy of which they may sing! O the greatness of the Author of it, a great God! If we be saved, what does he get? If we be damned, what does he lose? Yet he shews mercy. O the greatness of the object of it! it is extended towards the chief of sinners. O the greatness of the effects of it! Hereby great sins are pardoned, great blessings are conferred; great wrath is averted, and great salvation is obtained: O how can they but sing of mercy! O the greatness of the attendants and companions of it! It makes them sing, not only when they notice the mercy, but the contents, concomitants of it, and what comes along with it; how sweetly will the soul sing when it can say, I not only got such a mercy, but I saw God in it, and Christ in it, and the Spirit in it, and heaven in it, and glory in it! O, how sweet, when they consider this favour hath a necessary connection with heaven! It is a foretaste of what I shall enjoy for ever: it is connected with God's everlasting love. And hence,

5. Not only the greatness, but the sweetness of the mercy makes them sing. And there are two things, among many others, that make it sweet to them, namely, the excellency of the mercy itself, and then their relation to it. On the one hand, the excellency of the mercy; "How excellent is thy loving-kindness, O Lord! Thy favour is better than life. His mouth is most sweet," says the Church: "The words of his mouth are sweeter than honey, or the honey-comb." On the other hand, their relation to the mercy, contributes to the sweetness of it; the more of faith's application, the more sweet. O, says faith, there is a promise, and it is mine; there is a pardon, and it is mine; there is a robe of

righteousness, and it is mine ; there is a crown of glory, and it is mine ; there is a God, and he is mine : all is mine, because Christ is mine. O then he sings of mercy. But,

6. To name no more, The sureness and firmness of the mercy makes them sing : they are called, "The sure mercies of David," Isaiah lv. 3. The Septuagint renders it as the apostle does, Acts xiii. 34, "The holy, just, and faithful things of David." The mercies of God in Christ, our mystical David, are his holy, just, and faithful things : his holiness, justice, and faithfulness are concerned to make good and secure his mercy to them that believe. Hence it is said of believing penitents, 1 John i. 9, that God is faithful and just to forgive them their sins. Faithfulness hath a respect to God's promise, and justice a respect to the price and ransom paid by Christ : and God hath bound himself ; he is bound by his own faithfulness on the one hand, he will be faithful to his word of promise ; and he is bound by his own justice on the other hand, which is fully satisfied in Christ : he is thus obliged to give out mercy, and secure it for the believer : this makes it indeed the sure mercies of David ; and so they are eternally secured, and therefore everlasting mercies. In a word, the thing that makes them sing of mercy is, When they see the mercy to bear in it the tokens of God's love : when they find such a mercy is not only the answer of prayer, but the fruit of God's electing grace ; when they see God's everlasting love to be the fountain from whence it flows, Christ's everlasting righteousness the channel in which it runs, and the powerful operation of the Spirit making the effectual conveyance and application of all.—Now, these are some of the mercies, and the things in these mercies, both more ordinary and extraordinary, that are grounds of singing : "I will sing of mercy." But to the other part of the song.

II. The second thing was, to speak of the judgments that the Lord's people meet with ; and what it is in judgment that may be matter of a song of praise unto God. To sing of mercy is what I understand, may you say ; but how to sing of judgment, I want to know. Here then I would follow the same method as in the former head, namely, 1. To speak of some of these judgments they may meet with. 2. What it is in judgment, that may be matter of a song of praise to God.

1st. Now as to the first of these, viz., The judgments of which they are to sing : in order to clear this, you would know, that the

word Judgment hath various significations in Scripture; I shall name some of these.

1. Judgment sometimes signifies, when spoken with relation to man, Understanding and Equity: sometimes it signifies Understanding, and a faculty of discerning, in opposition to ignorance; "I pray that your love may abound yet more in more, in knowledge, and in all JUDGMENT," Philp. i. 9. Sometimes it signifies Equity, in opposition to Injustice: "I know Abraham, that he will command his children and his household after him, that they keep the ways of the Lord, and do justice and JUDGMENT," Gen. xviii. 19. Now, though the doing judgment thus, and that with an understanding heart, be one of the ways by which we are to sing the praises of God, and glorify him, of which more afterwards; yet other things are here intended. Therefore,

2. Judgment, when spoken of with relation to God, signifies several other things; as,

(1.) It sometimes signifies God's just and righteous government of the world, particularly by Christ Jesus; "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all JUDGMENT to the Son," John v. 22. Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne: and that both in the iron rod, by which he takes vengeance on his enemies; and in the golden sceptre, by which he rules his own people. And indeed, whatever be intended in the text, this government of Christ is matter of a song of praise; "The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice; the Lord reigns, let the earth be glad." But,

(2.) Judgment sometimes signifies the recitude of Christ's administration, in his forming the world, and bringing things in order, which sin and Satan had put into confusion; so may that word be understood, John ix. 34. "For JUDGMENT am I come into this world; And again, "Now is the JUDGMENT of this world; now shall the prince of this world be cast out." Of this judgment also will the believer sing, when the Spirit is come to convince, as of sin and righteousness, so also of judgment; "Because the prince of this world is judged." But,

(3.) Judgment sometimes signifies the precepts of the law; as ye know they are frequently called, God's testimonies and judgments, especially, Psalm. cxix. And when a man learns these in a gospel-way, they are matter of a song of praise also, Psalm cxix. 7., "I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I have

learned thy righteous JUDGMENTS." Yea, they delight therein, and sing of these judgments, Psalm cxix. 54. "Thy statutes have been my song in the house of my pilgrimage."

(4.) Judgment sometimes signifies the doctrine of the gospel: "I will put my Spirit unto him, and he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles," Matth. xii. 18. It is cited out of Isaiah xlii. 1. "He shall shew judgment to the Gentiles:" That is, He will publish the gospel; the way and method of salvation, which he came, as a Prophet, to teach and proclaim; as a Priest, to work out; and as a King, to apply; and if you should take judgment in this sense, surely all believers sing of judgment, whenever faith is in exercise; for the gospel is the song of the saints; it is the joyful sound, while with joy they draw water out of this well of salvation, Psalm lxxxix. 15. Isa. xii. 3.

(5.) It sometimes signifies the punishment inflicted upon Christ, when he substituted himself in our room; "He was taken from prison and from JUDGMENT:" or, as it may be rendered, and as you will see in the margin of some of your Bibles, "He was taken away BY DISTRESS and judgment;—while it pleased the Lord to bruise him," Isa. liii. 8, 10. O but this infinitely severe act of justice and judgment against Christ was an infinite act of mercy towards us! And, as we had perished eternally, if we had not been thus judged and condemned in a Surety, so this judgment executed upon him, is noble matter of a song. To sing of judgment, in this sense, is one of the sweetest hymns to the praise of God.

(6.) Judgment sometimes signifies the solemnity of the last day: "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousand of his saints, to execute JUDGMENT upon all," Jude, ver. 14, 15. And though it will be a day of terrible vengeance to the wicked, Christless world, yet the saints may sing of joy; for, the day of their redemption draws near: "When Christ, who is their life shall appear, they shall appear with him in glory. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust."

(7.) Judgment sometimes signifies the punishment of the wicked in a wrathful manner; and the heavy plagues which he pours out upon any person or people, whether it be sword, famine, pestilence, or any other stroke: Exod. vi. 6. "I will redeem you from Egypt (says the God of Israel) with a stretched out hand, and with great JUDGMENTS:" that is, with great plagues and punishments upon the Egyptians. "The Lord is known by the JUDG-

MENTS which he executeth." And sometimes the Lord gives his church and people occasion to sing of judgment in this sense, as Israel did at the Red-sea, after God had poured out all his plagues upon Pharaoh and upon his proud host; on which occasion you have the song of Moses, *Exod. xv.* In this sense it is said, "The righteous shall rejoice when he sees thy vengeance." Not that he will love to feed his eyes upon the blood and ruin of his fellow-creatures, but rejoice in that God is glorified in the destruction of his enemies, and the salvation of his church and people.

(8.) Judgment sometimes signifies the chastisement of the godly: for, as there is a wrathful judgment, which God exercises towards his enemies; so there is a fatherly judgment, which he exercises towards his friends. In this sense we may understand that word in the institution of the sacrament, even as it concerns the godly themselves, "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation [or, JUDGMENT] to himself," as the word may be rendered, *1 Cor. xi. 29.* And indeed, as a believer may communicate unworthily, so his unworthy communicating may bring on him heavy judgments or chastisements from the Lord;" "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep," verse 30. Judgment, I say, signifies sometimes fatherly judgments or chastisements: and thus it is to be understood, *1 Peter iv. 17.* "The time is come that JUDGMENT must begin at the house of God." And in this sense especially I conceive Judgment to be meant in the text, "I will sing of mercy and of JUDGMENT." So that by Judgment here we are to understand all the hardships and sorrows of a believer's lot, whether punitive or probative; that is, whether for the punishment of his sins, or the probation of his graces: all penal dispensations for his correction, or whatever dispensations make for his trial: all adversity, sufferings, and distresses, of whatsoever kind.

Now, if you ask more particularly what these judgments are? I think they may be all reduced to these four ordinary words, 1. The judgment of affliction. 2. The judgment of temptation. 3. The judgment of desertion. 4. The judgment of sin itself, which may be so called, when a man is left to fall into it for the punishment of other sins. I am not yet come to shew how these, or any of these, may afford matter of a song; I am as yet telling you what are the judgments they may meet withal. And,

1. The judgment of affliction. Many are the afflictions of the

righteous, even their outward afflictions: sometimes they are afflicted in their bodies, with sickness; sometimes in their estate, with poverty; sometimes in their name, with reproach; sometimes in their relations, either by the gracelessness of their relations, or by their death; if they were gracious, then they are afflicted with grief that they have lost them; if they were graceless, then they are afflicted with fear lest they be gone to hell; if they know not whether they died in Christ or not, they are afflicted with perplexity, because they know not what is become of them; sometimes they are afflicted in their families, with this and the other cross, and disorder, and confusion; sometimes in their neighbours and brethren, whether wicked or godly, from whom they may have trials of many sorts; sometimes in their cause they maintain, and for conscience sake, they may be persecuted and harassed; "If any man will live godly in this world, he must suffer persecution:—through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God." There is a necessity for it; for the believer here is like the tribe of Manasseh, half on this side Jordan, in the land of the Amorites; and half on the other side, in the Holy Land: I mean, he hath both corruption and grace, and hence a necessity of affliction and suffering: for if he hath any good in him, the devil will surely gnash at him, and endeavour, if he can, to devour him; and if he hath evil in him, he must look that God will afflict him. But,

2. There is the judgment of temptation, that the children of God sometimes meet with, even the fiery darts of the devil: for the Lord sees fit sometimes to let Satan loose on his people; who will not be wanting to improve any liberty granted to him, with his uttermost power and policy, as we see in the case of Job. It is strange to read how Christ was tempted of the devil, Mat. iv. 3-10. And after that, let none think strange, that the followers of Christ may be tempted to deny their sonship; tempted to doubt of God's care; tempted to destroy themselves; yea, tempted to worship the devil: for, "In all these things he was tempted like as we are, yet without sin; and in that he himself, though he sinned not, yet suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." The children of grace may be tempted to Atheism, and to doubt of the being of a God; tempted to blasphemy and horrible things, that they dare not tell for a world. It is said by the Spouse, Song ii. 4, "He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love." Why, what is the meaning of a banner in a banqueting house? A banner is rather for a battle:

But indeed, sirs, here the banquet and the banner go together: for the battle many times follows the banquet. It may be, Satan and corruption are sleeping, as it were now: but I assure you, they are not dead: while ye have sin, ye shall have temptations to sin: so long as there is a finger of the believer out of heaven, the devil will be striking at it. If temptations have not assaulted you already since the sacrament, as I fear they have, yet be sure the Philistines will be upon you.

3. There is the judgment of desertion, which is yet sorer than any of the former; "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled." Sometimes the believer comes under the sad loss of the light of God's countenance, and the sense of his love; and may lose his gracious comfortable presence very suddenly, even when he is just opening the door of his heart, as it were, to let him in; "I opened to my Beloved, but my Beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone," Cant. v. 6. Sometimes he loses that comfortable presence very unworthily, even in a fit of drowsiness and spiritual security, as in that same fifth of the Song, ver. 3. Sometimes he loses it very long: "I sought him, but I found him not; I called on him, but he gave me no answer." I went from duty to duty, from ordinance to ordinance, and yet not so much as a word or a look from him. In this case it cannot but be a very melancholy time with the believer, when he goes mourning without the sun, saying, "O that I knew where I might find him! O that it were with me as in months past!" Especially if he knows that he hath not lost that presence by sovereignty on the Lord's part, but sinfully on his part: and that he hath sinned him away. How ill went it with Asaph, when he was forced to say, "I remembered God, and was troubled," Psalm lxxvii. 3. Why? he remembered his own unkindness and ingratitude, that provoked the Lord to be gone. O! it is not easy to comfort the soul in this case. This soul-desertion is ordinarily attended with the want of life for the performance of duty: "Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up," Psalm xl. 12. His spiritual strength was so worn away, that he was neither able to pray nor praise; nor do any duty with liveliness or activity. In this case, the soul cannot pray with life or power: it cannot hear with joy or profit; it cannot meditate with any delight or spirituality: it cannot act with any freedom or liberty: it cannot suffer for God with any zeal, patience, boldness, or resolution. O what a judgment is desertion! In this case, the

soul is filled sometimes with fearful apprehensions of the wrath of God, and everlasting vengeance; though believers be secured against this by the oath of God, the blood of Christ, and the seal of the Spirit; yet, under unbelief, temptation, and desertion, they may have fearful apprehensions of it, and that for their correction for their sins; for, though he pardon their iniquity, he will take vengeance on their inventions. Here the believer may be afraid of terrible judgments; "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments," Psalm cxix. 120. He may sometimes be afraid, lest God lay open the filthiness and wickedness of his heart to the world; and make him a reproach and a scandal to the godly and the wicked; this made the Psalmist pray, "O make me not the reproach of the foolish: let none that fear thy name be ashamed for my sake." Sometimes he may be afraid lest God strike him suddenly with a visible and signal judgment, and take him off the stage in a terrible manner; hence says David, "Take me not away in thy wrath." Sometimes he may be afraid lest he be the Jonas that hath raised, or may raise the storm of God's wrath against the family, the congregation, the church, the land where he lives: the apprehensions of this nature may be greivous, perplexing, and create a multitude of thoughts within him; yea, in this deserted case, he may be filled with the terrors of God, and the arrows of the Almighty drinketh up his spirit, Job vi. 4. They may be brought to that pass, that the sorrows of hell compass them about, so as they choose strangling and death rather than life; and yet all this may be in a way of fatherly judgment, for the punishment of their sins; as David's bones were broken for his murder and adultery: though sometimes he hath done it in sovereignty; yet the terrors of the Lord may bring them the length of distraction; "While I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted," Psalm lxxxviii. 15. O what a storm is this! Desertion may come to a great height, and bring along with it dreadful storms of fear, terror, and distraction. It may be, your mountain is standing strong, believer: but look to yourself, and beware of God-provoking sins, for he may hide his face, and then be sure ye shall be troubled. Many, under sensible enjoyments, are like a man in a meadow with the sun shining upon him, and, or ever he is aware, the mist comes about him, and he knows not where he is. There may come a mist about your soul, that you will hardly know where you are, or where you have been, or whether your former experiences have been any thing but a dream.

However, this is one of the judgments the people of God may meet with.

3. There is the judgment of sin, which is worst of all, and hath the nature of a judgment; when God lets the man fall into one sin, for the punishment of another, as he may do even with his own, when his fatherly anger burns hotly against them; this is the saddest judgment and severest chastisement that, I think, a child of God can meet with: and it would seem that David's adultery was thus, in part, chastised, by letting him fall into murder; and Peter's pride and self-confidence, by letting him fall into a threefold denial of his Lord and Master; and thus he may do till the time of restoring their souls, which he hath determined, shall come. O how ill, how dreadfully ill does it go with the children of God, when they are brought to that pitiful complaint, "O Lord, why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our hearts from thy fear!" Isaiah lxiii. 17. And when led captive by sin, Satan, and an evil heart; by the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life.—Thus I have told you some of these judgments that the people of God may meet with.

2dly, Now, the second question upon this head was, What it is in or about judgment that may afford matter of singing, or of a song of praise? And now, some may be thinking, O, Sir, these judgments you have been speaking of are just the things that mar all my singing, and it will be strange, if there be any matter of singing, notwithstanding of these; for, if these be the judgments, what can be the song or ground of singing, when they afford such ground of sighing and lamentation? I shall endeavour to shew you upon what grounds the sovereign Lord may even make these things matter of a song of praise. And,

1. Say you, What ground to sing of judgment may a child of God have, when affliction is the judgment? Indeed, no affliction of itself is joyous, but grievous; but the Lord can bring meat out of the eater, and sweet out of the strong; and a sweet song out of a sad stroke and affliction: Hence David sings of affliction, and says, "It was good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes," Psalm cxix. 71. Now, there is ground to sing of judgment, when affliction is not in wrath, but in love; when it comes not from a wrathful, but a fatherly judge; when it is not satisfactory, but castigatory; when it is not to satisfy divine justice, but to correct vicious habits; when it is not expiatory, but expro-

batory; when it is not to expiate sin, but to prove grace: "That the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ," 1 Peter i. 7. That Christ drank out all the wrath out of the cup of affliction, and left nothing behind but love for his people to drink, O what matter of song is here! For, "Being justified by his blood, we are saved from wrath through him," Rom. v. 9.—There is ground to sing of judgment, when affliction is attended with instruction, even saving instruction; to this purpose the Psalmist sings, "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, and teachest out of the law."—When, by affliction, a man comes to learn the sinfulness of sin, and the evil of it; the emptiness of the creature, and the vanity of it: and the fulness of Christ, and his all-sufficiency. O when the God of heaven does famish all our gods on earth, and starve us as to creature comforts, to make us hunger after the fulness and sweetness of Christ, what matter of singing is this!—There is ground to sing of judgment, when afflictions make us conform to the Lord Jesus Christ, who, as he suffered for us, so he left us an example that we should follow his steps: surely, to be herein conform to the Son of God, who endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, is ground of singing.—Again, there is ground to sing of judgment, when affliction tends to the destruction of sin; "For by this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin."—When it tends to gain the heart more to God, and wean the heart from the world, and all the things of the world, and lusts of the world; and is a fire to remove the dross, and a file to remove the dust.—Again, there is ground to sing of judgment, when afflictions are badges of honour; when they are signs of love: "For whom the Lord loves he chastens." When they are marks of sonship; for, "He scourges every son whom he receives." And, "If you be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then ye are bastards, and not sons," Heb. ii. 8. Yea, what a badge of honour is it, when a man is helped to a patient submission to his heavenly Father? What an honour did God put upon Job, in that signal sentence, "Ye have heard of the patience of Job!" Alexander the conqueror is not so renowned as Job the sufferer.—Again, there is ground to sing of judgment, in that affliction tends to make you happy and holy: "We are afflicted for our profit, that we may be partakers of his holiness. For though the

affliction be grievous for the time, yet afterwards it yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby," Heb. xii. 10, 11. When the deluge of affliction makes us fly as a dove to the window of the ark, and when by faith we make use of the water of affliction to make us swim the faster to Christ: then it is ground and matter of a song.—In a word, there is ground here to sing of judgments, in that they make preparation for glory; "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." And so the worst that God does with his children by affliction, is but to whip them home to heaven.—Thus you see what ground there is to sing of judgment, when affliction is the judgment.

2. What ground to sing of judgment, may a child of God have, when temptation is the judgment? Indeed, under temptation he is ready to say, "All these things are against me," and yet they may all be working together for his good: and therefore, if a child of God be tempted, in a manner that I spoke of before, there is here ground to sing of judgment, in that temptation forces him to his knees; the more furiously Satan tempts, the more seriously the believer cries and prays; "A messenger of Satan was sent to buffet me, but for this I besought the Lord thrice," 2 Cor. xii. 7, 8. There is here ground to sing of judgment, in that temptation abates the man's pride, ver. 7, "Lest I should be exalted above measure," this messenger of Satan was sent: the temptation that humbles the soul, and makes it lie low in the dust, is a matter of praise.—There is here ground to sing of judgment, in that temptation is sometimes the opportunity of the communication of grace; "I besought the Lord, and he said to me, My grace is sufficient for thee, and my strength is made perfect in thy weakness." Hereupon the man falls a-singing, "Most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me: for when I am weak, then am I strong," ver. 8, 9, 10. There is ground to sing of judgment here, in that many times temptation to sin, keeps from committing a sin: the more Satan tempts to blasphemy, the more the believer trembles at it, and is afraid of himself, while he does not see the tempter.—There is ground to sing of judgment, in that the temptation hath mercy in it; mercy to others, while we are the more fitted to comfort them when they are under temptation, 2 Cor. i. 4; mercy to ourselves, in that we become the objects of the Mediator's sympathy; "For we have not an High-priest that

cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all things tempted like as we are, yet without sin ;” therefore will succour them that are tempted.—There is here ground to sing of judgment, in that as it is no sin to be tempted ; so the temptation can do no harm, when there is no yielding : I said, that it is no sin to be tempted, and I say it again ; though to yield to the least temptation is a sin, yet it is no sin to be tempted to the greatest sin : for Christ, who could not sin, was tempted to sin : there is no sin in it, where there is no yielding to it : in that case it is the sin of the tempter, but not the sin of the tempted.—But say you, O the temptation conquers me, and therefore how can I sing of judgment in this respect ? Why, the prevailing of a temptation is a sad thing indeed ; but yet there may be ground to sing of judgment, if the prevailing of the temptation tend to increase the grace and godly sorrow, as Peter’s fall cost him many a salt tear ; and if the prevailing of the temptation tend to the increase of watchfulness, and make him more afraid to commit sin, and more afraid to neglect duty, and more careful to improve Christ ; in this case there is ground to sing of judgment.—Why, say you, if the prevailing of a temptation will issue in a song of praise, may not that make us careless whether we yield or not. Answer, the prevailing of a temptation is one thing, and the yielding to a temptation is another thing ; the prevailing of it may issue in joy, as I have told you, but the yielding to it may issue in sorrow ; and if that sorrow be turned into joy, it will be a wonder of grace : O ! “ Shall we thus sin, that grace may abound ? God forbid.” The wind of temptation is cross to the wind of the Spirit ; and if we flee before the wind of temptation, we flee away from God and heaven ; and therefore, if we sing of judgment sweetly and safely, it will be by reason of the wisdom of God making use of cross winds to blow us to heaven, and not of our fleeing before these. Thus you see what ground there is to sing of judgment, when, and even though temptation is the judgment.

3. What ground to sing of judgment may a child of God have, when desertion is the judgment ? Desertion and divine withdrawing is a very heavy case, whether it be a withdrawing in respect of grace, the withholding the influences of the Spirit, the quickening, grace-exciting influences thereof ; or in respect of comfort, the withholding the light of his countenance, and leaving the soul in the dark : when light is away, there is nothing but darkness in the air ;

when the Lord is away, nothing but darkness, disorder, and confusion in the soul. Now, "How can I sing one of the songs of Zion in such a dark land?" Nay rather, "Mine eye, mine eye weeps, because the Comforter that should relieve my soul, is far removed:" Instead of singing, "I must hang my harp upon the willows." Is there any ground to sing of judgment, when desertion is the judgment, unless it be a heavy song, while I cannot but mourn as a dove, and chatter as a crane? Why, even in desertion, the child of God (and indeed none but a child of heaven is capable of desertion) he may sing of judgment; in regard, that as the seed of grace may be where there is not the flower of joy; so, though weeping may endure for a night, yet joy comes in the morning; and they that sow in tears, shall reap in joy; and the reaping time is hastening on, for desertion is but for a short time, Isa. liv. 8. There the Lord gives this to be the ground of singing, even in such a case; "For a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with everlasting mercy will I gather thee; in a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee."—There is ground to sing of judgment, when desertion tends to awaken the soul out of its drowsy distemper; "I sleep," says the spouse, Song v. 2, and presently Christ withdraws; "My Beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone." Why, then she fell a seeking him whom her soul loved. It is true, it is one of the sad effects of desertion many times, that the soul grows careless, and cannot seek with any life; but yet, if a godly soul become sensible of the Lord's departing (for some time, the Lord may be away, and they do not know or consider, as it is said of Samson, "He wist not that the Lord was departed from him:" but I say, when a godly soul becomes sensible of it) and sees him going off, or hears him saying, Farewell: O then, like friends at parting, he follows him, and cannot part with him.—There is ground to sing of judgment here, when desertion tends to alienate the heart from the world; when the soul refuses to take comfort from any thing in time, because the absence of Christ darkens all, or makes all things bitter to you, because his sweet presence is away, it is matter of praise.—There is here ground to sing of judgment, in that desertion makes you prize the light of his countenance the more, saying, "O to see thy power and glory, as I have seen it in the sanctuary!" When the night of desertion makes you welcome the rising of the Sun of righteousness, it is a happy parting; that contributes to make a joyful meeting.—There is here ground to sing of judgment, in that desertion makes you hate sin

that caused the same, as a stone in the pipe, hinders the current of the water: that desertion is matter of praise, that makes sin odious to you, as that which robs you of your best jewels, and that makes you lament his absence, and the cause of it. It is indeed matter of sighing, to want his presence; but it is matter of sighing to lament his absence. It is ground of sorrow, to be without him at any time; but it is ground of praise, that you cannot live contentedly without him: I mean not a sinful discontent, that frets at his absence; but a holy discontent, that longs for his presence, and laments his absence; this I call matter of praise.—There is ground to sing of judgment, in that Christ drank out all the wrath of God out of the cup of desertion, when he suffered that heavy desertion himself, that made him cry, “ELI, ELI, LAMASABACHTHANI; My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”—Further, there is ground to sing of judgment here, in that this desertion makes the expectation of heaven sweet here, and the possession of it sweet hereafter; when the believer longs for heaven the more now, and loves it the better, then is it not matter of praise? O there is no hiding, no desertion, no cloud there, but a constant vision of glory; “We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”—In a word, there is ground to sing of judgment, in that desertion makes room for faith and hope, till vision and fruition come. It is matter of sorrow indeed, when there is occasion to say, “Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour;” but it is matter of praise, when the soul is brought to say, “I will wait on the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him,” Isa. viii. 17. It may be, ye get a breathing now and then in the air of sensible manifestations, but ye must up to faith and hope again; and through the cloud ye must look for him, and bless him when he helps you to do so; for, though it were a killing desertion, or a slaying-like dispensation, yet there is reason to sing, when he helps you to say, “Though he slay me yet will I trust in him.”—Thus you see what ground there is to sing of judgment, even when desertion is the judgment.

4. What ground to sing of judgment may a child of God have, when sin is a part of the judgment; when either the sins of others are the affliction, or his own sins are the affliction? When the sins of others are the affliction, can there be any ground to sing of judgment? When I see the generation laden with sins and abominations, grievously departing from the Lord, surely it is ground of

sighing and lamentation ; and it is duty to sigh and cry for all the abominations that are done in the midst of Jerusalem, Ezek. ix. 4. It is true and yet the song of praise must not go down among the children of God ; for there is ground to sing in this case, when ye can say, " I beheld transgressors, and was grieved." For, as it is child-like to be grieved for the injuries done to your Father ; so it is Christ-like, for he was grieved for the hardness of their hearts : Yet it is matter of singing, as it is a mark of love to God : for one may weep for his own sins from fear of hell, but he weeps for the sins of others from love to God.—It is matter of singing, when the more sin you see in others, it makes you hate sin the more, and swim against the stream when the faster they run to hell, it makes you run the faster to heaven, and sets you a-praying ; that when they are hastening to the prison, ye may hasten to a palace.—It is matter of singing, when the sins of others are the glass wherein you see your own hearts, and see the roots of all that wickedness to be within you ; and therefore are made the more thankful, that God restrains you by his power from doing the same ; and constrains you by his grace to do otherwise. When ye are helped to say thankfully, what the Pharisee said boastingly, The Lord be thanked that I am not as other men : and that I have not so learned Christ.—It is matter of singing also, when their sins make you more holy : and when their unsavouriness makes your graces to send forth a fragrant smell : and when thereby the Lord gives you an occasion to convince and convert them ; and to be the instruments of doing good to their souls.—Well, say ye, but the great question is, when my own sins are the affliction, can there be any ground to sing of judgment ? Indeed sinning can be no ground of singing ; for sin is in itself a damnable thing, worse than hell : and, in God's name, I will say, Whatever tends to discourage holiness, and encourage sin, let it be ANATHEMA : and cursed be the preaching that tends to encouragement of sin ; yea, cursed be the thought, in the preacher or hearer, that makes the doctrine of grace an encouragement thereto. Many such thoughts may enter into us all ; but may vengeance from heaven come down upon them, and destroy them in us, that we may not blaspheme a holy, sinless Jesus, to make him a minister of sin. However, sin being the worst of all affliction and judgment, it would be an everlasting damp to the song of mercy and judgment, if a sovereign God could not, in his infinite wisdom, bring a song of praise out of the evil of sin. Why then, there is ground to sing,

notwithstanding of sin, when God makes your sin a burden to you, and you to look upon yourselves as wretched because of it, saying, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this sin and death? When the burden of sin makes you weary of this life; saying with Rebecca, "I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth."—There is ground to sing notwithstanding of sin, when God makes the prevalency of sin the mean of drawing you to a Saviour, and the blood of Christ that cleanses from all sin; when daily sin makes daily application to the fountain open for sin and uncleanness; when the bitterness of sin makes Christ sweet and precious to you, and the sting of sin draws out your eye to look to the brazen serpent; and so the man sees God get more glory, and Christ more honour, and his righteousness more renown, then he sings and glories in his infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon him.—There is ground to sing, notwithstanding of sin, when the sense of sin makes a man to judge himself, and condemn himself, that he may not be judged and condemned of the Lord; when it makes him examine himself more strictly, saying, "Search me, O God, and try if there be any wicked way in me:" and observe himself more closely, so as to watch over his heart and way, so as to find out sin, and expel it, through grace, and live more circumspectly for the future.—There is ground to sing notwithstanding of sin; when sin makes a man to abhor himself, and to repent in dust and ashes: when it makes him, with David, to water his couch with his tears; and with Peter, to go out and weep bitterly, and lays him low in the dust before the Lord: "Therefore, as one says, Better is the sin that makes us humble, than the duty that makes us proud." The hypocrite's rising is the mean of his fall; but the believer's fall, is the mean of his rising. While the sense of his sin makes him holy, and sense of his pride makes him humble, his hypocrisy sincere, his hardness makes him soft, his carnality makes him spiritual; happy that victory of sin over a man, that issues in a bloody war against it: yet no thanks to sin, but to a sovereign wise God, that turns the malady into a medicine.—If any should hereupon take encouragement to sin, let them consider, if they do so, whether their spot can be the spot of God's children; for, to sin, that grace may abound, is a presumptuous sin of the highest degree; and true grace dare not draw such a bitter conclusion for such sweet promises; or, if a child of God should do so, and make bold with sin, let him consider, if this be all his kindness to his friend?

Though God do not damn you, he may send you to a hell in this life, and fill you with horrors, terrors, and agonies of soul, such as I spake of before : let this therefore be a rail to keep you back from the burning mountain. To sing of judgment in respect of sin, is not to sing of our folly in committing it, but to sing of God's wisdom in destroying it : you have no cause to sing of sin, which of itself brings death, ruin, and damnation ; but still cause to sing of judgment concerning sin, or of the Lord's executing judgment upon it.—But what if hell be the judgment at last, would you have me to sing in that case ? I fear I go to hell when all is done ; I fear I never get to heaven ; and how should I sing ? I answer, Have you not cause to sing, that ye are out of hell, and that it is not as yet your lot ? But I will tell you, if you were beginning to sing, it would be the beginning of heaven : “Blessed are they that dwell in thy house : they will be still praising thee.” Will you say, as an honest exercised Christian once said, when tempted to fear hell, and thereupon to give over the duties of religion, “Why, says he, if I shall never praise him in heaven, I shall endeavour to praise him all that I can on earth.” This would be a sweet token that you shall sing in heaven for ever, among the redeemed. And thus you see, whether we view judgment with respect to affliction, temptation, desertion, or sin, in what respects it is that we are to sing of judgment ; it is even to sing of the mercy that God exercises in these judgments : and so, “I will sing of mercy and of judgment.” It comes all to this, as if the Psalmist should say, “I will sing of MERCIFUL JUDGMENTS ;” for judgment is mercy, as it is the matter of the song : or, to take them separately, “I will sing of mercy IN mercies,” and “I will sing of mercy IN judgment ;” and so I will sing of my blinks and of my showers ; I will sing both of my cloudy and my clear day ; both of my ups and downs ; both of smiles and frowns ; I will sing both of frowning and favourable-like dispensations : “I will sing of mercy and judgment ; to thee, O Lord, will I sing.”—So much for the second head.

III. The Third general head proposed was, What this singing imports ; and how we are to sing of mercy and judgment to the praise of God. I shall speak a little to the quality and import of this song.

1st, The import of this singing : “I will sing to the Lord :” that is, I will praise the Lord ; and it does not lie in the simple sound of a voice, but imports the glorifying of God with our hearts and lips, in our lives, and in our death or suffering.

1. To sing to the Lord is to glorify him with our hearts ; to give him the love and adoration of our hearts. In this singing there is the inward act of the soul ; " Bless the Lord, O my soul : and all that is within me, bless his holy name," Psalm ciii. 1. It imports a deep impression of God upon the soul, and a lively sense of his mercy in Christ, and of our unworthiness of it : and here the soul, and all that is within it, is acting and moving : the judgment moves with admiration and wonder at God for his glorious grace ; the memory moves with a thankful recording of his favours, " Forget not all his benefits : " the affections move with joy and delight in God, and love to him for the riches of his grace in Christ. O shall I not love the greatest and best of Beings, for the greatest and best of benefits ! The heart is here employed : neither prayer nor praises, without the heart, are of any worth : many sing with their voice when their hearts are a hundred miles off, gadding here and there : but a fixed heart is a singing heart ; " My heart is fixed, O Lord ; my heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise." We are called to sing with grace in our hearts, Col. iii. 16 : we are to sing with faith in our heart : he that is strong in the faith glorifies God. We are to sing with love in our hearts, with fear in our hearts, and with joy in our hearts.

2. To sing to the Lord is with our lips to glorify him : we are to give him the calves of our lips. When the heart is full of love, the tongue will be full of praise. Our tongues should be as well-tuned organs, to sound forth the high praises of God, pleading his cause, defending his truths, avouching his name, and confessing him before the world : " Thy loving-kindness is better than life, therefore my lips shall praise thee," Psalm lxiii. 3. When our hearts are inditing a good matter, our tongues will be as the pen of a ready writer, to speak of the things that concern the king, Psalm xlv. 1, when our hearts are glad, then our glory [*i.e.*, our tongue] will rejoice, Psalms xvi. 9, and xxx. 12. O ! the little heavenly discourse argues a very sad degeneracy.

3. To sing to the Lord is with our life to glorify him ; when the love of our hearts, the calves of our lips, and the service of our lives are presented unto God together, they make a harmonious song : the praise of the life is the life of praise : " Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me," Psal. l. 23. When we devote all the actions of our life to his disposing will, then we sing a song of praise unto God. When we live by faith on the Son of God, for no less is

worth the name of life, but what is derived from him, and devoted to him, then we may be said to glorify him in our lives. It is a practical way of singing the praise of God, that is here intended by the Psalmist, as appears from the rest of the psalm.

4. To sing to the Lord is, with our death and sufferings, to glorify him, as well as with our life and actions; thus we are called to glorify the Lord in the fires, Isa. xxiv. 15. Does God call you to suffer affliction in person, name, estate, family, or concerns; to suffer want of husband, wife, brother, sister, children, or other outward comforts? Why, then, you sing of mercy and judgment by suffering patiently and submissively; and God is as much glorified by your passive obedience as by your active. Whenever you are afflicted any way, believer, know that then God hath some employment for your graces, and expects praise thereby; yea, if he should call you to suffer death and martyrdom for his name, you are to sing his praise, by dying in and for the faith, as well as living by faith. O man, woman! could you die for him that died for you? That is a great matter.—“O, it is a small matter to die once for Christ,” said a martyr: “if it might possibly be, I could wish that I might die a thousand deaths for him!”—Thus you see the import of singing to the Lord.

2dly, As to the qualities of this song; or how we are to sing of mercy and judgment. And,

1. We are to sing of mercy and judgment cheerfully. Singing is a cheerful work; we are to sing with melody in our hearts to the Lord, and to make a joyful noise unto God. It is an antedating of the joy of heaven; though you be in a hell of troubles and trials, yet you have reason to praise him that you are not in a hell of fire and brimstone: though you had one hell on your back, and another in your bosom, you have reason to praise him that you are not in the midst of hell, among devils.

2. We are to sing of mercy and judgment highly and loftily, saying, with the angels, “Glory to God in the highest.” We are to praise him with the highest estimation, with the highest adoration, with the highest admiration, with the highest delight, the highest ravishment, the highest wonder: for, as he is highly exalted above all things and beings, and above all blessings and praises; so his mercies are the highest mercies, and his judgments the greatest deep; and, therefore, as we ought to sing loud and high, so ought we to sing low. Therefore,

3. We are to sing of mercy and judgment humbly and lowly. Pride and praise are inconsistent; and therefore we should join trembling with our praise and singing; having awful impressions of God upon our souls, and knowing the infinite distance betwixt him and us. When the twenty-four elders sing, they come down from their thrones, and cast down their crowns and their palms, Rev. iv. 10, as if they would say, We are not worthy to sit upon a throne, or to wear a crown in his presence: they make their crowns and their thrones a footstool unto him. When we sing of mercy and judgment, we are to mind, his judgments are a great deep, and we ought to be deeply humbled before him, saying, "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!" Rom. xi. 33.

4. We are to sing of mercy and judgment constantly and unweariedly. Every new mercy and judgment should be matter of a new song: and O, his mercies are new every morning, new every moment; and therefore we should still be singing and saying, "I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall be continually in my mouth," Psalm xxxiv. 1. "Let such as love thy salvation, say continually, The Lord be magnified," Psalm xi. 16. It is true, the saints will never sing without intermission, till they reach above these clouds: It is true also, when they see mercy, they are ready to sing; but when they cannot see the sun of mercy, through the cloud of judgment, they are ready to sigh and hang their harps upon the willows: yet nevertheless, as the obligation to sing does always take place; so they have always matter of praise, and ground to sing of mercy and judgment.

5. We are to sing of mercy and judgment both conjunctly and severally; when you meet with a mercy, sing of mercy; when you meet with a judgment, sing of judgment; when you meet with mercy and judgment both, then sing of mercy and judgment both; and improve both for matter of a song of praise, so as God may be glorified, both in his mercy and judgment.

6. We are to sing of mercy and judgment devoutly and obediently, as knowing it to be a commanded duty. It would take many an hour to tell over all the scriptures, whereby we are called to praise the Lord: it is a good, pleasant, and comely duty; "Praise ye the Lord: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant, and praise is comely," Psalm cxlvii. 1. There you see three epithets given to this duty, to move us thereto.

(1.) It is a soul-enriching duty ; it is a good way to make a sad case grow better : the spouse, under desertion, fell a singing and saying, " My Beloved is white and ruddy, the chief among ten thousands : " and never was she in a better case than when in this praising tune. It is good to cry down our complaints with praises ; it is good, in that it is all the tribute that the King of heaven can have from us ; and to deny him this, is the height of treason, for it is rent due to him ; " Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name. " It is good by way of eminency ; for it is a greater mark of love than other duties : self-love may influence a man to prayer ; but love to God makes him praise. If you can draw out a long libel of complaints before God, and yet have never a word of praise for the mercies you enjoy, it is to be feared that self-love hath the penning of your prayers. It is a token of enmity with your neighbour, when you receive many favours from him, and never so much as give him thanks ; so it is a token of enmity against God, when notwithstanding of his mercies, yet you do not sing his praise. It is every way good.

(2.) It is a pleasant duty : no music does God delight so much in, as singing his praises. It is the pleasant work of heaven, where new scenes of glory will open, and open, and open to all eternity, and new songs of praise will still be sung for ever and ever. It may be you think, when once you come to heaven, you will praise your fill ; but now, when so many dead weights are upon you, you cannot, and should not sing and praise ; well, no thanks to you to praise him when you are once in heaven ; but, if you glorify him now in the fires, and praise him now, in spite of devils and opposition in your way, you do more honour to him than to praise him in heaven, where there is no trouble, no temptation, no sin or sorrow to interrupt your song. To sing like Paul and Silas in the stocks, is more than to sing in heaven ; though not more pleasant, yet in some respect it is more honourable, noble, and glorious. And so,

(3.) It is a comely duty ; the garment of praise is a very graceful ornament. An ungrateful and unthankful man is an ugly ill-favoured man ; nothing more uncomely in the eyes of God and man. We are to praise him then devoutly, under a sense of duty.

7. In the Last place, we are to sing resolutely, or with holy purpose and resolution ; saying, with the Psalmist here, " Unto thee, O Lord, will I sing. " And, because this is a part of the text, I shall shew what is imported in the Psalmist's resolution and the

manner of expressing it: "I will sing of mercy and judgment; unto thee, O Lord, will I sing."

(1.) I think it imports a grounded resolution, that he had got a discovery of the glory of God's mercy and justice in the face of Jesus Christ; and a discovery of the glory of God in all his merciful and afflictive dispensations. He had a sense and impression of the goodness of God, in all the favours that he met with; and he had a sense and impression of the wisdom of God, in ordering all afflictive providences to his soul's advantage. "I will sing of mercy and judgment."

(2.) It imports a grateful resolution, that the spirit of gratitude filled his soul; so much does his resolution to sing import; for it says, that his spirit was sweetened with a sense he had of the kindness of God; his meditation of him was sweet, and that makes him resolve upon such a sweet exercise: he saw what strong and manifold obligations he was under to praise and magnify the name of the Lord.

(3.) I think, the manner of expression imports a cordial resolution: heart and will are engaged in it: there is twice I WILL in the text; "I WILL sing of mercy and judgment; unto thee, O Lord, I WILL sing." He had a good will to the work: where the understanding is enlightened in the knowledge of God, in his mercy and judgment, there the will is subdued and made willing; willing to praise, willing to glorify God by the obedience of faith and love through grace.

(4.) The manner of expression imports a fervent resolution; so much I think lies in that word, "O Lord, I will do it; to thee, O Lord, I will sing." To be fervent in prayer, is a notable exercise; but to be fervent in praise, is yet more notable: fervency in seeking is good; but fervency in singing is yet better; "To Thee, O Lord, will I sing." Perhaps this *O* imports also a wonder; O, I will sing; for thy mercies and judgments are so wonderfully great! O, I will sing with wonder and admiration!

(5.) The manner of expression imports a humble resolution: I cannot sing of merit; but I will sing of mercy, and through mercy I will sing of mercy. To sing of mercy must be a humble song; for mercy towards a miserable sinner is a melting word; and to sing of judgment must be a humble song; for judgment in every sense is an awful word; and the Psalmist breathes out his resolution in a most humble manner, "O Lord, I will sing of mercy and judgment."

(6.) The manner of expression imports a solemn resolution made in the presence of the great JEHOVAH ; “ To thee, O LORD, will I sing. It is not only resolved in his own mind, that he will sing to the Lord, but by way of solemn address to the God of heaven, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ; “ To thee, O Lord, will I sing : to thee will I give the glory of thy mercy and judgment : behold, I resolve upon it before thee, O Lord.

(7.) The manner of the expression imports a skilful harper, a dexterous musician, even in a spiritual sense ; he knew what should be the subject of the song, and therefore says, “ I will sing of mercy and judgment : ” and he knew what should be the object of the song, or to whom it should be sung, and therefore says, “ To THEE, O Lord, I will sing : ” he knew who should be the Singer : and therefore says, I will do it : he knew what should be the manner : and therefore says, “ I will SING of mercy and judgment ; to thee, O Lord, will I SING. ” It is before the Lord he resolves to sing, as he did before the ark, which was a type of Christ ; and so it is a song to the praise of God in Christ.

(8.) The manner of the expression imports a firm, fixed, and constant resolution ; so the redoubling of it seems to import ; “ I will sing, I will sing. ” He had a mind this exercise of singing should not go down, but be his continual trade ; “ I will sing, I will sing ; ” I will sing on earth, and I will sing in heaven : I will sing in time, and I will sing through eternity. And indeed, all on whom the Spirit of praise and gratitude is poured out they resolve never to give over singing. And because they know it will not last always in time, nor their harp be still in tune ; therefore they resolve, as it were, to make it their great errand to heaven, to sing, to sing there for ever ; “ I will sing, I will sing. ” David had heard once, yea twice, that mercy as well as power belongs to the Lord ; and therefore, not only once, but twice in a breath, he resolves to sing unto the Lord. The word hath a great deal of elegance and emphasis in it ; I will sing of mercy, I will sing of judgment : O, I will sing ; O Lord, I will sing ; and I will sing unto thee. ”

In a word, it imports, that a God in Christ was the ALL of the song ; even the Alpha and Omega of it, the beginning and the end of it ; it was of him, as the Alpha ; for the discovery of the mercy of God in Christ brought him to it ; “ I will sing of mercy and judgment ; ” and it was to him, as the Omega ; for the song is dedicated to the Lord : “ To thee, O Lord, will I sing. ”—These

things, I think, are imported in the manner of the expression, and they may help to regulate our resolutions in singing.

IV. The Fourth head proposed was, Why it is so ordered of the Lord that his people should have ground to sing of mercy and judgment both? why there is both mercy and judgment in their lot, to be the matter of song while in this world?

1. The first reason is, To put a difference betwixt heaven and earth; for in heaven there will be no judgment, no affliction, no desertion, no sin, no song of judgment present, but of judgment past: the song of heaven will be of mercy present, and judgment past, among the triumphant company; but the song of the militant church is of mercy and judgment, both present. Now, we see through a glass darkly, and therefore sing confusedly; but then we shall see face to face, and therefore shall sing distinctly: now we know in part, and sing in part; but then the perfect knowledge will make a perfect song: now we are very unlike to Christ, because we see but little of him, and so the song is but heavy, dull, and flat; but then shall we be like him, for we shall see him as he is, and so the song will be cheerful and ravishing: now, when a mercy raises the song, a judgment bears it down, some cloud or other interrupts the singing; but then there shall be no present judgment, no cloud, no night, no complaint to mar the song, for there the mercy is not mixt with any judgment, nor the joy mixt with any sorrow.

2. The second reason is, That they may put honour upon the divine wisdom, that does so wonderfully reconcile these opposites, such as mercy and judgment are. O the infinite wisdom of God, that can make antipodes meet in a song of praise, and contraries in a hymn of glory to him. O the wisdom that makes mercy and judgment meet together, and kiss one another! O the wisdom that brings the greatest good out of the greatest evil, and the best blessings out of the worst of evils; as out of the first Adam's sin and fall, brings the second Adam's glory and honour, and the greatest happiness of his seed! O the wisdom that brings life out of death, light out of darkness, liberty out of bondage, love out of enmity, happiness out of misery, holiness out of sin, joy out of sorrow, mercy out of judgment! O, can we look down to this great depth, without crying with the apostle, "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?" Rom. xi. 33.

3. The third reason is, That they may be trained up gradually

for singing hallelujahs in heaven. They are not yet fit and qualified for singing of mercy without judgment; and though judgment is turned into mercy to the people of God, and so is matter of a song: yet the present sense and feeling that they have of judgment makes the manner of their singing suitable to their imperfect condition, wherein they are not capable to sing of mercy without a mixture of judgment. They are but learning to sing; and by judgment they are disciplined to sing gradually better and better: when mercy does not prevail to make them sing aright, he sends a judgment to make them sing better. They are learning the language of heaven before they go there; but, at their first learning they are but scholars, and need the correction of judgment. If they abuse mercy, and do not sing aright of it there comes a heavy judgment to make them take heed how they sing, and then they learn to sing the seventy-first verse of the hundred and nineteenth Psalm, saying,

It hath been very good for me,
That I afflicted was,
That I might well-instructed be,
And learn thy holy laws:

And then they learn to sing the seventy-fifth verse:

That very right thy judgments are,
I know and do confess;
And that thou hast afflicted me,
In truth and faithfulness:

4. The fourth reason is, that the burden of the song may be proportioned to their back. They cannot bear to have all mercy, and no judgment; for then they would swell in pride, and be exalted above measure; they cannot bear to have all judgment, and no mercy; for then they would sink into despair, and be pressed above measure. On the one hand, to sing of nothing but mercy, would be a burden too great and heavy; they find, when their hearts at sometimes are lifted up to a high note, they cannot get praised; they are ready to invite angels, saints, sun, moon, and stars, to help them to praise, for it is too great work for them alone; they cannot get their notes raised high enough; but when the praising frame is over, if nothing but a sense of mercy remain, then having a body of sin that abuses all mercies, some proud thought and self-exalting imagination, rises in their breasts, and would rise above measure, if it were not kept down with judgment.—On the other hand, to sing

of nothing but judgment, would be a damp instead of a song, a melancholy sighing instead of singing : and therefore they are well mixed together in infinite wisdom.

5. The fifth reason is, That their song may be the more melodious. As in natural, or artificial music, there is no melody where there is but one note : there must be different sounds to make the music melodious. I think the apostle speaks after this manner, 1 Cor. xiv. 7.—“ Even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sound, how shall it be known what is piped or harped !” So it is here in the spiritual music, whether you look to the consummate song of the redeemed above, or the initial song of the redeemed below, the song of mercy present, and judgment past, makes the sweetest melody in heaven ; and the song of mercy and judgment, both present, makes the sweetest melody that can be attained on earth. Mercy and judgment like bass and treble, make holy melody in the spiritual song : here are the different notes of music ; mercy makes a high and lofty note, and judgment makes a humble and low note, and both make the song melodious. When a man not only sees mercy, but mercy and judgment, mercy before judgment, and mercy after judgment, and mercy in judgment, and mercy with judgment, and mercy out of judgment, and mercy backing judgment, and mercy blessing judgment, and mercy ordering and disposing judgment, mercy qualifying judgment, and mercy moderating judgment, and mercy sweetening judgment, and mercy rejoicing over judgment, and mercy running through judgment, and mercy at the root of judgment, and mercy at the top of judgment, mercy on this side of judgment, and mercy on that side of judgment, mercy round about judgment, and mercy turning judgment into mercy. O then, how does he sing with melody in his heart to the Lord !—It is to make the song melodious.

6. The sixth reason is, That they may prize both their mercies and their judgments ; both their crosses and their comforts, both their rods and reliefs, as both affording matter of a song ; and that they may neither on the one hand sport at his mercy, nor on the other hand spurn at his judgments ; and that they may neither abuse enlargements, nor despise chastisements, but that they may give both their proper place and room in their hearts and esteem, that they may sing of both, and love the Lord their God in both, and so may love a frowning as well as a smiling God, an absent as well as a present God, a hiding as well as a shinning God, a correcting as

well as a comforting God : and that both out of their clear and cloudy days they may pen a song to the praise of his name.—In a word, the Lord orders it so, that their song should be both of mercy and judgment, and puts both in their lot ; that, in the view of mercy they may not despair ; and, in the view of judgment, they may not presume : that they may sing hopefully, because of mercy, and humbly because of judgment : and that their song may be full, and take in all his dispensations, like the song of Moses and the Lamb : “ Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty ; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints,” Rev. xv. 3. So much for this head.

V. The Fifth head was the application, in the following inferences. Hence see,

1. That there is an over-ruling and wise providence, making all things, whether comforts, or crosses, sweet things or sad things, contribute and co-operate for the good and advantage of the hidden remnant ; “ We know that all things work together for good, to them that love God, and are the called according to his purpose,” Rom. viii. 28. Mercy and judgment, and all adverse and prosperous things, work together to be the matter of a song : surely there is a wheel within a wheel ; there is a secret hand that draws up and tunes all the strings of the harp of providence, to make a sweet song of praise unto God : there is an infinitely wise hand, like that of a cunning player upon his harp, that makes all the most jarring notes to contribute to melody, even as he made the malice of the Jews, the treason of Judas, and the rage of devils, to work for the salvation of an elect world.

2. See the sweetness of true religion, and that wisdom's ways are pleasantness : a religious life is a singing life, whether providence smile or frown. If a believer sigh and mourn at any time, and be not singing at the same time, it is when religion is at a low ebb with him. You may think religion is a melancholy life, man, because many are the afflictions of the righteous, and judgment may begin at the house of God ; but you do not consider, that true religion makes a man to sing of judgment, as well as mercy. Out of all the ups and downs, the vicissitudes and changes, smiles and frowns, of the believer's lot, the Lord brings a song of praise. Truly, God is good to Israel, whether Israel think it or not ; for even judgment will be matter of a song. It is the language of unbelief, when they say of judgment, as Jacob did of his afflictions, “ All these things

are against me ;” but when once the gallant grace of faith takes the field again, it will say, All these are for me, and I will sing of all.

3. See hence the difference betwixt carnal and spiritual mirth, carnal and spiritual singing ; betwixt the joy of the world and the joy of the saints. The world may rejoice, if they have, and while they have some outward mercy ; but to sing of judgment, when these mercies are withdrawn, is what they know nothing of ; nay, take away the world, and then they will say with Micah, “ They have taken away my gods, and what have I more ?” But spiritual joy can sing in the midst of sorrow, and say, “ Though the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olives shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat, the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls : yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation,” Hab. iii. 17, 18. O sirs, down, down, down with all carnal mirth and worldly joy, in comparison of this ; down with singing, piping, and dancing ; these things are but folly and madness.

4. Hence see, that the godly need not take any sinful shift, to shun suffering, or any sinful course to shun the cross ! for, come the cross when it will, they may even sing with the cross on their back, as Paul and Silas in the stocks, Acts xvi. 24, 25. Is the godly tempted to make any sinful compliance with the courses of the times ? What need he be annoyed, as if his life of outward comforts in a world would be at an end, as if bonds or imprisonments, the loss of worldly goods and enjoyments were abiding him, if he makes not this and the other compliance ? What need any annoyance ? For his suffering time may be his singing time : “ I will sing of mercy and of judgment.” Besides, all his light afflictions here, which last but for a moment, work for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

5. Hence see, what a sweet place heaven must be, and what singing must be there : If a song of mercy mixt with judgment here is sweet, and sometimes even ravishing, O what a sweet song is that of the redeemed about the throne, where there is no more judgment ; no more sorrow or sin ! And little wonder that the believer longs for heaven, seeing his sweetest songs are mixt with sighs, and his mercies with judgments ; his sweetest songs here have still this heavy sigh in them, Ah, and Wo is me, that wherever I go in this world, I am always drawing a body of death along with me.—O what a happy time is the day of death to a believer, when he

shall take an everlasting farewell of all his lusts and idols ! O believer, what would you think to be saying, Farewell darkness, and welcome everlasting light ; farewell enmity, and welcome everlasting love : farewell sorrow, and welcome everlasting joy ; farewell all my sins, and heart-plagues, and strong corruptions, and welcome eternal happiness, and uninterrupted felicity ? O would you not say Farewell, farewell, with a thousand good-wills, to all these evil things, and triumphantly say, Glory to God that we shall never meet again ? Hence see then, I say, what a sweet place heaven must be, if even judgments, sufferings and temptations to sin here be made matter of joy and singing sometimes to the believer, what shall glory be ? If the worst things on earth may contribute to a song, what will the best things in heaven do ? If the cross be sometimes so sweet, what will the crown be ? If the waters of Marah be made so sweet, what will the wine of paradise be ? If God's rod hath honey at the end of it, what will his golden sceptre have ? O ! how happy are they who have got the start of us, and are exalted above these visible heavens already, and past all their fears and doubts, and are singing praises without wearying.

6. Hence see, what a black and white garment the believer wears. The garment of praise is a garment of diverse colours ; dyed white and black with mercy and judgment : " I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, and yet as the curtains of Solomon," Cant. i. 5. Not only black in themselves and comely in Christ : black as sinners, and comely as saints ; black with sin, and comely with grace : but sometimes black with persecution, and comely with consolation ; black with affliction, distress, and judgment, but comely with the mixture of mercy in their cup of adversity, while they get the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Hence with what heaviness have you gone to prayer ! sometime under the sense of inward trouble from your lusts, or some outward trouble from the world ; some particular affair about your husband, your wife, your children, your family, that hath been distressing to you : You have in heaviness gone away to God in prayer, and come away with your soul leaping as a hart within you. O believer, you need not shudder or be grieved at the cup of affliction, which your Father gives you to drink ; for, though it be bitter at the top, yet the sugar is at the bottom of the cup : " What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

7. Hence we may see the happiness of the saints, and of all believers in Christ: They may in every thing give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ concerning them; be it prosperity or adversity, mercy or judgment, in life or death; he may sing, that nothing in a world can make him miserable, no losses, crosses, bonds, persecutions, famine, or pestilence. If he may sing of judgment, surely the judgments are not vindictive judgments, but fatherly chastisements; for God deals not with him according to the tenor of the law, as a covenant of works; nay, he is not under the law, nor liable to the penal sanction of it; they are judgments of a fatherly judge, not of a wrathful judge, otherwise he could not sing of judgment. How little cause hath the believer to be discontent at outward trials? What! are you discontent at that, out of which God is bringing a song of praise in time, and a weight of glory through eternity!

8. Hence see the misery of the wicked. Whatever matter of singing the children of God have, yet ye have matter of sighing, howling, and lamentation; for ye are under the curse of God, under the curse of his law, and so continue in a dreadful, damnable state: while ye are out of Christ, all the mercies that ye meet with are curses to you, and all the judgments you meet with, are drops of divine indignation, and pieces of hell. Your temporal mercies are curses; "The prosperity of fools destroys them:" and so your table is your snare: spiritual mercies are curses to you; from all the flowers of heavenly blessings you suck poison; the word is the savour of death to you; the gospel is a stumbling-block to you, over which ye fall into perdition; and as the same wind that blows one ship to an haven, blows another on the rock, so the same breath of the minister, that blows some to heaven, blows you to hell: the sacrament is a curse to you, for ye eat and drink your own damnation; the Bible is a curse to you, for the word of the Lord is against you, and ye are against it. What shall I say to you, graceless, Christless, desperate sinner? O will you tremble and quake, lest Christ himself, the blessing of all blessings, and mercy of all mercies, be a curse to you, and a stone of stumbling, over which you will break your neck! for, he is set up for the falling, as well as the rising of many in Israel. O that this thunder would awaken souls that are sleeping securely in a course of sin? As all mercies are curses to a reprobate world, so judgments are judgments indeed to you that live all your days without Christ; for judgment

without mercy is the portion of your cup : every affliction is a judgment of wrathful and vindictive nature unto you. You will say, O for patience under such a trouble and sickness ! Poor graceless soul, speaking of patience under trouble : you are thus contending with God, and struggling like a fly under a mountain, and striving to be quiet under that which God hath sent to disturb you. God does not afflict men that are out of Christ to exercise their patience, but to disturb their false peace and security. O that God would awaken you ! If God call for famine on the land, and make you feel the effects of this terrible drought,* it is a judgment indeed, and a pledge of hell unto you ; if God lay you on a sick-bed, and afflict you in your name, estate, persons, friends, all is a piece of hell to you : judgments to you are drops of vengeance. Again,

9. See how reproveable they are, from this doctrine, who never sing of mercy and judgment. Some never sing at all the praises of God ; there is a gentle or rather deistical fashion among some in our day, in public ordinances they do not open their mouth to sing with the congregation. O ! will they ever sing in heaven, that scorn to sing on earth ? Many indeed sing with their mouth, that know not what it is to sing with their heart, nor sing with their life to glorify God. Many never sing of mercy, notwithstanding of their receiving many mercies ; they pray for what they want, but never praise for what they have : and there is much of this ingratitude among believers themselves. Many again instead of singing of mercy, they slight their own mercies, and fight against God with his own favours ; they abuse their peace to security, their drink to drunkenness, their meat to gluttony, and their mercies to presumption. “ Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise ? ” Many, if they sing of mercy, they know not what it is to sing of judgment ; “ When God’s judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world should learn righteousness.” What are ye learning out of this great drought, whereby God is threatening to send a famine on the land, and break the staff of bread ? To sing of judgment, is to hear the rod, and who hath appointed it ; to sing of judgment, is to see the hand of God in the affliction, to kiss the hand that smites ; to glorify God in the fires ; to bless him that re-

* The summer in which this sermon was preached (viz. 1723.) was a very remarkable season for drought, there being scarce one drop of rain during the summer months ; on which account many were afraid that the staff of bread would have been cut off from them ; though providence interposed, that, by frequent and heavy dews, there was, in the issue, abundance of corn for man, but little provender for the cattle.

members mercy in the midst of wrath ; and to answer the call of God by such and such a dispensation. Many, instead of singing of mercy and judgment, they slight both mercy and judgment ; mercy does not melt them, and judgment does not move them : O take with the reproof.

10. See how comfortable this doctrine may be to all believers and lovers of our Lord Jesus Christ ; ye have ground to sing, not only of mercy, but of judgment : I know no case you can be in, believer, but there is room for singing : the saint may sing of mercy in the midst of judgment. O how can I sing, when I missed my errand at this occasion ? says one : let them give the praise that have got the profit ; but for me, I am left under heavy judgment, under affliction, temptation, desertion ; yea, and the prevalency and power of sin and corruption ; and therefore there is no room for my singing, but rather for my sighing, mourning, and lamenting before the Lord, and to be humbled to the dust. Why, man, indeed it is not humility, but pride, that makes you refuse to praise : you undervalue the day of small things, and any little measure of grace and mercy you enjoy, because, forsooth, you have not all you would be at ; and, it may be, God is saying, I will send trouble after trouble upon you, till you be so humbled as to be thankful for the least mercy, till you be thankful that you are out of hell, and thankful that you was not born in America, where people are worshipping the devil. O how many millions of mercies have you to bless God for ! And will you take offence at, or differ with your God, and deny him his due, because you get not all your will ? You have ground of singing, believer, notwithstanding all that you have said.—O ! but how can I sing, when I find sin, by which God is dishonoured, raging in my heart ; and corruptions, like so many devils, roaring and domineering ? If corruption were slain, I think I would sing, but no otherwise. Why, poor soul, I tell you, that you must even in that case sing of mercy and judgment, and sing because he hath said, “ Slay them not, lest thy people forget,” Psalm lix. 11. If your corruptions were slain, as you would have them, you would, perhaps, forget your own weakness ; forget your deliverer ; forget your dependance on him ; forget prayer ; forget pity towards these that are afflicted and tossed as you are : it may be you would forget the fountain open ; forget to make daily use of Christ ; forget to sympathize and bear with others, when they fall or are overtaken in a fault ; forget to walk

humbly ; forget the sweet experiences of his pardoning and purging grace ; and forget to call yourself a dog, when you go before him, saying, Truth, Lord, I am a dog, I am a devil, I am a lump of hell : And therefore, though you may think it strange to hear of blessing the Lord that corruptions are not slain outright, yet, since infinite wisdom sees that nothing less will cure your forgetfulness while here, even bless him, who hath said "Slay them not lest my people forget." Bless him that he hath not only said, of affliction, temptation, desertion, "Let not my people want them, lest they forget ;" but even of sins, corruption and spiritual enemies, "Slay them not, lest my people forget ;" better they be not slain, than that, you forget to give Christ the glory of his saving offices, by employing him daily to heal all your diseases, and fight all your battles.

11. Hence see the mark of a true believer, and try yourselves by this doctrine. Do you sing of mercy and judgment? I might tell you for marks, that if you have learned this song of mercy and judgment, as the song hath been introduced with sorrowing, I mean with legal conviction and humiliation : so you will find it interrupted with sighing, because all the powers of hell and corruption will oppose this sweet exercise : you will find your harp must perpetually be tuned by the hand of the Spirit, and that you are incapable to sing, till he pen the song ; for it is with the believer as with the marigold, it opens and shuts as the sun rises and sets ; and yet even when the sun is set as it were, that you cannot open and praise, you will find praise waiting for the Lord in Zion, Psalm lxxv. 1 ; or as it may be rendered, "Praise is SILENT for thee in Zion : " Why ? the Spirit of praise is sometimes silent, but yet it is a waiting silence ; you will be waiting for the Spirit of praise to be poured out, and in the mean time acknowledging your debt of praise ; and so, while it is not sensibly running out, it is gathering a dam, as it were, till the Spirit be poured out from on high, and then it will flow amain.—But, instead of all other marks that might be mentioned, I offer this : If you be one that hath learned to sing of mercy and judgment, then you have got a discovery of the glory of God's mercy and judgment, as reconciled together, and mutually embracing one another in Christ Jesus. There are two letters of God's name Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7, the one is mercy and grace ; "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious ;" the other is justice and judgment ; "The Lord that will by no means clear the guilty : " and

these are the two strings of the harp on which the believer sings. Now, have you been taught of God to reconcile these two letters of God's name, and so to play upon these two strings, by admiring the infinite wisdom that hath made them meet together, and kiss one another in Christ? Psalm lxxxv. 10. Have you seen salvation springing out of both these, and glory arising to both these attributes of God, from Christ's obedience to the death, whom God had set forth to be a propitiation! Have you seen mercy running in the channel of a complete satisfaction to justice, and so God by no means clearing the guilty, without a sacrifice and atonement? Many pretend to sing of mercy, and say, I hope in God's mercy; but they know not what it is to sing of mercy, to the highest praise of mercy, in finding out a ransom, whereby mercy is magnified, not to the disparagement, but to the highest praise of infinite justice; because judgment was executed upon the Surety to the uttermost, that the curse of the law, and the vengeance of heaven against sin could demand. If ever you sang to purpose of mercy and judgment, you have seen and admired the glory that shines in this mutual embracing betwixt mercy and judgment.

12. The last inference I offer is this. Hence we may see the duty of all the people of God, namely, to sing of mercy and judgment: As it is the duty of all hearing me to seek and pray while they are out of heaven, so to sing and praise while they are out of hell. But whatever others do, believer, you in particular are to sing of mercy and judgment: he hath done much for others, but he hath done more for you; he hath given you himself to be your God, his Son to be your shield, his Spirit to be your guide, his covenant to be your charter, and his heaven to be your inheritance: he hath given you his word and oath, that though he will visit your iniquity with the rod, and your transgression with stripes, and execute judgment on your lusts, and take vengeance on your inventions, yet his loving-kindness will he not take away, nor alter the word that hath gone out of his mouth. "Once hath he sworn by his holiness that he will not lie unto David;" and therefore you may sing of mercy and judgment: and even at your lowest, when you are crying out, "Behold I am vile! O, I am black, I am black, I am black;" yet even then he is looking upon you in Christ, and saying, "Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair," not only by imputed righteousness, but even by implanted grace, which makes you look upon sin as the greatest burden: even at your lowest, there is some-

thing about the bottom of your hearts, that says, O! I could be content to live in a coal-pit with Christ, rather than in a palace without him; "A day in his courts is better than a thousand; I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." O to see his name glorified in the world, and his kingdom coming in me, and in thousands about me! O sing, sing, sing of mercy and judgment! you have both to sing of.

QUEST. How shall I sing one of the songs of Zion in a strange land? I offer some general directions, and then I close.

1. See that your song be sung upon a new harp; I mean with a new heart and a new spirit. Ye that are graceless will never sing till ye get a new heart: O go to God, and cry for it: ye that are gracious will never sing aright, unless the new harp get a new set, and the strings be drawn up, and the heart tuned by the hand of the Spirit; and therefore seek the new influence for every song, and the Spirit to dictate the song, and to raise the notes. As the dial in the day-light will not shew the hour without the sun, so your harp of graces will not afford melody without the Spirit; therefore seek the Spirit to help you, when you cannot utter his praise: and when you find your hearts in a praising frame, O continue at the exercise, saying, as David, "My heart is fixed, my heart is fixed, I will sing and give praise."

2. If you would sing aright of mercy and judgment, then you may sing in your best robes; I mean, putting on Christ Jesus, and his righteousness, for your garment; this is the garment of praise; and this garment smells of aloes, myrrh, and cassia, and is the only thing that can perfume the praises of the saints. If you have Esau's garments, what though you have Jacob's voice; so as you want a tongue, and a heart, and a voice, to praise him as you ought; yet, with your elder Brother's garment, you may get the blessing. Come to God under a sense of your own unworthiness, and want of righteousness, and yet saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain." O pray and praise both under the covert of blood.

3. Put a mark upon mercy. If you would sing of mercy, though it were never so little, it is more than you deserve. I heard of a Jewish doctor, that was called RABBI THIS TOO, because he used to say, whatever befel him, This is good too, and this too, and this too; you may well say, how little soever you have, This is more than I am worthy of, and this too, and this too. He that sees

that nothing is his but sin, cannot but wonder that any thing is his but hell : put a mark upon mercy, saying, " O my soul, forget not all his benefits," Psalm ciii. 2—5. Mind the visit he gave you at such and such a place, in such and such an ordinance ; mind his words of grace, and emanations of love : put up some of the manna in the golden pot.

4. Put a mark upon judgments. If you would sing of judgment, as well as mercy, and lay your account with judgment, let not national judgments pass without remark, that God may get the glory of his holy and just administrations : many judgments are come upon us, and many sad tokens of judgment a-coming, because of our national apostasy from the work of reformation, our covenant-breaking, our perjury, and, O the other rampart abominations of our day. Learn the language of judgment, " Hear the rod." See Isaiah xxiv. 14. It is matter of singing, that Christ hath a greater concern for his Church than you have ; for, The government is upon his shoulders : God will take care of his own church ; and Christ hath more care of it than you can have ; and, upon all the glory there shall be a defence : but no thanks to a corrupt party, that would set doctrine, discipline, worship, and government, and all, before the wind. God usually brings about church reformation with a judgment, and then will the remnant sing of judgment, when God scums the pot and casts the scum into the fire ; as you have it, Ezek. xxiv. 12. " She hath wearied herself with lies." O but Scotland hath wearied herself with lies of carnal-policy, with the lies of court-flattery ; and there is a great scum that covers and clouds all our reformation-light, a great scum of self-justifying pride, that will rather sacrifice truth, than take with a fault, and rather let truth suffer than her credit : and yet her credit is cracked, ever since her covenant with God was broken, and burnt, and never a hand put forth to take it out of the fire, and renew it, since that time ; but yet the covenant shall be on the field, when the scum shall be in the fire. But, what shall we say ? there seems to be nothing but scum among us, nothing but filth and baggage : must all go to the fire together ? Yea, though it be so, yet a remnant shall sing in the fires, when the scum will be consumed therein, as you see, Isaiah xxiv. 13, 14, 15. If this shall be done in the isles of the sea, surely the isles of Britain and Ireland are not excluded.—Let not personal judgments and strokes pass without a remark, but let God get the glory of his frowning, as well as of his smiling dispensations ; and lay your ac-

count with judgments, that you may sing of judgment when it comes. Be not surprised though affliction, temptation, and desertion come upon you, on the back of a communion ; God uses to feast his people, to fit them for a trial : days of sweet enlargement are usually like sun-blinks before a shower ; as Peter and John were witnesses of Christ's transfiguration on the mount, that they might next be witnesses of his agony in the garden. Lay your account with trials from heaven, earth, and hell, that having laid your account with them beforehand, you may never forget to sing ; yea, lay your account that the Philistines will be upon you Samson : all your lusts and corruptions will be upon you : therefore, " Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation ;" and that your iniquity get not such hold upon you, that you shall not be able to sing. And therefore,

5. If you would sing aright of mercy and judgment, let your song be a practical song. Here I must tell you that the words, for David's mercy and judgment that he was resolved to exercise in his government, namely, to be merciful and just : the mercy of God shall teach me to be merciful, and his justice and judgment shall teach me to be just : I will praise thee, by exercising mercy and justice in my station, as a king, and a magistrate. His resolution here is, that the mercy and justice of God should be extolled in his thoughts, expressed in his words, and exemplified in his actions, according to that command, Hos. xii. 6, " Keep mercy and judgment, and wait on thy God continually." If you would sing of mercy and judgment, then keep mercy and judgment ; have you shared of the of God, and mercy will you not be merciful, as your heavenly Father is ? Do you know the judgment of God, and will you not be just and righteous, and equal in all your dealings with men, and conversation in the world ? David's song here is a practical song ; and you may see, at your leasure, the several notes of this practical song in the following part of the psalm : and do you the same according to your station. One note of his song is, verse 2, " I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way," &c., *i.e.*, that, through grace, he will act conscientiously and considerately ; and in the mean time praying that the Lord would come and dwell with him in his house, " O when wilt thou come to me ?" Another note of his song is, verse 3, where he resolves to practise no evil himself, but shuts his eyes from seeing evil. Another note of his song, verses 4, 5, he will not keep bad servants, nor employ these about him that were vicious ; that he would have nothing to do with malicious people, these that were

slanderers of their neighbours nor these that are proud and haughty, nor these that were deceitful, and made no conscience of lying and deceit. Another note of his song, verse 6. That he would keep company with them that fear God ; that he would keep good company, and honest servants : Yet do not practically sing to the praise of God, if you do otherwise. Another note of his song, verse 8. That he will extend his zeal to the reforming of city and country : we are to study the reformation of manners, and the suppression of vice, in our several stations ; being filled with a zeal for the glory of God, the interest of Christ and his truth.—The gospel-church is the city of the Lord : we are to seek the honour of God in the purity of his church.

6. And lastly, In order to your singing aright this practical song, lay the burden of the song upon the back of the chief musician. Who is the chief Singer ? Even Jesus Christ, in whose obedience to the death was raised a song of praise and glory to God in the highest ; and by the breathing of whose Spirit alone you can sing and serve the Lord acceptably. He hath said, "Without me ye can do nothing ;" and surely without him you cannot sing ; therefore depend upon him, who only can make the tongue of the dumb to sing. If there were more dependence on him, the tongue as well as the life of professors would be more employed in singing his praises, and talking of his name, and speaking of his glory. What a sad matter is it, that a dumb devil hath possessed the generality of professors as to spiritual converse ? O the idle worldly talk upon Sabbath days : yea, on communion days ! Some will go away even from this communion, talking more of the corn and weather, or any thing else, than upon the word they have heard, or any soul-edifying discourse suitable to the occasion.—What said Christ of the possessed man in the gospel ? "Thou dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee to come out of him." O look to him, that he would charge the dumb devil to come out of you, that your tongues may sing his praises, and speak of his glory. How hardening is it to a wicked world, to see professors as carnal and worldly as themselves ! O then employ the chief Singer to help you to sing, and plead his promise for this end, "They shall sing in the ways of the Lord, for great is the glory of the Lord," Psalm cxxxviii. 5, yea, he hath promised to give songs in the night of adversity ; that is, a song of mercy in the midst of judgment and affliction : "I will give her the valley of Achor for a door of hope, and she shall sing there," Hos. ii. 15. O believer,

whatever be your discouragement and complaint, while surrounded with judgments and trials, let not the world see you damped and discouraged, lest they say, You serve a bad master, that does not allow you to sing. Whatever dead weights you have upon your spirit, which God and you know, ye may tell him of it, and tell some godly person that will sympathize with you in it; but let not the world hear your complaints and discouragements, let them know you serve a good master; and remember how he encourages you to this, saying, "How great is thy loving-kindness thou hast laid up for them that trust in thee, before the sons of men!" or, as it may be explained, who carry boldly and courageously, under whatever difficulties and dangers, before the sons of men, and glorify God before the world: and therefore, though you may weep in secret places before the Lord, and get to a little more than a sigh or a sob, yet endeavour to sing before the world at least, that they may bring up a good report of religion, and that the world may know you believe what you profess; that yet a little while and you shall return to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon your heads, and sighing and sorrowing shall for ever fly away; and that though your body will be laid in the dust within a little time, yet a little while, and the happy and joyful morning of a glorious resurrection is hastening on, when the voice will be heard, "Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust," Isaiah xxvi. 19. O sing, sing, amidst all your sorrows and sighing; sing of mercy and judgment, in hope of singing there, where sorrowing and sighing shall fly away. O go away singing, in spite of the devil and corruption; and take Christ the chief Singer along with you, to tune your harp, whensoever the devil puts it out of tune; Go up from the wilderness, leaning upon him, who hath engaged to work in you both to will and to do.

And now, when we are parting, alas! is it not a sore matter that there are many here that will never learn to sing on earth, nor ever be admitted to the very first note of the spiritual song, which is to believe on the Son of God; for, "Without faith it is impossible to please God," or praise him; and, as they never get to this, so it never cost them an hour's care, or made them lose an hour's sleep, that they could not believe on Christ. O wretched man! are you careless and indifferent, whether you sing in heaven among angels, or roar in hell among devils, to all eternity? Yea, there are some here that do not believe there is such a person as Christ in

heaven ; they have had a fancy about him, by their hearing of him in the gospel, but never had the Son of God, by the Spirit's revealing him in the heart : and yet you are living careless and secure, in the pursuit of your sins and idols : you are going straight to hell, with a cart-load of sermons on your back, and making poor ministers spend their breath and labour in vain, and preaching you to the devil, when they would gladly preach you to Christ. O ! shall we part, and not a soul of you be touched and turned to the Lord, or brought to learn any other song, but to sing yourselves asleep in the arms of the devil and your lusts ? Some are sleeping in the arms of a black devil, in the pursuit of gross and abominable lusts, of drunkenness, whoredom, Sabbath-breaking, &c. Others are sleeping in the arms of a white devil, going about to establish a righteousness of his own, resting on their legal duties and prayers : having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof ; expecting God will have mercy on them, because they observe several duties of the law, which others neglect ; and so singing a false song of mercy, or hope of mercy, while they never knew the judgment of God, nor saw the wonders of God's executing all the judgments threatened in the law upon the glorious Surety Christ Jesus, nor ever came under that covert to escape the judgment of God : but, while you are strangers to Christ, all your worship is but hypocrisy, your zeal but madness, your faith but fancy, and your work abominable to God. O ! will none of you be prevailed with to cry with your heart to the Lord, saying, Lord, pluck me out of the arms of the devil, and as a brand out of the burning ? As you would not despise the riches of his mercy, and incur the fury of his judgment, go to a corner, and cry to him, that he would teach you how to sing of mercy and judgment. It may be, the Lord will pity you for his name's sake. O may the Lord himself shew his glory to you, and make you see mercy and judgment meeting and embracing each other, and with joint harmony carrying on your salvation work, in spite of all the opposing legions of hell ; and bring you to put in practice the psalmist's sweet resolution here, " I will sing of mercy and judgment ; unto thee, O Lord, will I sing."

S E R M O N X X .¹

THE HARMONY OF THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES DISPLAYED, IN THE
REDEMPTION AND SALVATION OF SINNERS BY JESUS CHRIST.

PSALM lxxxv. 10.—Mercy and Truth are met together, Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other.

My friends, at a solemn marriage-supper, there is usually a friendly company that meets together; and when at such an occasion, all things are managed with sobriety and decency, it is very heartsome and pleasant to the parties concerned, to see the members of the meeting with mutual kindness to one another, harmoniously gracing the solemnity: even so at the marriage supper of the Lamb; I mean, the sacrament of the Lord's supper, which we have been celebrating, there is a heartsome company, not of men and women, for that would make but a poor earthly meeting; nor yet of saints and angels, for that would make but at best a mean-creature meeting; but it is a glorious heartsome company of divine attributes and perfections, in the sweetest concord, meeting together, and embracing one another. This wonderful conjunction of divine excellencies, is the friendly company that meets together, to put honour upon this nuptial solemnity: and to see them thus harmoniously embracing one another in the salvation of sinners, is the sweetest sight, that the bride, the Lamb's wife, shall ever see at the marriage-supper, whether it be at the lower or upper table.

There is a great meeting in this house, but an infinitely greater in this text: a meeting of divine excellencies, to grace the assembly of the marriage-supper of the Lamb: Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other." When God made heaven and earth out of nothing, he made them by a word, without any other ceremony; but when he made man, there was some particular solemnity, a grand council, as it were, of the glorious Trinity called; "Come let us make man after our own image." But

(1.) This Sermon was preached on the Sabbath evening, immediately after the administration of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper at Dumfermline, September, 29th, 1723.

now, man having unmade himself, if God hath a mind for the praise of his own glorious grace to make him up again, by a new creation in Christ Jesus, there must be a more glorious solemnity yet; not only a council of the adorable Trinity, but a grand meeting of all the attributes of God, to consult their own glory that was marred, and reconcile their own interests, and seemingly contradicting claims; for the sin of man had brought real confusion among all the creatures of God on earth; yea, and a seeming war among all the attributes of God in heaven, concerning the execution of the sentence of the law upon mankind, the transgressor thereof. Some of these attributes, such as Mercy, saying, If the sentence of death be not execute upon them, how shall I be glorified? Others, such as Truth, saying, If the sentence be not executed, how shall I be glorified? Is it to be expected that such opposites can meet together? Or if they meet, they will agree together cordially? Yea, though it be beyond the expectation of men and angels, yet, behold, it is here celebrated with song, "Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

This psalm consists of a prayer of faith and an answer of peace. First, The church's prayer, from the beginning to the 8th verse, where they are praying for the removal of many tokens of God's displeasure they were under, notwithstanding of their return out of the Babylonish captivity. Secondly, The answer of peace that is made to their prayer, from verse 8th and downward. We have here the psalmist listening and waiting for the answer; "I will hear what God the Lord will speak." The answer itself in general is peace; "He will speak peace to his people and to his saints." If he give not outward peace, yet he will suggest inward peace; speaking that to their hearts by his Spirit, which he had spoken to their ears by his word, whatever other sort of peace and prosperity they enjoyed; when at length the children of captivity, after a great deal of toil, had gained a settlement in their own land, yet peace with God, and prosperity under the Messiah's kingdom, was the great thing here promised, and prophesied of; and that is a peace that lays the soul under the strongest obligation to stand aback from all sin, which is the greatest folly, and to beware of backsliding thereto; but let them not return again to folly: For true peace with God brings in war with sin. But this is further explained in the main leading part thereof, namely, salvation and glory, verse 9, "Surely his salvation is near to them that fear him, that glory may

dwell in our land." Now, whatever other salvation be here imported, Christ is the great salvation intended; when he is near in view, then the believer cries out with old Simeon, "Now mine eyes have seen thy salvation:" and whatever other glory and honour be here imported, Christ is the chief glory intended; when he goes away from a land, then *ICHABOD*, the glory is departed: but where he abides, glory dwells; for he is called, "A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel." But now, if we would know what sort of glory it is that appears when Christ is revealed; why, it is even the glorious harmony of all the divine attributes illustriously shining in him, who is both our salvation and our glory: "Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Now, though these words may be applied to the happy meeting of graces in men, upon the revelation of Christ in the soul, which I may afterwards notice in the sequel, and in which sense some interpreters understand it, yet I take it mainly to import the happy meeting of perfections in God, to be glorified in the sinner's salvation by Jesus Christ; which is a gloss that no interpreter I have had occasion to consult does neglect or omit: and if any of them should miss it, I think they would miss the very ground-work and foundation of all other happy meetings; "Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

In the words you may notice, 1. The members of the meeting. 2. The manner of the meeting. 3. The harmony of the meeting. 4. The strangeness of it.

1. Notice, I say, first, the members of the meeting: Mercy, Truth, Righteousness, Peace. I hope I need not caution some in this assembly that they beware of imagining these various perfections of God under the names of Mercy, Truth, Righteousness, and Peace, as if they were really distinct and different parties, making a formal consultation, in order to their agreement: for God is one, and cannot be divided; he is one infinite, eternal, and unchangeable Being: there are not distinct and different things in his nature and essence, however his perfections be thus represented to our weak, finite capacities, which cannot understand the perfections of God, but in several parts, as it were. By mercy, then, here we are to understand God himself, as he is a merciful and gracious God. By Truth we are to understand the same God, as he is a true and faithful God. By Righteousness we may understand his justice, or

God himself, as he is a just and righteous God ; and by Peace the same God, as he is the God of peace, and God reconciling the world to himself. So that the whole comes to this, It is the great and eternal God himself consulting with himself in a manner becoming his infinite and adorable perfections, how to glorify himself in all his glorious attributes in the way of saving sinners, in and by Jesus Christ.

2. The manner of the meeting : these excellencies and perfections of God meet together, as it were, in pairs ; Mercy and Truth, Righteousness and Peace, going hand in hand to the council-chamber, to concert the matters that concerned their highest glory and honour.

3. The harmony of the meeting ; having met together, they kiss and embrace each other. Mercy and Peace, as it were, express their complacency in Truth and Righteousness ; and Truth and Righteousness express their complacency in Mercy and Peace, and delight in one another's honour : for not one attribute of the divine Majesty can, or will be glorified to the dishonour of any other attribute, but mutually embrace each other in their everlasting arms, for supporting the honour of each other's excellency, with complicated ineffable endearments.

4. The strangeness and remarkableness of this meeting : for, the agreement of these parties met together is the more remarkable, in regard of their jarring and opposite claims : for, that Mercy and Peace should meet together, and agree in favour to save us ; and that Truth and Righteousness should meet together, and agree in justice to destroy us, were not so strange and remarkable. And if they had kept such a separate meeting, and remained at variance without meeting together, man had been for ever separate from God, and some darling attributes had never been glorified in man's salvation ; our sin and rebellion having in a manner set the attributes of God at such a variance, as nothing else than infinite wisdom could provide a sufficient answer to all their contradictory claims and interests, which behoved to be done, ere the proposal concerning the salvation of any sinner could be gone into. Why, says Mercy, It is my interest that the sinner live and not perish, that I may be magnified, since I have said, that " I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy : " well, but, says Truth, It is my interest as a God of truth, that the sinner die, since I have said, that " The soul that sinneth shall die : " yea, and says Righteousness, I

must join with Truth, and claim the sinner's damnation, for the advancement of my interest and honour; for I have said, and will not gainsay it, "That I will by no means clear the guilty:" O! but says Peace, I must join in with Mercy, and claim the sinner's salvation, for advancing my interest, "For I create the fruit of the lips, peace to him that is afar off, and to him that is near." So there appears to be a war in heaven among infinitely adorable attributes and perfections, where Mercy and Peace are saying, We must have glory in showing undeserved pity on the sinner; and yet Truth and Righteousness are saying, We must have glory in executing the deserved vengeance. And now, O men and angels! will you tell, can these antipodes meet together? Can these jarring-like attributes of the divine Majesty embrace each other, in the salvation of the sinner, so as to get all their demands answered, and their different interest advanced?—What say you, children of men? Can you devise how these differences can be composed for your own safety? No, no; human wisdom says, it is not in me. What say ye angels? You that excel in strength and wisdom; can you contrive the reconciliation of these irreconcilable demands? No, no; angelical wisdom says, It is not in me: well, since creature-wisdom fails, we may address the infinite Wisdom of the Deity, and inquire at a higher hand? Behold, now we have taken upon us to speak unto the Lord, who are but dust and ashes.—What sayest thou? O infinitely wise JEHOVAH! can these opposite claims be reconciled to the satisfaction of all parties, and the salvation of the sinner? yea, it is done, it is done; it is done in a crucified Christ, whom we have been remembering at this solemnity; and therefore we may sing this marvellous song upon the back of it, saying, Glory, glory, glory to God, that mercy and truth are met together, and righteousness and peace have embraced each other.

OBSERV. That in the salvation of sinners by Jesus Christ, the glorious attributes and perfections of God do harmoniously conspire and embrace one another. Or thus, That in Christ crucified, for the redemption of sinners, all the glorious attributes of the divine Majesty do harmoniously conspire, and embrace one another.

When God is well pleased, no perfection of God is displeased; but God is well pleased in Christ, and therefore every perfection of

his nature is well-pleased ; none of them displeased or dissatisfied, but all pleased and satisfied to the full, see Hos. ii. 19, 20. This is declared by an audible voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," Mat. ii. 17. And why, even for the reason you have, Isaiah xliii. 21. "The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake, he will magnify the law, and make it honourable."—We see he hath brought in a righteousness answering the demands of all that stood in the way of our salvation. Did divine Truth and Righteousness say, That the threatening of the law must be execute, so sure as God is true, as well as its precept obtemperate and obeyed? Well, can a Righteousness satisfying both these demands, do the business? Yea, says Justice itself, in concert with Mercy, if there be one righteous man in the Sodom of this earth, that can satisfy my violated and broken law, in its demand of complete satisfaction, then I will spare all the elect world, for the sake of that one righteous man: and by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many. Well, says Mercy, Here is one whose name is WONDERFUL, and whom they call IMMANUEL, God-man, who hath brought in an everlasting righteousness, both active and passive, suiting the precept and penalty of the law: why then, might one attribute say to another, We are all pleased, and with one consent let it be proclaimed on earth, that "The Lord is well pleased, for his righteousness sake; he hath magnified the law, and made it honourable." And now the great affair of man's salvation is so well concerted and contrived, that God may have mercy upon them, and be at peace with poor sinners without any wrong to his Truth and Righteousness. The attributes of God have met and agreed, and sealed their agreements with a kiss of infinite kindness, harmony, and satisfaction; "Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

Now, that I may speak to this purpose a little more fully, the method I propose is this,

- I. To touch a little at this question, Who are the members of this meeting? or, what are these attributes of God, which do thus harmoniously conspire together, proposing their various claims?
- II. I would inquire when and where it is that they meet together and embrace one another.

III. How, and after what manner it is that they meet together, and embrace one another.

IV. Why, or for what reason is it that they have met together, thus harmoniously.

V. Make some application of the subject.

1. I would speak a little of the members of this meeting, or the attributes of God that thus harmoniously conspire together. We need not ask at whose instance this meeting is called; it is at the instance, and by the order of JEHOVAH, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God; his sovereign will and pleasure resolving, in a manner like himself, to concert with himself; neither need we ask, what is the occasion of the meeting? Why, man had sinned, and all mankind, by their sin was involved under the curse of the law, and wrath of God: and yet God had resolved and decreed, for the glory of his grace and mercy, to save a world of sinners, elect according to the foreknowledge of God. And while Grace, Mercy, and Peace are upon this loving plot of saving sinners, it was fit that Justice, Truth, and Righteousness should be called into the same council, to appeal for their interest; since the proposal of such a salvation of sinners seem to encroach upon their honour, which required the vengeance due to be executed upon the sinner. Well, the meeting being called, compare these glorious perfections, Mercy, Truth, Righteousness, and Peace: Mercy and Peace, full of pity; Truth and Justice, full of fury; which made a seeming controversy in heaven. We may suppose Adam arraigned in the name of all mankind, and standing as a trembling pannel; yea, his very tongue chained up in silence, by reason of sin and guilt, sentenced to eternal death, and ready to have sentence execute upon him, and all his posterity.

We may suppose next, the several members of the meeting opening the assembly, by putting in their several claims: and we may notice them in the order of the text.

1. MERCY, being full of pity towards the miserable, comes walking along in the cool of the evening, and meekly craving leave to speak, notwithstanding that Truth and Justice be present at the meeting. It is true, says Mercy, that man hath sinned, and just that man should die: but art not thou, O Lord, full of pity and compassion, "The Lord, the Lord God, pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin?" What though man hath sinned, and is all

over besmeared with mire and blood, yet look upon him in love, and destroy not the work of thy own hand: he was made a child after thy own image, though now his garment be rent and all bloody: yet see, is not this thy son's coat? Joseph is gone, and wilt thou lose Benjamin also? Angels are gone, and shall men be lost also? Myriads of angels are fallen, and that irrecoverably, and shall men perish also? O spare him, is he not a little one, and his soul shall live. I see, might Mercy say, that Truth and Righteousness, or Justice, which have the poor sinner in their chains, are here present, ready to speak in this assembly, for their interest and honour, against the criminal: but let it be marked in the minutes of this court that Mercy craves to be magnified, and must have honour at this meeting. Well, Mercy having spoken her mind,

2. TRUTH comes in, naked and with open mouth, in favour of God's Faithfulness, and in opposition to man's perfidy and treachery, saying, I have heard what Mercy craves in favour of this criminal; but, O thou faithful and true God: the word is gone out of thy mouth, and there is no revoking it: thou hast said to Adam, "In the day thou eatest thou shalt surely die:" and now he hath eaten, he hath sinned, and shall he not die? What! is there yea and nay with God, who hath faithfulness for the girdle of his loins? Must not God's word of threatening take effect; "Yea heaven and earth shall pass away, but a jot of his word shall not fall to the ground." And therefore, whatever be the demand of Mercy, let it be marked in the records of this meeting, that Truth craves to be magnified; and that its honour be not infringed in the least, by any claim or plea that Mercy hath brought in. Well, Truth having spoken, gives way to her sister Justice: and thereupon,

3. RIGHTEOUSNESS, or JUSTICE, comes in and impleads against the rebel sinner; Righteousness, I say, bringing her scales in her hand, in which she had tried him, and found him lighter than vanity itself; he is weighed in the balances, and found wanting; yea, not only wanting and destitute of all that perfection and obedience that the law required, but full of all that rebellion which the law discharged: having sinned and come short of the glory of God: and so is righteously subjected to the sanction of the law, and sentence of eternal death: and therefore, says Righteousness, O thou infinitely righteous and just Judge, Mercy can have no hearing in this court to the prejudice of thy honour

and glory, as a just and righteous God, as Truth hath pronounced the sentence of wrath and vengeance against sin; so, if thou be a just God, the infinite vengeance due to such an infinite evil must be execute to the full. This pannel is my prisoner, and loosed he shall not be till I get full satisfaction, and my soul shall be drunk with blood: for, "Vengeance is mine, and I will repay it, saith the Lord. And I will by no means clear the guilty." And therefore, let it be registrate in this court, that Righteousness craves to be magnified, and Justice to be glorified in a full satisfaction; and this claimed and demanded in the name of the righteous and just Judge of the universe; and shall not the judge of all the earth do right? Here is the language of Justice. What then? O shall the demand of Mercy be utterly run down by these powerful opposing pleas of Truth and Righteousness? Is there no friend in this court to take Mercy's part? Yea, there is: and therefore,

4. PEACE immediately steps in with an olive branch in her hand, saying, "Fury is not in me;" and may I speak a word in behalf of forlorn mankind! may I offer a meek answer to the claim of Truth and Righteousness, which they have advanced in opposition to the demand of Mercy? For, "A soft answer turneth away wrath." Well, Peace being allowed a hearing proposes a healing overture, saying, O thou God of peace! may not an atonement be made, a reconciliation thought of betwixt the majesty and thy creature? May not one be found out to stand in the gap, and bear off this wrath, to become surety for this great debtor, to acquit and liberate this poor miserable prisoner and criminal? May not one be found out, that will make up the breach, by vindicating the honour of Truth, and satisfying the demands of Justice, and so making way for the claim of Mercy? And then all differences may be peaceably composed, so as we may harmoniously agree, and kiss one another. O! may not then a Peace-maker be found out, in whom we may find all our demands satisfied at once, without prejudging one another? Why, if such an one can be found, surely his name shall be called, "Wonderful Counsellor, the Prince of Peace."

Well, the overture and Proposal of Peace being recorded among the rest of the archives of the glorious Court; and it being such a peaceable overture, no member of the meeting could disprove it: but the great question then is, how it could be effectuate; for if one man sin against another, a man might determine it; but if a

man sin against JEHOVAH, who shall intreat for him? for when an infinite Majesty is offended, who among finite creatures is able to satisfy it? or, What can countervail the King's loss? "Where-with then shall he come before the Lord, or bow himself before the most high God? will thousands of rams do it, or ten thousand rivers of oil, or the fruit of the body for the sin of the soul?" No, no: "Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not; for it is impossible that the blood of bulls or goats should take away sin," Heb. x. 5. What then, will angels become surety for the sin of man? No, no: though they had a will, they have not power; they have but oil enough in their vessels for their own lamps. What then shall be done? Why, might Peace say, let us not stand in a demur, we have infinite Wisdom here present with us at this meeting, let us hear her judgment concerning this peaceable proposal, if it be possible that such a person can be found, in whom we may harmoniously centre at last.

Then WISDOM sits down upon the privy council-bench, and being full of eyes, doth gravely determine this doubtful case with a happy issue. It is expedient, says Wisdom, that one die for the people, that the whole nation of mankind perish not; but he must be such a righteous One, that can justify many; yea, he that will undertake this, must be finite, that he may die; and infinite, that he may conquer death, and satisfy divine justice: but lo! there is none such to be found among all the creatures that ever God made; neither can such an one be found, unless the Son of God himself, the second Person of the glorious Trinity, shall be pleased, by an un mistakeable mystery, to become flesh, "Made of a woman, under the law, to redeem them that are under the law, that they may receive the adoption of sons," Gal. iv. 4. That so when he who hath no sin, shall become sin for man; man, who hath no righteousness, may become the righteousness of God through him, 2 Cor. v. 21. And thus Mercy may be magnified, Truth justified, Righteousness cleared, Justice satisfied, Peace concluded: and all contented.

WISDOM having determined how this proposal of Peace might be effectuate, all parties hearkened, as it were, with pleasure, and willingly subscribed to the happy overture, and then heaven and earth conspired together, in solemn thanksgiving, saying, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace and good-will towards men."—Thus the jarring attributes of God are now reconciled, and behold the members of the meeting, that seemed to be at the greatest vari-

ance, are embracing one another in their arms: "Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

II. The Second thing was, When and where did these blessed parties meet together? When we speak of a remarkable meeting, it is usual to inquire into the time and place of the meeting. Now, the place where, and the time when as to this wonderful meeting, are two questions which I put together, for they may both be answered at once, because of their near relation.

1st, Then in general, the meeting place, or the place of the meeting, is CHRIST; and the time of the meeting was, when Christ put himself in our room, or substitute himself in the place of the sinner, to answer the demands of all the members of the meeting, that had any objection against our salvation, or anything to lay to our charge: Where then, and when did they meet together and kiss each other? Why, it was even in Christ, when he took our law-room, to pay our debt and purchase our liberty in such a manner as Mercy and Peace might have their interests advanced, without injury to Truth and Righteousness; that Mercy might vent, to the credit of Truth; and Peace might be proclaimed to the honour of Righteousness; and the sinner saved, to the satisfaction of Justice. They meet together and embrace each other in him, as the Surety, "The Surety of the better Testament," Heb. vii. 22.

We are debtors to the mandatory and minatory part of the law, arraigned at the instance of divine Justice to pay the debt. Christ substitutes himself in our room, comes under the law to pay the whole debt: it is true the debt is personal, and Justice had a demand upon the person that sinned, by virtue of the covenant of works; but the covenant never excluded a surety, though it provided none. The law promised life upon our personal obedience, but in case we fail, it revealed no surety to make out an obedience in our room. There behoved, indeed, to be a secret reserve in the covenant of works, whereby the perfect obedience of another was not excluded: for, if the covenant of works had absolutely excluded a surety in our room, then the covenant of grace had been excluded, and our salvation had been impossible after our fall; but though the covenant of works did not exclude a surety, yet that covenant did neither provide, nor reveal a surety. This is done in the covenant of grace, which is Christ as Surety fulfilling for us the covenant of works, in all the articles of it.

Now, is Truth and faithfulness at any loss here? No: the

truth of the promise and threatening both, of the law of works is fulfilled. On the one hand, the promise of eternal life, made to perfect obedience, which, though we forfeited in our own person, yet we recover in the person of Christ; the promise of life upon the ground and condition of perfect obedience, being fulfilled to us in him, who hath yielded that perfect obedience in our room. On the other hand, divine Truth and Faithfulness, in the threatening of the law, which was death, is glorified in that it is fulfilled upon the Surety; while we, who came under the sentence of death in the first Adam, undergo that death in the second.

Again, is Righteousness and Justice at any loss by the Surety in our room? No, no: whether we look upon it as vindictive or retributive Justice: vindictive Justice is displayed in its utmost severity against Christ; "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and the man that is my fellow." And so the sword is drunk in his blood to infinite satisfaction. Retributive Justice is gloriously displayed also in the sinner's being rewarded, justified, saved upon this ground. It is true, might Justice say, I could have demanded satisfaction upon the sinner himself, in his own person, but as I can sustain no injury to my honour, by such a surety as this, whom they call IMMANUEL, God-man; so I find my honour and interest, instead of being impaired, is advanced by this exchange of persons; for, though I shall damn the sinner to all eternity, I will never get such full and complete satisfaction upon any finite creature as I will get by one stroke of my avenging sword upon that person of infinite dignity; and so it pleased the Lord to bruise him.—Why then, they meet together and embrace one another in him, as the Surety; and if Truth and Righteousness be both pleased to the full, the parties cannot but all agree, and embrace each other.—Again, they meet together and embrace one another in him, as a Sacrifice: "A sacrifice and offering of a sweet-smelling savour unto God," Eph. v. 2. Why, "He offered up himself by the eternal Spirit." O great! Even by his eternal Godhead; a valuable sacrifice indeed!—They meet together in him as a propitiation; "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness, for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God," Rom. iii. 25. Behold him righteous in shewing Mercy! Here is the atonement, the propitiation: that very word which the Septuagint calls the mercy-seat, in the Old Testament; and it is the word that the poor publican made use of, when he was

seeking Mercy, "God be merciful to me a sinner ; or be thou PROPITIOUS to me," Luke xviii. 13.—He hath a mind of this Mercy-seat and Propitiation. It is not simple mercy that he sought, but Mercy through a propitiation ; he looked to the blood of atonement, to the sacrificed Lamb of God, saying, Give me mercy for this ; by that solemn propitiation ; "Be thou propitious to me." Here it is that Mercy and Justice meet together.—They meet together in him as a ransom : "Deliver his soul from going down to the pit ; I have found a ransom," Job xxxiii. 24.—In a word they have met together, and kissed one another in a crucified Christ ; whose death was the payment of our debt, the punishment of our sin, the price of our redemption, and a purchase of our life, liberty, and eternal salvation.—Here is the meeting-place then of these glorious perfections of God : here is the person in whom they centre, that they may be all glorified to the highest. Mercy, Truth, Righteousness, and Peace, all are pleased.—Mercy is gratified, and constitutes him to be the Mercy-seat : Truth is satisfied, and centres in him as the way, the truth, and the life ; Righteousness is contented, and declares him to be the Lord our righteousness ; Peace is perfected, and proclaims him to be the Prince of peace : yea, not only are all the members of the meeting pleased and satisfied for themselves, in the advancement of their own particular interests, but they are infinitely well-pleased in each other ; and that the interests of their seemingly opposite parties are advanced, as well as their own particular claims. Mercy is pleased, that Truth had got all its demands ; and Truth is pleased, that Mercy hath got all her desire ; and Righteousness is pleased, that Peace is proclaimed ; and Peace is pleased, that Righteousness is honoured. Mercy and Peace rejoice that they are magnified, to the infinite glory of Truth and Righteousness ; and Truth and Righteousness rejoice, that they are glorified, to the infinite pleasure of Mercy and Peace : and hence they not only meet together, but kiss one another. Here you see where they meet together.—So much for an answer thereto more generally.

2dly, More particularly as to the meeting time, you may take these following particulars for further clearing of it. Although this blessed meeting, once taking place, is still continued, and cannot be said properly to adjourn from time to time, and from place to place ; for this assembly never dissolves ; yet, in a suitableness to our weak capacity, and finite understanding, which cannot rightly conceive of

a meeting that never had a time to meet, because they met in eternity, and never shall have time to part, because they meet to eternity; we cannot conceive of it, I say, but by taking it, as it were into so many parts, or considering it in so many periods; and there are these eight remarkable periods wherein Mercy and Peace meet with Truth and Righteousness, and kiss each other.

1. The first remarkable period is this, They met together at the council-table of the covenant of redemption from eternity; before ever the foundation of the world was laid, and ere ever the morning stars sang together, Mercy and Truth met together, Righteousness and Peace kissed each other: for the council of peace did then meet. Zech. vi. 13. And all was concerted by infinite Wisdom, how Mercy should be magnified, Truth cleared, Righteousness vindicated, and Peace concluded; and all in Christ, who, according to the tenor of that covenant (whereof the covenant of grace is but a transcript) was to give his soul an offering for sin; and then was to see his seed, and the pleasure of the Lord to prosper in his hand. Then it was that this pleasant meeting was first constituted, as you may see, Prov. viii. 30, 31. He being set up from everlasting, ere ever the earth was, God in all his glorious perfections was delighted in him: and, in him, "His delights were with the sons of men." This was the grand meeting at which the time and place of all the subsequent meetings were concerted, and all the other particulars we are to mention, are by the result of this, and, as it were, emanations therefrom; for it is a meeting that never dissolves, though in several periods it appears like a new meeting unto us. Therefore,

2. Another remarkable period is, their meeting together in the garden of Eden, after man had made himself naked and obnoxious to the flaming sword of divine justice. Mercy comes walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the guilty pannel being examined in open court, behold Mercy and Truth meet together in the happy sentence that was pronounced, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent," Gen. iii. 15. Behold Righteousness and Peace kissing one another in the righteous vengeance that was to be executed upon the devil and his works, in order to effectuate a happy peace betwixt God and man.—This meeting was gradually cleared up under the Old Testament; and in the legal sacrifices, pointing out the great propitiatory sacrifice.

3. Another remarkable period is their meeting together at Bethlehem Ephratah, upon Christ's incarnation, Micah v. 2, 4, 5.

4. Another remarkable period is their meeting together at the banks of Jordan, when Christ was baptised, Mat. iii. 13. 16, 17.

5. Another remarkable period is their meeting together in the garden of Gethsemane, when Christ, being in an agony, did sweat great drops of blood under the pressure of avenging Justice; every drop of blood was an ocean of mercy: and while he was pressed in the wine-press of God's wrath, Mercy was expressed. No mercy to Christ; for, God spared not his own Son, even when he cried, Mercy, mercy; God's mercy, saying, "Father, if it be thy will, remove this cup from me." No! no mercy was shown to him, otherwise no mercy had been shown to us; Justice must have its due from him, that mercy might vent towards us; and so here Mercy and truth meet together.

6. Another remarkable period is, their meeting on Mount Calvary, where Christ was crucified. It was upon the cross of Christ, that Mercy and Truth met together, that Righteousness and Peace kissed each other; for there it was that he paid all the elect's debt, to the last farthing that Truth and Righteousness could demand; until he cried with a loud voice, and said, "It is finished." Having done all that the law could enjoin, he suffered all that the law could threaten, so as it cannot crave a farthing more: "It is finished." All that was stipulated for with the Father, in that federal transaction; all that was promised, in that eternal compact, is finished; every article agreed to in the council of peace was finished. The bargain that he had signed with his hand, he now sealed with his blood; and in this appearance upon the cross, or in his obedience to the death, did all the attributes of God meet, as in a centre. And on this account was mount Calvary more glorious than mount Sinai; for, in mount Sinai, God appeared in terrible majesty, making the mountain to tremble, and the earth to shake; but here in mount Calvary, he appeared not only in his terrible majesty, but in his tender mercy, in his terrible fury against sin; and in his tender favour towards the sinner; and now, the controversy betwixt Justice and Mercy seems at a crisis; here was the critical juncture, wherein their different demands behoved to be decided; and it was done with such a solemnity as made the whole universe, as it were, to tremble and quake: for then did God shake, not the earth only, but also heaven; for when Christ was under the mighty load of this terrible wrath, in the sinner's room, there was a great earthquake, and the heavens grew black, the sun was eclipsed; and, that at a time, contrary to the common rules of nature, which made a

heathen philosopher, at a distance, cry out, "That either the frame of nature was on the point of dissolution, or the God of nature was suffering." And indeed he was suffering unto blood, and unto death. Behold the living and eternal God here, in our nature wounded to death, and bleeding out his life to be a sacrifice for sin, that justice might be satisfied, and mercy might be magnified, and all the attributes of God glorified to the highest. O wonder! that GOLGOTHA, the place of a skull, should be such a famous meeting place for the divine perfections.—It was a place of the greatest shame and ignominy; but, in him who endured the cross, and despised the shame, it was made a place of most resplendent glory; for, in the cross of Christ, Mercy and Truth, Righteousness and Peace met, and embraced each other. God's attributes did harmoniously join together, so as the one does not blacken, but illustrate the glory of the other, while they shined gloriously in the face of Christ crucified, as a beautiful and bright constellation; for he was set forth to be a propitiation, to declare the Righteousness and Justice of God, together with his other glorious names.

7. Another remarkable period, is their meeting together at the bar of God's great Justice-court in heaven, "Within the vail, whither the Fore-runner hath for us entered, even Jesus," Heb. vi. 20. When Christ was upon the cross, the vail of the temple was rent in twain, from the top to the bottom; and a way was made for entering into the holy of holies: and as the priests under the law were not only to offer the sacrifice without the camp, but after that were to enter the holiest of all, not without blood, but with the blood of the sacrifice, to sprinkle the mercy-seat, Lev. xvi. 14. 15. "Even so, Christ having offered himself a sacrifice, and suffered without the gate, Heb. xiii. 12. He entered into the holy place by his own blood," Heb. ix. 12, there to appear as our High-priest, in the power and virtue of his blood, to make a full atonement of, and sprinkle the mercy-seat. Hence believers are said to be come to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling: And where is this? Even in heaven, as you see in the context, Heb. xii. 23. 24. Now, in this work, Christ carried the price of his blood into the very presence of God for us, Heb. ix. 24, and paid it down before him: and in this act, Justice hath its satisfaction brought home; and by this act, Mercy and Justice actually are met; for hereby Christ sprinkled the very mercy-seat with blood, all over, both upon it, and before it, as the fore-cited, Lev

xvi. represents. For the mercy-seat, of old, stood so, that it could be seen but two ways, namely, upon it, and before it, as a table next to the wall; and so this points out, that whatever way we look to mercy by faith, we may see mercy and blood mixed; mercy and justice met together; and all sorts of mercy conveyed through the blood of Christ; top-mercies, and side-mercies, upper-mercies, of a spiritual nature, and lower-mercies of a temporal nature; for the mercy-seat is sprinkled with blood upon it, and before it, and whatever way you look to it. The sacrifice was finished on the cross; and all sacrifices finished therein: but the blood of the sacrifice behoved also to be carried within the vail, in order to the full atonement, that what was written in blood upon the cross, might be sealed in the presence of God, at the heavenly bar: and we act not our faith far enough, for redemption, unless we follow Christ from the cross to the bar of God's justice-court in heaven, to see all sealed and secured there, within the vail, where this blood is exposed, as it were, and plead at the bar; where Mercy and Justice meet together, and embrace each other.

8. Another remarkable period, is their meeting together, at the bar of Conscience, God's lower court, on the day of actual reconciliation betwixt God and the sinner; for then, "The blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, did offer himself without a spot to God, doth purge the conscience," Heb. ix. 14. And, "The blood of sprinkling, wherewith the conscience is purged from dead works, to serve the living God," doth put forth its purgative power and virtue by a certain internal speech: And what doth it speak to the conscience? "It speaks better things than the blood of Abel:" That speaks vengeance, but this speaks mercy and peace, in conjunction with truth and righteousness, and justice: for where ever justice-satisfying blood cries for mercy and peace, Mercy and Truth, Righteousness and Peace meet, and embrace each other. This blood is the cement whereby they are joined together; before this blood be applied, the conscience of the convinced sinner is all in a flame, like mount Sinai; thunder, and lightning, and smoke, and darkness, and fear of hell and vengeance, compassing the soul about, while it is arraigned at the distance of the fiery law, to pay the double debt to the mandatory and minatory part of the law; that is, perfect obedience upon the pain of eternal death and damnation. The sinner finds himself lost and undone for ever by this law; but then, whenever the blood of sprinkling comes in, and appears at the

bar of conscience, it speaks better things ; it is a better speaker than the law : And what says it ? Why, the language of it is, With your leave, O law, you have nothing to crave ; for Christ, the Son of God was arraigned at the instance of divine Justice, to pay all this debt, because he was this sinner's Surety and Substitute ; and he actually paid it, by obeying the command and undergoing the penalty of the law ; and for this I produce the ancient records of God ; " In the volume of his book, it is written of Christ, that when sacrifice and offering would not, he said, Lo, I come ; I delight to do thy will : and that the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all : That he was made a curse for us ; yea, that he was made sin for us, even he who knew no sin, that we might become the righteousness of God in him." And therefore, O law, though thou hast Truth and Righteousness on thy side, yet Truth and Righteousness have met with mercy and Peace, and they have concerted matters, and agreed harmoniously, and kissed one another, in token of their full agreement in Christ ; so that in Christ all charges are answered. And thus in the believer's conscience parties meet together.

III.—The Third thing proposed was, How and after what manner is it, that they meet together, and kiss each other ? We are to conceive of it after the manner of God ; for it is more than a meeting of saints ; it is more than a meeting of angels ; it is a divine meeting of all the glorious attributes of God ; and we may notice these following qualities of it.

1. It is a wonderful and mysterious meeting : it is above our apprehension and conception. O ! how wonderful a meeting is this ! The very name of the Person, that is made the trysting-place, the meeting place, is called WONDERFUL, Isaiah ix. 6. Because the meeting is about us, his name is called IMMANUEL, God with us.—O how mysterious is this meeting ! " Great is the mystery of godliness ! God manifested in the flesh," 1 Tim. iii. 16. That is all the attributes of God meeting together, and harmoniously embracing one another in the eternal Son of God, who hath assumed our nature into his own personality : this is the most wonderful, mysterious meeting that ever was in heaven or earth.

2. It is a joyful meeting : they meet with infinite pleasure and satisfaction in one another ; " Behold my Servant whom I uphold ; mine Elect, in whom my soul delighteth," Isaiah xlii. 1. As the perfections of God, are glorified in Christ, so they rejoice and are delighted in him ; " For JEHOVAH is well-pleased for his righteous-

ness sake ; and therefore the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand ; and he shall see the travail of his soul and be satisfied." Surely, if God hath his pleasure and Christ his satisfaction, no attribute of the divine Majesty, no member of the meeting is displeased, or out of humour ; no, no ; " This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." My Justice is pleased, my Mercy is pleased, and all my other attributes are pleased. O it is a heartsome, pleasant, and joyful meeting ! May all that hear me, be well-pleased to see it : no joyful meeting, but what hath a respect to this.

3. It is a holy meeting : some meetings among men that are called heartsome meetings, yet are very unholy and sinful meetings ; but here is an infinitely holy meeting ; " Holiness to the Lord," is the motto of it. A meeting of holy saints, and holy angels, is not such a holy meeting as this meeting of the holy attributes of God, to advance the great design of infinite holiness. All the holy meetings that ever were, or ever will be, are the result of this, and the effect of some portion of holiness sent from it ; for all holiness issues from it. Here Mercy and Truth meet together, in a holy manner ; Righteousness and Peace salute each other, in a holy way, and greet one another with a holy kiss.

4. It is a happy meeting ; all happiness and blessings flow from this meeting : Christ, the meeting-place, is the centre of all spiritual blessings, Eph. i. 3. Many unhappy meetings have been in the world since sin entered into it ; and sinful, unholy meetings are always miserable and unhappy meetings : but this holy meeting, must be a happy meeting ; and this holy kiss, must be a happy kiss. If Mercy and Truth had not met together, we had never met with God ; if Righteousness and Peace had never kissed each other, we had never got a kiss of the fair face of the Son of God, nor ever been taken into the divine embraces.

5. It is a free meeting : Mercy and Truth met together freely, without being constrained : Righteousness and Peace kissed each other freely, without being forced ; no motive from without could ever take place, to move God to call this meeting from eternity ; it was " According to his own purpose and grace, which is given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began," 2 Tim. i. 9. Free sovereign grace is the original of the meeting. It is also such a free assembly, where every member might freely speak, and not one to interrupt another, as is usual in meetings among men, where some

cry one thing, and some another, in a confused manner ; like that assembly, Acts xix. 22. where it is said, " The assembly was confused, and the greater part knew not wherefore they were met together ; and some cried one thing, and some another : " No, this meeting is free, in opposition both to all constraint and compulsion from without, and to all confusion and commotion from within : where sovereign free grace is the master-convener, there can be no compulsion ; and where the God of order is the manager, there could be no confusion ; and where the God of peace was all in all, there could be no dissension. Therefore,

6. It is a harmonious meeting ; whatever different claims and pretensions the members of the meeting may seem to have, yet they harmoniously concur in advancing one another's honour and glory ; and hence, as they mutually meet together, so they affectionately embrace one another. There was no discord at this assembly, no proper variance or striving for state ; but gloriously conspiring with joint hearts and hands, to glorify each other in the salvation of a company of sinners, by Jesus Christ. The divine essence is undivided ; and as, " There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Spirit ; and these three are one : " so the attributes of God, however manifold, to our apprehension, yet there is no division among them, they are all one ; and their conspiring together in Christ for our redemption, is called, **THE MANIFOLD WISDOM OF GOD**. The manifold perfections of God meet together in one, with one consent, and with one heart. Behold Mercy and Justice in one another's arms : and so close is the embracement, that they are just one. Though it be a full meeting, and all parties present, yet there is no war, no jar, no dissension, no division, but all harmony and concord, all love and affection : it is the most peaceful meeting that ever was. And yet,

7. It is a bloody meeting : and never was, and never will there be such a bloody meeting in heaven or earth : the mercy-seat must be sprinkled with blood ; Mercy cannot be vented without blood ; Truth cannot be cleared without blood ; Righteousness cannot be vindicated without blood ; and Peace cannot be purchased without blood ; " Without shedding of blood there is no remission ; " no mercy to be vented, no peace to be proclaimed ; " Christ hath made peace by the blood of the cross," Col. i. 20. " A bloody husband hast thou been unto me," said Zipporah ; but, O how much more may Christ say, A bloody meeting hath this been unto me !

“Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozra?” Isaiah lxiii. 1. Why, what is the matter that this garment is dyed with blood? Why? When Mercy and Truth met together, they pressed to be so near one another in him, that they pressed the blood out of his veins; and so it was a bloody meeting: And when Righteousness and Peace kissed each other, it behoved to be in Christ, and so the sword of justice behoved to pierce him through and through; that so these sacred lips might meet and kiss each other in his heart; and so it was a bloody kiss: They kissed each other with such good-will, that Christ was, as it were, bruised betwixt their lips, that the blood might cement and glue them together. One would think, such a bloody kiss would be no pleasant kiss; nay, but, “It pleased the Father to bruise him:” They met together on a sea of blood.—Thus it was a bloody meeting. Again,

8. It is an efficacious meeting: Many meet, and assemble together, and yet do nothing for their meeting; it is to no effect: But here Mercy and Truth meet together efficaciously, co-operatively; all is done at the meeting that God proposed to be done, and all is done that concerns the glory of God, and salvation of men; their meeting together is their working together, and that to perfection; “For God the Lord is a Rock, and his work is perfect.” Their meeting together is their building together, Psalm lxxxix. 2, 3. “I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens.” There is Mercy and Truth both a building, and the foundation of the building is laid in Christ: “I have made a covenant with my chosen: I have sworn unto David my servant.”

9. It is an unexpected meeting; it is beyond the expectation of men and angels. If friends and intimates should meet, and salute one another, it would not be surprising; but to see opposites, antipodes and antagonists meet together, and embrace each other, this were surprising and unexpected; so to see light and darkness, love and enmity, life and death meeting, how unexpected were that? Thus it is here, Mercy and Truth, Righteousness and Peace, these attributes of God, with respect to us, were opposites and antipodes. The language of Truth and Righteousness, is death and damnation to the sinner; the language of mercy and Peace is life and salvation to the sinner; and when a sinner finds himself pursued to death, at the instance of divine Justice, and the truth and veracity of God engaged against him, according to the threatening

of the law. O how unexpected a re-encounter is it ! when he finds Mercy and Peace meeting with Justice and Truth, and stopping the pursuit, according to the promise of the gospel, to the credit of the opposite parties, saying, " Deliver his soul from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom ;" and so all differences are adjusted ; all opposites reconciled, to the infinite surprise, and beyond the expectation of all created beings. No wonder then, upon this meeting discovered, the poor soul cries, " Is this the manner of man, O Lord ? O, who is like unto thee ! Nay, there is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, that rides on the heaven for their help, and in his excellency on the skies."

10. It is an everlasting, indissolvable meeting : other meetings will adjourn their meetings from time to time, and from place to place ; yea, other meetings must part, and when they part, they may never meet again : and we that are here met, must part, and never all meet again in time ; even as some others that met together with us the last year, are away to eternity.—But O ! this meeting betwixt Mercy and Truth, Righteousness and Peace, it is a meeting where there is no parting ; the meeting is from everlasting to everlasting ; their meeting together, and kissing each other, is an eternal and unchangeable meeting, and an eternal and unchangeable kiss : it is every way like God, without beginning, without ending, and without succession.—Whatever beginning, issue, or increase it hath, with respect to its manifestation to us, yet, in itself, it is still the same in Christ Jesus, who is, " The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever ; without any variableness, or shadow of turning," Heb. xiii. 8. The meeting never breaks up ; it is a continued meeting, never to be dissolved ; and there they kiss one another to all eternity ; " For his mercy endureth for ever, and his righteousness to all generations : And because of truth, meekness, and righteousness, in his majesty he shall ride properly : And of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end. I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever ; and I have said, Truth shall be established in the heavens." Why, what is the meaning of all these expressions ? The language is, as if one glorious attribute of God, should say to another, O ! the sin of man set us all, as it were, at variance, and the whole creation knows not how to reconcile God with himself, if he shall save one sinner ; but behold we, having met together in Christ, the Righteousness, the Ransom, the Atonement, the Propitiation ; having embraced one another in behalf of

those poor miserable sinners, our arms shall never separate, they are clasped together. Mercy and Truth have met together, saying, You and I shall never part; Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other, saying, You and I shall never sunder, nor suspend the embracement; neither death nor life, nor hell, nor devils, nor sin itself, shall ever separate us. It is a bargain among us, a divine match; they have met together by an everlasting covenant, sealed the bargain with an everlasting kiss, and fastened a knot in an everlasting Righteousness, which is the bond of the union, even Christ; "For the covenant does stand fast with him, Psalm lxxxix. 28. Where you will also see how this everlasting-meeting is established in Christ, verse 14. "Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne; or, the ESTABLISHMENT of thy throne," as it may be rendered; "And mercy and truth shall go before thy face." And verse 21, "With him my hand shall be established; and my faithfulness, and my mercy shall be with him." And verse 28. "My mercy will I keep for him for ever." Thus it is an everlasting meeting.

IV. The Fourth thing proposed, was, Why, or for what reasons they have met together, and kissed each other? Why have the perfections of the glorious God conspired so harmoniously, and met together in such a sweet solemnity? Surely such a meeting as this must have noble designs in view; and I will tell you these four reasons of the meeting, or four things that were to be concerted at this great assembly.

1. They met together, to concert measures for advancing the glory of God to the highest. This parliament of heaven met together upon ways and means, for bringing in the greatest revenue of praise and glory to the crown of heaven, to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and all the glorious attributes of this great and eternal God. These glorious attributes conspired harmoniously to set forth and glorify themselves most illustriously: they met together, and kissed one another, that they might glorify each other. The glory of God, was the first and last end of the meeting. What is the chief end of man, but to glorify God, and enjoy him for ever? And, O! what is the chief end of God! It is even to glorify himself in all his perfections, and to enjoy himself for ever. And how does God glorify himself most brightly? It is even in Christ, the meeting-place of these perfections, with a view to our redemption, "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved,"

Eph. i. vi. And how does he enjoy himself most sweetly? It is even in Christ, "Behold mine Elect, in whom my soul delighteth. I was daily his delight, says Christ, while my delight was with the sons of men," Prov. viii. 30. They met together to put a crown of glory and honour upon each other. Adam's sin and rebellion, and your sin, man, woman, and my sin (O that God-dishonouring evil, sin!) it had pulled off that crown of glory, as it were, from the head of the great King, eternal and immortal, and thrown it into the mire, and stained it with filth and pollution: but behold these attributes of God meet together to take up the crown, to rub off the dust and dung that sin had cast upon it, and to add some more sparkling jewels to it than ever, and set it upon the head of their Sovereign, to the highest praises of his Mercy, Justice, Truth, Righteousness, Grace, Love, Holiness, Wisdom, and all his other excellencies; that men and angels might sing and say, "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will towards men:" that all the saints might sing a concert in praise of the meeting betwixt Mercy and Truth, Justice and Peace, saying, as it is, Psalm lxxxix. 14:—

Justice and judgment of thy throne,
Shall be the dwelling place
Mercy, accompany'd with Truth,
Shall go before thy face.

And that every saint might sing the fifty-seventh Psalm, and ninth and tenth verses,

I'll praise thee 'mong the people, LORD,
'Mong nations sing will I;
For great to heav'n thy mercy is,
Thy truth doth reach the sky.

They met together, to put a crown of glory upon the head of Christ, Heb. ii. 9, in whom they met. This assembly did convene for the coronation of the Son of God: For, "He having humbled himself, and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name above every name, that at the name of JESUS, every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is our LORD, to the glory of God the Father," Phil. ii. 8—13. Christ hath glorified the Father, and, therefore, the Father glorified him: "And now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him; and if God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself," John xiii. 31, 32.—"Him that honoureth me, I will honour," says God,

1 Sam. ii. 30. And in whom does this take place to perfection? It is in Christ; God is honoured most highly by him; and therefore, he is honoured most highly; AMEN, so let it be, and so shall it be.—And therefore it is concerted in that meeting, that all the saints shall glorify him; hence the royal edict comes forth, “He is thy LORD, worship thou him,” Psalm xlv. 11. And so we find them doing, Rev. v. 9.—“Thou art worthy to take the book, and open the seals; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.”—It is concerted in that meeting, that all the angels should glorify him; hence that edict comes forth, “Let all the angels of God worship him,” Heb. i. 6. And so we find them doing, Rev. v. 11, 12,—“I heard the voice of many angels, 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.”—It is concerted in this meeting, that all the creatures in heaven and earth, sea and land, shall glorify him, as we see, verse 13. But lest the sinful creatures upon earth, like you and me, should not glorify him, or see his glory, it is concerted in that glorious meeting, that the Holy Ghost, the eternal Spirit one God, equal in power and glory with the Father and the Son, shall be sent down to the earth to glorify him; “He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shew it unto you,” John xvi. 14.—O! hath the Spirit of God been shewing any thing of Christ among you this day! any thing of his grace, fulness, and righteousness, so as to glorify him, and make him glorious above all things to you: why then, we may reckon that you have found something of the saving fruits of this glorious meeting; for the grand design of it was to glorify God in Christ, by the Spirit. They met to concert all things relating to the glory of the Father, in the Son, by the Holy Ghost. They met to consult their own glory in Christ, that Mercy and Truth might be glorified in him.

2. They met to concert their proper work, in carrying on this great end, of the glory of God, and his perfections. They do not meet together to sit idle, and do nothing; no, they meet together to concert each of them their proper business, as Christ said to his friends, “Wherefore was it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” So I may say here, the attributes of God met together that they might go about God’s business. What business? What work belongs to each of them

severally? Why, Mercy and Truth meet together, that they may be sent upon an embassy together; "God shall send forth his mercy and his truth," Psalm. lvii. 3; his Mercy to give in the promise of the gospel; and his Truth, to make out the same. Thus Mercy and Truth meet together, that they may be sent forth upon some gracious expedition, particularly both to be leaders and followers, to the remnant whom God appointed unto life. On the one hand, to be leaders: hence the Psalmist cries, "O send forth thy light and thy truth; let them lead me, and bring me to thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacle: then will I go to the altar of God, to God my exceeding joy." Behold the wonderful business of Mercy and Truth, and the work they are set out upon, even mercifully to lead blind souls to God in Christ.—On the other hand, it is to be not only leaders, but followers: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life," Psalm xxiii. 6. If the child of God under any temptation, refuse to be led by Mercy and Truth, and give up with them as his leaders, yet for all that, he shall not hinder them to be his followers: he may run out of God's way, but Mercy will follow and bring him back; and when Mercy follows, it is always in company with Truth. And, O! what think ye of this wonder? Mercy and Truth meet together, that they might go forth together, like two pages, to follow you, believer, through all the steps of your wilderness journey; "Goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." Here is a piece of work that Mercy and Truth have met together for, even to be sent forth as leaders and followers of poor elect sinners, till they be out of all hazard, in IMMANUEL's land, where glory dwells: see Psalm lxi. 7. But then, as Mercy and Truth have met together, to pursue their proper work; so, Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other, for pursuing of theirs. Well, say you, what is the work of Righteousness and Peace? You have a word in the last verse of this Psalm, where our text lies, "Righteousness shall go before him, and set us in the way of his steps." Divine Righteousness displaying itself in Christ Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, goes before him, to prepare his way, and bring us to God, and to our duty: and, to be sure, whenever Righteousness goes before, Peace will follow after; for, "The fruit of righteousness is peace," whether it be imputed or implanted. Here then the work of Righteousness and Peace kissing each other, is to bring in these blessed effects in their order: we consider them as divine perfections in the text, and in these effects, Righteousness leads the van, and Peace comes up with the rear.

3. These attributes conspire harmoniously, they meet together and kiss each other, for this reason, that, by their meeting together, they may concert the dissolving of some unhappy meetings. These opposite-like attributes of God meet together, that some intimates may be separate, and sad and sinful agreements may be broken up : there is a sad meeting and agreement we read of, Isaiah xxviii. 15, " We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are at agreement." Why, is not this the case of all men by nature? Yea, but how is this sad and miserable meeting dissolved? See verse 16, " Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet." Well, when Judgment and Righteousness mercifully meet in Christ, the sure Foundation, what will be the effect? It follows, v. 17, 18, " The hail shall sweep away the refuges of lies, and your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand." Whatever sad aspect this scripture may have to the despisers of Christ, yet it hath a merciful aspect to all the chosen of God, and all that desire to live to the Lord Jesus ; yea, there is here a foundation of faith laid, for all that hear the joyful sound, that whatever sinful and miserable meetings and agreements there are betwixt hell and them, betwixt death and them, yet it cannot stand before this glorious meeting, that was designed to break up and dissolve the opposite meetings, that stand in a contrariety thereto. —There are many black unions which this blessed union doth dissolve, and there is no dissolving of them but by this blessed meeting. —There is the black union betwixt the sinner and the law, which is the foundation of the black union betwixt the sinner and his sin : for, when the union betwixt him and the law is dissolved, then the union betwixt him and his sin is dissolved, according to Rom. vi. 14, " Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace." Now, what is the covenant of grace? Why, Mercy and Truth meeting together, Righteousness and Peace kissing each other in Christ Jesus is the substance, the marrow, the kernel of the covenant of grace ; and it is this blessed meeting that dissolves the union betwixt the sinner and the law, and so betwixt the sinner and his sin. O view the glorious design of this meeting? They met together that you might be separated from your sad associates. By nature you and the devil had met together, and you was a slave to him ; and it is the virtue of this meeting in Christ

that dissolves that; "The Seed of the Woman shall bruise the head of the Serpent." The world and you had met together, and you took pleasure in your wicked companions, or else was wholly drowned in worldly affairs; "O it is the faith of this meeting that dissolves that; "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith." The curse of God and you had met together, and you lie under that curse till, in the faith of this meeting, you shall see that Christ hath become a curse for us. This meeting is designed for the breaking up of all these, and the like unhappy meetings. They met together in a glorious band, to loose all the knots that the devil had tied.

4. These glorious attributes of God do conspire harmoniously, they meet together and kiss each other, that they may concert and carry on some happy meetings, and make up some blessed matches. These opposite-like attributes harmoniously meet, that opposites, and irreconcilable things might meet together harmoniously, and kiss each other, whether real or seeming opposites.

1. There are real opposites that meet together harmoniously, by virtue of this gloriously meeting; particularly these six.

(1.) These opposite-like attributes meet together harmoniously, that opposite natures might meet together, even that God and man might meet together, and embrace each other. And there are these two meetings betwixt God and man, that were concerted at this meeting; the one is the meeting betwixt God and man, in the hypostatical union of the two natures of Christ, our IMMANUEL, God-man, in one person: this is the great mystery of godliness, "God manifested in the flesh;" and this is the foundation of all other saving and merciful meetings betwixt God and man.—The other is the meeting between God and man in the spiritual union betwixt Christ and his members, in one mystical person, by the bond of the Spirit; "For he that is joined to the Lord, is one spirit:" and this union is the foundation of all spiritual communion with God. We were not only at an infinite natural distance from God, as we are creatures, but at an infinite moral distance from him, as we are criminals and sinners: but the attributes of God met together, and kissed each other in Christ, that God and man might meet together in a spiritual union, and embrace each other in a sweet spiritual communion. Whatever spiritual communion you have with God, believer, this day, it flows from this glorious meeting of the divine attributes in Christ; and this union and communion is indeed a

meeting of opposite natures ; God became man, and took on our nature, and he makes us partakers of his nature, 2 Pet. i. 4.

(2.) These opposite-like attributes met together and kissed each other, that opposite wills might meet, and embrace each other. God's will and ours are opposite ; this is indeed a branch of the former ; but our wills are the great forts of corrupt nature, that stands out against God and his will ; " We are enmity against God, and not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Now how comes the will to be reconciled to God's will ? It is only by Christ, in whom the perfections of God meet together ; " Thy people shall be willing [Heb. WILLINGNESS] in the day of thy power," Psalm cx. 4.

(3.) These opposite-like attributes meet and kiss each other, that opposite persons, viz., Jews and Gentiles, man and man, that were enemies and haters of one another, might meet together ; that Jews and Gentiles might meet together, and men at variance with men might meet together ; hence it is said of him, in whom the attributes of God do meet, " He is our peace, who hath made both one, (*i.e.*, Jews and Gentiles) and hath broken down the middle wall of partition : having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments, contained in ordinances, for to make in himself, of twain, a new man, so making peace : and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body, by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby," Eph. ii. 14-16. If any thing slay the enmity to God or man, this is it.

(4.) These opposite-like attributes of God meet and kiss each other, that opposite climates might meet together ; I mean, that heaven and earth might meet together ; the church militant, and the church triumphant. Heaven and earth were at variance by our sin ; but now in Christ, saints in heaven, and saints on earth meet together. Hence we are said to be come to the general assembly, and church of the first-born, that are written in heaven,—to the spirits of just men made perfect, Heb. xii. 23. All believers are said to be thus come to mount Zion,—the heavenly Jerusalem, ver. 22. Yea, in Christ, angels in heaven, and men on earth do meet together : hence also believers are said to be come to the innumerable company of angels : and the angel of the Lord encamps about them that fear him, Ps. xxxiv. 7. Yea, all things in heaven and earth do meet together, and kiss each other in Christ, the meeting-place ; " Having made peace, by the blood of his cross, by him to

reconcile all things to himself; whether things in heaven, or things in earth," Col. i. 20, Eph. i. 10. See how, upon the back of this meeting in the text, 'heaven and earth are said to meet together in the following verse, "Truth shall spring out of the earth; and Righteousness shall look down from heaven;" which I insist not upon here.

(5.) These opposite-like attributes of God meet and kiss each other, that opposite covenants might meet and embrace each other: even the covenant of works, and the covenant of grace, in Christ the meeting-place of the divine 'perfections. These two covenants do, as it were, join hands and agree. Did the covenant of works command perfect obedience? and being broken, did it demand complete satisfaction? Behold Christ's obedience to the death answers both; God's covenant of grace dispensed to us, is just Christ fulfilling, for us, the covenant of works; and so in him they meet, and kiss each other; "For he is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth." Again,

(6.) These opposite-like attributes of God meet and kiss each other, that opposite thoughts might meet together, and embrace each other; even God's thoughts and our thoughts; how opposite these are you may see, Isa. lv. 8, "For my thoughts are not your thoughts; nor your ways my ways; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Some have presumptuous thoughts, while they look only to God's mercy, and so they think certainly God will have mercy on them, though yet they are strangers to Christ; these are opposite to God's thoughts; he hath no thoughts of shewing mercy that way. Others have despairing thoughts, while they look merely or mostly to God's Justice, and so their thought is "O! will God have mercy on the like of me! and, he cannot in justice save the like of me!" These thoughts are also opposite to God's thoughts; my thoughts are not your thoughts met together: why, let a man view the mercy and justice of God met together, and harmoniously kissing one another in Christ, so as to see God in Christ reconciling the world to himself. If your thoughts be spiritualised, to discern mercy venting through the sacrifice, that satisfies divine justice, then God's thoughts and your thoughts meet together, and kiss each other.—Thus the divine attributes meet together harmoniously. This glorious meeting lays a foundation for these happy meetings.

2dly, there are seeming opposites, that meet together harmoniously, by virtue of this glorious meeting ; as,

(1.) These opposite-like perfections of God meet together, and kiss each other harmoniously, that opposite-like providences might meet together, and kiss each other. There are frowning providences, and smiling providences ; crosses and comforts in the believer's lot : here is a providence that favours the promise, and there is a providence that seems to contradict the promise : at one time the believer is exalted, and his mountain standeth strong ; at another time he is troubled, depressed, and cast down. Well, how shall these unite and cement together ? Why, they meet and embrace each other in Christ, the meeting-place : for, "All things work together for good to them that love him, and are the called according to his purpose." Hence we will find, not only light and darkness in the believer's lot, but sometimes light and darkness meeting together, Zech. xiv. 7, there you read of a day, "That is neither day nor night ; yet a day known to the Lord neither clear nor dark, but at evening time it shall be light." There evening-darkness ushering in the morning-light. Hence they have occasion to sing of mercy and judgment ; because of their meeting together and kissing each other, and working together for good. Behold the cross and the crown meeting together.

(2.) These opposite like perfections of God meet together and kiss each other, that opposite-like desires they meet, and embrace each other, while Mercy desires our life, and Justice seems to demand our death ; these are reconciled only in Christ, in whom Mercy and Truth, Righteousness and Peace, meet and embrace each other. But look to our desire of God's glory, and our own salvation, men and angels could never have contrived how these two desires could be reconciled, if Mercy and Truth had not met together, and kissed each other ; for the glory of God's truth and righteousness, in the threatening of his law, seems to rest satisfied with nothing less than our destruction ; and therefore to desire God's glory, would have been to desire our damnation ; and, consequently, in desiring our own salvation, we must have desired God's dishonour : but now by this blessed contrivance of infinite Wisdom, let us see how these two are not only reconciled, but made inseparable ; "Having set forth Christ to be the propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness in the remission of sins."

(3.) These seemingly opposite attributes meet and kiss each

other, that seemingly opposite graces might meet and embrace each other : for example, reverence and confidence ; how shall fear and reverence meet together with faith and confidence ? Why, Truth and righteousness are at the meeting : and therefore fear and reverence becomes us : but Mercy and Peace are also on the bench, therefore faith and holy confidence may boldly step in ; “ We have boldness to enter unto the holiest by the blood of Jesus.”

(4.) These opposite-like attributes meet and embrace each other, that opposite-like duties may meet together : prayer and praise seem opposite duties in some cases ; prayer supposes our wants to be great, otherwise, why should we pray ?—Praise supposes our enjoyments to be great, otherwise, why should we praise ?—Well, Truth and Righteousness, these awful attributes present at the meeting, say, We have nothing in ourselves, therefore we ought to pray ; but Mercy and Peace say, we have all, we have enough in Christ, and therefore we ought to praise. Humiliation and gloriation seem opposite duties ; but the seemingly opposite attributes of God meeting together, bring also these duties to meet and embrace each other.—Is Truth and Righteousness in the company with Mercy and Peace ? then humiliation is our duty : but is Mercy and Peace in company with Truth and Righteousness ? Then gloriation is our duty. “ Let him that glories, glory in the Lord.”

(5.) These seemingly opposite attributes of God meet and embrace each other, that seemingly opposite experiences may meet and embrace each other, and be reconciled, though seemingly irreconcilable. There are sad experiences, and sweet experiences : O ! here is the sad experience of a guilty conscience, a powerful corruption, and a conquering temptation : can ever that be reconciled with the experience of a holy peace, pardon, and victory ? Yea, here is a foundation laid for the reconciliation of these opposites. If Justice and Mercy have met together, then a guilty conscience, and a mercy seat may meet together ; a prevalent corruption, and pardoning, purifying blood may meet together, as they did in the psalmist's case ; “ Iniquities prevail against me : but as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away,” Psalm lxxv. 3.—The sad experience of fatherly anger, or of the feeling of divine wrath, may meet with the sweet experience of felt love and favour ; for Mercy and Justice are met together, Isa. liv. 7, 8.—The sad experience of perplexing thoughts, may meet with the sweet experience of spiritual consolation, and be swallowed up therein ; since Truth and Justice have

met with Mercy and Peace : Hence it was that these two met together in David : “ In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul,” Psalm xcix. 19. O ! is such a sad experience consistent with an interest in Christ ? Why, both terrible and amiable attributes of God meet together in Christ ; and therefore is it not strange, that the saddest and sweetest experiences meet together, so as not to be inconsistent with the state of a believer that is in Christ. To see awful Justice, and lovely Mercy meeting together in a sweet smelling sacrifice, is a greater wonder, than to see your saddest and sweetest experiences meeting in Christ, to make up a HALLELUJAH, “ Praise ye the Lord :” and the former meeting is the reason of this.

(6.) These irreconcilable like attributes of God meet and embrace each other, that irreconcilable like Scriptures might meet together and embrace each other. How shall Exod. xxxiv. 7, “ He will by no means clear the guilty,” (or, justify the sinner) be reconciled with Rom. iv. 5, where he is said to justify the ungodly ? O ! how can these two opposites meet together ?—Why, Mercy and Truth have met together in Christ, to make up a match betwixt them : a ransom is found, a propitiation is set forth ; why then, these opposite like scriptures may meet together, and kiss each other : “ He will by no means clear the guilty,” without a ransom a propitiation. Well, is the ransom found, and propitiation set forth ? then he will justify the ungodly on that ground ; “ Deliver his soul from going down to the pit, I have found out a ransom.” Now he can justify the sinner, and be just in so doing, while he draws him in to Christ by faith, Romans iii. 25, 26.—Thus you see the reasons of the meeting. In a word, they meet together upon a design to bring the greatest good out of the greatest evil, and the highest glory out of the deepest misery, to the praise of all God’s glorious perfections.

V. The fifth thing proposed, was the Application, in a few inferences. Is it so, that in the salvation of sinners by Jesus Christ, the glorious attributes and perfections of God do thus harmoniously conspire, and embrace each other ? Then hence we may see,

1. What a dreadful evil SIN is, which sets all the attributes of God, as it were, in opposition to one another, and puts all the world into confusion, and every thing out of order ; it sets heaven and earth, and all things in them at variance, one against another : to think light of sin, is to think light of this glorious meeting of divine

attributes, that met together to break this rebellion, and take order with this horrid insurrection against heaven. O! what a great matter is the salvation of a sinner! ere that can take place, this grand meeting must be called: all the injured attributes of God must have an honourable reparation.—Justice must be satisfied; Truth vindicated; Righteousness cleared; and in order to all this, a Surety must be provided, even a God in our nature: the guilt must be imputed to him, and the iniquity of us all must be laid upon him; and then a bloody tragedy must be acted upon his soul and body, till he sink to death under the weight of infinite wrath.

2. Hence see, what a wonderful person our Lord JESUS CHRIST is, in whom so many wonders meet together. It is in him, that Mercy and Truth, Righteousness and Peace, do meet together, and kiss each other; here all the illustrious perfections of the divine nature do gloriously conspire; here is the bright constellation of all the divine attributes shining forth in him; and every star performs its evolutions in this orb. Behold in him the bright glory and excellency of God's grace and love; a whole Trinity in concert, to perform each Person his own part, and each attribute its own work; and Christ, the image of the invisible God, set forth to be a GLORIOUS THEATRE, on which men and angels might see the splendour of the transaction: "He is the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person:" here is the great mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh, and all his attributes meeting together, and kissing each other in our IMMANUEL, God-man. There are two things meet in Christ, which should make him wonderful to us; the one is, all our sins meet together on him, that they may be condemned according to that word, Isaiah liii. 6, "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all;" (or, made them to MEET on him). The other is, all the attributes of God meet in him, that they may be glorified. And indeed there is no saving or satisfying knowledge of any property of God, but what is to be had in Christ: to see God to be a merciful, just, true, righteous, good, and holy God, is neither a saving, nor a satisfying sight; unless we see these attributes meeting in Christ for our salvation; and to see this, is to see the glory of God, in the face of Christ; here see the glory of divine Mercy! What a pardoning Mercy! "It is God's free, gracious acceptance of a sinner, upon satisfaction made to his justice in the blood of Jesus." Nor is any discovery of mercy, but as relating to the satisfaction of justice, consistent with the glory of

God : mercy cannot be seen savingly, but as meeting with justice in Christ. Here also we see the glory of divine truth in the exact accomplishment of all his threatenings and promises : that original threatening and commination, whence all other threatenings flow, Gen. ii. 17. "In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die," backed with a curse, "For cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them," is in him accomplished fully, and the truth of God therein cleared to our salvation, while he tasted death for us, and he was made a curse for us : so that in every threatening his truth is made glorious. And as to the promises, they are all Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus, to the glory of God by us, 2 Cor. i. 20. And so of all the other attributes of God, they are made glorious, and exalted in Christ to our salvation. Hence, when Christ desired his Father to glorify his name, John xii. 28., to make his name, that is his nature, properties, and perfections all glorious in the work of redemption, that he had in hand ; he was instantly answered from heaven, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again ;" I will give my attributes their utmost glory in thee.

3. Hence see the difference betwixt the law and the gospel : one great difference betwixt them lies in this, that in the law, the sinner that hath violated the same, may see Truth standing engaged against him, but no Mercy in company with Truth : and Righteousness in arms against him, but no Peace in company with Righteousness ; "Justice without mercy, and war without peace to the sinner," is the motto of the law ; for therein Truth and Righteousness meet together, but Mercy and Peace are not at the Meeting ; and so the language of the law, to you that are out of Christ, and under the law, is, No mercy, no peace, but the wrath of God, the vengeance of God, the curse of God, upon you ; and that so sure, as God is a God of truth and righteousness. There is the law. But in the gospel, Mercy and Peace come into the meeting, and make up a match betwixt all the opposite parties, to the highest glory of God, and the greatest happiness of the sinner : and they seal the match with a kiss of infinite complacency ; so that the sum of the gospel is this, "Mercy and Truth are met together, Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other."

4. Hence we may see what is the fountain-head, and foundation of all true communion and fellowship with God and man. This glorious meeting is the foundation of all other happy meetings :

fellowship with God, and an happy meeting with him, is a stream that flows from this fountain. We could never have met with God, or got a kindly kiss, or embrace, in the arms of his favour and love, if this divine meeting and embracement had not made way for it. Fellowship with man, or the communion of saints, is a rivulet that flows from this spring. When saints meet together for prayer or praises, under the influence of the Spirit, and under a gale of heaven; when their hearts are fired with love to God, and to one another in him; what is this? It is just a live-coal cast in among them, from the altar, Christ Jesus, where all the attributes of God meet together, and kiss each other; and hence true fellowship with God, and with the saints, are both declared to be in and through Christ Jesus;—"That which we have heard and seen, declare we unto you, that ye may have fellowship with us: And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ," 1 John i. 3. The harmony of the attributes of God in Christ, is the fountain of all the harmony among the saints. The little harmony, that takes place among them in our day, and the rarity of holy fellowship meetings, flows from the little faith of this heavenly divine meeting: for all the saints, that are under the lively views thereof, cannot but desire to meet together, and embrace each other harmoniously, in the arms of mutual love.

5. Hence see the malignity of the sin of unbelief, the great employment whereof is, to spoil the harmony of the divine perfections, and to do its utmost to dissolve that glorious meeting, and separate what God hath joined, saying, in effect, they have not met together, nor kissed each other. This we may discern in the unbelief, whether of secure or awakened sinners: See it is the unbelief of the secure sinner, who sets Truth and Righteousness out of the meeting, saying, "God is a merciful God, and I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my own heart, adding drunkenness to thirst." Thus they hope in God's mercy, and speak peace to themselves, while they never view the truth and righteousness of God, and how the credit thereof shall be salved, or the honour repaired: And hence, as faith is said to set to the seal that God is true, or, that he is a God of truth; so unbelief is said to make God a liar: To fancy that God will have mercy on their souls, without regarding the truth of his threatenings, is to make God a liar, and say, Mercy and Truth have not met together: To think that God will be at peace with them, while his Righteousness and Justice are

not satisfied, is to make God a liar, and say Righteousness and Peace have not met together. Thus the unbelief of the secure sinner puts Truth and Righteousness out of the meeting. Again, on the other hand, the unbelief of the awakened sinner, puts Mercy and Peace out of the meeting, saying, O! he is a God of truth, and how shall he have mercy on the like of me! He is a God of awful justice and righteousness, and how will he be at peace with me? What is the language of this but that Mercy and Peace have not met with Truth and Righteousness? Here is a making God a liar also, and separating what God hath in the gospel declared to be joined. Behold then, the malignity of unbelief: it breaks the glorious meeting, and will not let them kiss one another. The presuming sinner will not let God have the glory of his truth and righteousness.—The despairing sinner will not let God have the glory of his mercy and grace; both are in a concert with the devil to break the harmony of the meeting. But O! may virtue come from that glorious meeting in Christ, to the poor sinful meeting in this house, for dashing our unbelief to pieces, that we may see Mercy and Truth met together, Righteousness and Peace kissing each other.

6. Hence see sure and noble ground, for the boldness and confidence of faith in Christ; "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him," Eph. ii. 12. Here is an answer to all objections of unbelief and diffidence; the chief whereof lies here; O! says unbelief, may I, sinful guilty I, lay hold on the promise of mercy and peace in the gospel, when I see the great ordinance of the divine threatening hard charged with the truth and righteousness of God, and ready to be discharged against me with thunder and lightening, saying, No mercy, no peace, "He that made thee will not have mercy upon thee: And there is no peace, says my God to the wicked." Mercy and peace in the promise then, says unbelief, cannot take place, with respect to me; for truth and righteousness, in the threatening, stand in the way, like a flaming sword, to keep the way of the tree of life: Nay, but says faith, Here the promise and the threatening have met together, and kissed each other in Christ; mercy in the promise, and justice in the threatening, have met and agreed in him; "In whom all the promises are Yea and Amen;" And in whom all the threatenings are fully executed, by drawing out his heart-blood. Thus then, "We have boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through

the vail of his flesh : Therefore let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith," Heb. x. 19, 20, 22. O ! what ground for the boldness and assured confidence of faith, with particular application, notwithstanding of the threatening ? The threatening hath nothing to say to me, saith faith, for Christ hath spoken with it already, and spoken it out of breath ; he hath left it speechless, and breathless, not a breathing of wrath in it towards me. The believer may have a million of doubts, while his unbelief keeps the chair ; but let gallant faith come in, and take the room, it will dispel them all : let once unbelief break the harmony of this meeting of divine attributes in Christ, and then nothing but doubts of God's favour and mercy must ensue ; but let faith view the harmony, and see them meeting and kissing each other ; and then according to the measure of faith, such will be the measure of holy boldness, confidence, and persuasion of the favour, mercy and good-will of God in Christ, with particular application to the person himself. Take away unbelief from faith, and then not a single doubt will remain behind ; unbelief creates all the doubts that are in the believer ; his faith hath no part in them. The general doubtful faith of the Papists, is not faith, but unbelief ; and therefore no wonder that our forefathers abjured it in our National Covenant. Behold the sure ground and firm bottom that faith stands upon, even the mutual meeting, and embracement among the divine perfections in Christ. If you break and separate the meeting by unbelief, then your confidence is broken, and your peace with God marred ; but if you keep them together in your view, by faith in Christ then you have boldness, confidence, affiance on this ground ; yea, then God in Christ, and you meet together, and kiss each other.

7. Hence see what is the best mark of a believer in Christ. For your trial and examination, try it just by this, What view have you got of this glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ, and of the attributes of God meeting and embracing each other in him ? Have you seen the glory, and felt the virtue of this happy meeting ?

(1.) Have you seen the glory of it ? When once in a day, you had seen the attributes of God in arms against you because of your sinful rebellion against God ; and when you had seen the truth of God, pronouncing the sentence of the law, and his righteousness and justice ready to inflict the sentence, and execute the same with curses and vengeance, making you despair of mercy, and give up with all hope and expectation of peace with God, by the law of

works ; have you thereupon got a view of the harmonious meeting of these attributes of God, in Christ Jesus, as the Surety, the Sacrifice, the Ransom, the Propitiation, in whom the truth and veracity of God is accomplished, and the righteousness and justice of God is satisfied, and so mercy and peace vented gloriously, without detriment to any other excellency or perfection of God ? Hath nothing satisfied your conscience, but the view of this meeting betwixt Mercy and Justice, in the death of Christ, and kissing each other in his mediation ? Hath God and you met together this way, and made your heart joyfully to kiss and embrace this wonderful device, as worthy of God, and suitable to you ? Have you seen this glory at this rate ? Then in God's name, I pronounce you a believer in Christ : " For God, who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into your heart, to give you the light of the knowledge of his glory, in the face of Christ." And Christ and you have met together, and kissed each other ; whether it was in the day of first believing, when you fled to him for refuge, or in the day of after-manifestation, when, upon the back of dismal hiding on God's part, or grievous backsliding on yours, the Lord drew aside the vail, and gave you a glance of his glory ; whether it was by some word of grace, sweetly and powerfully coming in, and opening your understanding to see this harmonious meeting, or by some sweet droppings of the blood of sprinkling upon your conscience, by which blood, the meeting is cemented together. Have you seen this glory, whether in a secret corner, or public ordinance ; whether at the market-cross of the gospel, where this glorious meeting is proclaimed, or at a communion-table where it is sealed ? It is all a matter, it was heaven begun.

(2.) Have you felt the virtue, as well as seen the glory of this harmonious meeting of the divine attributes in Christ ? 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, as by the Spirit of the Lord." Surely if you have seen this glory, you have felt something of this virtue, by changing you from glory to glory. It is true, many that have got a discovery of this glory of the Lord, can never think that they have felt the sanctifying virtue thereof, and this keeps them down in the pit of discouragement : it is true, they that are not sanctified and made holy, they discover, that they never beheld this glory of the Lord : for this meeting of attributes, makes a meeting of graces, in the person that sees it savingly. But

you must remember, That this virtue will never be perfectly felt, till this glory be perfectly beheld in heaven, where "We shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is." And therefore, since you cannot judge and try yourself by a perfect sanctification, try it by the beginnings of it; this transforming virtue, this sanctifying virtue is present with you, though you cannot discern it. But that you may, through grace, discern something of it, let me ask you what makes you wrestle in secret sometimes against sin, if it be not some sanctifying virtue? What makes the prevalence of sin to humble you to the dust? What makes you lament your own unholiness and impurity? What makes you long and groan for complete victory over, and freedom from sin? What makes you glad of any victory over your corruption, when this glory shines? What makes your heart to rise against sin? And when sin prevails, what makes you find yourself uneasy, and out of your element, always till the Lord return, and until you get a new dip in the Jordan of the blood of the Lamb? you have no mercy on your lusts, and are at no peace with him, but still crying, Vengeance upon them! Why, it is just the sanctifying virtue, that flows from this view of the glory of God in Christ, in whom Mercy and Truth meet with Truth and Righteousness. If you fall and stumble at any time, believer, is it not like the stumbling of a horse, that makes you run the faster? So as you get more good of one fall, than a natural man will get of a hundred duties, while it makes you always the more humble, and watchful, and circumspect, and dependent.—Why, by all this, it appears (whatever be the defect of your sanctification) that having beheld the glory of God, you are changed into the same image from glory to glory: you have seen the glory, and felt the virtue of this harmonious meeting of divine attributes in Christ. But then again,

8. Hence, we may see the ground of Terror to all Christless, unbelieving souls, that never have seen the glory, nor felt the virtue of this harmonious meeting, and live careless about either of those. What shall I say? "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, should shine in them," 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. It may be, you are presuming upon the mercy of God, while yet your eyes are blinded, that you do not see the truth of his threatenings standing against you: and therefore, O blasphemer! do you think, that he will be a

God of mercy, and not a God of Truth? Nay, his mercy will never be vented, unless the glory of his truth be salved. Perhaps you are speaking peace to yourself, saying, "I shall have peace," while yet your eyes are blinded, that you do not see how God's being at peace with a sinner is consistent with his righteousness, in taking vengeance upon sin. O then, blasphemer and presumer! do you think, that God will be a God of Peace, and not a God of Righteousness? Know it, then, in the Lord's name, O sinful unbelieving wretch, that as there is no mercy for you, to the discredit of God's truth; so no peace, to the dishonour of his righteousness. You expect mercy and peace separate from truth and righteousness; and therefore mercy and truth shall be separate from you; and truth and righteousness will meet with you in fury, and with a vengeance. —Your false hope of mercy and peace, makes you merciful to your lusts, and at peace with your idols: but the truth and righteousness of God, which you exclude from the meeting, will hide mercy and peace for ever from your eyes: Justice instead of mercy, war instead of peace, will ensue; for truth and righteousness will execute judgment upon you, for the abuse of mercy and peace; while through unbelief, you do not see, or approve their meeting together, and kissing each other in Christ. While you are in this case, you cannot meet with God, though you may meet with his people at ordinances, or at a communion-table: yet God and you never met together: nay, you have other company; the Devil and you meet together; and your lusts and you embrace each other; the world and you meet together, and its vanities and you do kiss each other; the law and you have met together, and its curse and you do embrace each other: but because you do not see the terrible curses and threatenings, that you are under, remember, that in a short while, death and you will meet together, and its cold arms and you must embrace each other; and if this gospel be still hid to you, then, after that, hell and you will meet together, and the flames of divine wrath and you will embrace each other to eternity; and the motto written upon the door of your hell, will be, "The vengeance of Truth and Righteousness, for the abuse of Mercy and Peace." Let this word of terror sink into your conscience, O graceless, Christless unbelieving soul, that never saw the glory, nor felt the virtue of this blessed meeting; and, Gallio-like, "Care for none of these things." But, on the other hand,

9. Hence, from this doctrine, see ground of comfort to all believers in Christ, who have seen the glory, and felt the virtue of this

harmonious meeting of divine attributes in Christ. This doctrine is as comfortable to you, as it is terrible to others. Can you say, before God, that these two marks are your experiences? Then I can say, that all the comforts, that issue from that glorious meeting in Christ, belong to you; and God allows you strong consolation, who have fled for refuge, to the hope set before you: for that city of refuge, to which you have fled, is the centre of the meeting, and the trysting-place, where they kiss one another harmoniously. Why, say you, What concern have I in their meeting, and embracing each other? O believer, they met for your sake, and kissed one another out of kindness to you: For there was no real jarring among them: but all the apparent jarring was about you; and how they should be glorified in your salvation: and when infinite wisdom found the ransom, and so the way, how they should all be glorified in your eternal happiness, then they hugged each other in their arms, as it were, in a rupture of joy, for your sake; "His delights were with the sons of men," Prov. viii. 31. It was not one attribute only, that had its delight, satisfaction, and glory; it is delights, in the plural number; for all the attributes of God had their delights; and whereabouts was it? Why, the council of peace was concerning you; "For his delights were with the SONS of MEN." And you having seen the glory of this device, and felt something of the virtue thereof, God and you have met together, and Christ, and you have kissed each other: he hath embraced you, and you have embraced him; and that embracement is a pledge and earnest, that he and you will meet together in heaven, and embrace each other to eternity. This meeting and embracement is founded upon the harmonious meeting and embracement of the divine attributes in Christ; and therefore, it shall be sure, abiding, and everlasting; and all these attributes are engaged for your comfort and support: and this glory of the Lord, you shall for ever behold; for Christ, in whom all these glorious perfections meet together, hath prayed for it; "Father, I will, that these, whom thou hast given me, be with me, where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me," John xvii. 24. Here then, believer, is ground of comfort to you, in every case. Comfort against desertion; it is long since Christ and you met together, and kissed each other? Behold, here is the reason: "He will never altogether leave you, nor forsake you;" but certainly meet with you, now and then, when he sees it fit; and give you the other kiss of his infinitely blessed lips, and

embrace of his arms : till you come to the intimate, immediate embracements of his love in glory : Why ? because, " Mercy and Truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other." So sure as Mercy and Truth are met together, as surely will the Lord meet with you.—Here is comfort against the Law, when it comes in as a covenant upon your conscience, saying, Pay what thou owest, or otherwise thou art cursed, and must go to hell : And the law, speaking in the name of Truth and Righteousness, seems terrible. But you may soon answer by faith, and say, " O law, the demand is just indeed, and agreeable to Truth and Righteousness ; but you mistake the person ; for Truth and Righteousness have already met with Mercy and Peace, in the Person of Christ, my husband, who endured all my hell, and became a curse for me : and therefore, I have no ground to fear the hell thou threatens, nor the curse thou denounces, nor any liahleness thereto."—Here is comfort against Satan, and his temptations : for this blessed meeting in Christ, did concert his ruin, and the bruising of his head ; " The Seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent," Gen. iii. 15. Satan shall be bruised under your feet shortly. Here is comfort against church-divisions and commotions ; when neither ministers nor private Christians do meet together, or embrace one another with love and amity. Is this sad and afflicting to you ? Here is a meeting, that may give you comfort in that case : for no member of that meeting will ever differ among themselves, or cast out with you.—Here is comfort against your jarring with friends : What do I know, but there is some here, that cannot get lived in peace with such a friend or relation ; nor their Christian liberty enjoyed, because of their frowns ; and perhaps, they are as aliens to you, not in speaking terms with you ; you cannot meet together with them cordially, nor embrace one another amicably : but let this be your comfort, in that case ; " Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other : " and you have got a kiss by the bye, and that is better than all the friends of the world.—Here is comfort against public calamities, that seem to be approaching, or personal trials, that may be coming upon you.—Here is a cordial, though affliction and you meet together ; though, in a little, death and you meet together ; yet this meeting of divine attributes in Christ, your glorious Head, speaks comforts, and safety to you in every case : though you should die distracted, this meeting cannot be dissolved : and you having seen the glory, and felt

the virtue thereof, shall be sure to enjoy the benefit of it to eternity :
 “ Yea, surely goodness and mercy shall follow you, all the days of your life, and you shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.”

10. The last Inference is, Hence see the duty of all that hear and know this joyful sound : Never was there a sweeter sound in heaven, or in earth. And what is the duty of all you that hear it ? Surely the news of such a glorious and harmonious meeting of the divine perfections, about the salvation of sinners, in and by Christ Jesus, should be joyfully received. Here is the good tidings of great joy unto all people, Luke ii. 10. When Elizabeth, the mother of John, and Mary, the mother of Jesus our Lord, met together and saluted each other, the babe leapt in Elizabeth’s womb for joy. Behold, here is yet a more wonderful meeting, and salutation among the jarring-like attributes and perfections of God ; and surely if the babe of grace be in your heart, it will leap for joy, when you perceive such a blessed meeting and salutation. O ! may it not bring our heart to our mouth, and make it flutter within us, when we hear of such a salutation as this, “ Mercy and Truth are met together, Righteousness and Peace have embraced each other.”—And again, What is your duty, believer, who not only hear, but know this joyful sound ? Your duty is, not only to rejoice, in this matchless harmonious conjunction of divine attributes in Christ ; but to exemplify the same, by an harmonious conjunction of graces and holy virtues in you. Let Mercy and Truth meeting together, as divine attributes, in Christ, be exemplified by Mercy and Truth meeting together, as divine virtues in you : Let Righteousness and Peace kissing each other in him, be exemplified by Righteousness and Peace kissing each other in you. Let the meeting of Mercy and Truth engage you to be merciful and true ; “ Merciful, because your heavenly Father is merciful ; and true, because he desires truth in the inward parts.” Let the embraces of Righteousness and Peace engage you, to be righteous and peaceable ; that is, to be students of Purity and Peace ; “ For the wisdom that is from above, is first pure, and then peaceable,” James iii. 17. It is declared in the verse following our text, that it is the design of these perfections of God, looking down harmoniously from heaven, to make suitable graces spring up from the earth : “ Truth shall spring out of the earth, and Righteousness shall look down from heaven.” When the Sun of righteousness, in whom all the excellencies of God do shine, looks down ; then as the natural sun shedding its influences, makes fruit

to spring from the earth ; so the Sun of Righteousness looking down and shedding abroad his influences, makes Truth and all the rest of the fruits of the Spirit, to spring out of the earth, out of the heart, the soil where they are sown, in regeneration. O ! does Mercy look down from heaven to you, in friendship with Truth ? Shall not this Mercy make you merciful to the bodies and souls of others, by doing them all the temporal and spiritual good that you can ? And shall God manifest his Truth, in conjunction with mercy towards you ; and will you not be a friend to Truth, even to all the precious truths of his gospel ? Shall not Truth, in opposition to hypocrisy, be your study ; and Truth, in opposition to error, be your concern ? And this Truth, in conjunction with Mercy : For, when Truth is in any hazard, should not Mercy to your own soul, and the souls of others, make you zealous for it ; and mercy to your children, and the generation that is to come after you, on whom we shew no mercy, if truth be not transmitted purely to them, as it was by our forefathers to us, at the expence of their blood ; however now the waters of the sanctuary are puddled ?—Again, does Righteousness and Peace look down from heaven, kindly embracing each other in your behalf, believer ? And shall not you be a student of Righteousness, in opposition to all unrighteous and unholy ways ; and of Peace, in opposition to contention and discord : “ As much as possible, follow peace with all men ; and holiness, without which, no man shall see the Lord.” Does God glorify his righteousness towards you ? And will you study no righteousness in your conversation towards God and man ? Does God speak peace to you, and will you be at war with him ; and love to live in war with any of his ? Shall that be the disposition of any, with whom God is at peace ? “ O tell it not in Gath !” Surely there is none here, that have tasted of this sweet peace of God ; but they would desire to live at peace with all men ; and particularly with all the saints.—They would desire to see all the honest ministers of Scotland, meeting together more kindly than they do, and embracing each other. Some, indeed, are at this time reproached, as “ enemies to peace in the church :” * but the matter

* See the reason of this assigned, Sermon IV. intitled, *Christ the People's Covenant*, in a foot note.—The hearty friends to the doctrine of grace, in those days, were very unjustly accused with Antinomianism ; and the strenuous supporters of the doctrine of free justification, through the imputed righteousness of Christ, without the works of the law, were injuriously calumniated as enemies to holiness, and as *disturbers of the peace of the church*.—This matter is further cleared up, in a note, about the middle of these Sermons, entitled, *Law-death, and Gospel-life*.

is, Peace must not be studied separately from Truth : but as all meeting, and embracing one another : for Mercy and Peace, without Truth and Righteousness, is a cruel conspiracy against God and man.

Now, certain things have past concerning the Truths of God, and the Righteousness of Christ in our day, which some think will stand infamous till the judgment of the great day : and this Truth and Righteousness, being the great ministerial trust, some have chosen rather to be reproached by the world, than be challenged by God and their own conscience, as betrayers of their trust. However, O believer, study you through grace, to get a match made up between Mercy and Truth, Righteousness and Peace in you, seeing there can be no merciful Peace to the prejudice of righteous Truth ; and study to get all these attributes of God, exemplified in your heart and life : and the seal and impress thereof upon your soul ; you being united to Christ, in whom all these glorious excellencies of God do meet together, with harmonious embracements. " Out of Christ's fulness do you receive, and grace for grace : " as the child receives member for member from the father, and the paper letter for letter from the press : so beholding his glory, be you changed into the same image, by receiving mercy for mercy, truth for truth, righteousness for righteousness, and peace for peace ; out of his fullness, do you receive grace for grace, holiness for holiness, and an holy virtue suitable to every holy perfection, that is in him ; and all these harmoniously meeting together, and kissing each other in you. Let no heavenly grace, or holy duty be excluded out of the meetings : Let faith and repentance meet together ; let love and new obedience kiss each other ; let knowledge and practice meet together, and prayer and praise embrace each other ; yea, let opposite like graces meet harmoniously in you ; let humility and boldness meet together, let godly sorrow and holy joy embrace each other. Here is the gospel-holiness we call you to, in a suitableness to these harmonious attributes of God in Christ. If the world call you Antinomians, know it is the will of God, that by well doing, you put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, 1 Pet. ii. 15. Let the mouth that reproaches the gospel be stopt by the power of it, in your walk. —The world will surely reckon you the greatest stars that give the greatest light : " Therefore let your light so shine before men, that others seeing your good works, may glorify God ; " even the works of Mercy and Truth, Righteousness and Peace, hand and hand to-

gether ; and thus, for the sake of the glory of God, the honour of Christ, and the credit of the gospel, let the world know, that you have seen the glory, and felt the virtue of these perfections of God, harmoniously meeting and embracing each other in Christ. Here is your duty and work, believer, in the wilderness ; and now in all your short-comings therein, still look again to God's holy temple, to Christ, the meeting-place of these divine perfections. This is the mercy-seat, of which God says, *Exod. xxv. 22.* "There will I meet with thee, and commune with thee, from between the cherubims : " And every new meeting with God there, will bring in new strength, for all your work and warfare in time, till God and you meet together, and embrace one another, in glory, through eternity.

And now, believer, I know you would desire, that others should share of the same happiness with you ; and therefore, pray, that a short concluding word may be blessed with power, to thousands that hear me.—O ye that are by-standers and hearers only ; in whatever corner of this house, round about me, whether you be in my view or not, you are in God's view ; and I have a word from him to you all : And as I have told you, what a terrible thing it is, to live and die in unbelief with respect to this glorious device ; so now I would tell you your duty, in this matter ; and how you may share of the blessings and benefits in time, and for ever, that flow from this glorious meeting and embracement ; and it is by kissing the Son God, in whom all the attributes of God do kiss, and embrace each other, " Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way ; when his wrath is kindled but a little : blessed are all they that trust in him," *Psal. ii. 12.* Blessed are all they that kiss and embrace him. Would you then share of the grace and glory, that issue from this wonderful meeting, and ineffable embracement among divine perfections, in Christ the Son of God ? O then ! come and kiss the Son : O down, down, with carnal thoughts ! carnal kissing, carousing, and cajolling ; here, here is an object worthy of the most endeared embraces of the immortal soul.—O come ! and kiss the Son, by believing in him, and applying the benefits of this glorious transaction, to yourself ; and be who you will, if you kiss and embrace the Son, you shall find these glorious attributes of God kissing and embracing you, and hugging you in their arms, as a darling of heaven, and a favourite in the house of God : Are the attributes of God embracing one another in Christ ? O flee in to their embraces, by fleeing in to Christ : " Say not, Christ is in heaven how shall I

embrace him? For the word is nigh, even in your mouth, and in your heart," Rom. x. 8, *q. d.* So near is he in this word, that you may kiss him with your mouth, as it were, and embrace him in your heart: and to take in this word of grace, and Christ in it, is to embrace him. What do you say against Christ, man, woman? Are you afraid, that Truth and Righteousness conspire against you, and hinder Mercy and Peace from ever meeting with you and embracing you? O no: Fear not; only believe, that Mercy and Truth are met together, and that Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other in Christ. Truth will not stand in the way of Mercy; for they have kissed each other. He is indeed an infinitely just God, to take vengeance upon sin: but Justice will not hinder Mercy from coming to you: only believe, that Justice and Mercy are reconciled in Christ, so as Mercy can vent towards you, to the credit of Justice. But, O! may such a black-mouthed sinner as I, as black as hell and the devil, expect a kiss of such an infinitely fair Jesus? Is that to be expected, that such opposites should meet in one another's arms? Yea, man, woman, allow me, a black sinner like yourself, to be the happy messenger, to tell you in God's name, that be ye as black as ye will, such a meeting and embracing betwixt Christ and you, is more to be expected, than ever men or angels could have expected, that infinite Justice and Mercy should have met together, and kissed each other in a God-man: and this unexpected meeting is the very ground upon which your expectation of a meeting with, and embracement of God in Christ, is to be founded. O then, come and kiss the Son: Why, but I cannot, say you; I think I would gladly do it; but I cannot get near him, to kiss and embrace him. Indeed this kindness must begin on his side; and therefore, O pray, that he would come, and meet you with a kiss of infinite love. Say with the church, Song. i. 2. "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth; for his love is better than wine." If that be the language of your soul, O! I cannot embrace him; but my heart says, O let him come, and embrace me; and draw me out of the embracements of all my former lovers and lusts, that I may never kiss any idol in the world again; but may live and die in the arms, and embraces of the Son of God: Is that the language of your soul before the living God? Why, then the embracement betwixt Christ and you is begun, that shall never have an end; for it is a pledge, that he and you shall meet together in heaven, and embrace each other to eternity.

Now, though I hope, that this glorious meeting of divine perfections in Christ, hath put forth some virtue, to draw in some poor soul, to the match : yet I fear, that the most part are but still as idle hearers and spectators, as if they were not concerned. But, O man, woman, young and old, unconcerned soul, be what you will, O yet, will you come, and see the greatest sight that ever was, or will be in heaven or earth, "A bush burning, and not consumed ;" all the burning and shining attributes of God, meeting with infinite harmony, in the bush of our nature : and yet, the bush able to bear the glory, Zech. vi. 15. O come and wonder ! Here is the wonder of men and angels ! For, this is a wonderful meeting to them. And the name of the meeting-place is justly called WONDERFUL ! O come and partake ; for the meeting is concerning your salvation, in Christ : "His delights were with the sons of men." O come, and sing to the praise and glory of this wonderful harmonious embracement of divine perfections in Christ ; especially, you that partake ; so as to see the glory, and feel the virtue thereof. O will you sing with your hearts, and lips, and lives, saying, Glory to God, that his attributes have met together, and kissed each other in Christ ; and that ever the like of me, got a kiss by the bye ? Glory to God, that there is no breaking of this meeting, nor parting of these embraces, by sin, Satan, earth, or hell ; but that they meet and embrace each other in eternity. And though you cannot mind to sing all that hath been said ; yet I hope the weakest memory may mind, to sing the best note of all the sermon, every day, saying, Glory, glory, glory to God, that "Mercy and Truth are met together, Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other."

S E R M O N X X I. X X I I.

CARNAL CONSULTATION UNFOLDED ; OR, THE GREAT EVIL OF BEING
ACTUATED BY CARNAL PRINCIPLES, IN THE MATTERS OF GOD,
EVINCED.¹

GALATIANS i. 16 — "Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood."

WHEN I considered the great spring of all the motions and actions

(1) We are not positively certain, either when or where this Sermon was preached ; but, from the place it hath in the Author's notes, and some passages and references in the discourse itself, it appears to have been delivered in his own church at Dunfermline, sometime towards the latter end of the year 1723.

of the most of people, at this day ; and what seems to be the grand counsellors, with whom they generally confer, I thought it was evident, from universal practice, that flesh and blood are the great principle that influence the deportment and behaviour of the generation : And when I considered, that not only the wicked world, but even the most eminent professors of religion, and the truly godly, seem to discover, by their walk at this day, and their sinful conformity at this day with the world, and compliance with the course of the times, their being led by motives from flesh and blood : I say, when I considered these things, I thought the contrary practice and example of the great apostle would, at least, be suitable for discovering the great evil of living under the conduct and influence of such carnal principles : “ Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.”

The false teachers, who preached up the ceremonial law, were doing all they could to lessen Paul’s reputation, who preached the pure gospel of Christ to the Gentiles ; and, therefore, he is here setting himself to prove the divinity of his mission and doctrine, which he doth several ways in this chapter ; particularly from ver. 11, 12. He evidences it by the manner wherein he received the gospel ; that it was not by information from men, but by revelation from God, and immediate inspiration of Christ himself. Here he puts them in mind,

1st, Of his education, ver. 13, 14 ; that he had been not only a rejector of Christianity, but a persecutor of it : this he doth that they might be assured he was not led to this religion purely by education, since he had been bred up in enmity and opposition to it : and that it behoved to be something extraordinary that had made such a change upon him, and conquered the prejudices of his education : and brought him not only to profess, but to preach that doctrine which he had before so vehemently opposed.

2ndly, He puts them in mind of his conversion, verses 15, 16, which is here described four ways.

1. In the author of it, viz., GOD, the efficient cause ; and the pleasure of God, the moving cause : “ It pleased God.” And this God is here described two ways.

(1.) He is described by his separating grace ; “ He separated me from my mother’s womb.” The change that was wrought in Paul was in pursuance of a divine purpose concerning him, whereby he was appointed to be a believer and an apostle.

(2.) God is here described by his calling grace; "He called me by his grace." Paul was called in an immediate way and manner: there was something very peculiar, and extremely singular in his conversion.—See Acts ix. 1—8.

2. Paul's conversion is described in the manner of it: "It pleased God to reveal his Son in me." Christ was not only revealed externally to him, but also in him.

3. It is described in the end of it: "That I might preach him among the heathen." Paul was both a Christian and an Apostle by revelation.

4. His conversion is described in the effect of his carriage; "Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood."

From the words we might lay down and prosecute several doctrinal observations; such as,

(1.) That the Mercy of God is preventing mercy, towards all whom it takes hold upon; it prevents them; before ever they are separate.

(2.) That none are called upon the account of any good work, or sanctity, or blamelessness in themselves; no: they are called of grace, and of the good pleasure of God.

(3.) That the Doctrine of Grace is the revelation of Christ: God, in the gospel, reveals his Son to us; and, by his Spirit, reveals him in us when he calls us effectually.

(4.) That when the Gospel is revealed, it is God that doth it; "It pleased God to reveal his Son in me."

(5.) That to preach the Gospel is to preach Christ; it is not a preaching of Moses, but Christ.

(6.) That in matters of religion there ought to be no consulting or conferring with flesh and blood. Here the apostle tells us his own practice, that he did not consult therewith; he did not consult man, nor apply himself to any other for their advice and direction; neither, as in the following verse, did he go up to Jerusalem, to those who were apostles before him, as if he needed to be approved by them, or receive any farther instructions or authority from them: so that it could not be pretended that he was indebted to any other for his knowledge of the gospel, or his authority to preach it; but it appeared that both his qualifications for, and his call to the apostolic office, were extraordinary and divine.

But although these observations are couched in the words, and natively deduced from them, yet I choose to confine myself to the

consideration of this text, as it may be taken more generally, and as bearing this proposition, viz. :—

DOCT. That in the matters of God, there ought to be no consulting with flesh and blood. “Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.”

In prosecuting this subject, through supernatural assistance, we shall observe the following method and order.

- I. We would explain what is to be understood by flesh and blood; and not conferring with it.
- II. We would confirm the truth of the doctrine by scripture example.
- III. Give the reasons why we ought not to consult with flesh and blood.
- IV. Make application of the whole subject in several uses.

I. We would explain the doctrine by inquiring, 1. What we are to understand by flesh and blood. 2. What it is to confer with flesh and blood.

1st, We are to inquire what is understood by flesh and blood. In general, MAN, who is flesh and blood, is here principally intended; men, whether good or bad: the apostle consulted not with men, but gave himself up to God. More particularly by flesh and blood we may understand carnal ease, carnal reason, carnal friends, and carnal counsels of spiritual friends.

1. By flesh and blood is meant carnal ease and interest. Master, spare thyself; what need all this toil and trouble? is the language of easy nature. Paul, being now converted, and so in a happy state, having his salvation secured, carnal ease might say, What need you go and essay these travails, and encounter such hardships, in propagating the gospel of Christ, and spreading the knowledge of his name? Nay, but Paul, having got Christ revealed in him, he would not consult with carnal ease: he would now spend and be spent for Christ.

2. By flesh and blood is understood carnal reason. Paul was now divinely taught, as Peter was, of whom Christ says, “Flesh and blood hath not revealed these things unto thee:” so Christ was revealed in Paul, not by flesh and blood: that is, not by carnal

reason, or natural understanding ; and therefore he would not confer with flesh and blood. We ought not to consult with carnal reason, in the matters of religion.

3. By flesh and blood is meant carnal friends : and by these I understand not only natural relations, as father, mother, brother and sister, who, when loved and followed more than Christ, it is a consulting with flesh and blood ; and graceless relations, with whom our conference and consultation cannot but be a conferring with flesh and blood : but also all ungodly neighbours and acquaintances, whether blood-relations or not : to consult with them, or put any confidence in them, is to consult with flesh and blood.

4. By flesh and blood is meant even the carnal counsels, and carnal arguments of spiritual friends : for godly and pious friends may offer ungodly and impious counsels ; such as Peter to his master, when he would dissuade him from going up to Jerusalem to suffer ; and Job's wife to her husband, when she said to him, " Curse God and die ;" or, if it may be rendered, " Bless God and die," it was an impious intention wherewith it was given. They that would not consult with blood, must not rest in the counsel of godly flesh and friends, or trust thereunto.

5. In a word, by flesh and blood we may understand all carnal confidence whatsoever, whether from without or from within ; in others, or in ourselves : for, while we have any confidence in the flesh, in our own or other's natural wisdom, righteousness, or strength, we so far consult with flesh and blood. But this leads me to consider,

2dly, what is to be understood by not conferring with flesh and blood. We shall lay down what we take to be the import thereof, in the following particulars.

1. Not conferring with flesh and blood imports a shunning their company, in a manner. When we would not confer with a man, then we shun his company ; we refuse to converse with him : so, when we confer not with flesh and blood, we refuse, in a manner, the company of such ill guests. The man that confers not with flesh and blood in the matters of God, he lets in to his company the wonderful Counsellor for his guest, to converse withal : and shuts all carnal counsellors to the door. The man that will not confer with flesh and blood, he avoids the salutations thereof, and shuns conversation therewith.

2. Not conferring with flesh and blood, imports a not giving

ear thereunto. When a person will not confer with one, if he cannot get his company altogether avoided, yet he will stop his ear, that he may hear what he says: so, if flesh and blood will be in to our company, not to confer therewith is to give a deaf ear to the suggestions of carnal reason, in the matters of God, and religion, and conscience. Shut the door against all carnal counsel.

3. Not conferring with flesh and blood, imports, not taking their advice, nor regarding their solicitations, but rejecting their motions. If flesh and blood will be in with a word, and that we cannot get our ear stopt so fast but that we must hear what it says; then, if it will be heard, yet it must not be regarded. It is vastly dangerous to hear, and much more to join with carnal counsellors, as Jacob of Simeon and Levi; "O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united," Gen. xlix. 6.

4. Not conferring with flesh and blood, imports a not following the dictates thereof. It may be, that, through the prevalence of corruption, even in the godly, flesh and blood, and carnal counsellors, are let in to their company; and, when once admitted, they are heard; and, when heard, they are too much regarded: but here, at least, they are to stop; in regard they have gone too far; for, there wants nothing, in that case, but a putting the carnal counsel into execution: and therefore, they are to go back all the steps, by which they have gone forward, in this course; and to beware of walking in the counsel of flesh and blood, or practising according to the advice thereof. If we walk in the counsel of the ungodly, we are in danger of standing in the way of sinners: if we stand in the way of sinners, we are next in danger of sitting in the seat of the scornful, as you have it, Psal. i. 1. If flesh and blood will be in with its word, yet it must not be heard; if heard, yet it must not be regarded; if regarded, its advice must not be followed, otherwise we confer with flesh and blood.

5. In a word, not to confer with flesh and blood, is not only to reject conference and consultation therewith, but to receive other counsellors, and embrace better counsel than flesh and blood can give! and particularly, to consult with the oracles of the living God, and follow the conduct of his word and Spirit.

II. We are next to confirm the truth of the doctrine, by a few scripture-examples, that we are not to consult with flesh and blood, in the matters of God and conscience. You may observe these four excellent examples in this matter.

1. To begin with the example of CHRIST, the great pattern of our imitation, in all his imitable perfections. When Peter came in with his carnal counsel, after Christ had been foretelling his death and sufferings, Peter began, forsooth, to rebuke him, saying, "Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee," Matthew xvi. 22. What! wilt thou suffer such indignity? There was the language of flesh and blood. But, how doth Christ entertain it? He turneth himself to Peter, saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." So, when flesh and blood comes in with its solicitations, we ought to banish the same with a Get thee behind me, Satan.

2. We have the example of Abraham, when he went out of his own country at the commandment of God, not knowing whither he went, Heb. xi. 8, and so not consulting with flesh and blood: yea, when God called him to offer up his son, his only son, Isaac, flesh and blood might have objected a thousand things: that he was the child of promise: nay, that his offering Isaac, would contradict the command of God, "Thou shalt not kill:" and contradict the promise of God, That in Isaac should his seed be called: that it would contradict the rule of natural affection. Yea, but Abraham consulted not with flesh and blood; but by faith offered up Isaac, as it is said, Heb. xi. 17. As little did he consult with flesh and blood, when he took God's word, and trusted in him, with relation to his having Isaac, when both his body and Sarah's was dead.

3. We have the example of Moses, of whom it is said, Heb. xi. 24-27, "By faith Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season," &c. If he had conferred with flesh and blood, he had rather chosen to dwell at ease in Pharaoh's court, and enjoy all the pleasures and treasures thereof: but he had learned, not to confer with flesh and blood.

4. We have the example of Daniel, chap. iii. 15, 16, 17, when commanded to worship Nebuchadnezzar's gold image: if Daniel had consulted with flesh and blood, he would easily have complied with the courses of the times, and rather have worshipped the golden image, than have been cast into the fiery furnace: for, flesh and blood would have told him, that it was better to be wise

than too precise. Yea, but he and his companions could not be persuaded to a little outward obedience; for, they consulted not with flesh and blood, but consulted with God, saying, "We are not careful to answer thee, O king, in this matter; for, the God whom we serve, is able to save us." Yea, so far from consulting with flesh and blood was he and they, that they would not defile themselves with a portion of the king's meat, Dan. i. 8; nor with the wine which he drank. Flesh and blood would have told him, that there was no harm in meat; that it was a thing indifferent: but they were under another influence and conduct, than that of flesh and blood. Yea, so obstinate was Daniel from consulting with flesh and blood, that notwithstanding the conspiracy of the nobles against him, because of his devotion towards his God, and their obtaining a decree of casting all into the lion's den that should, for thirty days, worship any other, or ask any petition of another, except of Darius, Daniel went more openly and worshipped his God than ever, in the view of his very enemies.—Flesh and blood would have told him, that he might have dispensed with a little ceremony of opening windows, and exposing him to danger that way: nay, but he consulted not with flesh and blood.

III. We now proceed to assign the reasons, why we must not consult with flesh and blood. We shall only condescend on the four following.

1. Because flesh and blood are utterly unable to give advice, in the matters of God. Flesh and blood could not so much as tell how a man might be born again or regenerated, unless he should go into his mother's womb again; as you see in the instance of Nicodemus, a learned man, a ruler of the Jews, and a master in Israel, John iii. 1-4. Yea, when it was explained in part to him, it was impossible for flesh and blood to understand it, as he himself confessed: "How can these things be?" John iii. 9. Flesh and blood are altogether unable to give advice in the matters of God.

2. Because flesh and blood are unwilling to give advice in the matters of religion; for, they are in a constant rebellion against God and godliness; "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these two are contrary the one to the other," Gal. v. 17. Yea, flesh and blood are enmity against God: and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then, they that are after the flesh, cannot please God," Rom. viii. 7, 8. Hence,

3. Because flesh and blood are unfit for giving advice in the matters of God, and conscience, and religion: if they be unable and unwilling, surely they are unfit to be consulted with. It is a folly to consult with them; for, their counsel is like that of Ahithophel, that will be turned to foolishness. Flesh and blood will be sure to give us wrong advice, and bad counsel in the matters of God. Is it fit, in the matters of God, to consult the enemies of God? No: for, "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? What concord hath Christ with Belial? Or what agreement hath the temple of God with idols?" 2 Cor. vi. 14, 15, 16. Again,

4. Because it is dangerous to consult with flesh and blood. It is very dangerous, in several respects; particularly in the four following ones.

(1.) It is dangerous, because flesh and blood will hinder us from duty, if we confer with them. What hindered those that were bidden to the gospel-feast? Why one consulted with his Farm, another with his Merchandise; and so they made light of the invitation, by consulting with flesh and blood, and advising with carnal reason, and carnal ease, Matth. xxii. 5. What hindered the rulers that believed in Christ from confessing him? John xii. 42, 43. Even fear, "Lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for, they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." They consulted with flesh and blood.

(2.) It is dangerous, because if we consult with flesh and blood, it will not only hinder us from entering upon a profession of Christ, and so lead us to the omission of duty, but also will make us venture upon those things, which God hath expressly discharged, and commanded that we should not do: So Saul, when he went to destroy the Amalekites, he had an express command to spare nothing, 1 Sam. xv. 3. But Saul consulted with flesh and blood; "He spared Agag, and some of the best of the cattle." What might flesh and blood say to Saul? O, I may be in the like case; and he that shews no mercy, shall have no mercy shewn him: so he spared him. And he also consulted with flesh and blood concerning the cattle, and sheep, and oxen: carnal reason told him they would serve for burnt-offerings, ver. 15. But Samuel told Saul afterwards, "That obedience was better than sacrifice; and to hearken, than the fat of rams," ver. 22. It was consulting with flesh and blood that caused Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit: "She saw it was fair to the eye, and meat to be desired," Gen. iii. 6.

(3.) It is dangerous, because if we consult with flesh and blood, it will hinder us from suffering, in the cause of God. The apostles rejoiced in this, That they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name, Acts v. 41. They counted it a great honour. It is a gift of God, when it is given, not only to believe, but to suffer for his name. Had Paul consulted with flesh and blood, he would never have been willing to die for Christ's sake, as Acts xxi. 11, 13. "What mean ye to weep, and to break mine heart? I am ready, not only to be bound, but also to die at Jernsalem, for the name of the Lord Jesus." Flesh and blood, instead of suffering for Christ, will tell a man to persecute the cause of Christ, and the followers of Christ, against knowledge and conscience, if he consult his own carnal ease, interest, credit, and honour in the world.

(4.) It is dangerous, because if we consult with flesh and blood, it sends a man at last to consult with the Devil, and to take advice of hell, as you see in the case of Saul, 1 Sam. xxviii. 7. "Seek me a woman that hath a familiar spirit, that I may go to her, and inquire of her." Thus he consulted with the witch of Endor. Having so long consulted with flesh and blood, he at last sought to the Devil himself, to consult with. If we still consult with flesh and blood, who are the devil's friends and favourites, we are in danger of consulting next with the devil himself.

IV. We come now to the Application of the subject, which we shall essay in an Use of Information, Caution, Reprehension, Dehortation, and Direction.

1st, Let us then improve the Doctrine, in an Use of Information. Hence we may see,

1. What advice it is, that the wicked of the world do follow; and what is the counsel that doth destroy them, and mislead them. Why, they are wholly under the conduct and counsel of flesh and blood: they have a daily conference stated with carnal ease, carnal reason: and the conference is held in the heart; and at this council Satan presides; he works in the children of disobedience. And what can be expected, as the result of such a black and hellish consultation? For, at this council, iniquity is established by a law; and no acts passed, but acts of rebellion and hostility against heaven. Indeed, the wicked world listen to no solicitations, no arguments, but what are drawn from flesh and blood: And hence, in a suitableness to the dictates of carnal inclination, some are hotly pursuing their pleasures, some their profits, some their honour: The

voluptuous man, his pleasure, his cups, and queans; the covetous man, his profits, his worldly gains; the ambitious man, his honour, his credit and grandeur.—Whence is it that all manner of wickedness, profanity, and carnality abound? Why, the world are all busy conferring with flesh and blood: this is the principle that sways them; hence so wearied in duty, secret, private, and public.

2. See wherein it is, that the immortal soul, and its everlasting concerns, are so much slighted and neglected by the world, while the body, and outward things, draw away all the concern after them; why, it is because men consult with flesh and blood; they consult their carnal ease and outward conveniency; but do not consult their soul's everlasting welfare. Flesh and blood goes no higher than itself, and takes no notice of the soul; or, if it doth, it provides no better for the soul than for the body, like the fool in the gospel, who thought his soul might be happy with full barns;—"Soul, take thy rest, thou hast goods laid up for many years." Alas! short-lived happiness for an immortal soul; "Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee."

3. Hence see the root of superstition and will-worship; it flows from conferring with flesh and blood; which hating the spirituality of worship, is most taken up with carnal ordinances and human inventions, and uninstituted ceremonies: "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." It is too remarkable, that the more carnal that the generation is growing, the more is abjured ceremonies creeping in among us, and the less testifying against the same; though yet it be "A burden, which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear," as the Apostle says, Acts xv. 10, "Why tempt ye God to put a yoke?"—The Apostle there speaks of a yoke of ceremonies, once enjoined of God himself, that now being abolished, it was a tempting of God; much more is the yoke of ceremonies that never were enjoined. But while we consult with flesh and blood, we tamely submit to the yoke of carnal ordinances, as they are called, Heb. ix. 10.; and while the spirituality of worship is neglected and detested, and the internal glory of ordinances is out of sight.

4. See what is the spring of all corruption in the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the house of God: it will be found that consulting with flesh and blood, in the matters of religion, is at the bottom thereof.

(1.) Whence is it that the doctrines of the gospel have been so

much corrupted? it is just from carnal reason, and consulting with that rather than with the word : We err, not knowing the Scriptures, not conferring with the Scriptures : Or, if men confer with the Scriptures, and consult the word, it is not with the word and the Spirit together ; but it is with the word and their own spirit, their own carnal sentiments :—Hence so many carnal interpretations of the Scripture, and carnal glosses upon the word, suiting the natural apprehensions of men concerning the Law, as if it was still standing in force, as a covenant, against believers, as well as unbelievers ; or, as if personal obedience thereto, were the way to eternal life, while yet the Scripture testifies of Christ, as the only way to life ; and our obedience now, when evangelical, as being only the necessary fruit and evidence of union to him. Pride of reason, founds Socinianism ; pride of the will, Arminianism ; pride of self-righteousness, Neonomianism.—How is the doctrine of Justification and Sanctification confounded,¹ by men's conferring with flesh and blood? Carnal reason suggesting, that God will not justify us, but upon some worthy consideration, or valuable performance of ours, which intimates gross ignorance of the gospel, concerning free justification by the blood of Christ.—It is from this root, even the conferring with flesh and blood, that many also do abuse the doctrine of the gospel to licentiousness, as if it encouraged wickedness, which is blasphemy against Christ, as if he was the minister of sin ; nay, those that reproachfully charge the doctrine of grace, as a covert to sin ; and the preachers of it, as if they were enemies to holiness ; do but grossly betray their ignorance of the gospel, and their consulting with flesh and blood in all their carnal arguments ; for, if they consult with the gospel itself duly, in opposition to legal doctrine, they would find, that the more evangelical the doctrine is the more holy and pure it is, and influential upon holiness ; for, the more a man is dead to the Law, the more he lives unto God : but this, will remain a mystery to many in the world for ever, because of their carnal thoughts and reasonings in favour of the Law, as a covenant ; for flesh and blood cannot endure gospel doctrine ; nature and carnal reason, cannot make the Law, a rule of obedience, without making it a rule of acceptance.²

(1.) The difference between Justification and Sanctification, is clearly stated by our Author.

(2.) The Reader will find these topics handled to an excellent purpose, by our Author, in the Sermon entitled *Law Death and Gospel-Life*.

(2.) Whence is it that the Worship which God hath appointed in his house, is so much abused : What is the rise of all that detestable neutrality in the worship of God, and weariness and lukewarmness in the duties thereof? Why, it is just men's conferring with flesh and blood. Spiritual worship, and a carnal heart, cannot comport, suit, or agree together : "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." And flesh and blood cannot endure spiritual work and worship : Hence men draw near to God with the mouth, while the heart is removed far from him. Hence men are careless what way they worship, or what way others worship God ; whether it be an idolatrous, superstitious, or instituted way, like Gallio, they care for none of these things. Hence Sabbaths and sermons, are a weariness ; praying and praising, are a burden : flesh and blood cannot endure these things. "Take a carnal man, says one, tie him to a post, and you may kill him with praying and preaching."

(3.) Whence is it that partiality in the exercise of church discipline, doth proceed? When men do not confer with flesh and blood, then discipline is powerful and impartial : but when, by consulting with flesh and blood, they connive at sin, overlook it in some, and dare not reprove it in others.—Flesh and blood says, Such a person is a friend ; we must favour him : such a person is a great man, a rich man, we must wink at a fault ; we must not meddle with him, lest he make us and the church uneasy.—By these carnal reasonings, the power of discipline is broken. Alas ! how far are we, at this day, from the spirit of Ambrose, who excommunicated the emperor Theodosius, for some rash orders of his ; while the emperor humbly submitted to the discipline of the church ; and, upon his repentance was received? But now, alas ; we must not offend this and that great man, otherwise all will go wrong. Oh ! where is powerful and impartial discipline ! It is sunk in the mire of sinful conference with flesh and blood.

(4.) Whence again proceeds that disorder and confusion that takes place in the government of the church? While men consult not with flesh and blood, the government is beautiful and orderly : but by carnal reasoning and carnal policy, and carnal wisdom, it is turned out of course : tyranny in church government over the souls and consciences of people ; such as, in thrusting pastors upon a Christian flock, without their free consent and election, is rooted in conferring with flesh and blood : Why, says carnal wisdom and policy, such a patron must be gratified ; such a great man must be

pleased, the church cannot stand without the support of such pillars.¹ What is all this, but a conferring with flesh and blood.—In a word, all the degeneracy of our day, is owing to this origin.

5. Hence see what is the root of all the divisions of our day, it flows from this consultation with flesh and blood. See James iv. 1. 1 Cor. iii. 3. “Whereas there is among you envying, and strife and division: are you not carnal?” Division among ministers and people flows from this carnal bias; proud flesh and blood cannot be controlled, scorns to be corrected: Who shall be greatest? is still the question of flesh and blood. Who shall be highest? Proud flesh and blood will put a fair face upon the foulest act, rather than take with a fault, or confess a wrong, or forgive an injury.

6. Hence see what it is, that the people of God have to wrestle against, while here, even all the counsels of flesh and blood. Paul rejects the consultation: there he plainly supposes that flesh and blood was ready to suggest, and solicit, and gave their advice; but Paul rejects the same; “Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.” This is a council where Satan presides, and is always at the head of the table. And hence, while they have flesh and blood to wrestle against, they have principalities and powers also, Eph. vi. 12. Much need have they of the whole armour of God, that they may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

2dly, This doctrine may be improven for Caution to prevent mistakes. There are several things that this duty, of not consulting with flesh and blood, doth not prohibit; such as,

1. It doth not exclude the duty of necessary conversation, traffic, and merchandise with the carnal men of this world, providing we do not mingle with their vice, and contract no intimate friendship with them; for, “The friendship of this world is enmity against God:” but otherwise, conversation, company, trade, and traffic with such may be necessary and allowable. This caution the apostle gives us, 1. Cor. v. 9, 10, “I wrote, unto you in an epistle, not to keep company with fornicators. Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters: for then must ye needs go out of the world.”

2. It doth not exclude, impeach, or debar the duty of charity

(1.) That Patronage is a great grievance in the Church, contrary to the Scripture, and repugnant to the Acts of the Church, in her best times, may be seen evinced, Sermon intituled, *The Law of the House*; Sermon entitled, *The Church Besieged*; and Sermon intituled, *The Stability of Faith*; in notes at the foot of the page.

toward the poor, and honouring the Lord with all our wordly substance, providing it be not done out of ostentation, to be seen of men, and to gratify flesh and blood. And as it doth not exclude charitable deeds, toward the souls and bodies of all men, doing them all the good services we can; so neither doth it exclude charitable thoughts of them: "Charity thinketh no evil," but puts the best construction upon all the actions of others, that the nature of the thing will bear, 1 Cor. xv. 12.

3. It doth not exclude or debar the duty of spiritual prudence. We are to be wise as serpents, and not to run upon seen hazard, without a call; nor to neglect the duty of consulting our necessary safety in time of danger and persecution; providing we do not fly when God bids us stand; or when the cause of Christ, or the glory of God, oblige us to bear witness for him, and for his truth: but abstract from these, or the like cases, Christian prudence is requisite in shunning whatever hazard we may, through imprudence, cast ourselves into: hence saith Solomon, "The prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself."

4. It does not exclude or impeach the duty of courtesy and civility towards all men; no: religion doth not allow men to be ill-bred or any way uncivil, more than it allows them to be ill-natured toward any: so, to be courteous, as the apostle exhorts, 1 Peter iii. 8, is not to be reckoned a conferring with flesh and blood. There is a way of becoming all things to all men, by the duty of courtesy, civility, and hospitality, which may be gaining to all.

5. It doth not exclude of frugality and industry about our wordly concerns. One is not reckoned a consulter with flesh and blood, because he provides for his family: "For, he that doth not so, saith the apostle, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." One may be a Mary for piety and a Martha for industry too; providing it be managed with moderation, so as not to exclude the better part.

6. It doth not exclude the duty of mercy, pity and compassion towards the body, whether our own, or that of others. It were an abuse of this doctrine, if any, out of pretence of not consulting with flesh and blood, should shew no mercy to the outward man, no regard to their own health: but should punish the body with immoderate fasting, or penance, or unmercifully lacerate their flesh, as many in the Popish church, through their superstitious devotion, do. But, in some cases, "Mercy is better than sacrifice."

7. It doth not exclude or debar the duty of forbearance and tenderness towards those that are overtaken in a fault. It were an abuse of this doctrine, of not consulting with flesh and blood, to be thereupon untender of weaklings, who are ready to stumble and fall: for, though this doctrine obligeth us not to bear with sin, wherever it is, yet it doth not allow us to insult over the infirmities of any; but we are to take the Apostle's rule, Gal. vi. 1, 3, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and fulfil the law of Christ."

8. It doth not exclude the duty of respect to every one, in their several stations and relations; particularly, due regard to parents, magistrates, and ministers; and subjection to judicatories of God's appointment, provided it be in the Lord, and in all things lawful, if not inconsistent with this duty of not conferring with flesh and blood: nay, it is highly consistent therewith, yea, and necessary thereunto; for a man may consult with flesh and blood, by refusing to give a due subjection; as many obstinate offenders do, that despise all discipline. Though, indeed, unlawful subjection or obedience, not in the Lord, is but a consulting with flesh and blood; while we follow the dictates of courts or counsels, in a way disagreeable to the word of God.

9. It doth not exclude the duty of advising with neighbours and Christians, whether about civil or religious matters, wherein any difficulty doth present itself. The doctrine, indeed, excludes the taking of good counsel from man, in an agreeableness to the word of God: nay, many times "In the multitude of counsellors there is safety," as Solomon saith; who also teacheth us to take advice in matters of weight, saying, "With good advice make war."

10. If we view this doctrine of not consulting with flesh and blood, as it stands in opposition to self-righteousness; or seeking to establish our own credit before men, or our own righteousness before God; yet it doth not exclude the duty of desiring and seeking, in a regular way, to have and maintain a good name: studying to have a righteousness of profession before men; and a righteousness of sanctification, both of heart and life, before God. Though we are to deny the righteousness of works, and to seek justification and acceptance elsewhere, otherwise we are of those that put confidence in

the flesh, and are not the true circumcision : yet we are not to forsake the works of righteousness, but to maintain good works: "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God, might be careful to maintain good works : these things are careful and profitable unto men." They are to be maintained before man in all the duties of righteousness respecting them ; and sobriety, respecting ourselves, and our deportment before them : they are to be maintained before God, in all the parts of holiness ; and that both internal, in the exercise of holy graces ; and external, in the performance of holy duties. Though we must deny this righteousness in point of dependence, yet not in point of performance ; though we need another righteousness to trust to, yet we need to be possessed of this ; otherwise we would expose the faith of Christ to be evil spoken of. By our light shining before men, we must endeavour to make others confess that we are illuminated with the beams of the Sun of Righteousness.—A righteousness without us we need, to give us a title to heaven ; and a righteousness within us, for sanctification of heart and way we need, to give us a meetness for heaven. A right of merit we have in justification, by Christ's righteousness ; a right of meetness we have in sanctification, by Christ's spirit : which latter right may be the meaning of that word, Rev. xxii. 14, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city : " or, it may be understood thus, that they may have evidence of their right, according to that word, John xv. 14, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."

The third use is of Reprehension. This doctrine reproves many sorts of people that may be said to confer with flesh and blood ; and here, by-the-bye, you may examine whether or not you be chargeable with this sin of conferring with flesh and blood ; and, if we search narrowly, I know few or none will be in case to exculpate themselves, or plead not guilty. There are those seven or eight sorts of people that consult with flesh and blood.

The First sort of persons, that confer with flesh and blood, are those, who, not choosing the word of God for their rule, nor his Spirit for their guide, consult with tradition ; yielding themselves to be ruled and conducted with human tradition, and ancient customs of their forefathers : This Paul acknowledges was his sin, before Christ was here revealed in him, ver. 14. "Being more exceedingly

zealous of the traditions of my fathers.”—This is the sin of the Papists, who reject the Scriptures, as sufficient to uphold their religion; no wonder, for if it cannot stand upon that foundation; and therefore they build upon corrupt traditions, and study to uphold the same with fire and faggot.—Yea, this is the sin of ignorant Protestants, that shape their religion only in a conformity to their ancestors; they will be of their forefathers’ religion, and maintain the principles of their education, like those, Jer. xlv. 17. What is all this but a consulting with flesh and blood?

The Second sort of persons, that confer with flesh and blood, are those that consult with man in the matters of God; and that either in point of trust or fear.—Some consult with man in point of trust, while they put their trust in man, contrary to the command of God, Psalm cxlvi. 3, “Put not your trust in princes, nor in the sons of men, in whom there is no help.” It is dangerous to repose our trust in man: “Cursed is the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, whose heart departeth from the Lord,” Jer. xvii. 5. If we trust in armies or allies, parliaments or potentates, friends or favourites, we trust in lying words: “It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in princes, Psalm cxviii. 9. Trust ye not in a friend, put no confidence in a guide, Micah vii. 5. And Jer. ix. 4. Take ye heed, every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother: for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders.” That time is come to pass: there is the ordinary character of the men that are the object of our false confidence, when we trust in men like ourselves: yea, “The best of men are like a briar, saith the prophet Micah; and the most upright, sharper than a thorn hedge, which will pierce all that lean to it.” If we depend upon human powers, for the preservation of our church or state; or depend upon human policy, for the reformation of religion, we will find ourselves sadly disappointed: “It is better to trust in the Lord, than to put confidence in princes.” If we depend upon human laws, even for the security of our fortune; or upon our compliance with whatever human authority enjoins, for our freedom from outward troubles and trials, we trust but in man, and so confer with flesh and blood.—Again, some consult with man in point of fear: If either we trust in them or be afraid of man that shall die, we consult with flesh and blood. It is an awful word to this purpose, Isaiah li. 12, 13, “Who art thou that thou shouldst be afraid of man, that shall die; and of the son of man, which shall

be made as grass : and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth?" Thus many dare not do their duty for fear of man : they dare not worship God in their families ; they dare not abstain from swearing, drinking, tippling, or betake themselves to serious religion, for fear of being scoffed, and scorned, and persecuted ; like the Jews (John xii. 42), that durst not profess Christ, for fear of being cast out of the synagogue. Thus some even of the godly, perhaps, dare not make public appearances for the cause and truths of the Lord Jesus, for fear of being exposed to the censures of the church, in a time when they are called to appear : But see what the Lord saith in such a case, to those that fear the reproaches and revilings of men : "Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law, fear ye not the reproach of men, neither be ye afraid of their revilings : For the moth shall eat them up like a garment, and the worm shall eat them like wool." It is but the grass of the field that opposeth us ; "All flesh is grass."—Let us not consult with flesh and blood.

The Third sort of persons, that confer with flesh and blood, are these who consult with passion and resentment, so as to seek revenge upon every injury, real or conceived. Why, ask a man why he is so hot in the pursuit of revenge, against those that have wronged him : he will answer, How can flesh and blood bear this ? If I put up with this wrong, they will wrong me again ; therefore, nothing will serve me but their blood, or some suitable retaliation, for the injury done me : while yet we are commanded to pray for them that persecute us, and to love them that hate us. If we consult with flesh and blood, we will devour one another, Gal. v. 15. How often hath it happened, that those who have sought revenge have been the destruction of themselves and others, while both parties have been killed in the field ; and while others, meditating revenge, they and their whole families have been undone by lawpleas : yea, many times consulting with flesh and blood, in matters of revenge, causeth men to be their own destruction. Saul killed himself, after he had long hunted David. And Judas, who was so cruel to his Master, sold himself to a halter, hanged himself, and his bowels gushed out. Proud flesh and blood is the cause of revenge ; "Only by pride cometh contention," Prov. xiii. 10, whereas humility would keep peace. Pliny writes of two ill-natured goats, that met both together, upon a narrow bridge, over a great stream ;

the bridge was so narrow, that the one could not pass by the other ; and if they had striven, and fought it out, it had been present danger of drowning to them both : but at last one of them lying down, 'and becoming a bridge to the other, both were saved. Indeed, the example of that brute beast may tell us, it is better, to let persons trample upon us sometimes, than by squabbling and discord, to endanger the drowning and destroying of both ourselves and others. A man, meditating revenge, cannot go to God, and say, as Christ hath taught him, "Forgive us our sins, as we forgive them that trespass against us." If you say this petition with a heart full of revenge, you do nothing but imprecate a curse upon yourselves ; and that God would deal with you, as you deal with your brother : if you pray not, then God's vengeance is ready to be poured out, Jer. x. 25. ; if you do pray, then your prayer is a cart-rope to pull down vengeance upon you. Why, say you, but should my neighbour abuse me at this rate ? No, indeed : but because he hath broken one command, in wronging you, will you break another, in malicious revenge against him ?—Why put this last question ? This is doctrine for them that have no blood in their nails : I tell you, minister, flesh and blood cannot endure the wrong I sustain. I tell you, man, flesh and blood cannot enter into the kingdom of God : wherefore, if you come there, flesh and blood must be mortified, and not consulted with. Why, I would be just reckoned a fool, a sot, an idiot, if I should put up with such an affront ; it would be a discredit. Why, the wisdom of God, by the mouth of Solomon, saith, "It is the glory of a man to pass by an injury." And what saith your carnal wisdom, poor fool that you are, in opposition to God's wisdom ? Let the world judge as they please, it is a greater credit for a man to overcome himself, and his revengeful affections, than to overcome his enemies, either at the bar or in the field. Well, say you, I shall forgive, but I cannot forget. Indeed, it is a wonder what one remarks in Cyprian, that though he had an excellent memory for all things else, yet he could never remember an injury ; so ill was his memory on that score, which was his excellency. But we may observe as great a wonder, on the contrary, that men have such ill memories, that they forget all things else almost ; yet they have such good memories, that they will remember injuries never so long : yea, they will never forget them, but mind to resent and revenge them, after many years. Ask many a person concerning a sermon, Alas ! I have the worst memory in the world, I am so for-

getful; I would give anything for a good memory: and yet, perhaps, they will mind an injury twenty years. Oh! if God so forgive our sins, as yet not to forget them, what would become of us!

The Fourth sort who confer with flesh and blood, are those that consult with numbers and multitudes, in the matters of God: they will be the religion that the most are of; they will follow such a principle and opinion, because the greatest multitude and number of great men, or good men do so: thus, like Roman votaries, they bind their faith to the belt of the church: to believe as the church believes. It is not, "Thus saith the Lord," that binds them; that were to build upon a divine testimony; but, Thus saith the Church, or thus saith an assembly of Divines, or thus saith such and such a great number of men: the greatest multitude of the learned and eminent say so and so; therefore we follow these. Thus they take the gospel upon trust, and have the faith of Christ with respect of persons. Can such a great number be all wrong, and such a small number only right? No; wisdom must dwell with the greatest multitude, saith flesh and blood, without ever proving all things, and holding fast that which is good: or, like the noble Bereans, searching the Scriptures, to see whether these things be so. Perhaps this is as prevailing an evil as any in the present time, with respect to matters controverted in the Lord's house. It is a carnal argument for one to say, Lord help us, if all others be in the wrong but you; yet, why must we be singular? Yea, but when vice becomes general, singularity becomes a virtue: when error in judgment, or principle, becomes universal, singularity becomes a necessary duty. What though we be called nice, and proud, and singular, affecting a name above others? We must follow Christ, bearing his reproach. Though a man should happen to be on the right side of the question, by following the principles of those whom he takes to be the greatest multitude of learned and eminent men; yet his faith is but an human faith, while it is built upon an human testimony: and a man's embracing what he thinks the Rabbies of the day maintain, is too like that of the Pharisees, John vii. 48, 49,—“Have any of the rulers and Pharisees believed in him? But this people, that know not the law are accursed.” Even so will flesh and blood argue: The greatest body and number of the great and learned world, if not the whole tribe of those that are reckoned wise and learned, believe so and so; and it is to be supposed that it is but a pack of ignorant fools, that differ from them; and therefore we will

believe as the greatest multitude of our church-guides direct us : they know the things of that nature better than we ; and therefore we must trust that they are in the right ; Thus many times the blind lead the blind, and both fall into the ditch : for it may happen that even those may be blind, whom neither themselves, nor others think to be so : so it was with the opinionative Pharisees, who said, "Are we blind also?" John ix. 40.

The Fifth sort that confer with flesh and blood are those who consult with human wisdom, in the matters of God, and whose fear towards God, is taught by the wisdom of men ; on which account the Lord threatens, Isaiah xxix. 14.—"The wisdom of their wise men shall perish ; and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid." Many are taken not with the truth, as it is in Jesus, but with the wisdom of fine words, or the wisdom of human literature, and carnal reasonings ; both which the apostle cautions against, in the matters of religion ; "And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words," Col. ii. 4. And the apostle's practice was the very reverse of this, 1 Cor. ii. 1, 2.—"Brethren, when I came to you, I came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Enticing words is the bait wherewith the credulous and simple sort of people are taken, as the apostle observes, Rom. xvi. 17, 18. The simple are they who are caught with the bait of enticing words of men, who, like merchants, set off slight and corrupt wares with the finest words. Another caution is, Col. ii. 8. "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, not after Christ." The former is a bait for the simple, but here is a bait for the learned world, when human philosophy and natural reasonings, are set in opposition to the truth as it is in Jesus Christ.—People confer with flesh and blood, when they are offended at the simplicity of Christ's doctrine, which is a stranger to the ornament of human wisdom, clothed only with the simple attire of a vulgar style, free from the flourish of lofty eloquence : Thus Augustine, before his conversion, owns his contempt of the word, when he began to read it, because he looked upon the style of the Scriptures as very mean, compared with the eloquence of Cicero, to which he had accustomed himself : hence it is said, "The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom : " The Jews, who

were accustomed to live under extraordinary dispensations, they would have nothing but miracles and prodigies from heaven ; but the Greeks, the Gentiles, they sought for the depth of philosophy in the gospel ; and when they missed that, they laughed it to scorn ; as you may see in Paul's rencounter with the Epicurean philosophers and Stoics, Acts xvii. 18. Great reason then had the apostle to say as he doth, 1 Cor. ii. 4, 6, 7.—“ And my speech, and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power. Howbeit, we speak wisdom among them that art perfect ; yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world, unto our glory. Therefore, though the preaching of the gospel be, to them that perish, foolishness ; yet to them that are saved, it is the power of God : For God hath made foolish the wisdom of this world ; and by the foolishness of preaching saveth them that believe. We preach Christ crucified ; to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness ; but to them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God : because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men ;” So you see the apostle speaking at large, 1 Cor. i. 17—29. These that are only taken then, with a fine style of language, and turns of wit, and the flowers of rhetoric, without searching into the mysteries of the gospel, and seeking to have the gospel coming, not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, 1 Thess. i. 5, are carnal, and conferring with flesh and blood.—But carnal wisdom, and carnal reason runs sometimes in another channel, while it not only, upon the one hand, represents the doctrine of the gospel as too mean, and therefore despises it ; but, on the other hand, represents the mysteries of the gospel, as too high, and therefore discredits it. Thus the devil plays his game at both hands : sometimes suggesting, that the doctrine of the gospel is too coarse and plain ; at other times that it is too sublime and mysterious ; such as the mystery of the Trinity, the mystery of the incarnation of Christ, the mystery of the spiritual union between Christ and the believer, the mystery of free justification, without works, by the righteousness of another.—Hence a generation of atheists, not only call in question, but impudently deny the mysteries of religion, as incomprehensible and impossible, because inconsistent with their carnal reason, however agreeable to

right reason.—But flesh and blood are ready to say of gospel-mysteries, as Nicodemus of the wonders of regeneration, “How can these things be?” We might shew how many errors of the day, whether Arian, Socinian, Arminian, or Pelagian, derive their origin from hence; but I proceed.

The Sixth sort of persons, who conferring with flesh and blood, are those that consult with the world in the matters of religion.—Of this sort are these that follow the ill example, and study the carnal politics of the world, and join in therewith, especially when it tendeth to advance or secure their worldly interests. Thus many, in point of worldly example, they rule their actions according to the will and example of their superiors; so Israel followed Jeroboam. And some, to please a great man, will make bold with light and conscience, directing them another way: or, if they suppose him to be a good man, that takes such and such a course, then the example of such will blind the eye of their conscience, and foster the argument of flesh and blood; for, why, saith flesh and blood, may not I do as such a great man, or such a good man doth, that is wiser than I can pretend to be? Yea, but we are to be followers of none, but as they are followers of Christ; otherwise we consult only with flesh and blood.—Of this sort also are those that give up themselves to the conduct of worldly policy, and study the carnal politics of the world, even in the matters of God and conscience; and hence will yield a blind obedience to the commandments of men, as Israel did to the statutes of Omri, Micah vi. 16. And Ephraim, who willingly walked with the commandment, Hosea v. 11. And perhaps all this, not for conscience-sake, but for interest-sake: Why, saith flesh and blood, it is better to be wise than fool-hardy, and expose ourselves to the fury of the government, civil or ecclesiastic: should we not take the course that will most contribute to obtain some worldly advantage, to secure our worldly interest, or to prevent worldly losses, crosses, and inconveniences; and why should we not obey the higher powers? Well, if it be duty, you are enjoined, why not obey? We ought to obey them in the Lord, and for conscience sake: but though a man may be doing what is duty in this case; yet, if he be swayed thereto, not from conscience, but from such carnal worldly motives, in matters that concern God and religion, then he but consults with flesh and blood; and his fear toward God, is taught by the precepts of men. But, on the other hand, if you truly doubt of its being duty, before God, that you are called

to, then, "Whatsoever is not faith is sin:" And if thus it be sin, then, "Whether ye ought to obey God or man, judge ye?" We consult with flesh and blood, if we yield obedience either to civil or ecclesiastical authority, any other way but in the Lord: or, if conscience be merely swayed with interest.—In a word, all sinful shifts to shun the cross, and carnal compliances to secure the world, is a consulting with flesh and blood: yea, when human authority is more regarded, for the sake of the world, than the authority of God and Christ.

The Seventh sort of persons that conferreth with flesh and blood, are those that consult outward peace and tranquillity, in the matters of God, even though they have little regard to gospel-truth and piety: they love to be easy, and to live in peace, though it should be at the rate and expense of making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. But "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, and then peaceable," James iii. 17. First purity and truth, and then tranquillity and peace, is the due order of heavenly wisdom; and hence we are commanded to love the truth and peace; first the truth, and then the peace. Peace without truth, is but a conspiracy against the God of truth: therefore, in studying to "Follow peace with all men," we are to observe this rule, otherwise it cannot be an holy peace, according to what follows, "And holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. The peace of a church can never be maintained with a blessing on it, if truth be not the foundation of that peace; for, it is a cursed peace that stands not upon that foundation.—But of this sort of people, that confer with flesh and blood, are those also that study their own outward peace and ease, at any rate; and hence will rather sin than suffer: therefore, when persecution comes, they fall away; flesh and blood cannot endure the cross of Christ.—They are content to follow Christ in a fair day; but when foul weather, and a heavy cross comes, by and by they are offended.—Matthew xiii. 21. Our Lord hath fairly warned all his disciples what a tempest of trouble and trial, reproach and persecution, will blow in their face, saying, "If any man will be my disciple, let him take up his cross, and follow me." And therefore they are not to promise themselves peace in the world, and a constant flourishing state of outward prosperity; for he hath said, "In the world ye shall have tribulation:" And yet when tribulation comes, hereupon Christ is to many, a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence.—Thus they consult with flesh and

blood, who project nothing but peace and ease in the way of duty and religion.

The Eighth sort of persons, who confer with flesh and blood, are those that consult with sense and self, in the matters of God, and of faith, and religion : that is, those who in religion put sense, as it were, in the room of faith, and self in the room of God.

[1.] Some put sense in the room of faith ; and hence their faith is governed by sense and feeling : they do not believe the threatening, because they have the sense and feeling of smiling providences : they do not believe the promise, because they have the sense and feeling of adverse and frowning providences : outward providences is made the rule of their faith, not the word of God. Hence, saith flesh and blood, that measures the threatening by sense, "Where is the promise of his coming? For, since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were, from the beginning of the creation: Not knowing, That one day is with God as a thousand years; and a thousand years, as one day: And that the heaven and earth, which are now, are kept in store, reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men," 1 Pet. iii. 4-8. But, "Because sentence against these, is not speedily execute; therefore the hearts of the children of men are fully set in them to do evil," Eccl. viii. 11, "Despising the riches of the goodness and forbearance of God, and his long-suffering; not knowing, that the goodness of God should lead them to repentance," Rom. ii. 4. And, on the other hand, hence, saith flesh and blood, that measures the promise by sense, Except I see signs and wonders, I will not believe: and, like Thomas, "Except I see in his hands the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." Of this sort are those that distrust all present means of faith, and imagining that extraordinary discoveries, striking upon outward sense, would make such impressions as would do the business, saying, as Luke xix. 30, "If one came from the dead, they would believe:" If they had oracles and miracles; if God did speak to them from heaven, they would believe. But Moses and the prophets are a sufficient ground of faith; "If we do not believe them, neither would we believe, though one should rise from the dead." If we cannot believe the threatening, till we feel the execution of it, it is like saying, We will not believe, till we be in hell; or, till it be in part execute on earth upon us: why, then our belief of it would not be founded on God's

word, but our own sense and feeling ; and so it would not be faith properly, but sense. If we will not believe the promise, till we feel the accomplishment of it, this is like putting the plough before the oxen ; a backward way of going to work : yea, it is impossible to believe this way ; for sense is not faith : believing and feeling are different things. We may believe, without feeling ; but we cannot feel, without first believing.

[2.] Some, again, put Self in the room of God, and the righteousness of God ; and so evidently consult with flesh and blood, while we consult with our self ; and here take a view both of natural or carnal self, and of spiritual and religious self.

1. When we gratify natural or carnal self, we do but consult with flesh and blood ; when we cannot endure the mortification and self-denial, which Christ calls his disciples to, and by which they evidence themselves to be his disciples. We are called to mortify our members that are upon the earth ; to renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh ; to be denied all the sinful pleasures of time, and carnal company in the world : this grates hard upon flesh and blood, which is ready to cry out with the Jews, “This is a hard saying, who can hear it?” Flesh and blood think it strange that God should plant desires in them, which he will not allow them to satisfy : but as these carnal desires of men, are of themselves, so it is the natural craving of flesh and blood, that makes people desire to live as they list, and not as they ought : hence arises a secret dislike at the purity of the gospel. But besides this gross consultation with flesh and blood, in gratifying natural or carnal self,

2. When we gratify spiritual and religious self, we do but consult with flesh and blood. And there are two special ways wherein men gratify their religious self, namely, when they seek to establish their own credit before men, and when they seek to establish their own righteousness before God, in all their religious performances.

(1.) When they seek to establish their own credit before men and to have a name, reputation, and applause, without having a single eye to the glory of God : these carnal ends and designs, in men’s spiritual-like performances and religious duties, are a consulting with flesh and blood, while they love the praise of men more than the praise of God, John xii. 43. This is a piece of self and carnal consultation, which, as it reigns over hypocrites, who yield themselves to the power and government of it : so it may prevail

over true believers, who, many times, may find themselves under the tyranny and bondage of it. This is a thief that will steal into the minister's study and pulpit, to rob God of his glory there, that self may get what belongs to God. This is a robber that follows people from the chamber to the church, and spoils all their duties of hearing, praying, and praising; that, instead of giving praise to God, they may get praise to themselves. Hence flesh and blood makes the man have no pleasure in duty which have brought in no applause to the man; and makes him take pleasure in that performance which brings in most reputation and renown to the performer. From this principle a minister will preach Christ out of envy, that he may be thought as evangelical as the best; and from this principle also, some people will be as throng about religious duties as any can be, that they may be thought as religious as the best. Thus, for a pretence, the Pharisees made long prayers, and did many things to be seen of men. This is an attempt, as it were, to swear by the Lord, and swear by Malcham; to serve Christ and Belial, God and self both. See how our Lord speaks of this, Luke xvi. 15, "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men, is abomination in the sight of God."—Thus, I say, men consult with flesh and blood when, in the matters of God, their great design is to establish their own credit before men.

(2.) When they seek to establish their own righteousness before God, as the Jews did, Rom. x. 3. These two parts of self do effectually oppose all true religion: for, as in the former respect, those that establish their own credit put self in the room of God and his glory, which is the ultimate end; so, in the latter respect, those that establish their own righteousness, they put self in the room of Christ and his righteousness, which is the mean to that end. And now, while we seek a righteousness in ourselves and in our own duties, for justification and acceptance with God, we do, in effect, bring down Christ, and set up flesh and blood in his room, and consult therewith. Men naturally seek after a righteousness in themselves, or salvation by their own personal obedience, according to the tenor of the covenant of works. Man's righteousness was once in himself when he remained in his primitive integrity; but, since the fall, the Lord has removed our righteousness from ourselves to Christ, who has become the Lord our Righteousness; yet how few are prevailed upon to relinquish self and self-righteousness! Many seek to

(1) See this point of doctrine more fully illustrated, Sermon XLI.

establish their own righteousness, that will not take with the charge.

1. These do seek to establish their own righteousness who can hardly be brought, either doctrinally or practically, to own that believers are wholly and altogether delivered from the law, as a covenant of works; but still are for seeking righteousness, as it were, by the works of the law, Rom. ix. 32.—This was the stumbling-stone over which the Jewish nation stumbled and fell headlong into ruin.

2. Of this sort are those that only cover their legal sentiments with a gospel varnish, while they bring in faith and repentance, and the like, as proper conditions of the covenant of grace, in room of the perfect obedience required in the covenant of works; which is a razing of the foundation of the gospel, and an establishing of a righteousness in our own person, for justification before God.

3. Of this sort are these also that bring in gospel repentance, and the like, as necessary conditions and qualifications, in order to our justification before, and acceptance with God. Again,

4. Of this sort are those who, in principle or practice, contend that it is the believer's duty to be influenced, in his obedience, either by the slavish fears of hell, or the legal hopes of heaven. To obey from a legal hope of heaven, as if we were to obtain heaven by our obedience, as it is contrary to the apostle's doctrine, 1 Thess. v. 9, where he says, "That God hath appointed us to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that we should live with him;" so it affronts the obedience of Christ, whereby alone our title to heaven is secured. To obey from a slavish fear of hell, as if our obedience and duty would secure us therefrom, is like opposition to, and denial of the virtue of Christ's death, whereby alone our freedom from hell is secured.

5. Of this sort are those who bring the believer upon every new sin, under a liableness to everlasting death and damnation, which is the penalty of the covenant of works, and which, though his sins deserved, yet the righteousness of Christ imputed to him, not only secures him from it, but from ever being liable to it. Those who thus will make the believer liable to that law-sentence because of his sin, must of consequence suppose him not liable because of his obedience; and so they make him to be justified by his obedience, and condemned by his disobedience to the law; contrary to our received principles in our Standards, declaring "That the believer is not under the law, as a covenant, either to be justified or condemned." The believer is neither justified by his obedience to the

law, nor condemned for his disobedience: but, if he disobeys, his God and Father hath other ways of chastising him in a fatherly manner, according to Psalm lxxxix. 30—33. In all these ways, men do but establish their own righteousness, and so consult with flesh and blood.

In a word, of this sort are all these that suspect the doctrine of the gospel as if it were an enemy to the law and holiness. Such is the propensity of nature towards the law, as a covenant of works, whenever awakened to any thoughtfulness about religion, that when the gospel declares that there is no justification by the deeds of the law; and that we are justified by faith, without the works of the law; and that righteousness is accounted to, or justification conferred upon them that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, Rom. iv. 5: Why, when this evangelical doctrine is opened, presently the legal disposition of men suspect this gospel-doctrine, and say of the publishers of it, as the Jews did of Paul, Acts xviii. 13. "This fellow persuades men to worship God, contrary to the law." Yea, not only contrary to the ceremonial law, but even to the moral law: for, must not men do as well as they can, in obedience to God's law; and then expect to be justified and accepted. Thus gospel-doctrine comes to be challenged for Antinomianism; as if it allowed men a carnal liberty for sin, and freedom to break the law, or discouraged the practice of holiness; which is one of the greatest calumnies that can be raised against the gospel of Christ; and betrays dreadful ignorance of the gospel of grace: which shews plainly that a man never lives unto God, in point of holiness, till he be dead to the law in point of righteousness, Gal. ii. 9: nor ever brings forth fruit unto God, till he be dead to the law, and married to Christ, Rom. vii. 4.¹ But we need not think strange of this suspicion, nor the calumnies that issue from thence; for Christ Jesus, our glorious Lord himself, was obliged to defend himself against such calumnies as these; and therefore saith, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law:" I see, might he say, that is your thought, that is your suspicion; you suspect my doctrine as if it was an enemy to the law and to holiness: "I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." And the apostles had themselves to defend from this charge, "Do we make void the law

(1.) This point of doctrine is very copiously handled by our Author, in the Sermon intitled, *Law-death, and Gospel-life*.

through faith? God forbid; we establish the law."¹—Thus you see in how many respects people may be said to confer with flesh and blood.

S E R M O N X X I I.

GALATIANS i. 16.—"Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood."

[The Second Sermon on this text.]

HAVING finished what we intended upon the doctrinal part of the subject, by explaining what is to be understood by flesh and blood; confirmed the truth of the doctrine, by shewing that we are not to confer therewith in the matters of God; assigned the reasons therefore; entered upon the application of the subject, and have applied it in an use of information, caution, and reprehension; this doctrine may next be applied for dehortation and direction. And,

The dehortation is, O sirs, consult not with flesh and blood.—And for motives, consider the reasons of the doctrine, formerly assigned. Flesh and blood are unable to give advice in the matters of God; and as unable, so they are unwilling, and consequently unfit to consult with; yea, to consult with flesh and blood is dangerous; for, if we consult therewith, flesh and blood will hinder us from duty; flesh and blood will lead us to sin; flesh and blood will impede our suffering for Christ and his cause: yea, if we consult with flesh and blood, we will consult with the devil, as Saul did; and so to consult with flesh and blood, is to consult with our own ruin: yea, the dishonour of God, and the discredit of the gospel. But these I pass, having formerly insisted upon them.

But for direction in this matter, it may be asked, 1. What are we to consult with, if we may not consult with flesh and blood. 2. What are the most proper means for preventing our conferring with flesh and blood?

I. Whom or what are we to consult with, if we may not consult with flesh and blood? Who are we to consult? To this we

(1.) About the time when this Sermon was preached, the contest about the Marrow-doctrine was upon the field, and the supporters thereof were accused as Antinomians.

reply; in general, we ought to consult with God: with God, in Christ, by the Spirit; or, with the Father, in the Son, by the Holy Ghost: I mean, we ought, under the conduct of the Spirit, to consult with God, as he is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that in all the duties of religion, and ordinances of his appointment, whether public or private: especially in prayer, saying, with David, Psalm cxliii. 10. "Thy Spirit is good: lead me to the land of uprightness.—We ought to seek that he would guide by his counsel, till he bring unto glory; and give his Spirit for our guide: for he hath given us the greatest encouragement so to do; "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Luke xi. 13. Every good gift cometh from him; and therefore, to whom should we go, for counsel and direction, but to the Father of lights, and to Christ, the wonderful Counsellor: and to the Spirit of truth, who is promised to lead his people into all truth? If we do not acknowledge the Lord in all our ways, and consult with him, we will certainly consult with flesh and blood.

But more particularly, because God hath given us counsellors over him, we are to consult such things, or persons, as he allows us to consult with, in a subordination to himself. If we would know then, more particularly, how we are to consult with God, we may do it by consulting, 1. The oracles of God. 2. The children of God. 3. The messengers of God. 4. The glory of God. 5. The analogy of faith. 6. The conscience, God's deputy in our breast.

1. We are to consult the oracles of God; I mean the Scriptures of truth, in the matters of faith, in the matters of God and conscience; "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and these are they which testify of me," John v. 39. The Scripture is the judge of controversy. General assemblies and councils may err; so cannot the Scripture: For, it is "The more sure word of prophecy, to which we do well to take heed, as to a light shining in a dark place," 2 Pet. i. 19, 20, 21. We are therefore exhorted to let the word of God dwell in us richly, in all wisdom; and to receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save our souls; being doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving our own souls, James i. 21, 22. See how Timothy is commended for his consulting with the Scripture from his youth, 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16, 17. Thus we are to consult with God in the Scripture.

2. We are to consult the children of God, the saints of God;

especially such of them as are most tender, and live nearest unto God, and have most of the mind of God; and especially at such times when they and their God are in good terms together. Though we are not to consult with carnal friends in the matters of God; nor yet to follow the carnal counsel of godly friends; yet we do not consult with flesh and blood when we follow the godly counsel of godly friends, and the spiritual advice of spiritual friends: the word encourages us to confer with such, Mal. iii. 16, "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written for them that feared the Lord, and thought upon his name." And, again, "He that walketh with the wise shall be wise." It is good consulting with those whom God is communicating his secrets unto; and now, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him," Ps. xxv. 14.

3. We are to consult the messengers of God, for so we are warranted to do, Mal. ii. 7, "The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should keep the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts:" 2 Chron. xx. 20, "Believe in the Lord your God, and so ye shall be established: believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper." But what if the prophets be deceived? What if the minister be mistaken, or the priest's lips do not keep knowledge, or hold by the truth? Why, we are to receive nothing indeed from men, by an implicit faith, without laying it to the rule, Isaiah viii. 20, "To the law, and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." We must "Prove all things, and hold fast that which is good;" and, like the noble Bereans, "Search the Scriptures daily, whether these things be so," Acts xvii. 11. And if they were commended for not crediting the apostles themselves, that were immediately inspired from heaven, without comparing their doctrine with the Scripture; how much more commendable is it for people to compare the doctrine of ordinary teachers with the word, and the analogy of faith? Neglect, in this particular, makes many grossly ignorant; and hence to be carried about with every wind of doctrine, not knowing whom to trust, or what to believe: they err, not knowing the Scriptures.—Well, but those that know the Scriptures better than we do explain it so and so, in a different manner from others. It may be so, but the Scripture is the best explainer of itself; if we searched it dependently upon the Lord, light would arise out of darkness; such light as would darken and confound all the false glosses the devil

put upon it in his debating with Christ; but our Lord Jesus did, with other Scriptures, refute the devil's corrupt glosses, which he put upon the Scriptures that he cited. However, I say "The priest's lips should preserve knowledge, and we should seek the law from his mouth." He ought to be a good counsellor, a faithful guide: and we ought to consult and confer with him in the matters of God: and we ought to take the counsel that is agreeable to the Word of God, and to be followers of such, as far as they are followers of Christ, and no further.

4. We are to consult the glory of God in all. If we consult our own ends, it is but flesh and blood: but if, in all things, we consult the glory of God, as our ultimate end, then we consult not with flesh and blood. "Whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we ought to do all to the glory of God." And in all the matters of God and conscience, it is always safest to consult what is most for advancing this great end, the glory of God in Christ; the glory of his sovereign grace; the glory of his infinite holiness and other perfections. Whatever tendeth to the dishonour of God, and of his name, comes of flesh and blood; and of devilish carnal consultation. The world are set upon pleasing of flesh and blood, though it should be never so displeasing to God: they are set upon the exalting of self, and the debasing of Christ; the enthroning of self, and the dethroning of God. But, O sirs, if the glory of God was consulted, how remote would people be from consulting with flesh and blood? God's glory would lead people up to the hill of God: but flesh and blood takes them down to the stream of the world. Why are so many carried down with the stream of the times? Why, they do not consult God's glory.

5. We are to consult the analogy of faith, and purest antiquities: "Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls," Jer. vi. 16. And, indeed, in order to the right use of the oracles of God, or the unerring rule of the Scripture, that rule is to be used in an agreeableness to the analogy of faith, *i. e.*, There are some fundamental truths that are as first principles, founded upon the clearest testimony of the word; and whatever is not agreeable in principle or practice to that analogy of faith, we may be sure is not agreeable to the word of God, and consequently savours not of God, but of flesh and blood. If you ask, What these fundamental truths or first principles are? Why, they

are such, with respect whereunto all, that know any thing experimentally about religion, are beyond doubt : such as, that there is a God : that he is an eternal, immutable, and independent Being : hath ordained all things, executing his decrees in the works of creation and providence : that he created man after his own image : that man fell from his own happiness, and brought himself into a state of sin and misery : that God sent his Son, to take on our nature ; that therein he might suffer and satisfy divine justice, pay the price of redemption ; and there is no remedy for us but in him, and by him : that to all the elect he applies this redemption, enlightening their minds in the knowledge of himself, subduing their wills ; and that whom he thus regenerates and converts, he justifies, adopts, and sanctifies, giving them his Spirit to quicken them, and guide them from step to step, till he land them in glory, and they be eternally blessed in and with himself : and that all others, being left in their sins, shall be eternally damned, and destroyed with everlasting destruction, from the presence of God. These, and the like, are fundamental truths, founded upon the clearest and strongest grounds of Scripture, and linked together inseparably : and whatever doctrine or principle runs in a direct opposition to any of these, savours not of God, but of flesh and blood. And therefore, we ought, I say, carefully to consult the analogy of faith.

6. We are to consult with the deputy of God in our breast ; I mean, Conscience, when it is under the government and regulation of the word and Spirit of God ; for, if it be not thus regulated and governed, I dare not say it is fit to be consulted with ; nay, I am not for conscience being consulted with, and regarded in this matter, unless it be guided by the word and Spirit of God : for many may pretend they act according to the light of their conscience, while yet they are but under the conduct of a blind mind and misled conscience ; “ And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the ditch.” Paul pretended conscience, when a Pharisee ; yea, when he was persecuting the church of Christ ; “ He verily thought with himself, that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth,” Acts xxvi. 9. Yea, Christ hath told us, that many persecutors of his members, will think that they do God good service : and so, following a blind conscience, they may be but consulting with flesh and blood. But conscience, guided by the word and Spirit of God, is to be consulted with ; and then the man’s walk a conscientious walk, living in all good conscience before God :

and studying to have a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man: and herein should we exercise ourselves: for, conscience reaches all relative duties between magistrate and subject, minister and people, parent and child, master and servant: yea, all religious duties toward God and man; and so far as we cross the light of conscience, and go over the belly thereof, we do but consult with flesh and blood, and cast an affront upon God's deputy.

II. What are the most proper means for preventing our conferring with flesh and blood? I shall observe two things in the text, which were the notable means for preventing Paul's conferring with flesh and blood. The first was, his getting a saving revelation of Christ in him; "He revealed his son in me." The next was his speedy rejecting the counsel of flesh and blood: "Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood."

1st, The first was, his getting a saving revelation of Christ in him; "It pleased God to reveal his Son in me." Here is the best antidote in the world, against carnal consultation. It is true, some that have Christ savingly revealed in them, may yet consult too much with flesh and blood; for true believers may miscarry far, through unbelief; but surely, the more that Christ is revealed in a man, the less will he consult with flesh and blood, in the various ways condescended upon, in the doctrinal part of the subject. Here two things may be inquired into: 1. What is the nature of this revelation of Christ. 2. What influence it hath to prevent and hinder our consulting with flesh and blood?

(1.) What is this revelation of Christ? For understanding this, you would know, that the revelation of Christ is twofold, viz. external and internal.

(1.) The external revelation of Christ by the word. The light of nature and reason cannot reveal Christ: that light hath its own use to guide us in the things of nature, but not in the things of God; "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God," 2 Cor. ii. 14. It is by the word that Christ is revealed, and the gospel notified and made known to us; and yet, where there is no more but this external revelation, there is no saving change. Therefore,

(2.) There is the internal revelation of Christ, by the Spirit; when Christ is not only revealed to us, but in us: "He revealed his Son in me." Now, the question is, What is this internal, saving revelation of Christ? I think the best way to understand it, is,

under the conduct of the Spirit of God, to consider every word of this emphatic description of the matter ; “ He revealed his Son in me.” And every word will afford a thought for opening up the nature of his saving work of divine illumination, in the knowledge of Christ : and, by the nature of this light wherein Paul was here enlightened, we may try, whether “ The God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, hath ever shined into our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of his glory, in the face of Jesus Christ :” For,

1. It is a clear and manifest light : this is imported in the very word REVELATION ; “ He REVEALED his Son in me.” Revelation speaks out clearness and evidence. As God, in creation, and making the world, began with light, saying, “ Let there be light and there was light :” so in conversion, he begins the illumination : “ They that know thy name, will put their trust in thee.” None will believe, till they clearly and plainly take up the object, though they cannot know it fully and perfectly : “ He that seeth the Son, and believeth in him, hath everlasting life,” John vi. 40. The revelation of Christ doth effectually dispel the massy clouds of spiritual darkness and ignorance, that sits hard and heavy upon the eyes of the understanding ; for by nature we are as ignorant and brutish, in the things of God, as the beasts that perish, till the Spirit be sent, as a Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of Christ, and then the man sees clearly ; not like the man that saw with his eyes half-open, men like trees walking ; but, in God’s light, he sees light clearly, and gets some suitable uptakings of God’s testimony concerning his Son, testifying that he is a well qualified Saviour, able to save to the uttermost : testifying that salvation is to be had no other way ; “ That there is no other name given under heaven, whereby we can be saved ;” testifying that he is ready to save all comers ; and that whoever will is welcome : yea, testifying that every one who hears of him, hath a warrant to come to him, and accept of him ; and that it is not presumption in poor sinners to come. This revelation, I say, imports a clear light opening up the object of faith, and giving the soul some distant uptaking of God’s testimony concerning Christ ; “ For, whatsoever maketh manifest, is light.” Again,

2. It is a supernatural light ; “ He revealed his SON in me. It pleased GOD to do it,” saith Paul : this light was from above, from the Father of lights : flesh and blood revealed not this to Paul,

but his father which is in heaven : this is given from heaven ; “ To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, to others it is not given,” Mat. xiii. 11. Human parts and literature could not give Paul this insight and discerning ; he wanted not his share of all the learning of that age : but the natural man, let him be never so learned, and have never such a stock of natural parts, and acquired literature, yet he receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him ; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned : the man must be taught of God. True saving light is spiritual and supernatural : “ He that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh to the Son ;” and the Father revealeth the Son in a sovereign way and manner ; not from any regard to some good qualifications in the sinner, but from his own sovereign good-will and pleasure : “ It pleased God to reveal his Son in me.”

3. It is an evangelical light ; “ He revealed his SON in me.” HIS SON : it is not an absolute God, a God out of Christ, as he is revealed to the sinner by the law, as a covenant of works, but God, in his Son Jesus Christ, according to the gospel, which discovers him as a God in Christ, reconciling the world to himself. He revealed his Son ; the Son of his love, in whom he is well pleased. His Son who is the Sent and Sealed of the Father : his Son, who is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person : his Son, in whom it pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell ; and in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead : And so it is a revelation of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ ; “ He revealed his Son in me.” The law, as a covenant of life and works, doth not reveal Christ ; when God reveals himself, according to that dispensation, he is a consuming fire out of Christ to the sinner ; and at best is revealed as a commanding God, and a wrathful threatening God : but when God reveals himself in his Son, then he is known as a promising God, a gracious God, a reconciled God. And this gospel-revelation, this evangelical light, brings in peace and quiet to the whole soul : Hence Christ says to his disciples, when it seems their views of God were more dark and legal, apprehending God in the law, without apprehending Christ in the gospel, John xiv. 1, “ Let not your heart be troubled ; ye believe in God, believe also in me.” And there he shews them, verse 6, that he is the way to the Father ; and that no man cometh to the Father but by him. Hence, lest any should imagine, that a view of the Son

would lead them off from a view of the Father, he adds, verse 9, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father:" and so, when the Father reveals the Son, he reveals himself in him. How sweet is it then to consider, that first the Father reveals the Son, according to John vi. 45.; and then the Son reveals the Father, according to John i. 17, 18. Where, after it is said, that "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ;" it follows, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." And thus "He revealed his Son in me;" *i. e.* He shewed me his own glory, in the face of his Son. Here is the saving gospel-revelation.

4. It is an internal light; this is evident from the participle *IN*, "He revealed his Son *IN* me; not only *TO* me by an external objective revelation; but *IN* me, by an internal subjective revelation. It is not light without presented to the bodily eye, shining outwardly, like that wherewith some poor ignorant creatures are deceived, who speak of their having seen about them, or in such a part of the room, or of the bed, a strange light, or a pleasant representation: while yet they may be brutishly ignorant of Christ: for, though I shall not disprove, all external manifestation, as if God, in extraordinary cases, might not, by the ministry of angels, make some outward glorious appearance to his own; yet, as Christ himself is not now to be seen any other way, than by the eye of faith, in the light of internal saving manifestation, by the Spirit, so these external manifestations are evidently delusive, especially where there is nothing but gross darkness and ignorance in the mind. It is not light without, I say, but light within; and that not enthusiastical, like the Quaker's light, but spiritual and scriptural, suitable to the objective revelation of Christ in the word and in the gospel: nor is it national internal light, making impression upon the fancy, like a strong imagination: but it is light irradiating the whole soul; "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ, 2 Cor. iv. 6. "In our hearts;" and hence cometh that heart-melting, when this sun of righteousness ariseth, with his warm beams. And hence also cometh heart-persuasion; a full persuasion of the truth of God's testimony concerning Christ; the man believes, and is sure; knoweth, and is persuaded upon the testimony of God. Hence also heart-approbation of Christ, and the device of salvation, in him and through him.

O! says the soul, this way of salvation is worthy of all acceptation. Hence also heart-satisfaction: it is sweeter than honey or the honey-comb. There is a savour in the name of Christ; it is as ointment poured forth: the heart and soul acquiesces in Christ, as fully answering all its necessities, and all its desires. Hence heart-purification: the more the man sees him, the more he is like him; for it is a begun heaven; and in heaven the saints are like him, for they see him as he is; so here in proportion to the sight.—And, in a word, hence heart-experience: there is a feeling of power and virtue in the revelation of Christ; a taste of his sweetness and excellency. Other knowledge and learning is merely speculative; and hence the pavement of hell is laid with the skulls of many great scholars, who have had their heads freighted with notions of God and Christ, but never their hearts irradiated with the light of life, so as to have experience of the soul-quickenings and sin-killing efficacy of divine light. Thus it makes much heart-work, being internal light.

5. It is a close, appropriating light; this I draw from the ME, in the words, "He revealed his Son in ME." The saving knowledge of Christ is appropriating: therefore Paul calls it, "The knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord," Phil. iii. 8. The devils have some knowledge of Christ; but cannot say he is their Saviour; Nebuchadnezzar could say, "There is a God of power;" but he is the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: Darius calls him the God of Daniel. But this saving revelation comes close home to the man himself; and natively tends to the man's participation of the good that he seeth: if Christ be revealed savingly as a Prophet, it is for teaching me; if as a Priest it is for atoning for me; if as a King, it is for conquering me to himself, and subduing my foes under him; if as a Saviour it is for saving me. There is a particular application of Christ for wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption to the man's self. It is not a general speculation, saying, Here is a full, suitable, glorious Saviour for sinners: but it is like a marriage, application and appropriation, saying, Here is a match for me; I apprehend him and take him as given to me: "He revealed his Son in me." According to the measure of illumination and faith, accordingly it comes to this particular ME; "He loved me, and gave himself for me."

6. It is a glorious and manifest light, as may be gathered from the whole context of this verse; which shews, at least, four things that contribute to make it very glorious.

(1.) It is glorious in the spring and origin of it, viz., the good-will and pleasure of God; "It pleased God to reveal his Son in me: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Proud flesh and blood may dispute the sovereignty of grace: but it is beyond dispute with all the children of grace, when in their right wits, that all saving blessings are owing to, and resolve in this origin, the good pleasure of God.

(2.) It is glorious in the method and manner of it; "He revealed his Son in me:" here is a glorious Trinity all at work; He, namely, the Father, did reveal his Son by the Holy Ghost, in me. For this is the work of the Spirit, as a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, Eph. i. 7; given of the Father for this end, as that verse doth shew us: and promised of the Son for this end, John xv. 26, "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you, from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me." And again, John xvi. 14, "He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." This is what is here made out in Paul: so it is also made out in all that are savingly illuminated in the knowledge of Christ; the Father reveals the Son by the Holy Ghost. This is the glory and saving light of knowledge: it is God the Father that enlightens the mind in the knowledge of Christ, by the powerful irradiation and operation of the Spirit.

(3.) It is glorious in the end and design of it; "That I might PREACH him among the Gentiles." It is true, indeed, every real Christian is not enlightened for this end, to preach Christ among the Gentiles, as Paul was: but all that have Christ revealed in them are enlightened for some such glorious end, namely, that they may commend Christ unto the world, both by their words and by their walk: that they may serve and honour him on earth; and that they may praise and glorify him for ever in heaven; yea, that they may preach him forth unto others, according to their call and station; if not in a ministerial and authoritative way, yet in a practical and charitative way. And hence all that are savingly enlightened, according to the measure of illumination, in the knowledge of Christ, will find a sweet disposition to proclaim him in the world, and to do all that they can to recommend him to others, like the psalmist, Psalm li. 12, 13, "Restore to me the joy of thy salvation, and uphold me with thy free Spirit: then will I teach transgressors thy way, and sinners shall be converted unto thee."

(4.) It is glorious in the immediate effect of it, as the words of the text declare ; “IMMEDIATELY I conferred not with flesh and blood ;” instantly a change is wrought upon the man, so soon as Christ is revealed in him ; for, “Beholding the glory of the Lord, we are changed.” It is a fair owning and confession, that before this time he had been all along consulting with flesh and blood ; and under the conduct of carnal reason, self, and self-righteousness : but now he is made to rejoice in Christ Jesus, and hath no confidence in the flesh. The conference with flesh and blood is so far broken up, as Christ is revealed : “Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.”—Thus much of the nature of this revelation of Christ. And now I am led to the other question, namely,

[2.] What influence this revelation of Christ hath upon preventing our consulting with flesh and blood ? This question is of great moment, as being the hinge of the doctrine, stating the connection between the revelation of Christ, and not consulting with flesh and blood in the matters of God. For the doctrine may be thus framed,

That, as there ought to be no consulting with flesh and blood in divine matters, so the best preservative against this evil is a saving internal revelation of Christ : or thus, That freedom from carnal consultation is a fruit of saving illumination.

Now, to give answer to this question, you would know that the influence which the revelation of Christ hath to prevent our consulting with flesh and blood is twofold.

1. Moral and argumentative.

2. Physical and operative.

(1.) The saving revelation of Christ influenceth this not consulting with flesh and blood, in a moral and argumentative way, while it affords the most powerful arguments and strong persuasions not to consult with flesh and blood. For the revelation of Christ natively leads the soul to reason, and argues thus : “O ! hath God revealed his Son in me ? Is it God himself that hath revealed Christ savingly to and in me ? And shall I fight against this God, with these carnal weapons of flesh and blood ? Did it please him to do so to me ? Was it his good pleasure to reveal Christ ? And shall I follow my carnal pleasure, to the displeasure of this God ? Hath he revealed such an one as his Son in me ? And shall I hug self in me ?—Flesh and blood hath not revealed Christ in me : and shall I follow the carnal conduct of flesh and blood ?”

But, more particularly, this moral influence it hath to prevent consulting with flesh and blood will further appear if we consider that, when Christ is revealed, there is such a display made of the glory of God in him, as tendeth mightily to reason the man out of all his carnal reason. For instance,

1. The revelation of Christ displayeth the wisdom of God; for, "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge;" yea, herein the man sees the manifold wisdom of God; and the wisdom of God in a mystery: and, when this is discovered, surely it spoils all carnal politics; yea, and makes carnal wisdom to hide its face with blushing; yea, "God makes foolish the wisdom of this world."

2. The revelation of Christ displays the power of God; for he is Christ the power of God, as well as the wisdom of God, 1 Cor. i. 24. And now, says the enlightened soul, when Christ the wisdom of God, and the power of God is displayed, "O! what need I trust to the policy of men? Or, what need I fear the power of men that are against me? Or trust in the power and policy of men, even when they seem to be for me? Here is almighty power that I am called to confide in; even the power of a God in Christ:" "Trust ye in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord JEHOVAH is everlasting strength: he is able to save to the uttermost."

3. The revelation of Christ displays the holiness of God: and so this makes the unholiness and sinfulness of all carnal consultation to appear so: it shames the man out of his carnal counsels. "O! is he such an infinitely holy God, that he hated sin as much as he loved his eternal Son? And shall I take any unholy course? Is this conferring with flesh and blood agreeable to the infinite holiness of God, in the face of Christ, which I have seen."

4. The revelation of Christ displays the justice of God; both his vindictive justice, in punishing sin, to the utmost, upon the Surety, when it was imputed to him; and retributive justice, in giving all good things to Christ and his seed, as a reward of his obedience to the death: and in all this God has given the most noble indication; that, as he will not let sin go unpunished, wherever it is, whether it be in his own, by fatherly chastisement; or in others, by wrathful resentment; so he will not let gospel obedience and holiness, wherever it is, want its reward of grace in Christ; and therefore, saith the enlightened soul, "Oh! this consulting with flesh and blood is altogether disagreeable to that revelation of divine justice in Christ, whether vindictive or remunerative, that I have got.

Shall I run upon the thick bosses of his buckler, and provoke him to anger? Or, shall I take a course that hath nothing of that promise of the sweet reward of grace in Christ? Alas! this I must not do."

5. The revelation of Christ displays the faithfulness and truth of God: for so he is the truth, as he hath sealed the truth of all the words of God, and all the promises of the covenant. "Now," saith the enlightened soul, "is God so true to me, and shall I be so false to him? Is his veracity engaged in the promise, and his promise sealed with the blood of Christ? And shall I not take his word for my support? And take his word as a sufficient security for my protection, provision, and direction? And what need I take any sinful shift, by consulting with flesh and blood? Faithful is he that hath promised, saying, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee," Heb. xiii. 5.

6. The revelation of Christ displays the mercy, grace, and love of God: for, when Christ is seen, then the soul sees God in Christ, reconciling the world to himself; and he is seen to be well-pleased in Christ: when he appears, then the kindness and love of God towards men appears, Titus iii. 4. And now, this kindness and love of God, is a most powerful argument, against the consulting with flesh and blood. "What! saith the soul, under a discovery of this love, Shall I thus requite the Lord? Is this my kindness to my friend? Shall I fight against infinite love? And spurn against the bowels of divine pity and compassion, yearning towards me? Shall he consult my welfare, and I consult his dishonour? O! tell it not in Gath. Shall I harbour his enemies within me, when in loving-kindness he hath revealed his Son in me? Shall I wear arms of flesh and blood, to fight against him? And entertain such a devil of enmity against such a God of love?" These are the reasonings of faith: and this is the moral argumentative influence, that the revelation of Christ hath, for preventing carnal consultation.

(2.) The saving revelation of Christ hath a physical operative influence upon the prevention of this consultation with flesh and blood: for the revelation of Christ doth not only strenuously urge and press, but powerfully conquer and overcome the soul, so as to deliver it from consulting with flesh and blood: according to the measure of the saving revelation of Christ, accordingly is the soul transformed; "Beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, we are

changed into the same image," 2 Cor. iii. 18. And surely, the more of God's image any hath, the less consulting with God's enemies.

Now that this physical operative influence may the more evidently appear, consider a little, in some particulars, what it is that this internal revelation of Christ doth powerfully work and effectuate: for, the Spirit of power reveals Christ in the soul, and you will see how it cannot but natively work out all carnal consultation.

1. This revelation of Christ works faith; for they that know his name, cannot but put their trust in him; they that see the Son, they believe in him; "He manifested forth his glory, and the disciples believed in him." And this faith purifies the heart; and, consequently, according to the measure thereof, cleanseth from carnality; and now the man walks by faith, and so cannot walk by carnal reason, which is faith's greatest opposite and antipode. The revelation of Christ dashes unbelief quite out of countenance. Now, this unbelief is the main root of carnal consultation, the main cause of consulting with flesh and blood. This revelation of Christ then, strikes at the root of the disease: for the man's eyes are opened to see the King in his beauty; and so the power of this fatal plague is checked.—While unbelief prevails, flesh and blood prevails, saying, "Except I see the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I cannot believe;" but whenever Christ appears, unbelief is put to the blush; and faith cries out, "My Lord, and my God."

2. This revelation of Christ works love; they that see him, cannot but love him, though they see him not with the bodily eye; "Whom having not seen, we love." Yea, this revelation of Christ fills the soul with ardent love to Christ, and such as many waters cannot quench. And this love is strong as death; it is stronger than flesh and blood. The revelation of Christ, breaks the power of natural enmity; "The carnal mind is enmity against God." Paul goes to Damascus, full-freighted with prejudice and enmity against Christ; but getting a sight of Christ, a revelation of Christ in him, the arms of rebellion dropt out of his hand; and he is made to cry out, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Yea, it will raise the affections to such a pitch, as will make Christ preferable to all the glory of heaven and earth; "Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none in all the earth that I desire besides thee." A saving sight of Christ doth lay him open to our view, as

one in whom is all the fulness of the Godhead ; and out of whose fulness we may receive grace for grace : and this breaks the conference with flesh and blood ; for true love will admit no rival, no competitor.

3. This revelation of Christ works humility : when the soul sees him, then, with Job, the man abhors himself, and repents in dust and in ashes. A sight of Christ doth sink the soul into the lowest pit of self-anihilation, self-abhorrence, and self-detestation : and when once the power of self-confidence is broken, inasmuch as the man hath no confidence in the flesh, in his own self-sufficiency, self-righteousness, self-wisdom, self-will, then one of the strongest holds of flesh and blood is broken down. The day of the revelation of Christ, is the day wherein self is sentenced to death, that Christ may live and reign by faith in the soul ; like that, 2 Cor. i. 9, " We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God, which raiseth the dead : " intimating, that when, by whatever mean, self-confidence is broken, then the man is brought to confidence in the Lord. Now, when by the revelation of Christ, self is abased, then consulting with flesh and blood, is turned to confidence in the Lord alone.

4. This revelation of Christ works zeal ; true zeal for God and his glory, for Christ and his honour ; and true zeal against every false way. Many have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge : but this revelation of Christ, bringing in the saving knowledge of him, makes zeal regular and right, being according to knowledge : and this zeal will lead the soul to do and suffer for Christ, maugre all the arguments of flesh and blood to the contrary. Where there is no revelation of Christ, there is no true zeal for him : where faint revelation, faint zeal ; where clear and full revelation, great zeal : and where great zeal takes place, flesh and blood are burnt in the flame thereof ; for then the man takes joyfully the spoiling of his goods. None of these things move him ; neither counts he his life dear unto himself, so that he may finish his course with joy. Hence,

5. This revelation of Christ, works joy in the heart ; " In whom, believing, we rejoice, with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." The revelation of Christ brings gladness into the soul ; " Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord." O but a sight of Christ is a gladdening joyful sight ; " Abraham rejoiced to see my day afar off, and he saw it, and was glad. I will see you

again, saith Christ, John xvi. 22. and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." Now, this joy of the Lord is their strength, Neh. vii. 10. And surely the more strong in the Lord that they are, the less confidence in flesh and blood will take place.—A sight of Christ, is a heart-strengthening, grace-strengthening thing; and the stronger that the new man is, the weaker is the old man. The Dagon of flesh and blood falls before the Ark of God.

6. This revelation of Christ, creates contempt of the world, and of all that is in the world: "The lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life:" and this prevents all consultation with flesh and blood. The internal revelation of Christ, will eclipse and darken the beauty and glory of the world, and all things therein. Love of the world makes men to consult with flesh and blood; and Demas-like to forsake Christ, even after a considerable time's profession of him openly: but now, when Christ appeareth, the glory of the world disappears; and the man is content to forsake all, and follow the Lamb: counting all but loss and dung for him: yea, selling his all to buy the pearl. The internal revelation of Christ doth effectually loose the heart from all lusts and idols: see Isaiah xlix. 29, and xlii. 1, compared.—It makes the man cry out, with Ephraim, "What have I any more to do with idols?" As the stars vanish upon the appearance of the sun, so doth the world, and the lusts thereof, upon the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, and our beholding thereof; and, as it disengages from idols, so it effectually engages the heart to himself; yea, the man is content to engage ten thousand hearts, if he had them, to the Lord.—And thus he is delivered from consulting with flesh and blood.

7. In a word, The revelation of Christ doth effectually dispel the massy clouds of spiritual darkness and ignorance, that sit hard and heavy upon the eyes of our understanding, whereby a man is buried under the mud of flesh and blood, and prejudices against Christ are fomented. It is said of the Jews, "If they had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory:" Even so, if we knew Christ, we would not consult with his enemies, or confer with flesh and blood. When Christ is revealed, then the man is in the light, and sees about him: the revelation of Christ, discovers the subtilty of Satan, the deceitfulness of the heart, and the sophistry of carnal reason; and dashes down Satan's strong holds; "For Christ is manifested, to destroy the works of the devil."—Thus you

see what influence, both moral and physical, both argumentative and operative, this revelation of Christ hath, for preventing this sin of conferring with flesh and blood ; and how necessary a saving sight of Christ is, for attaining this end.

2dly, The second mean was, his speedy rejecting the counsel of flesh and blood ; “Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.” And this IMMEDIATELY seems to import these four things.

1. That before this time, the set and disposition of his heart was carnal : Why, “That which is born of flesh is flesh.” While he was in a state of unregeneracy, he was wholly under the conduct of flesh and blood : even when he was, touching the righteousness of the law, blameless : and profiting in the Jews religion above many of his equals, in his own nation : yet, for all that time, he now sees that he was but a proud Pharisee ; yea, he put himself among the number of these that were foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, hateful, and hating one another, Titus iii. 3. When converting grace took hold of him, then he understood what a fool he had been, before conversion ; and how much he had been under the conduct of carnal sense and reason : but now, when Christ was revealed in him, immediately he conferred not with flesh and blood, as he had always done before.

2. It imports, that, upon the revelation of Christ, a change was instantly wrought, from a carnal to a spiritual disposition ; beholding the glory of the Lord, he was changed immediately.—No sooner doth the sun shine upon a man, than light and heat is conveyed with the beams thereof : and thus, no sooner is Christ savingly revealed, than the soul is enlightened, warmed, transformed, and spiritualized : the new light and saving sight brings in a new quality and disposition, at the same time. In order of nature, the revelation of Christ is first ; but in order of time, no sooner is the revelation given, but the spiritual disposition is wrought : for, the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, doth enter into the man, and brings grace with him.

3. It imports, that this spiritual disposition was instantly put in exercise ; “Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.” He got not a new disposition to lie dormant, like a sleeping habit, without any vigour and activity : but whenever he got grace implanted, he stirred up the same to an holy exercise. True holiness is not only passive, in the principle and habit, but active ; and that both internally, in the exercise of grace ; and externally, in the

performance of duty. The apostle was in haste, like David ; in that holy haste, mentioned, Psalm cxix. 60. "I made haste, and delayed not, to keep thy commandments : " Thus did the apostle, upon his first illumination ; "Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood."

4. It imports, that now he was in the straight way of duty ; whereas formerly he was in a crooked way. For the word here in the original, rendered IMMEDIATELY, comes from another that signifies STRAIGHT ; and is so rendered, Mat. iii. 3. "Make his paths straight." And the adverb of the same nature, is rendered STRAIGHT-WAY, Matt. iii. 16. "He went up straight-way out of the water : and now, compare the noun, which signifies Straight, and the adverb, which signifies Immediately, or Straightway ; comparing them, I say, together, we may turn the adverb into the sense of the noun, and see this lesson in it, namely, that to do what is right straight-way, is to take the straight way of doing it ; whereas, to delay what is right, and what ought to be done instantly, and not to do it straight-way, is so far a going out of the straight way. He that delays to do good, and to do what the Lord calls him to do, and doth it not straight-way, he is not walking in the straight way of duty : but Paul delayed not at this rate ; "Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood ;" he instantly and speedily rejected the counsel of flesh and blood. They that would not consult with flesh and blood, had need to take care that they do not stand to parley with the temptation ; for, when a man enters upon speaking-terms with carnal reason, and doth not immediately reject its solicitations, he is in danger to be drawn aside therewith. Evil parlied with the temptation ; and so was overcome ; so did Samson, and was conquered ; so did David, and he was vanquished. Peter's fall also discovered the danger of parlying with the temptation ; he entered upon the consultation with flesh and blood, when he expressed his confidence in himself, saying, "Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I : " next he entered into the judgment-hall ; and upon his being first attacked, flesh and blood suggested fears of death ; from one step he goes on to another, in conferring with flesh and blood : and then he is overcome so far, as to sway with the time, in cursing and swearing, and denying his Master. The suggestions of carnal reason, of flesh and blood, are to be rejected at their first appearance : the cockatrice must be crushed in the shell ; and the first motions of flesh and blood must be abhorred, otherwise danger is at

hand ; thus did Paul here ; “ Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.” Thus much for the import of this, IMMEDIATELY.

Now, I would offer some corollaries from the doctrine, in this complex view, That the revelation of Christ is the best preservative, against consulting with flesh and blood Hence see,

1. Whence it is, that a world of mankind are living wholly under the conduct of flesh and blood, and corrupt carnal reason ; even because they are strangers to Christ ; Christ was never revealed in them. Ignorance of Christ is at the root of all that profanity and ungodliness, that bears such a sway in the world ; why doth the drunkard continue in his drunkenness, the whoremonger in his whoredom, the hypocrite in his hypocrisy, and every wicked man in his wickedness ? And what is the reason of all the laxness, looseness, and lasciviousness of our day ? Why, it is ignorance of Christ ; Christ, in his person, and offices, hath never been revealed in them ; they are destroyed for lack of knowledge ; the god of this world hath blinded their eyes. As Christ said to the Sadducees, “ Ye err, not knowing the Scriptures ;” so say I of such, They err in principle and practice, not knowing Christ, nor the glory of God in him ; for, if they beheld his glory, they would be changed.

2. See whence it is that people, who enjoy a clear gospel-revelation, may yet be under the conduct of flesh and blood ; Why, Christ is revealed to them, but not IN them ; while people have only the external objective revelation of Christ to them, without the internal subjective revelation of Christ in them, all their knowledge and common illumination, hath not so much power and virtue, as to deliver them from their carnal bias ; the gospel comes to them in word only, not in power, and in the Holy Ghost. Hence many live under the gospel, and have attained a measure of the knowledge of Christ ; and perhaps have, through the knowledge of Christ escaped many pollutions of the world’s lusts ; and yet are never delivered from the power and dominion of this evil, of consulting with flesh and blood ; carnal ease, carnal reason, carnal interest, carnal pleasure reigns over them, and leads all the faculties of their soul into subjection : Why, Christ, who is revealed to them by the word, was never revealed in them by the Spirit : they rest satisfied without the saving knowledge of Christ.

3. See whence it is, that so many of the truly godly, do so much consult with flesh and blood, at this day ; and give so much way to carnal reason, in the matters of God : it flows from this, even

on the one hand, partial ignorance of Christ, or the small measure of the knowledge of him : though Christ be revealed in them, yet it is but very darkly ; and perhaps the impression that the first revelation of Christ made upon them much obliterated by their defection, in leaving their first love, and little growth in grace, and in the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ : whereas growth therein, and clearer views of his glory, would advance their mortification of flesh and blood. It flows also from this, on the other hand, their not taking Paul's course, in rejecting speedily the suggestions of flesh and blood : upon the back of the manifestation of Christ, immediately he rejects the conference with them. Whereas, if this course be not followed, though a man should get a saving manifestation of Christ, if upon the back of it, he stands parlying with the tempter, and dallying with the temptation, he is in danger, as in the case of Peter, who instantly after a manifestation, ran into the camp of flesh and blood ; yea, the camp of Satan, Matth. xvi. 17, compared with verse 22, 23. Though manifestations are of a transforming nature ; yet, if a child of God give up his watch, and turn secure, after Christ is revealed to him and in him, flesh and blood may trip up his heels very quickly.

4. Hence see what is God's method of sanctifying an elect soul, and carrying on the work of sanctification in the believing soul : his method is first to reveal Christ, and so, by discovering his glory, to change and transform the soul ; having convinced the man of his sin and misery, he then enlightens his mind in the knowledge of Christ : and this saving illumination carries the will and affections towards the Lord ; and the man, being renewed after the image of God, is enabled, by the means of more and more illumination, in the knowledge of Christ, to die unto sin, to mortify the deeds of the body, and to live unto God : consulting with him, and not with flesh and blood.—Many, at this day, discover their ignorance of God's method of converting souls, and sanctifying of sinners, by magnifying the maxims of morality ; and supposing as if the mere preaching of moral duty was enough to make men holy : but to reveal Christ for that end, and harp upon this theme, they cannot think this is adapted for such a purpose. But my text and doctrine shews that it is the revelation of Christ that works true sanctification : "He revealed his Son in me : " and then, "Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." The knowledge of the law will not do it ; the knowledge of all moral systems will not do it ; but the internal knowledge of Christ will effectuate it.

5. Hence see the excellency and necessity of the knowledge of Christ, and of the gospel : when once Paul came to this knowledge he counted all but loss and dung in comparison of the excellency of it. And how necessary it is, is evident in this, that there is no sanctification without it ; no freedom from carnal courses and consultations without it. The gospel is the revelation of Christ and his righteousness ; and, as such, it is the power of God to salvation ; and the power of God to sanctification, Rom. i. 16, 17. It is the organical power of God unto salvation from sin ; because therein is revealed the righteousness of God, even Christ, who is the Lord our righteousness, from faith to faith. No wonder that flesh and blood, or men that are in the flesh, think the gospel needless, and cannot endure that Christ should be the minister's habitual theme : for the revelation of Christ is the greatest enemy, and the strongest battering ram to bring down the walls of it ; "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strongholds ; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ," 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. Flesh and blood opposes the gospel and revelation of Christ, because when Christ is once revealed, immediately the man conferreth not with flesh and blood.

6. Hence see how ignorantly men suspect the gospel of God's grace, as a nurse of licentiousness, and an enemy to the holiness required in the law ; for the quite contrary is the truth. That ignorance of Christ and his gospel is the root of all carnality : and the knowledge of Christ and the gospel, in a saving way, is the root upon which true holiness and piety doth grow. The preaching of Christ was Paul's work, as you see in the bosom of this text, "he revealed his Son in me, that I might preach him among the Gentiles ;" he was revealed unto me, that I might reveal him unto others ; and might be the instrument of their conversion and sanctification thereby ; as I myself was sanctified by this mean. To preach duty without Christ is the way to make moralists : to preach duty before Christ, and more than Christ, or in order to Christ, and to make men Christians, is the way to make men legalists ; and to make the world think they can be religious without Christ, and that a good moral life will bring them to heaven ; but true gospel-preaching lies in preaching Christ, in order to duty ; it is to preach Christ in order to holiness, and so to preach duty in preaching Christ : for,

till Christ be revealed in us there is no true holiness, no freedom from consulting with flesh and blood.

7. Hence see what it is that contributes to make a corrupt ministry in a church : why, Christ is not revealed in all that profess to preach him among the Gentiles ; and therefore they never stand to consult with flesh and blood. What is it that qualifies a man for the ministerial work ? Here is the best qualification, when Christ is revealed in him for this end, that he may preach him among the Gentiles. Whom God sends he thus qualifies, according to the measure of the gift of Christ. But many run without being sent : and, as the Athenians worshipped an unknown God, so they preach an unknown Christ ; which is very melancholy work, and can have little success : yea, the want of the saving knowledge of Christ in such lays a foundation for doctrinal error and practical error both, while they want the main preservative against the consulting with flesh and blood. Some are wholly corrupt, because wholly destitute of the saving knowledge of Christ ; and so the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of Christ's house cannot be long safe and free from corruption among their hands : especially if they, by reason of their gifts, parts, and authority in the church, bear a considerable sway therein. Others are tainted with corruption, though truly gracious, and carried down with the stream of carnal consultation, while any saving knowledge of Christ that they have is so small, that flesh and blood hath the ascendant ; or, if their knowledge of Christ be great in one respect, yet it is defective in other respects. So Peter, for example, was greatly enlightened in the knowledge of Christ, as the Son of the living God : a most glorious fundamental article of faith, Matth. xvi. 16 ; but yet his knowledge of Christ was defective, and exceeding dark concerning Christ as a sacrifice, a ransom ; and hence he takes upon him, forsooth, to reprove Christ, when he spoke of his suffering at Jerusalem, verse 22, saying, " Far be it from thee, Lord ; this shall not be done unto thee ;" for which Christ calls him a devil, saying, " Get thee behind me, Satan ; for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." Though he was extraordinarily enlightened in the knowledge of Christ in one respect, yet he was extremely ignorant of Christ in another respect ; and hence in that matter savoured of flesh and blood, and consulted with carnal ease and carnal reason, under colour of zeal for his Master's safety and honour. Hence we will find such corruptions creeping into the church of

Christ, both among good and bad; so that we may see personal credit acting under the colour of zeal for God. Men will pretend zeal for God's honour, the credit of the ministry, the honour of ordinances; and vent themselves hotly and tenaciously under this view, while yet it is personal credit, reputation, and applause that is acting under that covert, and hiding under that mask.—Thus the disciples sought to be avenged on the place that would not receive Christ by fire from heaven; why, it seemed to be zeal for their Master's honour that swayed them, but personal credit was their motive; and they were not under the conduct of God's Spirit, but of their own flesh and blood: therefore, saith Christ, "Ye know not what Spirit ye are of," Luke ix. 54. See also verse 59.

8. Hence see what is the best antidote against corruption, both in ministers and people; and the best antidote against the power of corruption in any particular person: it is even a transforming revelation of Christ. A day of power is necessary for this end, making a display of God's power and glory in the sanctuary.—When God builds up Zion, he will appear in his glory: and there is no hopes of getting evil amended till the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of Christ, be poured out. And, therefore, we should be at no rest; yea, should give God no rest till he send the Spirit, Isaiah lxii. 6, 7. O cry with the psalmist, saying, "O send forth thy light and thy truth;" and with Moses, "I beseech thee shew me thy glory;" that so, beholding the glory of the Lord, we may be changed into the same image; and that each of us, for our own part, may have it to say with Paul here, "It pleased God to reveal his Son in me; and immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood."

S E R M O N X X I I I.

SOME SIGNS OF A SAD EVENING-TIME WITH THE CHURCH OF GOD.

ZECH. xiv. 7 —"But it shall come to pass, that at evening-time it shall be light."

As the whole scriptures testify of Christ, so this text testifies concerning the tenor of his dispensations towards his church and people,

both in his providence and grace.—There are two *but*s in the verse where our text lies ; the one points at the wise disposure, the other at the joyful issue of God's procedure towards his church and people.

In the words themselves we observed, 1. The saddest crosses and calamities that befall the church and people of God in this world, represented under the metaphor of an evening-time. 2. The sweetest comforts and encouragements that take place in their lot, represented under the metaphor of light. 3. The season, or remarkable time, when their hope is giving up the ghost. 4. You have the infallible certainty of this happy issue. *It shall come to pass, that at evening-time it shall be light.*

These things we have formerly opened up ;¹ our present purpose is to evince, that the present time we live in is an evening-time. We would have you attentively consider the signs of the time ; and surely, if you do so, it will appear too evident, that it is an evening-time, a dark time, an evil time with the church of God. And, to assist you herein, we would represent some of the Signs of an evening-time in the church. And seeing the Spirit of God expresses the sad case of a people by an evening-time, he hereby allows us to allude to the phrase in representing the same. The signs that we mention then shall be gathered from that illusion, so as they may be the better fixed upon your memories, when they are expressed by such things as are obvious to everybody, who can distinguish between evening and morning.

Now, of these Signs there are two sorts. 1. Some that may be called prognosticating signs, shewing that a dark evening is approaching. 2. Some that may be called promulgating signs, shewing that the present time is an evening-time.

1st, There are prognosticating signs, that not only shew forth much darkness present, but that a darker evening-time is hastening on ; such as these following.

1. It is a sign that bodes an evening-time when the shadows

(1.) These and other topics of discourse, were handled by our Author, in several excellent Sermons, at sacramental occasions, in the year 1723. The Publishers of the present edition (1819) would have been very happy to have been able to have favoured the public with the whole of these Sermons on this text ; and used every means in their power, with the relations of the Author to effect their design ; but they are very sorry their endeavours were unsuccessful.—This one being formerly published in the folio edition, as apposite to the then present times, it was judged proper still to continue it, as now still suitable.

are waxing long. While the sun is high, the shadows are short; but the lower the sun is, the longer the shadows are.—So here, my friends, it is a sign of an evening-time coming upon the church, when empty shadows are growing long, and of more account than substantial religion. When a man's shadow is two or three times longer than himself, it says the sun is low, and the night is nigh. It is not so in a spiritual sense, when professors have much more of the form of godliness than of the power thereof: more of the shadow of religion than the substance of it? Some, indeed, have not so much as the form or shadow of religion either in their families or closets; which saith that it is quite dark with them, and that they are destitute of the light of the knowledge of Christ: for, where there is no light there is no shadow at all: all is black darkness there: or, they have a shadow of devotion, and no more, or little more; which saith that the light they have is a declining light, and that a dark evening is coming on. When the church is in a thriving case, and the sun high in her firmament, the shadows of empty forms, superstitious ceremonies, and human inventions are cut short; yea, and cut off, as you know they were solemnly renounced and abjured among us, in our covenanting days: but when the shadows are turning long again, many standing up for them, and few appearing against them, but rather standing for nothing but mere shadows in the church of God, themselves have a name to live, but are dead; when this, I say, doth universally obtain, it bespeaks an evening-time.

2. It is a sign that bodes an evening-time, when labourers are fast returning from their labour. If you see those who labour in the field returning home from their work, you conclude that the evening-time is at hand. So, when in the church of God, many faithful labourers in God's vineyard, are fast taken home to heaven, from their labour on earth, is a sign that evening-time is approaching. As the removal of the godly in general is a prognosticating sign of an evening of judgment coming, they being taken away from the evil to come; so the removal of eminent labourers in God's vineyard in particular, bodes an evening-time. When Lots are taken out of Sodom, it presages a shower of wrath. Methusehah was taken away the year before the flood; Ambrose was removed before the ruin of Italy; Luther before the wars of Germany; and many eminent labourers hath the Lord, of late, removed in this land, and from this country-side; we may only thence conclude,

that when Noahs are taken into their arks, it betokens a deluge, and that God gathers his harvest before the winter storm, and calls home labourers before the dark night comes on.

3. It is a sign that bodes an evening-time, when men begin generally to be heavy and sleepy-headed : for, as they that sleep, sleep in the night, saith the apostle : so, when men begin to fall a-napping, it shews that the night is coming on.—Thus when universal security, and spiritual sleep and slothfulness begin to sieze a church, it betokens a night of judgment approaching. We find all the virgins, both wise and foolish, to slumber and sleep before the midnight cry was made. When people are saying “Peace, peace ; then sudden destruction cometh.” There are many symptoms of sleep and security about us ; and we are not like to be awakened till the midnight cry of the Lord’s coming, in a way of judgment : neither will that cry awaken a secure generation, unless the Lord come powerfully with it.

4. It is a sign of an evening-time a coming, when the dew beings to fall. We find the Lord speaking to his sleeping church in these terms, Song v. 2, “Open to me, for my head is filled with the dew, and my locks with the drops of the night :” Intimating, what he suffered for her, even the dew and drops of the divine wrath and vengeance. Which, by the bye, is one of the grand motives why we ought to open our hearts to him, who exposed himself to the wrath of God for us. But now, I say, when the dew begins to fall, it betokens an evening-time.—So, when the dew and drops of God’s judgments begin to fall upon a church, it bodes a darker evening-time approaching ; especially if these lesser drops of judgment have not the proper effect upon them, to awaken and quicken, but they rather remain incorrigible : for, as a physician, when lesser potions will not work, prescribes a stronger ; so, small judgments contemned, are harbingers to usher in greater : “If by these ye will not be reformed, saith the Lord ; then will I punish you seven times more for your iniquities.” How many drops of the night have been falling, for sometime bygone, upon us, is evident to all that have their eyes open ; yea, to common observers : not only the death of many gracious men, but also the great departure of the divine glory ; the wide rent and division of the church ; besides many temporal judgments, intestine flames, insurrections, sword, poverty, slavery : and more especially spiritual judgments ; blindness of mind, hardness of heart, barrenness under the gospel, and innumerable drops

of dew that have fallen ; do not these prognosticate an evening-time ?

5. It is a sign of an evening time approaching, when the air (that was warm with the sun-beams through the day) becomes exceeding cold : when the sun being away, the air grows cold, it says the dark night is coming on.—Even so, when iniquity abounds, the love of many waxeth cold, Matth. xxiv. 12. This coldness of Christian love to God and men, is a certain forerunner of a darker evening-time of calamity. Ephesus fell from her first love, and the candlestick was taken out of its place, Rev. ii. 4, 5. When Laodicea became lukewarm, neither cold nor hot, then God spued her out of his mouth ; that is, rejected her with abhorrence. Perhaps there was never a colder air than that which the present generation breathes in ; love to God and his people, zeal for God and his glory, that sometime ago warmed the breasts of Christians, is turned to such a cool in the evening, that the coldness of the air prognosticates a storm.

6. It is a sign of an evening-time approaching when the clouds and sky begin to grow ruddy and bloody, as it were tintured with scarlet ; whatever fair days it may signify afterward, yet it is a sign of an evening, in the first place, to be at hand.—So, when dry clouds, by reflection of the sun beams, cast a dash and make a fair appearance, and no more : I mean, when hypocrisy is universal, and professors are nothing but clouds without water, Jude, ver. 12. having a glittering, splendid outside, but empty and destitute of the Spirit ; and when, at the same time, the great ones of the land, whether in church or state, that fly above others, like the clouds, instead of being useful for watering those that are below them, are turned to nothing but red sky, bright empty nothings, having no moisture in them, no grace : and indeed, when the great ones of a land are given up of God, and become generally graceless, and destitute of religion, it is a symptom of an evening-time of wrath. When king Saul is rejected of God, and runs to the devil, consulting with the witch of Endor ; then he and Israel falls upon the mountain of Gilboa. When Zadekiah is given up, with his nobles, to rebel against the king of Babylon, and break covenant ; then he and his people are carried away captive to Babylon. When David was so far left destitute of the Spirit of God, that his heart was lifted up in pride to number the people ; then a severe stroke from God lights upon Israel. Alas ! when great men, nobility and gentry, are left of God, and turned sensual, not having the Spirit,

what are they but so many ruddy glaring clouds, from whom God is withdrawn wholly : and so many bloody signs of a dark night coming on ?

7. Another sign of an evening-time is, when hills and mountains begin to interpose between the sun and us : when they begin to hide the body of the sun from us, then night comes on.—Even so, it is a symptom of an evening-time hastening on a church, when mountains of sin and guilt, great mountains separate between God and us, between Christ, the Sun of righteousness, and his church. Who can study the circumstances of our day, and the abounding iniquities and profanities of all sorts, and among all ranks, without seeing good cause to justify the Lord's withdrawing his presence, and taking with the charge, Isa. lix. 20, "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God; and your sins have hid his face from you?" The hills are come between the sun and us, and night is approaching.

8. Another sign of an evening-time is, when the light is gradually declining and departing.—So it is a symptom of an evening-time coming on a church, when there is a gradual departure of God's glory. We read of the gradual removes of the glory of the Lord from the cherub to the threshold of the house, and there it stood; from thence to the midst of the city; and from thence to the mountain, Ezek. x. 4, 18, xi. 23. Shewing us, by how many steps and paces the Lord departs from a sinful people, as loth to go away : and waiting to see if any will intercede with him to return. The gradual departure of God's glory is a sign of a gradual approach of a sad evening-time.

9. Another sign of an evening-time approaching is, when singing birds are silent, and give over their melodious notes.—Now, you know, a lightsome time of the church is represented by a time of singing of birds, Song ii. 12. So we say, it is a sign of a dark evening-time at hand, when the singing birds begin to cease : I mean, when the sweet singers of Israel have lost their melody, and are out of court : being so far discouraged, that they are no more useful in the courts of Zion. When God discouraged old Eli, and would not speak to him but to young Samuel : then a night of wrath was near to Eli's family, to Hophni and Phinehas ; yea, to the church of God : for presently the ark of God was taken, and left in the hands of the Philistines. When Solomon was discouraged, then a multitude of enemies brake in upon him and his people.

When old professors are discouraged, singing birds silenced, and eminent servants, who have been useful through the day, are dismissed, as if there were no more use for them, it says that evening-time is coming on. When God is saying, in his providence, to his old friends and favourites, that he hath no more to do with them in this world, their singing time on earth being over: when useful instruments are become unsavoury salt, having lost their usefulness, their savour, and their melody, it is a symptom that night is coming on, that the day-birds are drooping.

10. It is a sign that the evening-time is coming, when, as the day-birds are either flying to their nests, or drooping and putting their bills under their wings, so the night birds are appearing and flying abroad; when the morning birds are disappearing, and the evening birds, such as the bat and the owl, that cannot endure the light of day, are discovering themselves, it is a sign that night is approaching.—So, sirs, it is a sad symptom of a very dark night coming on a church, when not only, on the one hand, the day-birds, that sing sweetly in publishing the joyful sound, are either flying away to their heavenly nest; or, if any of them are left, as I hope many are, yet they are generally under some silencing kind of dark cloud or vail, that mars their melody and usefulness: but also, on the other hand, when the night birds, such as heretics and erroneous teachers, are flying about, and discovering themselves. If it were a clear day in the church, such evening birds, that delight in the darkness of error, would not peep out of their holes; but their appearing prognosticates a dark evening-time; for a deluge of errors brings on a deluge of wrath, 2 Thes. ii. 10, 11, 12; 2 Pet. ii. 1, 2. Surely no error is more damnable and pernicious, than that of denying the Lord that bought them; and casting a cloud upon the Supreme Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ; this black cloud of Arianism, is one of the blackest that ever covered the gospel church; and yet, besides this, many other clouds of error have darkened our sky. However, errors and heresies must needs be, saith the Spirit of God, that those that are approved may be made manifest: and they must be also, that approved truth may shine forth the more brightly, when it breaks out from beneath the dark cloud of error.

11. It is a sign of an evening-time at hand, when men are generally tired with the toil, and wearied with the work of the day. So, it is a sign of an evening upon the church, when the generality therein are saying of the service of God, and work of the day,

“What a weariness is it?” When people are weary of Christ and his yoke, weary of the true religion, &c., it shews that God is weary of them; that God and they are not to keep company long together; or that some heavier yoke is to be laid upon their neck, to make them long for, and take the better with his light and easy yoke.—This weariness of God’s service is evident from the general atheism and infidelity of the day; men saying to the Almighty, “Depart from us; we desire not the knowledge of thy ways—What is the Almighty that we should serve him?” Job. xxi. 14-15.—It is evident from the stop that is put to reformation, which proves but an abortive child, it sticks in the birth, or rather goes backward, and draws in its hand; which says that the child of wrath is to be brought forth before the child of mercy; I allude to that history, Gen. xxxviii. 27.—It is evident from this, that there is none to stand in the gap, at which wrath enters in, Ezek. xxii. 30, 31. When men are generally weary of prayer, the gap is open, and judgments ready to come in. And sometimes people are so weary of God, and so ripe for a stroke, that though they were a praying and wrestling remnant busy in their behalf, it would not avail. Sin may be come to such a height, and the rectitude of God’s equity and justice may be so much concerned to punish it, in a church or nation, that the most powerful intercession of men cannot prevail, Jer. xiv. 1. There is a time when prayers and pleadings will not profit a people; yea, when there is no physic operative, Ezek. xxiv. 13, 14.

12. It is a sign of an evening-time approaching when the light becomes uneasy, and windows become useless for letting in the light; and when men close the window-shutters to exclude any light that is shining: this, you know, is ordinary, when the night is coming on.—Even so, sirs, it is a sad sign of an approaching dark night in the church of God when the light of the gospel becomes uneasy to men, when they prefer the darkness of ignorance to the light of knowledge, and the darkness of error to the light of truth; the darkness of legal knowledge to the light of gospel mysteries, John iii. 19. Gospel ordinances are compared to windows for letting in the light, Song ii. 9. Now, when these become useless for this end, and the gospel becomes under a general contempt, it is a sad symptom of night coming on, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 15, 19. Jerusalem had a signal day of the gospel; but she fell a stoning the prophets, and did not know the time of her merciful visitation; therefore wrath came upon them to the uttermost; and, “Behold,

her house is left unto her desolate." We have our gospel-day; and the time has been when the gospel was highly prized and valued: but possibly thirty or forty years' possession of the gospel has given many people a fill of it, so as they loathe the heavenly manna; it is become light food, and unsavoury to the most part; any thing in the world tastes better in their mouth than the waters of the sanctuary. "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not;" yea, the darkness shuts out the light, or, at the same time, "Holds the truth in unrighteousness," Rom. i. 18.

2dly, There are promulgating signs, shewing that the present time is an evening-time. Many of these things that I have mentioned not only declare that it is an evening-time, but they are also prognostications of a darker evening approaching. And, as I have not gone out of my Bible to prophesy of what is to come; so neither need I go far off to find signs and evidences that the time we live in is, indeed, an evening-time, in many respects: and, while I offer these marks of an evening-time, you may, and ought to try yourself whether it be a dark night with you, as well as with the church of God in general, that so you may the more deeply regret the darkness of your condition, and more vigorously apply to Christ, the fountain of light, that at evening-time he would make light to shine.—The signs of an evening-time at present are many: we shall mention these following, still alluding to the metaphor that the spirit of God makes use of.

1. It is a sad sign of a present evening-time when the stars only appear, and the sun disappears; when nothing but stars appear in the firmament. Now, ministers of the gospel are compared to stars, that borrow their light from the sun; they are called stars in his right hand; but Christ himself is the Sun of Righteousness.—Now, is it not an evidence that it is evening-time when the light of the sun, the glory of Christ, cannot be seen, and only the star-light appears? And when there is no more but an outward objective light of a gospel-ministry, without an internal subjective light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ? And when people are gazing only upon the stars; looking merely to instruments, and taken up with them, without looking to Christ himself?

2. It is a sad sign of an evening-time, when that which is called the falling of stars is discernable.—And is it not an evening-

time with the church, when the stars are seen to fall as it were, from heaven to earth ; when those who were eminent ministers and professors are making apostacy from the faith ; and when they are observed to make shipwreck of the faith and a good conscience : when the dragon is pulling down the stars with his tail, and sons of the morning falling to the ground ? Surely a time of apostacy and defection is so.

3. It is a sign of an evening-time, when wild fire casts a dash, and false lights are followed, fancied, and confided to.—And is it not a dark evening-time, in a spiritual sense, when the light of wild nature, the light of human wisdom and carnal reason are taking the place of spiritual, scriptural, and gospel-light : and when men are following blind guides, false lights, that are ready to lead them into the ditch ; and especially when men are confiding in their own light ? There is not a greater sign of men's being in the dark of night of a natural state, without saving light, than when they are confident of their own knowledge, and see not their own blindness and darkness, John iii. 39, 40, 41. To see this purpose, see 1 Cor. iii. 18 ; viii. 2.

4. It is a sign that it is an evening-time, when artificial light comes to be in most request ; such as that of candles, torches, and lamps, instead of day-light, and sun-light.—Even so, it is an evening-time in the church, when, instead of simplicity of the gospel, and the plain preaching of the word of God, preference is given to the wisdom of words and of human literature. When, on the one hand, candidates for the ministry, and many who are actually invested with the ministerial function, though tintured with loose and legal principles, set up for a new modish way of preaching, with flourishing harangues, without studying to preach Christ, and the great substantial truths of the gospel ! but rather empty speculation, and lifeless morality : and, on the other hand, when a world of people, that come under the name of wits, and people of a fine taste, are pleased with no sermons, but such as are artificially decked with the flowers of the gaudy rhetoric and tickling oratory ; and when this comes to be universally preferred to plain, powerful, and spiritual preaching, quite cross to the Apostle Paul's way, notwithstanding of his great attainments in human literature and acquired abilities, 1 Cor. ii. 1, 2, 4. Now, when these artifiical lights are set up and esteemed, as the only light in request, it speaks a dark state of the church ; and especially the gross darkness they are in, that please themselves with candles of that sort, instead of the true light, John i. 9.

5. It is a sign of an evening-time, when darkness obstructs the light, hinders discerning, and occasions many mistakes, Isaiah v. 20.—Thus it shews an evening-time in the church in general, when gross darkness of ignorance covers them, and when the face of the covering remains, insomuch that there is no discerning between good and evil, truth and error; and when the generality are running into mistakes. How easily are men cheated in the dark, having bad wares put into their hands? They vent falsities, instead of truths; formalities, instead of holiness; and put off any thing to men in the dark: and the deceitfulness of sin rules over men, because they are in a state of darkness, and destitute of spiritual discerning, insomuch that they cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God, 2 Cor. ii. 14.

6. It is a sign of an evening-time, when day-work is laid aside, and night-work is at hand.—Even so, is it not at an evening-time with people when the works of darkness are generally practised? What these works of darkness are, you may gather from Rom. xiii. 12, 13. See Job xxiv. 17. Surely when professors turn profane, and works of darkness are generally practised, then it is an evening-time. A sinning time is always a dark time: profanity is the daughter of obscurity. Darkness and ignorance of God in Christ, is the root of all wickedness and ungodliness.

7. It is a sign of an evening-time, when men are generally wandering out of the way; for people wander in the dark.—Even so, is it not an evening-time in the Church, and with the generality, when not only works of darkness are practised, by men's doing what is evil; but also duties of piety are omitted and neglected, by men's wandering out of the good way; and no wonder that men break God's commands by commission, when they wander from him by omission. But what makes wandering, but darkness and want of understanding, which is a deadly sin? Prov. xxi. 16.

8. It is a sign of an evening-time, when stumbling becomes universal; for, as people wander in the dark so they stumble in the dark.—Alas! what a sad evidence of an evening-time, in a spiritual sense, when men are stumbling on every stone in their way, and running over dangerous precipices unawares; and especially when Christ himself is become a stumbling stone, Rom. ix. 32, 33. O! they are in dreadful darkness that are stumbling on the Rock of ages, on which they should be building! Why, say you, who are they that stumble upon Christ instead of building on him? Why, even

they that, like the Jews, have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, and not submitting themselves to the righteousness of God, Rom. x. 2, 3. Where you see the darkness of ignorance they were compassed with, was the cause of their stumbling. They were not ignorant of God's law; nay, they were zealous for that: but they were ignorant of God's righteousness, revealed in the gospel, that is, of Christ as the end of the law for righteousness: and hence they stumbled in the dark. Many are much enlightened in the knowledge of the law, and heated also with a zeal, for the law of God; and yet are in the dark night of gross ignorance of Christ and God's righteousness: and so they stumble in the dark, and fall into perdition.

9. It is a sad sign of an evening-time, when all is hushed in silence, and the house kept in profound peace: for, in the day time there is still some noise about the house; but in the night time there is nothing, for ordinary, but undisturbed peace and tranquillity.—Even so, it is a sign that it is the dark and dead hour of the night with people, when their hearts are resting in the beds of carnal ease and peace: it says, that the devil is lulling them asleep in the bed of security; "When the strong man armed keeps his palace, his goods are in peace," Luke xi. 21. Some are ready to think, God be thanked I was never disturbed by the devil: Yea, but man, why doth he not disturb you? The reason is, because he is sure enough of you: but if you were resisting him, he would give you little peace; he would set all the powers of hell on your top. But when all is hushed into a hellish peace, it is a black evening-time: thus many say, "We shall have peace though we add drunkenness to thirst."

10. It is a plain sign of an evening-time; yea, that it is midnight with them, when all their doors are bared and bolted, and when no knocks are heard or answered, so as to procure an opening of the door: this is the case that frequently occurs in the night time. And now, is it not a sad evidence, that it is an evening-time; yea, a midnight time with a multitude in the visible church, when the doors of their hearts are fast shut against Christ; and though he stand at the door and knock, Rev. iii. 20, yet they do not hear, answer, and open to him? When sinners knock at his door, he is still ready to open, according to his word, "To him that knocketh it shall be opened;" but when he knocks at the sinner's door, he

may knock a thousand times, and never be heard or answered. Many a knock hath he given, and still is giving, at the door of this generation.—He knocks by his word of command, Heb. iii. 7, 8. Eph. v. 14. 1. John iii. 23, by his word of threatening, John viii. 24. Luke xiii. 3. Mark xvi. 16, by his word of promise and kindly invitation, Mat. xi. 28. John vi. 35. viii. 38.; by his word of expostulation, reasoning the matter, Ezek. xxx. 11.; by his word of complaint, John v. 4.; and by his word of counsel, Rev. iii. 13.—Again, he knocks by his Spirit, by conscience, by afflictions, by common mercies, by judgments, by the good examples and counsels of others, and foretastes of love.

11. It is a sign that it is an evening time, when the moon is risen, and risen high: for, you know, as it is a sign the sun is setting, when the moon is risen; so, for ordinary, the higher the moon is risen, the farther on is the night, and the farther off is the sun. When the moon is up, the sun is down.—Now, as Christ is compared to the sun, and this world to the moon, so, when it is day-light with the church of God, their splendour is described by their being clothed with the sun, and having the moon under their feet, Rev. xii. 1. And as it is a day time of spiritual light with a person or people, when they have the sun above their head, and the moon under their feet; so it is a night-time of spiritual darkness with a person or people, when they have the moon above their head, and the sun under their feet; when men's affections are set wholly upon this changeable world, this mutable moon: when the world is uppermost in their heart, Christ is downmost. Are not then the worldly hearts, worldly affections, worldly mindedness of people, who only mind earthly things, an evidence that they are darkness? Some by the moon in Rev. xii. 1, understand the moon of self-righteousness; and it holds thus also, that when men, instead of being clothed with the Sun of righteousness, and having the moon of self-righteousness under their feet, are clothed with the moon, the spotted moon, of their own righteousness; then they have the Sun of righteousness under their feet. They are trampling on Christ and his righteousness while they are exalting themselves and their own righteousness, extolling the law of works, and not knowing that they are thus crying down Christ, the end of the law for righteousness, in whom only we have righteousness and strength.

12. It is a sign that it is an evening-time, when looking-glasses are of no use; and when, by reason of darkness, men can make no

use or improvement either of a mirror, for seeing themselves ; or of a prospect, for seeing other things.—So, it is a sign of a very dark night, an evening-time of gross darkness, when God's two glasses are of no use ; I mean, neither law nor gospel : when people can neither see themselves in the glass of the law, as Paul did, Rom. vii. 9 ; and also when they cannot see Christ, and the glory of God in him, in the glass of the gospel, as Paul and others did, 2 Cor. iii. 18. But it is a time of darkness with the church, and with particular souls, and a sad evidence, a certain sign of their total want of saving light, when the law is unserviceable for discovering their sinful nature, hearts, and lives ; and the gospel unserviceable for discovering the glory of God, in the method of salvation through Christ : when they are neither convinced of sin and misery, by the Spirit opening the command, and applying the threatening of the law ; nor convinced of righteousness and judgment, by the Spirit coming as a Spirit of wisdom, and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, as the Lord our righteousness.

Now, tell me, after you have heard these signs of an evening-time, if there be not much matter and ground of deep regret and lamentation over the present time ? Are not the generality in the visible church, yea, the most part here, under gross darkness ? Is it not a black evening with you, man : with you woman ? If God would convince you by these signs of it, you would see that you are enveloped and surrounded with the clouds and thick darkness of hell ; and see your need to cry, Lord, enlighten ; Lord, send forth thy light and truth.

END OF VOL. I.