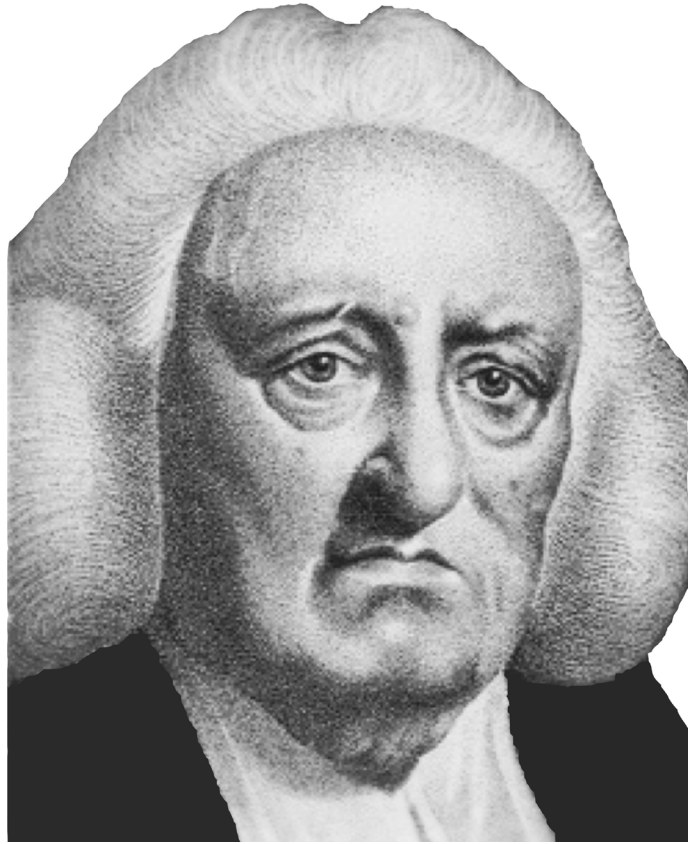


SERMONS AND TRACTS



BY DR. JOHN GILL

Volume 1

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These volumes are reproduced for the benefit of Bierteron Particular Baptists Pakistan with a view to promote the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the view of the publisher that Dr. J Gill is the clearest and most faithful in preaching and teaching the doctrines of grace. We dismiss the charges, that those who do not his writings, and call him a Hyper-Calvinist and ask you to read or your self and learn from a master in Israel.

Bierteron Particular Baptists have republished the whole of **Dr. Gills Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity, The Cause of God And Truth. Sermons and Tracts in several volumes**, See our publications list at the end of this volume. We call our reader to **James Stuart Russell's book, "The Parousia"** to help in the study of eschatology as this will help clear the errors in Historicism, as mentioned in our publication, **Difficulties Associated With Articles Of Religion Among Particular Baptists.**

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1 THE SCRIPTURE THE ONLY GUIDE IN MATTERS OF FAITH

Preached At The Baptism Of Several Persons In Barbican,

November 2, 1750.

Jeremiah 6:16.

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.

In this chapter the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians is threatened and foretold, and the causes of it assigned; in general, the great aboundings of sin and wickedness among the people; and in particular, their neglect and contempt of the word of God; the sin of covetousness, which prevailed among all sorts; the unfaithfulness of the prophets to the people, and the people's impenitence and hardness of heart; their want of shame, their disregard to all instructions and warnings from the Lord, by the mouth of his prophets, and their obstinate refusal of them; which last is expressed in the clause following the words read; and which, though an aggravation of it, shew the tender regard of the Lord to his people, and may be considered as an instruction to such who had their doubts and difficulties in religious matters; who were halting between two opinions, and like men in bivio, who stand in a place where two or more ways meet, and know not which path to take; and in this light I shall consider them; and in them may be observed,

I. A direction to such persons what to do; to stand in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein.

II. The encouragement to take this direction; and ye shall find rest for your souls.

I. The direction given to stand in or on the ways, etc. to do as men do when they are come to a place where two or more ways meet, make a stand, and view the roads, and see which they should take; they look about them, and consider well what course they should steer; they look up to the way-marks, or way-posts, and read the inscriptions on them, which tell them whither such a road leads, and so judge for themselves which way they should go. Now in religious matters, the way- marks or way-posts to guide and direct: men in the way, are the scriptures, the oracles of God, and they only.

Not education-principles. It is right in parents to do as Abraham did, to teach their children to keep the

way of the Lord (Gen. 18:19).

The direction of the wise man is an exceeding good one; Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it (Prov. 22:6); that is, easily and ordinarily: and it becomes Christians under the gospel dispensation to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4); and a great mercy and blessing it is to have a religious education; but then, as wrong principles may be infused as well as right ones, into persons in their tender years, it becomes them, when come to years of maturity and discretion, to examine them, whether they are according to the word of God, and so judge for themselves, whether they are to be abode by or rejected. I know it is a grievous thing with some persons to forsake the religion they have been brought up in; but upon this foot, a man that is born and brought up a Turk or a Jew, a Pagan or a Papist, must ever continue so. Sad would have been the case of the apostle Paul, if he had continued in the principles of his education; and what a shocking figure did he make whilst he abode by them? thinking, according to them, he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus (Acts 22:3, 4; 26:9).

Nor are the customs of men a rule of judgment, or a direction which way men should take in matters of religion; for the customs of the people are for the most part vain (Jer. 20:3), and such as are not lawful for us, being Christians, to receive or observe (Acts 16:21); and concerning which we should say, We have no such custom, neither the churches of God (1 Cor. 11:16).

Custom is a tyrant, and ought to be rebelled against, and its yoke thrown off.

Nor are the traditions of men to be regarded; the Pharisees were very tenacious of the traditions of the elders, by which they transgressed the commandments of God, and made his word of no effect; and the apostle Paul, in his state of unregeneracy, was zealous of the same; but neither of them are to be imitated by us: it is right to observe the exhortation which the apostle gives, when a Christian (Col. 2:8); beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

Take care you are not imposed upon, under the notion and pretense of an apostolical tradition; unwritten traditions are not the rule, only the word of

God is the rule of our faith and practice.

Nor do the decrees of popes and councils demand our attention and regard; it matters not what such a pope has determined, or what canons such a council under his influence has made; what have we to do with the man of sin, that exalts himself above all that is called God; who sits in the temple of God, shewing himself as if he was God? we know what will be his fate, and that of his followers (2 Thess. 2:4, 5; Rev. 20:30; 13:8; 14:11).

Nor are the examples of men, no not of the best of men, in all things to be copied after by us; we should indeed be followers of all good men as such, of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises; and especially of such, who are or have been spiritual guides and governors in the church; who have made the scriptures their study, and have labored in the word and doctrine; their faith we should follow, considering the end of their conversation; how that issues, and when it terminates in Christ, his person, truths and ordinances, the same to-day, yesterday and for ever (Heb. 6:12; 13:7): but then we are to follow them no further than they follow Christ; the apostle Paul desired no more than this of his Corinthians with respect to himself; and no more can be demanded of us; it should be no bias on our minds, that such and such a man of so much grace and excellent gifts thought and practiced so and so. We are to call no man father or master on earth; we have but one father in heaven, and one master, which is Christ, whose doctrines, rules, and ordinances we should receive and observe. We are not to be influenced by men of learning and wealth; though there should be on the other side of the question, it should be no stumbling to us; had this been a rule to be attended to, Christianity had never got footing in the world: Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? But this people, who knoweth not the law, are cursed. (John 7:48, 49)

It pleased the Lord, in the first times of the gospel, to hide the things of it from the wise and prudent, and reveal them unto babes; and to call by his grace, not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but the foolish, weak, and base things of the world, and things that are not, to confound the wise and mighty, and bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence (Matthew 11:25, 26; 1 Cor. 1:26-29): nor should it concern us that the greatest number is on the opposite side; we

are not to follow a multitude to do evil; the whole world once wondered after the beast; Christ's flock is but a little flock.

The scriptures are the only external guide in matters of religion; they are the way-posts we should look up unto, and take our direction from, and should steer our course accordingly: To the law and to the testimony: if men speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them (Isa. 8:20); we should not believe every spirit, but try them, whether they are of God (1 John 4:1); and the trial should be made according to the word of God; the scriptures should be searched, as they were by the noble Bereans, to see whether the things delivered to consideration are so or no; the inscriptions on these way-posts should be read, which are written so plain, that he that runs may read them; and they direct to a way, in which men, though fools, shall not err: if therefore the inquiry is,

1st, About the way of Salvation; if that is the affair the doubt is concerning, look up to the way- posts, look into the word of God, and read what that says; search the scriptures, for therein is the way of eternal life; life and immortality, or the way to an immortal life, is brought to light by the gospel. The scriptures, under a divine influence, and with a divine blessing, are able to make a man wise unto salvation, and they do point unto men the way of it: it is not the light of nature, nor the law of Moses, but the gospel-part of the scriptures which direct to this; there will shew you, that God saves and calls men with an holy calling, not according to their works, but according to his purpose and grace; that it is not by works of righteousness done by men, but according to the mercy of God, that men are saved; and that it is not by works, but by grace, lest men should boast (2 Tim. 1:9; Titus 3:5; Eph. 2:8,9). That it is a vain thing for men to expect salvation this way; that it is a dangerous one: such who encompass themselves with sparks of their own kindling shall lie down in sorrow: and that it is a very wicked thing; such sacrifice to their own net, and burn incense to their own drag. These will inform you that Christ is the way, the truth, and the life; that he is the only true way to eternal life; that there is salvation in him, and in no other: the language of them is, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved: these words, Salvation alone by Christ, salvation alone by Christ, are written as with a sunbeam on them; just as the way-posts, set up in places where two or more

ways met, to direct the manslayer when he was fleeing to one of the cities of refuge from the avenger of blood, had written on them in very legible characters, refuge, refuge.[1]

2dly, If the question is about any point of Doctrine; if there is any hesitation concerning any truth of the gospel, look up to the way-posts, look into the scriptures, search them, see and read what they say; for they are profitable for doctrine (2 Tim. 3:16); for finding it out, explaining, confirming, and defending it: there will tell you whether the thing in debate is so or no, and will direct you which side of the question to take; if you seek for knowledge and understanding in gospel-truths diligently and constantly, as you would for silver, and search after them as for hid treasures, then will you understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God (Prov. 2:4, 5).

Thus, for instance,

If the inquiry is about the doctrine of the Trinity; as the light of nature and reason will tell you, that there is but one God, and which is confirmed by revelation; the scriptures will inform you, that there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the holy Spirit, and that these three are one (1 John 5:7); are the one God: look into the first page of the Bible, and you will see how just and right is that observation of the Psalmist (Ps. 33:6); by the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath or spirit of his mouth; and that Jehovah, his word and spirit, were concerned in the creation of all things: you will learn from thence that God made the heavens and the earth; that the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, and brought the chaos into a beautiful order, as well as garnished the heavens; and that God the word said, Let there be light, and there was light; and that these three are the U S that made man after their image and likeness. (Gen. 1:1-3; 1:26) This doctrine is frequently suggested in the Old Testament, but clearly revealed in the New; and no where more clearly than in the commission for the administration of the ordinance of baptism; Go, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost (Matthew 28:19); and in the administration of it itself to our Lord Jesus Christ, at which all the three persons appeared; the Father by a voice from heaven, declaring Christ his beloved Son; the Son in human nature, submitting

to the ordinance; and the holy Ghost descending as a dove upon him (Matthew 3:16, 17); this was thought to be so clear a testimony for this doctrine, that it was usual with the ancients to say, "Go to Jordan, and there learn the doctrine of the trinity."

If the question is concerning the Deity of Christ, his eternal Sonship and distinct personality, look to your way-marks; inquire into the sacred records, and there you will find, that he is the mighty God, God over all, blessed for ever; the great God, the true God, and eternal life (Isa. 9:6; Rom. 9:5; Titus 2:13; 1 John 5:20); that all divine perfections are in him; that the fullness of the Godhead dwells in him; that he is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person; to whom all divine works are ascribed, and all divine worship is given; that he is the only begotten of the Father, the firstborn of every creature; or was begotten before any creature was in being (Heb. 1:3; Col. 2:9; 1:15); of whom the Father says, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee (Ps .2:7); that he is the Word which was in the beginning with God; and must be distinct from him with whom he was; and in the fullness of time was made flesh; which neither the Father nor the Spirit were (John 1:1, 14); and the same sacred writings will satisfy you about the deity and personality, as well as the operations of the blessed Spirit.

If the doubt is about the doctrine of Election, read over the sacred volumes, and there you will find, that this is an eternal and sovereign act of God the Father, which was made in Christ before the foundation of the world; that it is to holiness here, and happiness hereafter; that the means are sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth; that it is irrespective of faith and good works, being before persons had done either good or evil; that faith and holiness flow from it, and that grace and glory are secured by it; Whom he did predestinate, then; he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified (Eph. 1:4; 2 Thess. 2:13; Rom. 9:21; 8:30).

If you have any hesitation about the doctrine of Original Sin, look into your Bible; there you will see, that the first man sinned, and all sinned in him; that judgment, through his offense, came upon all men to condemnation; and that by his disobedience many were made sinners; that men are conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity; that they are transgressors from

the womb, go astray from thence, speaking lies, and are by nature children of wrath (Rom. 5:12, 18, 19; Ps. 51:5; 58:3; Isa. 48:8, Eph. 2:3).

If the matter in debate is the Satisfaction of our Lord Jesus Christ, read over the epistles of his holy apostles, and they will inform you, that he was made under the law, and became the fulfilling end of it, in the room of his people; that he yielded perfect obedience to it, and bore the penalty of it, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in them; that he was made sin for them, that they might be made the righteousness of God in him; and a curse for them, that he might redeem them from the curse of the law; that he offered himself a sacrifice for them, in their room and stead to God, for a sweet-smelling savor; that he suffered, the just for the unjust, to bring them nigh to God; and died for their sins according to the scriptures, and made reconciliation and atonement for them (Gal. 4:4; Rom. 8:3, 4; 10:4; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13; Eph. 5:2; 1 Pet. 3:18; 1 Cor. 15:3; Heb. 2:17).

If you are at a loss about the Extent of Christ's Death, and know not what part to take in the controversy about general and particular Redemption, look to your way-marks, the scriptures, and take your direction from thence; and there you will observe, that those whom Christ saves from their sins are his own people, for whose transgressions he was stricken; that he gave his life a ransom for many, for all sorts of persons, for all his elect, Jews and Gentiles; that they were his sheep he laid down his life for; that he loved the church, and gave himself for it; and that he tasted death for every one of his brethren, and of the children the Father gave him; that those that are redeemed by him, are redeemed out of every kindred, tongue, people, and nation (Matthew 1:21; 20:28; John 10:25; Eph. 5:25; Heb. 2:9-12; Rev. 5:9).

If the affair before you is the doctrine of Justification, and the query is, whether it is by works of righteousness done by you, or by the righteousness of Christ imputed to you, or about any thing relating to it, read over the sacred pages, and especially the epistles of the apostle Paul; and you will easily see, that a man cannot be justified in the sight of God by the works of the law, or by his own obedience to the law of works; that, if righteousness comes by the law, Christ is dead in vain; that men are justified by faith, without the works of the law; that is, by the righteousness of Christ, received by faith; that they are justified by the

blood of Christ, and made righteous by his obedience; that this is the righteousness which God approves of, accepts, and imputes to his people, without works; and which being looked to, apprehended and received by faith, is productive of much spiritual peace and comfort in the soul (Rom. 3:20, 28; Gal. 2:16, 21; Rom. 5:1, 9, 19; 4:6).

If the dispute is about Free-will or Free-grace, the power of the one, and the efficacy of the other, in a sinner's regeneration and conversion; turn to your Bible, and from thence it will appear, that this work is not by the might, or power of man, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts; that men are born again, not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God, his Spirit and grace; that it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy; that the work of faith is a work of power, of the operation of God, and is carried on by it, and is even according to the exceeding greatness of his power, who works in man both to will and to do of his own good pleasure (Zech. 4:6; John 1:13; 3:5; Rom. 9:15, 16; Col. 2:12; 2 Thess. 1:11; Eph. 1:10; Phil. 2:13).

If the demur is about the final Perseverance of the Saints, read over the gracious promises and declarations in the word of God, and they will serve to confirm you in it; as that the righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall grow stronger and stronger; that God will put his fear into the hearts of his people, and they shall not depart from him: that they are preferred in Christ Jesus, and in his hands, out of whose hands none can pluck them; who is able to keep them from falling, and will; and that they are, and shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation (Job 17:9; Jer. 32:40; John 10:28, 29; Jude 1:24; 1 Pet. 1:5).

To observe no more: if the doctrines of the Resurrection of the dead, and a future Judgment, should be called in question, read the divine oracles, and there you are told, that there will be a resurrection both of the just and unjust; that the one shall come forth from their graves to the resurrection of life, and the other to the resurrection of damnation; that there is a judgment to come; that there is a righteous Judge appointed, and a day let when just judgment will be executed; and that all, small and great, good and bad, must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, to receive for the things done in the body, whether they be good, or whether they be evil (Acts 24:16; John

5:28, 20; Acts 17:31; Rev. 20:12; 2 Cor. 5:10).

3dly, If the inquiry is about Worship, the scriptures will direct you both as to the object and manner of it, and circumstances relating to it; they will inform you, that God only is to be worshipped, and not a creature; and that the Deity to be worshipped is not like to gold, or silver, or stone graven by art and man's device; that God is a spirit, and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth: you will there find the rules for the several parts of worship, for prayer to him, singing his praise, preaching his word, and administering his ordinances, and how every thing should be done decently, and in order (Rom. 1:25, Acts 17:29; John 4:24; 1 Cor. 14:40)

4thly, If the inquiry is about the nature of a Church, its government, officers, and discipline; look into the ancient records of the scripture, and there you will meet with a just and true account of these things, the original of them, and rules concerning them; you will find that a church is a society of saints and faithful men in Christ Jesus, that are joined together in holy fellowship; that are incorporated into a visible church-state, and by agreement meet together in one place to carry on the worship of God, to glorify him, and edify one another (Eph. 1:1; 1 Cor. 11:20); that it is not national, provincial, or parochial, but congregational; that its offices or officers are only these two plain ones, Bishops, or Overseers or Elders, and Deacons (Phil. 1:1); where you will find nothing of the rabble of the Romish hierarchy; not a syllable of archbishops, archdeacons, deans, prebends, priests, chantors, rectors, vicars, curates, etc. there you will observe laws and rules of Christ, the sole head of the church, his own appointing, for the better ordering and regulating affairs; rules about the reception and rejection of members, for the laying on or taking off censures, for admonitions and excommunications; all which are to be done by the joint suffrage of the church.

5thly, If the inquiry is about the Ordinances of the Gospel, stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, in which the saints formerly trod; if it is about the ordinance of the Lord's-supper, the scriptures will inform you of the original institution of this ordinance by Christ, of the nature, use, and intent of it; that it is to shew forth the death of Christ till he come again; to commemorate his sufferings and sacrifice, to represent his body broken, and his blood shed for the sins of his people; and that if any one is desirous of partaking

of it, he should first examine himself whether he has true faith in Christ and is capable of discerning the Lord's body (Matthew 26:26-28). If it is concerning the ordinance of baptism, by consulting the sacred oracles you will easily perceive that this is of God, and not of man; that it is to be done in water; that the form of administration is in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost; that the subjects of it are believers in Christ, and the mode by immersion; and that the whole is warranted by the commission and example of our Lord (Matthew 21:25; 3:6, 11, 16; 28:19) But,

1. If there is any doubt about the subjects of this ordinance, whether they are infants or adult persons, stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths not which fathers and councils have marked out, but which the scriptures point unto, and in which John the Baptist, Christ and his apostles, have trod. We do not decline looking into the three first centuries of Christianity, commonly reckoned the purest ages of it; we readily allow, that Infant-baptism was talked of in the third century; it was then moved in the African churches but that it was practiced is not proved. I will not say it is improbable that any were then baptized; but this I affirm, it is not certain that any were; as yet, it has not been proved, and as for the writers of the two first centuries, not a word of it is mentioned by them. And had it, had any thing dropped from their pens that looked like it, and could by artifice be withdrawn to the countenance of it, we should not think ourselves obliged to embrace it on that account; what if Hermas, or Barnabas, or Ignatius, or Polycarp, or the two Clements of Rome and Alexandria, or Irenaeus, or Justin Martyr, or Tatian, or Theophilus of Antioch, or Athenagoras, or Minutius Felix declared it, any one or more of them, as their opinion, that infants ought to be baptized, (though none of them have) yet we should not think ourselves bound to receive it, any more than the many absurdities, weak reasonings, and silly notions these men gave into; and even could it be proved, (as it cannot) that it is an incontestable fact that Infant-baptism was administered by one or more of them, it would only serve to prove this sad truth, known by other instances, how soon corruptions in faith and practice got into the Christian churches, even presently after the times of the apostles; nay, the mystery of iniquity began to work in their days. Wherefore, in order to get satisfaction in this point,

Look over the accounts of the administration of the ordinance of baptism by John, the first administrator of it, and see if you can find that any infants were baptized by him. We are told, that there went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan; that is, the inhabitants of these places, great numbers of them; but surely these could not be infants, nor any among them, that went out to John to hear him preach, or be baptized by him: it is added, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins: these also could not be infants, but adult persons, who being made truly sensible of sin, and having true repentance for it, frankly and ingenuously confessed it; which infants are not capable of. John preached the baptism of repentance, and required repentance previous to it, and even fruits meet for it, and evidential of it; and when the Pharisees and Sadducees came to his baptism, who also could not be infants, he objects to them, because not good men and penitent; and even though they were capable of pleading that they were the children of Abraham, and the seed of that great believer (Matthew 3:5-9). And indeed the notion that is advanced in our day is a very idle one, that infants must be baptized, because the seed of believers. Are not all mankind the seed of believers? Has not God made of one man's blood all nations that are upon the face of the earth? Were not Adam and Eve believers in Christ, to whom the first promise and declaration of a Messiah were made? And do not all men spring from them? Or come we lower to Noah, the father of the new world, who was a perfect man, and found grace in the sight of God; do not all men descend from him? Turks, Jews, Pagans and Papists, are all the seed of believers, and at this rate ought to be baptized: and as for immediate believers and unbelievers, their feed by birth are upon an equal foot, and are in no wise better one than another, or have any preference the one to the other, or have by birth any claim to a gospel privilege or blessing the other has not; the truth of the matter is, that they are equally by nature children of wrath.

Look farther into the account of baptism as administered by Christ, or rather by his orders, and see if you can find an infant there. John's disciple come to him, and say, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bearest witness, behold the same baptizeth, and all men come to him (John 3:26).

These also could not be infants that came to him and

were baptized; and besides, who they were that were baptized by him, or by his orders, we are afterwards told, and their characters are given; Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (John 4:1): first he made them disciples, and then baptized them, or ordered them to be baptized, and a disciple of Christ is one that has learnt him, and the way of salvation by him; who is taught to deny sinful, civil and righteous self for Christ; and such were the persons baptized in the times of Christ, who must be adult ones; and with this his practice agrees the commission he gave in Matthew 28:19 where he orders teaching before baptizing; and such teaching as issues in believing, with which compare Mark 16:16. True indeed, he says (Matthew 19:14), suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; but they were admitted to come to him, not to be baptized by him, of which there is not one syllable, nor the least intimation, but to lay his hands on them and pray, or be touched by him, very probably to heal them of diseases that might attend them. However, it seems reasonable to conclude, that the apostles knew nothing of any such practice as Infant baptism, enjoined, practiced, or countenanced by Christ, or they would never have forbid the bringing of infants to him; and our Lord laying nothing of it when such a fair opportunity offered, looks very darkly upon it.

Once more; look over the accounts of the administration of Baptism by the apostles of Christ, and observe who they were that were baptized by them. We read indeed of households baptized by them; but inasmuch as there are many families that have no infants in them, nothing can be concluded from hence in favor of Infant-baptism; it should be first proved that there were infants in these households, before any such consequence can be drawn from them: and besides, it will appear upon a review of them, that not infants but adult persons in the several instances are intended. Lydia's household consisted of brethren, whom the apostles comforted; who could not be infants, but adult persons; we have no account of any other, no other are named; if any other can, let them be named. The Jailor's household were such, to whom the word of God was spoken, who believed in God, and rejoiced with him. Stephanas' household, which is the only other that is mentioned, is thought by some to be the same with the Jailor's; but, if not, it is certain that it consisted of adult persons, such who addicted

themselves to the ministry of the saints (Acts 16:15, 32-34, 40; 1 Cor. 1:26; 6:15). It will be easy to observe, that the first persons that were baptized after our Lord's resurrection and ascension, were such as were pricked to the heart, repented of their sins, and gladly received the gospel; such were the three thousand who were baptized, and added to the church in one day. The Samaritans, hearing Philip preach the things concerning the kingdom of God, were baptized, both men and women. The instance of the Eunuch is notorious; this man was a Jewish proselyte, a serious and devout man, was reading in the prophecy of Isaiah when Philip joined his chariot; Who, after conversation with him, desired baptism of him, to whom Philip replied, that if he believed with all his heart he might be baptized; intimating, that if he did not, notwithstanding his profession of religion, and external seriousness and devotion, he had no right to that ordinance; and upon professing his faith in Christ he was baptized. Cornelius and his family, and those in his house, to whom Peter preached, and on whom the holy Ghost fell, were ordered by him to be baptized, having received the holy Ghost, and for that reason. And the Corinthians, hearing the apostle Paul, and believing in Christ he preached, were baptized (Acts 2:3 7, 41, 42; 8:12, 37, 38; 10:47; 18:8): from all which instances it appears, that not infants but adult persons were the only ones baptized by the apostles of Christ. Now, though we might justly demand a precept or command of Christ to be shewn, expressly enjoining the baptism of infants, before we can go into such a practice, since it is used as a part of religious worship; for which we ought to have a thus saith the Lord: yet if but one single precedent could be given us, one instance produced; or if it could be proved that any one infant was ever baptized by John the Baptist, by Christ, or by his orders, or by his apostles, we should think ourselves obliged to follow such an example; let this be shewn us, and we have done; we will shut up the controversy, and say no more. Strange! that in the space of sixty or seventy years, for such a course of time ran out from the first administration of baptism to the close of the canon of the scripture, that in all the accounts of baptism in it, not a single instance of infant baptism can be given! upon the whole, we must be allowed to say, and if not, we must and will take the liberty to say, that Infant-baptism is an unscriptural practice; and that there is neither precept

nor precedent for it in all the word of God.

2. If the doubt is concerning the Mode of baptism, whether it is to be performed by immersion of the whole body, or by sprinkling or pouring a little water on the face; take the same course as before, ask for the old paths; inquire how this ordinance was anciently administered in the times of John, Christ, and his apostles. I shall not appeal unto, nor send you to inquire the signification of the Greek word; though all men of learning and sense have acknowledged, that the primary meaning of the word is to dip or plunge; but this ordinance was appointed not for men of learning only, but for men and women also of the meaner capacities, and of the most plain and simple understandings: wherefore let all inquiring persons consult.

The scriptural instances of baptism; read over the accounts of baptism as administered by John, and you will find that he baptized in Jordan: ask yourselves why a river was chose, when a bason of water would have done, had it been performed by sprinkling or pouring; try if you can bring yourselves to believe that John was not in the river Jordan, only on the banks of it, from whence he took water, and poured or sprinkled it; and if you can seriously and in good earnest conclude (with a grave divine) that if he was in the river, he had in his hand a scoop, or some such instrument, and with it threw the water over the people as they stood on the banks of the river on both sides of him, and so baptized them in shoals. Look over the baptism of Christ by John, and see if you can persuade yourselves that Christ went ankle deep, or a little more, into the river Jordan, and John stood upon a bank and poured a little water on his head, as messieurs painter and engraver have described them; or whether the most easy and natural sense of the whole is not this, that they both went into the river Jordan, and John baptized our Lord by immersion; which when done, he straightway came up out of the water, which supposes him to have been in it; and then the Spirit descended on him as a dove, and a voice was heard from his Father, laying, This is my beloved Son (Matthew 3:6, 16, 17). Carefully read over those words of the evangelist (John 3:23), and John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there; and try if you can make much water to signify little; or many waters, as the words may be literally rendered, only a little rill, or some small rivulets of

water, not sufficient to cover a man's body; though the phrase is used even of the waters of the great sea;[2] and persuade yourselves, if you can, that the reason of the choice of this place, because of much water in it, was not for baptism, as says the text, but for the convenience of men, their camels and asses on which they came to hear John; of which it says not one word. To which add the instance of the eunuch's baptism, in which we are told (Acts 8:38, 39), that both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water; and that when baptism was administered, they came up out of the water: now try whether you can really believe that this great man, who left his chariot, went down with Philip into the water, ankle or knee deep, only to have a little water sprinkled and poured upon him, and then came out of it, when in this way the ordinance might as well have been administered in his chariot; or whether it is not most reasonable to believe, from the bare narrative, from the very letter of the text, that their going down into the water was in order that the ordinance might be administered by immersion; and that when Philip had baptized the Eunuch this way, they both came up out of the water: as for that poor weak criticism, that this is to be understood of going to and from the water-side; it may be asked what they should go thither for, what reason was there for it, if done by sprinkling? Besides, it is entirely destroyed by the observation the historian makes before this, that they came unto a certain water;[3] to the water- side; and therefore when they went down, it must be into the water itself; it could not with any propriety be said, that when they were come to the water-side, after that they went to the water- side. But to proceed,

Consider the figurative or metaphorical baptisms mentioned in scripture. Baptism is said (1 Pet. 3:20, 21) to be a like figure to Noah's ark, in which eight souls were saved by water; there is a likeness, an agreement between the one and the other; now see if you can make out any likeness between the ark upon the waters and baptism, as performed by sprinkling; whereas it soon appears as performed by immersion, in which persons are covered in water, as Noah and his family in the ark were, when the fountains of the great deep were broke up under them, and the windows of heaven were opened above them: think with yourselves, whether sprinkling or immersion best agrees with this, that baptism should be called the antitype to it; to which may be added, that Noah

and his family, when shut up in the ark, were, as it were, buried there; and baptism by immersion is a representation of a burial. The passage of the Israelites through the Red sea is called a being baptized in the cloud and in the sea (1 Cor. 10:1, 2); but why should it be so called? what is there in that account that looks like sprinkling? There is that resembles immersion; for when the waters of the sea stood up on both sides of them, as a wall, and a cloud covered them, they were as people immersed in water; and besides, their going down into the sea, and parting through it, and coming up out of it on the other side; if it may not be literally called an immersion, it was very much like an immersion into water, and an immersion out of it; and both that and baptism represent a burial and resurrection. The sufferings of our Lord, are called a baptism; you would do well to consider

whether only sprinkling a few drops of water on the face, or an immersion into it, belt represents the abundance and greatness of our Lord's sorrows and sufferings, for which reason they are called a baptism; and the rather, since they are signified by the waters coming into his soul, and by his coming into deep waters, where the floods overflowed him (Luke 12:50; Ps. 69:1, 2). Once more, the extraordinary donation of the holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost is called a baptism, or a being baptized with the holy Ghost, and with fire; which was done when the house in which the apostles were, was filled with a mighty wind, and cloven tongues, as of fire, sat upon them (Matthew 3:11; Acts 1:5; 2:1-3): it deserves your consideration, whether this wonderful affair, and this large abundance of the Spirit, is not better expressed by baptism, as administered in a large quantity of water, than with a little. To add no more;

Consider the nature, use, and end of baptism; it is a burial; and the use and end of it are, to represent the burial and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ; hence the phrase of being buried with him in baptism (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12) see if you can make any thing like a burial when this ordinance is administered by sprinkling; can you persuade yourselves, that a corpse is properly buried, when only a little dust is sprinkled on its face? on the other hand, you will easily perceive a lively representation of a burial, when the ordinance is performed by immersion; a person is then covered with water, and when he comes out of it, it clearly

represents our Lord's resurrection, and the believer's rising again to newness of life. Upon the whole, having asked for the good old paths, and found them, walk herein, abide by this ancient practice of baptism by immersion; a practice which continued for the space of thirteen hundred years at least, without any exception, unless a few bed-ridden people in the times of Cyprian,[4] who received baptism on their sick and death-beds, fancying there was no atonement for sins after baptism, and therefore deferred it till such time.

But after all, let me advise you in the words of our text to inquire where is the good way, or the better way; for though the ordinance of baptism, and every other, is a good way, there is a better way. This is a way of duty, but not of life and salvation; it is a command of Christ, to be obeyed by all believers in him, but not to be trusted in and depended on; it is essential to church-communion, but not to salvation; it is indeed no indifferent thing whether it is performed or no; this ought not to be laid or thought of any ordinance of Christ; or whether in this or the other manner, or administered to this or the other subject. It ought to be done as Christ has directed it should; but when it is best done, it is no saving ordinance: this I the rather mention, to remove from us a wicked and a foolish imputation, that we make an idol of this ordinance, and place our confidence and dependence on it, and put it in the room of the Savior. I call it wicked, because false; and foolish, because contrary to an avowed and well-known principle on which we proceed, namely, that faith in Christ alone for salvation is a prerequisite to baptism: can any man in his senses think that we depend on this ordinance for salvation, when we require that a person should believe in Christ, and profess that he believes in Christ alone for salvation, before he is baptized; or otherwise we judge he is not a fit subject? but on the other hand, those that insinuate such a notion as this, would do well to consider, if their own conduct does not bespeak something of this kind; or otherwise what means the stir and hustle that is made, when a child is ill, and not yet sprinkled? what means such language as this, "run, fetch the minister to baptize the child, the child's a-dying?" Does it not look as if this was thought to be a saving business, or as if a child could not be fared unless it is sprinkled; and which, when done, they are quite easy and satisfied about its state? But to

leave this, and as the apostle says, yet shew I unto you a mere excellent way (1 Cor. 12:31), which is Jesus Christ, the way, the truth, and the life.

Christ is the way of salvation, which the gospel, and the ministers of it, point out to men; and he is the only way of salvation, there is salvation in him, and in no other; this is what the whole Bible centers in; this is the sum and substance of it; this is the faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance. that Christ came into the world to save the chief of sinners. He is the way of access to the Father, nor can any come to God but by him; he is the mediator between God and man, and through him there is access with confidence by the faith of him. He is the way of acceptance with God: we have nothing to render us acceptable unto God; we are black in ourselves with original and actual sin, and are only comely in Christ; our acceptance is in the beloved. God is well pleased with him, and with all that are considered in him; their persons and their sacrifices are acceptable to God through him. He is the way of conveyance of all grace, and the blessings of it to us. All was given originally to him, and to us in him; and from him, and through him we receive it, even out of his fullness, grace for grace; all spiritual blessings are with him, and come to us from him; all grace passes through his hands; the first we have, and all the after-supplies of it; yea, the gift of God, eternal life, is through Jesus Christ our Lord And he is the way to heaven and eternal happiness; he has entered into it with his own blood already, and has opened a way by it for his people, into the holiest of all; he is gone beforehand as their forerunner, and has taken possession of heaven for them; he is now preparing a place for them there, and will come again and take them to himself, and introduce them into his kingdom and glory. And he is a plain, pleasant, and safe way; plain to him that understands, and has a spiritual knowledge of him, even though but of a very mean capacity; for this is a way in which men, though fools, shall not err; and it is a very delightful one; what more delightful than to live by faith on Christ, or to walk by faith in him, as he hath been received. And a very save one, it must needs be; none ever perished that believed in Christ; he is the living way, all in this way live, none in this way die; though it is a strait gate and narrow way, yet it surely and rarely leads to eternal life; and though it is sometimes called a new way, yet not because newly contrived, for it is

as ancient in this respect as the counsel and covenant of peace; nor newly revealed, for it was made known to Adam immediately after the fall; nor newly made use of, for all the Old Testament saints were directed in this way, and walked in it, and were rived by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, as well as we; but because it is more clearly manifested now, and more largely and frequently walked in: otherwise it is the good old path to be asked for; there never was any other way of salvation, or ever will be. I go on,

II. To consider the encouragement given to take the direction, and make the inquiry as above; and in this I shall be very brief; it lies in this clause, and ye shall find rest for your souls.

There is a rest for souls to be enjoyed in ordinances, when men are arrived to satisfaction about them, and submit unto them in a becoming manner; when a man has carefully and conscientiously searched the scriptures, and is come to a point about an ordinance, his mind is easy, which before was distracted and confused; and he is the more easy in that he has acted the faithful part to himself and truth; and I cannot see how persons can have rest in their minds, who have not stood in the ways and looked about them, searched the scriptures, and inquired for the good old paths; and in consequence of an honest inquiry, walk therein; to such, wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and her paths of peace; there is great peace enjoyed in them, though not from them; a believer comes to an ordinance, being upon inquiry satisfied about it, as for instance, the ordinance of baptism; he, I say, comes to it with delight, passes through it with pleasure, and goes away from it as the eunuch did, rejoicing.

There is rest for souls to be enjoyed in doctrines, which a man does enjoy, when upon a diligent search after truth, he finds it, and is at a point about it; a man that is tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, is like a wave of the sea, always restless and uneasy; a double-minded man, that halts between two opinions, and sometimes inclines to one, and sometimes to the other, is unstable in all his ways, and has no true rest in his mind; a man that is carried about with divers and strange doctrines, is like a meteor in the air, sometimes here, and sometimes there; a good thing it is to have the heart established in and with the doctrines of grace; and the way to this is to search the scriptures, to see whether these things be so or no;

which when seriously and faithfully done, the issue is peace of conscience, rest in the mind.

But above all, true rest for the soul is to be had in Christ, and such who ask for the good and better way find it in him, nor is it to be found in any other; Christ is that to believers, as Noah's ark was to the dove, which could find no rest for the sole of its feet, till it returned thither: there is rest in Christ, and no where else, and he invites weary souls to come to him for it; his words are (Matthew 11:28, 29), Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest; take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls; which last clause is the same with this in our text, and the Lord seems to have had respect unto it, and to have took his language from it: and what peace and rest do weary souls find in Christ, when their faith is led to his person, fullness, blood, sacrifice and righteousness? and such who are made partakers of spiritual rest here, shall enjoy an eternal one hereafter, for still there remains a rest to the people of God (Heb. 4:9).

To conclude; let us bless God for the scriptures, that we have such a way-mark to direct us, and point out unto us the way in which we should go; let us make use of them; let us search the scriptures daily and diligently, and the rather, since they testify of Christ, of his person, offices, of his doctrines and ordinances. There are the more sure word of prophecy, to which we do well to take heed, as to a light shining in a dark place; these are a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our paths, both with respect to the way of salvation, and to the way of our duty. These guide us to the old paths, and shew us where is the good way in which we should walk; and when we are tempted to turn to the right hand, or the left, it is best to hearken to the voice of the word behind us, saying, This is the way, walk in it (John 5:39; 2 Pet. 1:19; Ps. 119:105; Isa. 30:21). The Bible has the best claim to antiquity of any book in the world; and the gospel, and the truths of it, have the greatest marks and evidences of it upon them. Error is old, but truth is more ancient than that; the gospel is the everlasting gospel; it was even ordained before the world unto our glory (Rev. 14:6; 1 Cor. 2:7); and the ordinances of it, as administered in the times of Christ and his apostles, should be received and submitted to, as there delivered; and we should walk in them as we have Christ and his apostles for an example: but above

all things, our concern should be to walk in Him, the way; there is no way better, nor any so good as he; seek rest for your souls in him, and no where else; not in the law, and the works of it, there is none there; not in the world, and the things of it, this is not your rest, it is polluted (Micah 2:10); but seek it in Christ, where you will find it here, and more fully enjoy it with him hereafter.

2 THE AGREEMENT OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT

A Sermon,

Preached at a Wednesday's Evening Lecture, in
GREAT EAST-CHEAP,

Mar. 24, 1756.

Acts 26: 22, 23.

Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great; saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

This Lecture, which I am now about to take my leave of, was set up in the year 1729, between six and seven and twenty years ago. I opened it with a discourse or two on the words of the Psalmist, in Psalm 71:16, I will go in the strength of the Lord God; I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only: My view in the choice of those words was, partly to observe that I undertook the service of the Lecture, and engaged in this work, not in my own strength, but in the strength of Christ, hoping for and expecting the aid and assistance of his Spirit and grace; and partly to shew that my intentions and resolutions were to preach that great and glorious doctrine of a sinner's free justification before God, by the righteousness of Christ imputed to him, with all others that are analogous to it, or in connection with it; which Luther rightly called *articulus stantis vel cadentis ecclesiæ*, "the article of the church standing or falling, or that by which it stands or falls;" for as that doctrine is received or rejected, the church of Christ in all ages and periods of time flourishes or declines. And through the grace of God I have been enabled to abide by these resolutions throughout my concern in this Lecture; and now I close it with a discourse on the words read, having therefore obtained help of God, &c., which are part of an apology or defence, which the apostle Paul

made for himself in a very numerous assembly; at the head of which were very great personages, as Agrippa king of the Jews, Bernice his sister, Festus the Roman governor, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city of Cesarea, and all in open court; which verified what our Lord had foretold to his disciples, saying, ye shall be brought before kings and governors for my sake (Matt. 10:10). The apostle being permitted to speak for himself, addressed the king in a very polite manner, and gave an account of himself from his youth upwards; "how that he was brought up in the strictest sect of the Jewish religion, a Pharisee; trained up in the belief and hope of the promised Messiah, and of the resurrection of the dead; and possessed with prejudices against Jesus of Nazareth and his followers, against whom he was exceeding mad, and persecuted them to strange cities; and how that in the midst of his career of rage and fury against them, it pleased the Lord to meet with him, and convert him." And then he relates the manner of his conversion; "how an amazing light surrounded him and struck him, and those that were with him, to the ground; that he heard a voice speaking to him by name, and what answer he returned to it; when he was not only effectually called by grace, but the Lord Jesus Christ personally appeared to him, and made him a minister of the everlasting gospel; promised him protection and deliverance from all people, Jews and Gentiles, to whom he should send him; and pointed out the ends and usefulness of his ministration; to open the eyes of men, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Christ:" upon which he observes to Agrippa, that he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision; but immediately preached the doctrines of faith, repentance and good works at Damascus; the place where he then was, and at Jerusalem, and through all the land of Judea, and then among the Gentiles; and these were the only causes and reasons of the rage of the Jews against him, and which moved them to seek to take away his life time after time: but notwithstanding, the Lord preserved him for much and long usefulness in the ministry of the gospel; which he takes notice of in the words before us, having therefore obtained help of God, &c. In which may be observed,

First, That the apostle ascribes his continuance in

life, and in the ministry of the word, to the help that he had obtained of God, which help,

Designs the care of divine providence exercised towards him in a special way and manner. The providence of God is common to all his creatures; it is owing to that, the souls of men are upheld in life; and as life itself is a grant and favour from the Lord, so it is his providential visitation that preserves the spirits of men. In him all live, and move, and have their being (Ps. 66:9; Job 10:12; Acts 17:28), they not only have it from him, but they are supported in it by him; and there is a special providence which superintends the people of God; though he is the Saviour of all men, yet more especially of those that believe (1 Tim. 4:10); and particularly ministers of the gospel are in a remarkable manner preserved by the Lord; he holds these stars in his right hand (Rev. 2:1); they are his peculiar care and charge, and he continues their useful lives for much service in his church. This was the happy case of our apostle.

It takes in, and has a particular respect unto, the deliverance of him from dangers to which he was exposed, and which Christ promised him, verse 17, and he here acknowledges was made good unto him. As soon as he became a convert, and a preacher of the gospel, the Jews laid in wait for him to take away his life; insomuch that the disciples were obliged to let him down in a basket by the wall of the city of Damascus, to make his escape; at another time they found him in the temple, and fell upon him, and beat him unmercifully, and would have destroyed him, had not the chief captain of a Roman band ran to his relief: and after this, forty of them bound themselves under a curse, not to eat or drink until they had killed him; besides many perils of life was he in among the Gentiles, as at Lystra, Iconium, and other places (Acts 9:24, 25; 14:19; 21:32, 33; 23:12, 13); but he obtained help of the Lord against all his enemies, and deliverance from all dangers; and continued a faithful dispenser of the word, and stood his ground, through all difficulties, and in spite of all opposition.

This includes all that help and assistance which he received from the Lord in preaching the gospel; for notwithstanding his natural and acquired abilities, and the ordinary and extraordinary gifts of the spirit bestowed on him, yet he was conscious of his own weakness and inability in himself to perform such service; and therefore asks (2 Cor. 2:16), who

is sufficient for these things? He knew he was not of himself, and that the grace of Christ alone was sufficient for him; that it was his strength which was made perfect in his weakness; that it was through Christ strengthening him he did all those wonderful things he did; that though he laboured more abundantly than any of the apostles, yet it was not he, but the grace of God which was with him (1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 12:9; Phil. 4:13); by which he was what he was, as a minister, and had what he had as such, and did what he did under that character; and by which he was enabled to preach the gospel so frequently, so constantly, so fully, and in so many places, from Jerusalem round about to Illyricum.

Secondly, The apostle expresses the nature of the work he was engaged and continued in, by witnessing; it was a testifying of the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24); bearing witness to the truth of it, to the grace of God in it; his free favour in choosing men to salvation, in providing and sending Christ to be the Saviour of them, and in the whole of their salvation by him: it was a giving testimony to Christ, to his person, office and grace; hence the gospel is called, the testimony of our Lord (2 Tim. 1:8): the apostles of Christ were made and appointed to be his witnesses, to testify of his incarnation, works, sufferings, death, resurrection from the dead, ascension to heaven, and of all things they had heard, and seen, and knew concerning him; and so was the apostle Paul, verse 17, and all ministers of the gospel are witnesses, who prophesy, though in sackcloth, and will do so to the end of the reign of antichrist.

Thirdly, The persons to whom he witnessed, he says, were small and great; having, no doubt, a special regard to the audience he was now addressing, consisting of great personages, as before observed, and of a multitude of the common people; he bore witness to the truths of Christ and his gospel, to all sorts of men, of every age, rank and condition of life, high and low, rich and poor; and of every character, wise and unwise; his commission being the same with the rest of the apostles, reached to all; go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15).

Fourthly, The subject-matter of the apostle's ministry is signified; 1st, More generally, as what agreed with the doctrine of the Old Testament, with Moses and the prophets: 2dly, More particularly, as it respected, in agreement with them, the sufferings and

resurrection of Christ, and his being a light to Jews and Gentiles. And on these two things I shall a little enlarge.

What the apostle chiefly insisted upon in his ministry in general, was the same with what Moses and the prophets had spoken of; saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come, or should be: as he agreed with them in the following things, which are particularly respected, so in every thing they said there is an entire harmony and consent between the prophets of the Old, and the apostles of the New Testament; and especially in every thing concerning Christ: they agreed in laying him as the foundation of the church and people of God, and of their faith, hope and happiness; hence he is called (Eph. 2:20), the foundation of the apostles and prophets. The Old and New Testaments are like the cherubim over the mercy seat, which were exactly of the same form and size; their faces were to each other, and both to the mercy seat, a type of Christ; as the cherubim were of the ministers of the word, the prophets of the Old, and the apostles of the New Testament. These two parts of the sacred scripture are the church's two breasts, which are like two young roes that are twins (Cant. 4:5); that are in every thing, in nature, color and proportion like to each other. Our Lord and his apostles appealed to the writings of Moses and the prophets, for the truth of what they delivered; they fetched quotations from them to support their doctrines by; and these are said by them to be able to make men wise unto salvation; and to be profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness; and to make the man of God thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:15-17): there is not a doctrine of the gospel, but what may be established and confirmed by these sacred books. And this will soon and easily appear by a short detail of some of the principal and peculiar doctrines of it. As,

The doctrine concerning the divine Being, and the persons in the Godhead. One branch of which is, that there is but one God. This is the voice of reason and revelation, the language of the Bible, of both Testaments, old and new. Our Lord frequently suggests this truth, and so do his apostles; and the apostle Paul particularly, in the name of the rest, and indeed of all Christians, says to us there is but one God (Matt. 19:17; Mark 12:29, 32; John 17:3; 1 Cor. 8:6; 1 Tim. 2:5); and

this is what Moses said, hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord (Deut. 6:4): the prophets say the same, and the Lord by them; before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me—is there a God beside me? yea there is no God, I know not any (Isa. 43:10; 44:8), all which is said in opposition to the polytheism of the heathens, but not to the exclusion of any of the divine persons in the Godhead; for another branch of this doctrine is, that there is a plurality of persons in God, and that these are neither more nor fewer than three; for as the apostle John says, There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these three are one (1 John 5:7); and which agrees with the doctrine of Christ, as appears by his appointing the ordinance of baptism to be administered, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Matt. 28:19); which three divine persons appeared at the baptism of Christ; there was the Son of God in human nature submitting to that ordinance; and there was the voice of the Father from heaven, declaring, that this was his beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased; and there was the Holy Spirit, which descended as a dove upon Christ (Matt. 3:16-17); hence the ancients used to say, “Go to Jordan and learn the doctrine of the Trinity:” and this is no other than what is to be found in the writings of Moses and the prophets. Moses plainly intimates a plurality of persons in the Deity, which he represents God as saying, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness:— Let us go down and there confound their language (Gen. 1:26; 11:7); and his account of the creation, plainly suggests there were three, and no more. God, the first person, the Father, made the heavens and the earth; and God the Word, the essential Word, the second person, said, Let there be light, and there was light; and the Spirit of God, or the Spirit of the Messiah, as the Jews call him, the third person, moved upon the face of the waters (Gen. 1:1, 2, 3), and brought the dark and unformed chaos in a beautiful order. All which is summarily comprehended in the words of the Psalmist; by the Word, the essential Word of the Lord, of Jehovah the Father, were the heavens made; and all the host of them, by the breath or spirit of his mouth (Ps. 33:6). And the prophets all agree in, and bear testimony to this truth not to mention any other than those words in Isaiah, and now the Lord God and his Spirit hath sent me (Isa. 48:16); here are Jehovah and his Spirit

spoken of, as concerned in the mission of Christ into this world. Another branch of this doctrine is, that each of the divine persons is God; not to say any thing of the Father, the first person, about whom there is no question; the second person, the Son of God, is expressly called by the apostle John, the last of the apostles, with whom the rest agree, the true God and eternal life (1 John 5:20); and this doctrine clearly appears in the writings of the Old Testament, for to the Son, he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever (Psa. 45:6); and he that is promised as the child that should be born, and the Son given, is named the mighty God (Isa.9:6); he who is prophesied of as the Saviour of lost sinners, is called their God, your God will come and save you (Isa. 35:4); he that is spoken of that should be incarnate and become man, is said to be not a mere man, but the man, Jehovah's fellow (Zech.13:7); his equal, who thought it no robbery to be equal with God. And as for the blessed Spirit, who, in the New Testament, is called the Lord the Spirit; and lying to him is represented as lying to God (2 Cor. 3:18; Acts 5:3, 4); so in the Old Testament such things are ascribed to him, as clearly shew him to be a divine person such as, his concern in the creation of all things; his bringing the earth into proper form and order, by moving on the face of the waters; garnishing the heavens, and bespangling them with stars; making man, and giving him life and understanding (Gen. 1:2; Job 26:13; 32:8; 33:4).

The doctrine respecting the person and offices of Christ, is the same in both testaments. Is he called in the New Testament the Son of God? is the doctrine of his divine Sonship written as with a sunbeam, in the books of it? is he owned to be the Son of God, by angels and men, good and bad, as well as declared to be so by his Father himself? is this an article of the apostles creed, in which they all unite, saying (John 6:6, 29), We believe and are sure that thou art Christ the Son of the living God? not by office, but by nature; for this is not a term of office, but of relation. The writings of the Old Testament agree herein, in which the second person is often called the Son of God. Daniel knew him as such, and had instilled such a sentiment of him into the mind of Nebuchadnezzar, an heathen monareh; or otherwise, how could he have said (Dan. 3:25), that the form of the fourth person, in the fiery furnace, is like the Son of God? Solomon, long before him, under the name of Agur, says (Prov. 30:4) of

God, and his divine Word, What is his name, and what is his Son's name, if thou canst tell? And David his father, before him, introduces the second person, as declaring what his divine Father had said unto him; The Lord bath said Unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee: hence David exhorts the kings and judges of the earth to kiss this Son of God; that is, to serve, worship, and obey him; who appeals to be a divine person, by his being a proper object of trust and confidence; blessed are all they that put their trust in him (Ps.2:7, 12).

Do the writings of the New Testament speak of Christ as God and man in one person, this being the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16)? The writings of the Old Testament speak of him also in both natures as meeting in him: when they represent him as a child to be born, they declare him to be the mighty God and everlasting Father; and when they intimate he should be a branch of David's family, they give him the name of Jehovah our righteousness; and when they speak of him as a man, they call him Jehovah's fellow Isa.9:6; Jer.23:5, 6; Zech.13:7). Is he in the New Testament said (1 Tim. 2:5) "to be the mediator between God and men?" the writers of the Old Testament speak of him as drawing near to God, engaging his heart to approach unto him; as becoming the surety of his people; as being the days-man that lays his hands on both; as signified by Jacob's ladder, which reached from earth to heaven, and united both; as the mercy seat, from off of which the Lord communes with his saints; and as the Angel of God's presence, who appears for his people in it, and introduces them into it (Jer. 30:21; Job 9:32; Gen. 28:12; Ex. 25:22; Isa. 63:9). Do the apostles of Christ make mention of him as invested with the offices of prophet, priest, and king? This is no other than what Moses and the prophets said should be. Moses foretells that God would raise up a prophet like unto him out of the children of Israel, whom they should hearken to (Deut. 18:15); and David says of the Messiah, that he was by the

constitution and oath of God, a priest after the order of Melchizedek (Ps. 110:4); and other prophets signify that he should make his soul an offering for sin, and make intercession for transgressors (Isa. 53:10, 12); which are the two parts of his priestly office: and there is no need to say, that he is often promised

and prophesied of as a king that should come, it is so notorious; Rejoice, O daughter of Zion,—thy king cometh unto thee (Zech. 9:9).

The several peculiar doctrines of special and distinguishing grace are to be observed in the writings of the Old Testament, as well as of the New. As for instance, the doctrine of eternal, personal election is it a truth of the New Testament, that some men are chosen in Christ their head before the foundation of the world, to be holy and happy? It is suggested in the Old, that Christ is God's, first and chief elect, in whom his soul delighteth, and is chosen by him out of the people; and has a people chosen by the Lord for his peculiar treasure and inheritance (Isa. 42:1; Ps. 89:19; 135:4); for himself, or his glory, to enjoy everlasting communion with him. Know that the Lord hath set apart, in a most wonderful and gracious manner, him that is godly; him to whom God is good and gracious, and who is the object of his free grace and favour, as the word signifies; for himself, his service and honour. The same writings declare, that God has made with Christ, with David, his chosen, an everlasting covenant; that Christ is set up from everlasting as mediator of it; that his goings forth in it were of old, from everlasting; that he is the messenger of it, yea the covenant itself; that all the blessings and promises of it belong to him, and are therefore called the sure mercies of David (Ps. 89:3; 2 Sam. 23:5; Prov. 8:22; Micah 5:2; Mal. 3:1; Isa. 42:6; 55:3); which are all absolute and unconditional, and are all confirmed and established by the blood of Christ, said to be the blood of the covenant (Zech. 9:11; Heb. 13:20), in one Testament, as in the other. The doctrine of particular redemption is held forth in both, and appears alike, the person of the redeemer is the same, that should come to, and out of Zion: the redeemed are the spiritual and mystical Jacob and Israel; the things they are redeemed from, are all their sins, Satan that is stronger than they, and death and hell they deserve (Isa. 59:20; 43:1; Ps. 130:7; Jer. 31:11). The doctrine of justification, our apostle so much insisted upon in his ministry and writings, is clearly expressed by the prophets; from whence it appears that it is God that justifies Christ the head, and all his people in him; that it is in, and by him, that all the seed of Israel are justified and glorified; and it is in him they have their justifying righteousness, which is called an everlasting one; and hence he is called the Lord their righteousness (Isa. 50:8; 45:24, 25; Dan. 9:24; Jer. 23:6).

The doctrine of pardon of sin, which is an evangelical one, and of pure revelation, is spoken of by Moses and the prophets, as by Christ; for to him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins (Acts 10:43), and by them it appears that there is forgiveness with God; and that it is of all sins, and is an act of God's free grace and mercy, and peculiarly his; and who, before the face of Moses, proclaimed his name, a God gracious and merciful, pardoning iniquity, transgression and sin (Ps. 130:4; 103:3; Isa. 43:25; Ex. 34:6, 7). And the agreement of other doctrines of the New Testament with the Old, may easily be observed, as being no other than what is there asserted; as that conversion is not by might or power of man, but by the Spirit of the Lord (Zech. 4:6); and that they that have the true grace of God shall persevere to the end; shall go from strength to strength, grow stronger and stronger, and hold on their way; and that the fear of God being put into their hearts, they shall never depart from him (Ps. 84:7; Job 17:9; Jer. 32:40); and that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a future judgment; that those that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to everlasting shame and contempt (Dan. 12:2); and that God will judge the righteous and the wicked, and bring every work into judgment, good or evil, open or secret (Eccl. 3:17; 12:14).

II. The particular things here observed, in the ministration of which the apostle agreed with Moses and the prophets, are such as respect the sufferings and resurrection of Christ, and his being a light to Jews and Gentiles; that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and shew light to the people and to the Gentiles.

1st, That Christ should suffer; a suffering Christ is the principal subject of the gospel-ministry. The apostles preached Christ crucified, as having suffered the death of the cross in the room and stead of, and for the sake of men; and the apostle Paul determined to know, that is, to make known none but Christ, and him crucified, as the only Saviour of men. This was the first and principal thing of all which he delivered wherever he came, that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures (1 Cor. 1:23; 2:2; 15:3). The person said to suffer, is Christ; not the Father, as some, called Patri-passians from thence, are said to hold; they, as the Sabellians, asserting there is but one person

in the Godhead; but of the Father our Lord says, ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape (John 5:37). He never assumed a nature capable of suffering; nor the Holy Spirit neither; he formed, prepared, and adorned the human nature of Christ, and Christ through the eternal Spirit offered himself to God (Heb. 9:14); but the Spirit suffered not; it was the Son of God that became incarnate, and appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh; and whom God spared not, but delivered up into the hands of justice and death for us all (Rom. 8:3, 32): it was not indeed in his divine nature, as the Son of God, he suffered, for that is impossible; but in the human nature he assumed, which he took on purpose, that he might have something to offer; as it was necessary he should, that he might be put to death, in the flesh, and be crucified through weakness (1 Pet. 3:18; 2 Cor. 13:4): and yet his sufferings are ascribed to his whole person, and even as that is denominated from his divine nature; just as what belongs to his divine nature is predicated of his person, as denominated from his human nature; for instance, his omnipresence, which is an attribute of Deity, is ascribed to Christ, denominated the Son of man; and no man bath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven (John 3:13): and so, on the other hand, the sufferings of Christ, which are peculiar to his human nature, are spoken of his person, as described from his divine nature; as when it is said, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory, and God purchased the church with his own blood (1 Cor. 2:8; Acts 20:28): this is owing to that strict, close, hypostatical, or personal union there is of the two natures in the Son of God; and hence is the efficacy of the blood, righteousness and sacrifice of Christ: his blood cleanseth from all (1 John 1:7), because it is the blood of him who is the Son of God; and his righteousness justifies from all sin, because it is the righteousness of God, of him who is God as well as man; and his sacrifice expiates all sin, and is a sufficient atonement for it, because it is the sacrifice of himself. Should it be asked, what it was that Christ suffered? The answer is, That he suffered in his name, credit, and reputation, which he willingly submitted to, and therefore is said to have made himself of no reputation (Phil. 2:8); he was content to be reckoned a worm, and no man (Ps. 22:6); he was traduced as a sinful man, as a seditious person, as having a devil, and doing his

miracles by his help and assistance. He suffered in his body, being beat and bruised, buffeted and scourged, pierced in his hands and feet with nails, in his side with a spear, and in his head with thorns; he suffered the painful, shameful and accursed death of the cross: he suffered in his soul, partly by the temptations of Satan, for he suffered being tempted (Heb. 2:18): and partly by enduring the wrath of God in the room and stead of his people; in the garden, when his soul became exceeding sorrowful even unto death (Matt. 26:38); and upon the cross, when his God and Father forsook him, and he cried out in the agony of his spirit, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me (Matt. 27:46)? his soul, as well as his body, was offered, and became a sacrifice for sin. And all this he endured, not on his own account; he was cut off in a judicial way, by the hand of divine justice, but not for himself (Dan. 11:26), not for any sin of his; he knew none, nor did any; but, he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; it was for the transgression of his people that he was stricken (Isa. 53:6, 8), smitten and afflicted of God; not for angels, and any sins of theirs, whose nature he did not assume, nor are they spared and saved; but for men, sinful men, the worst of men, the chief of sinners he suffered, the just for the unjust (1 Pet. 3:18); not for all the individuals of mankind; for his redeemed ones are redeemed from among men, and out of every kindred, tongue, people, and nation (Rev. 14:4; 5:9); they are a people Christ suffered for, his sheep he laid down his life for, the church he gave himself an offering and a sacrifice for unto God, of a sweet-smelling savour (Titus 2:14; John 10:15; Eph. 5:2, 25): and his ends in all his sufferings were to make peace with God for them, which is done by the blood of his cross; to procure the pardon of all their sins, which is obtained the same way; and to redeem them from all iniquity; which redemption is also through his blood; and to deliver them out of the hands of all their enemies, and particularly from him who had the power of death, the devil; and to bring many sons to glory, for which it was necessary the captain of their salvation should be made perfect through suffering. For there was an absolute necessity of them; Ought not Christ to have suffered these things (Luke 24:26)? He must; partly on the account of God, his counsels and decrees, his promises and prophecies. God resolved on saving sinners by Christ; he appointed him to be his salvation; he determined

he should suffer and die and he was given up to men, by the determinate counsel of God, who did to him “none other things than what his hand and counsel determined before should be done;” and to fulfill the decrees of God, it was necessary Christ should suffer for his council shall stand (Isa. 46:10); as well as to make good the many promises and prophecies concerning this matter, delivered out by the mouth of his holy prophets; and had he not suffered, how then could the scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be (Matt. 26:54)? And partly on account of Christ himself, his covenant- engagements, to do this part of his Father’s will, and the several predictions he himself gave out, that he should suffer many things of the scribes and Pharisees, and die and rise again. As also on the account of the Lord’s people, who otherwise could not be saved for here was a law broken, which must be fulfilled; not only its precepts obeyed, but its penalty, which was death, must be endured; injured and affronted justice to be satisfied, which could only be done by the sinner, or surety for him, suffering the demerit of sin; there was no other way of saving sinners but by the sufferings of Christ; consistent with the purposes of God, his counsel and covenant; with the engagements of Christ, and the happiness of the Lord’s people, these sufferings could not be avoided: it was not possible the cup should pass from him; could any other way have been found out, or these sufferings excused, that prayer of our Lord would have (Matt. 26:39) procured it.

Now all these sufferings of Christ were no other than what were foretold by Moses and the prophets. The first promise or hint of a Messiah, suggests, that he would be a suffering one, Thou shalt bruise his heel (Gen. 3:15); and all the prophets speak of him as subject to reproach and trouble, to pains and sorrows, to distress of every kind, and death itself. Read over the 22nd Psalm, and the 53rd chapter of Isaiah, and it will be abundantly evident from thence, and other passages, how the prophets testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow (1 Pet. 1:11): these show that he would be a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs; that he would be wounded, bruised, give his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair; that he would be brought to the dust of death, and his soul be poured out unto death; and that he should be buried, and make his grave with the wicked, and with the

rich in his death. Yea, the several circumstances of his sufferings and death are most minutely and exactly foretold in the writings of the prophets; as that he should be betrayed by one of his disciples, one that ate bread with him should lift up his heel against him (Ps. 41:9); that he should be sold for thirty pieces of silver, the price of a servant (Zech 11:12, 13; 13:7); the goodly price he was prized at by them; that he should be deserted by all the disciples, when he should be seized and smitten; that he should be crucified between two thieves, or numbered among the transgressors (Isa. 53:12); that the soldiers should part his garments, and cast lots on his vesture; that they should give him gall for his meat, and vinegar for his drink, and that his side should be pierced with a spear.

2dly, Another particular in which the apostle agreed with Moses and the prophets, is, that Christ should be the first of the resurrection of the dead, or should rise first from thence: that he is risen is certain, not only from the testimony of the women who first came to his sepulchre, and to whom he first appeared; but from the testimony of his disciples and others: of these, he was first seen of Cephas or Peter, then of the twelve, after that of above five hundred brethren at once; next of James, then of all the apostles; and even after his ascension he was seen by Stephen standing on the right hand of God; and last of all by our apostle, as here declared in the context, as one born out of due time (1 Cor. 15:6-8; Acts 7:55). Now the apostles of our Lord were chosen witnesses of God for this purpose (Acts 10:41), and were men of unquestionable characters; they were thoroughly acquainted with Christ, and could not be imposed upon nor were they over-credulous; nay they were incredulous to a fault, and in this very case; they believed not the first report of it from the women, and the two disciples that traveled with Jesus to Emmaus; and therefore Christ at his first appearance to them upbraided them with their unbelief, because they believed not them which had seen him after he was risen (Mark 16:11, 13, 14): and they had all the opportunities and advantages of satisfying themselves in this matter they could wish for; he shewed himself alive to them by in fallible proofs (Acts 1:3); he was seen of them for the space of forty days, during which time they frequently ate, and drank, and conversed with him; and they were men of probity and honesty, and had no sinister ends, nor worldly views to answer

by making such a report; but were sure to meet with reproach and disgrace, with rage and persecution, and with death itself in every shape wherever they came with it: nay, the resurrection of Christ is further confirmed by the testimonies of angels, who declared at the grave, that he was not there, but was risen (Luke 24:6); and not they, and men only, were witnesses of this, but the Holy Ghost also, by signs and wonders of his attending the declaration of it (Acts 5:31, 32). Moreover, not only Christ was to rise from the dead, but he was to rise first, as he did; for though there were others that rose before him, as to time, as the son of the widow of Sarepta, who was raised by Elijah, and the Shunamite's son by Elisha, and the daughter of Jairus, and the son of the widow of Nain, and Lazarus, by our Lord; yet these were raised, not by their own power, but by the power of another: whereas Christ was raised by his own power, and so declared to be the Son of God: they rose to die again, but he rose to an immortal life, never to die more; he was the first to whom God, in this sense, shewed the path of life (Ps. 16:11); for though he was dead he is alive, and lives for evermore, and has the keys of hell and death (Rev. 1:18): likewise, he was the first in dignity that rose from the dead; he who is the first-born among main, brethren, is the first-begotten from the dead; he rose not as a private person, but as the head of the body, the church, as the representative of all his people, and they were raised up together with him (Col. 1:18; Eph. 2:6); also he is the first in causality; he is the first cause of the resurrection; as by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. It is by virtue of his power, and in consequence of union with him, the saints will rise; he is the first-fruits of them that sleep (1 Cor. 15:20, 21, 23); the earnest and pledge of their resurrection; as sure as his dead body is raised, so sure shall theirs; his glorious body, raised, is the exemplar and pattern, according to which the bodies of the saints will be fashioned in the resurrection-morn and it will be owing to his voice, and to the exertion of his almighty power, that the graves will be opened, and the dead will come forth and appear before him (Isa. 26:9; Phil. 3:21; John 5:28, 29).

Now this is a very principal doctrine of the gospel, and of great moment and importance; on this the proof of Jesus' being the true Messiah, greatly depends; this is the sign he chose to give to the adulterous and unbelieving generation of the Jews, when they required

one of him, saying (Matt. 12:39), there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas; his lying three days and three nights in the whale's belly, a type of Christ's resurrection from the dead on the third day. This doctrine is of so much consequence, that were it not true, the whole of Christianity, the doctrine and preaching of it, the faith and hope of Christians would be affected with it, yea, be all vain (1 Cor. 15:14) and worthless. The resurrection of Christ has a very great concern in the justification of men; for he was raised again for our justification (Rom. 4:25); and it has an influence on their regeneration, to which it is sometimes ascribed; and Kith may be designed by the power of his resurrection (1 Pet. 1:3; Phil. 3:10), as well as the resurrection of his people at the last day, which depends upon it. And the whole of this doctrine is no other than what Moses and the prophets said should be; it is perfectly agreeable to the writings of the Old Testament; it was hinted at in the types, of Isaac being received from the dead as in a figure by his father, after he had given him up for dead for three days; and of Jonas being delivered from the belly of the whale, after he had lain in it three days and three nights; it was foretold by David, Isaiah, and Hosea particularly; who declare he should not see corruption in the grave, that his dead body should arise, and he, and his people with him, should be quickened after two days (Ps. 16:10; Isa. 26:19; Hos. 6:2).

3dly and lastly, Another thing the apostle had asserted, which Moses and the prophets had done before him, was, that Christ would be a light to Jews and Gentiles; or would shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles; first to the people of the Jews, and then to the nations of the world.

To the Jews. Christ was first sent to them, even to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matt. 15:24); and to them only; he was the minister of the circumcision (Rom. 15:8), or of the circumcised Jews, to fulfill to them what God had promised and foretold: and though they received him not, but rejected him, he sent his apostles to them first, and charged them not to go into the way of the Gentiles, or into any of the cities of the Samaritans; and when their commission was enlarged after his resurrection, they were ordered to begin their ministry at Jerusalem (Matt. 10:6, 7; Luke 24:47). Now these people, notwithstanding they had the law and statutes of God, his word and ordinances, and the divine oracles committed to them, yet were

in great darkness, and had no true understanding of them; in those times there was a veil over their minds in reading the books of the Old Testament concerning Christ, and the things of the gospel; they were blinded, and so were their leaders the scribes and Pharisees. Christ came a light unto them, and the light of grace and truth came by him; and some through his ministry, and that of his apostles, were spiritually and savingly enlightened.

To the Gentiles. These were in great darkness before the coming of Christ; they were without a divine revelation, without any knowledge of God and Christ; they were suffered to walk in their own ways of darkness, superstition, and idolatry; their times before this were times of ignorance and blindness: but when Christ came, he sent his apostles to them with the gospel to enlighten them; and they carried it throughout the world; and by means of it, many were called and turned from gross darkness to marvelous light. And now all this was agreeable to the writings of the Old Testament, which represent Christ as the sun of righteousness; as that great light which should arise and shine on the Galilean Jews, that sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death, and should also be a light of the Gentiles (Mal. 4:2; Isa. 9:2; 42:6); and so good old Simeon understood the prophecies concerning him, that he should be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of the people of Israel (Luke 2:32).

The use of all this is, a wonderful confirmation of divine revelation, of the truth of Christianity, and of Jesus being the true Messiah; for since the various things foretold in the Old Testament by Moses and the prophets, at sundry times and in divers manners, appear to be fulfilled in the New, this proves the revelation to be of God; that Christianity stands upon a sure foundation, and that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ promised and prophesied of from the beginning of the world. And this may serve to recommend the writings of the Old Testament to the reading and perusal of men; since they testify of Christ so clearly, concerning his person, office, and grace, and are so profitable for doctrine, and instruction in righteousness (John 5:39; 2 Tim. 3:16): we have here also the plan of the gospel-ministry; that it is a suffering, risen, and exalted Saviour, held forth as a light to Jews and Gentiles. This was the plan of the ministry of the apostle Paul; and no man need be ashamed to copy after such an example, who was the greatest preacher that ever was

upon the earth, excepting our Lord Jesus Christ.

And now, my friends, If call you to dear witness that these truths, and what have been briefly suggested in this discourse, have been what I have chiefly insisted upon in the course of this Lecture; namely, the doctrines of a Trinity of persons in the Godhead; of the person and office of Christ; of the person and operations of the Blessed Spirit; of special and distinguishing grace, as it appears in election, redemption, justification, adoption, regeneration, sanctification, and the final perseverance of the saints; with other doctrines which are in consequence of them, and in connection with them. And now I, am about to take my leave of you, and this Lecture, and do: not through any dislike of the work I have been so long engaged in; not through any disgust at any thing I have met with; not through any discouragement for want of attendance or subscription; I have nothing to complain of; the Lecture was never in better circumstance than it now is. But I find my natural strength will not admit me to preach so frequently, and with so much constancy, as I have done for many years past; being now on the decline of life, in the fortieth year of my ministry; so that it is time for me to have done with extra-service, I mean, service out of the church of which I am pastor. But a more principal reason is, that I may have a little more time and leisure to attend to, and finish an arduous work upon my hands,

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Part of which work, I shall immediately propose for publication; and if I meet with encouragement, the publishing of this will be an additional weight upon me; and I have no other way of easing myself, but by dropping the Lecture; and these, and these only, are my reasons for so doing. And now as I would be, and am, thankful to the God of my life, who has given me so much health and strength, to carry on this Lecture for such a course of years, with very little interruption for want of health; so I would, and do return thanks to you, my friends, who have so long encouraged and supported me with your presence and purse; and I heartily wish and pray, that you may be preserved from the prevailing errors of the times, and may be kept stedfast in the faith of the

gospel, and abide by the truths and ordinances of it; and that the means of grace you attend upon, in season, and out of season, here, or elsewhere, may he

blessed unto you for your comfort and edification; and that you may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and be made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints of light.

3 THE SURE PERFORMANCE OF PROPHECY.

A SERMON,

Preached at a Wednesday's Evening Lecture, in
GREAT EAST-CHEAP,

Jan. 1, 1755.

Isaiah 9:7 (latter part)

—The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

In my last annual Sermon save one, on this occasion, I discoursed concerning the glorious things foretold of the church of God in the latter day, both in the spiritual and personal reign of Christ; and now I shall treat of the certain performance of those things. I gave an hint in my last annual Discourse, that whereas a great portion of prophecy, particularly in the book of Revelation, has been already fulfilled, there is great reason to believe the rest will be; and this hint I shall pursue and enlarge upon at this time; and argue from the actual accomplishment of some things relating to the kingdom of Christ, to the certain completion of others; and into this train and course of reasoning I shall be naturally and easily led in considering the words of my text; which refer partly to the performance of some things foretold, since fulfilled, and partly to others which yet remain to be accomplished; and as sure as the one is fulfilled, so sure shall the other. The things that are already performed are,

The appearance of Christ in the land of Galilee, which is predicted (ver. 1) and which land, as it had been afflicted by the Assyrians, and was to be moved so by the Romans, as it has been in the times of Vespasian and Titus, as the history of Josephus shows; and as it was vile and mean, and lightly esteemed of by men, it should be made glorious and honorable, as the word signifies, particularly by the presence, ministry and miracles of Christ in it; and to this purpose it is quoted and applied by the evangelist Matthew (4:13-23), from whence it appears, that Christ first began to preach in that country: that he called his first disciples near the sea of Galilee; and that he went through that whole land, and taught and preached in the synagogues in it, and healed all diseases; here he wrought his first miracle of turning water into wine; here he lived the greatest part of his private life; and here he resided chiefly during his public ministry; here he promised

to meet his disciples after his resurrection, and here he did: in short, being educated and brought up in this country in the former part of his life, and conversing here so much in the latter part of it; the Jews concluded he was born here, and confronted his Messiahship with it, shall Christ come out of Galilee (John 7:41)? And hence he was called by them Jesus of Galilee, and his followers Galileans: all which confirm the truth of this prophecy, and the performance of it; and it is with respect to this, no doubt, that the ancient Jews expected that the Messiah would first appear in Galilee.

Another event in consequence of the former is foretold, and that is, the illumination of the Galileans by the ministry of Christ among them (ver. 2). These people were an ignorant and illiterate people; their common language was rustic, rude and barbarous; their speech betrayed them, as Peter's did, who therefore was supposed to be a Galilean; they were reckoned a people that knew not the law, and were accursed: it was observed, that no prophet arose among them, and no good thing was expected of them; and so are here said to walk in darkness, and to dwell in the land of the shadow of death; and yet these people, according to this prophecy, were first favored with seeing Christ, the light of the world, both with their bodily eyes and with the eyes of their understanding, enlightened by his ministry; the great light of the gospel shining in them, removed their darkness, and filled them with spiritual light and knowledge. Hence, as here predicted,

There was a multiplication of them; thou hast multiplied the nation, that is, Galilee of the nations; which was multiplied with glory and honor, with light and knowledge, with joy and comfort, and with a number of truly gracious souls that believed in Christ; the five hundred brethren to whom our Lord appeared at once after his resurrection, seem to be Galileans, when he showed himself on a mountain in their country to the eleven disciples; for it will not be easy to say where there was such a number of brethren, or believers, but in Galilee; it is certain their number at Jerusalem was not so large; being about an hundred and twenty.

It is foretold that there should be great joy upon all this; indeed our version renders it not increased the joy; but the Keri, or marginal reading of the Hebrew text is, and increased joy unto it, unto the nation: or

it may be rendered with an interrogation, as it is by some, and may take in both the textual and marginal reading, hast thou not increased joy unto it? and in one way or other it must be rendered, or otherwise there is a glaring contradiction in the text ; for it follows, they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil; phrases expressive of the greatest joy among men; as there doubtless was among the Galileans when Christ was present with them, and his gospel preached to them; which is a joyful sound, and brings good tidings of good things, peace, pardon, righteousness, and salvation by the incarnate Redeemer; and so joy along with it, wherever it comes with power, and is received and embraced; as it did in Samaria, and among the Gentiles.

The ground and reason of this joy would be a deliverance from a burdensome yoke, and from a staff and rod of affliction; which was effected by Christ, who has delivered all his people, and so those believing Galileans, from the yoke of the ceremonial law, a yoke of bondage intolerable; from the tyranny of Satan, and from the servitude of silk; and which should be wrought as easily, and as suddenly, as the deliverance of Israel from the Midianites by Gideon; Christ's own arm bringing salvation to him, and his people, without the help of man: for every battle of the warrior is with confused noise; with the shoutings of soldiers, blowing of trumpets, beating of drums, rattling of armor, and garments rolled in blood; the garments of the slain rolled in their own blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire; through the flaming love and burning zeal and affection of Christ for his people, who, Is prophesied of as the author of all this, and is the child that should be born, and the Son that should be given; for not Hezekiah is here meant, as the Jews would have it, who at the time of this prophecy was at least ten or eleven years of age, and to whom the august titles after given can by no means agree. The child here is the same that is prophesied of, chapter 7:14, that should be born of a virgin, and called Immanuel; even Jesus the son of Mary, born in the city of David, a Saviour, Christ the Lord, whose birth the angel declared to the shepherds; the Word that has been made flesh, and has dwelt among men; he is the Son of God, his only-begotten Son, his Son in such sense as no other is, and is the unspeakable gift of his love to men. He is here represented as a king,

on whose shoulders the government should be; not meaning the government of the whole world, which belongs to him as God and creator; the kingdom is his, and he is the governor among the nations (Ps. 22:28); but the government of the church, his mediatorial kingdom, which is delegated to him, and devolved upon him as king of Zion, king of saints; a kingdom appointed to him, and for which he is and will be accountable to his Father, and will give it up to him complete and perfect and God shall be all in all; his names and titles follow, and his name shall be called ; not that he should be called in common by all the following names, but that he should be or answer to what is signified by them: so he is wonderful in his person as God and man, having two natures united in him; in his offices, in his life and death, in his resurrection from the dead, ascension to heaven, session at the right hand of God, and second coming to judgment: counsellor or, as the Septuagint rendered it, the angel of the great council: who assisted in the everlasting council held concerning the salvation of men; and who by his Spirit in his word, and by his ministers, gives the most wholesome counsel and advice to saints and sinners respecting their spiritual and eternal welfare: the mighty God, as appears from the perfections of deity in him, from the works done by him, from the worship given to him, and from his names and titles: the everlasting Father, who has a spiritual seed and offspring given him, whom he loves with an everlasting love, takes an everlasting care of, and makes everlasting provision for: the prince of Peace, the author of peace between God and men, between Jew and Gentile, and the giver of spiritual and eternal peace. Now all the above things the zeal of the Lord of hosts has performed already.

The things which remain to be performed, are the increase of Christ's Government, and the peace, order and establishment, of it; which are predicted in the beginning of this verse, the latter part of which I have read unto you. The kingdom of Christ is set up in the world, and there was an increase of it in the first times of the Gospel, both in Judea and in the Gentile world, but it was but small in comparison of what it will be; the stone was cut out without hands, but it is not yet, as it will be, a great mountain, which will fill the whole earth; as yet the kingdoms of this world are not Christ's, as they will be, when he shall be king over all the earth; when the Jews will be converted, and the

fullness of the Gentiles will be brought in. Little peace has attended the kingdom and church of Christ as yet, but there will be abundance of it, when there will be an increase of his government; when his “kingdom shall be from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth,” then there will be peace without and peace within; war shall cease from among the nations of the earth, and they shall learn it no more; the church will, be free from persecution, and no more annoyed with it; there will be none to hurt and destroy in all the Lord’s holy mountain; and there will be no more animosities and divisions among the saints; “Ephraim shall not envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim” (Isa. 2:4; 11:9, 13); and though Christ is upon the throne of his Father David, and has appointed and ordered the form of government, and enacted laws, and settled ordinances for the execution of it; yet it does not appear with that order and regularity as it will, when the church shall be established upon the top of the mountains, and so continue, being an everlasting kingdom. Now from the exact performance of all the above things in the context, and of all others, we may reasonably and strongly conclude the certain accomplishment of all things relating to the increase, peace, prosperity, order and settlement of the kingdom of Christ; and this is what I shall at present insist upon, in the following method.

I shall consider the things that remain to be performed, and the certain performance of them.

Show to what the performance of them is to be ascribed; to the zeal of the Lord of hosts.

The things that are not yet fulfilled, but will be, as may be argued from the performance of many things already relating to the same subject: and these are the destruction of antichrist, the more extensive call of the Gentiles, and the conversion of the Jews, the setting up by these means the kingdom of Christ in greater glory in the world, and his second coming, which will introduce his personal reign.

First, The destruction of antichrist which as I have observed in the Sermon first referred to, is the leading event to the glory of Christ’s spiritual kingdom; which cannot greatly increase, nor the peace of it, so long as this enemy stands in the way; and therefore he must be removed, as it is foretold he shall be. All that believe a divine revelation allow that there is, or will be, what is commonly called antichrist; not only Protestants, but even Jews and Papists: though both these latter have

very foolish and fabulous notions concerning him; yet a general notion they have, which is founded on prophecy.

I shall therefore lay before you the more considerable prophecies concerning him, and observe what are fulfilled, and from thence argue the certain performance of those which relate to his utter and final ruin. I shall not take notice of what is only incidentally and occasionally dropped concerning him: such incidental and occasional hints we have as early as the times of David. In his Psalms there are frequent hints of him, and of his destruction; as that the man of the earth shall no more oppress, when the Lord shall reign for ever, and the heathen or Gentiles, a name sometimes given to Papists, shall perish out of his land; and when the Messiah is said to wound the head over many countries; that is, antichrist; who has reigned over the kings and kingdoms of the earth: and respect seems to be had to his followers, when it is wished, that the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and the wicked be no more (Ps. 10:16, 18; 110:6; 104:35); at the end of which verse the word Hallelujah is first used, and which is used at the destruction of mystical Babylon. But I shall only observe such as purposely and largely predict him and his ruin, and shall begin,

1st, With the famous prophecy of him in the seventh of Daniel, in which the prophet is said to have a vision of four beasts rising out of the sea; that is, of the four monarchies rising up in the world, the Babylonian, Persian, Grecian and Roman: the fourth and last beast is the Roman empire, said to have ten horns; now among these rises up a little horn, different from them, and which plucks up three of them; and it is said to have “eyes like the eyes of a man, and a look more stout than its fellows; to have a mouth speaking great things against the most high, and to make war with the saints, and prevail over them, and wear them out; and to think to change times and laws;” and thus it is to continue until a time, and times, and the dividing of time, and then to have his dominion taken away, destroyed and consumed. Now this horn cannot be Antiochus Epiphanes, as Grotius, Junius, and others have thought; for not a single person or king is meant by a horn, but a kingdom or state, and a succession of rulers and governors in it; as by the other ten horns are meant ten kingdoms (ver. 24). And besides, this little horn is a part of the fourth, and not of the third

beast, to whom Antiochus belonged; and was to rise, not in the third, but in the fourth monarchy, not in the Grecian, but in the Roman empire; and moreover was to continue until the coming of Christ, even until the spiritual coming of Christ in the latter day, and when his spiritual kingdom will take place in the world and as there is no other that has appeared in the Roman empire but antichrist, or the Pope of Rome, to whom the characters agree as to him; it may be safely concluded he is intended, and as will more fully appear by the account of him; who described,

By his name and title, a little horn. An horn is an emblem of strength, power and authority, and denotes a strong and powerful principality or kingdom, as the ten horns do, as before observed; the allusion is to the horns of beasts, in which their strength lies, and with which they push their enemies and defend themselves: this horn indeed was but a little one, rose from small beginnings, and at its height was but such, in comparison of others; so the Pope of Rome, as to his ecclesiastic power, was but at first a common minister, pastor, or bishop of a single church; then became metropolitan of all Italy, and at last commenced universal bishop: though this seems rather to regard him as a temporal prince; who was but very little indeed at his first appearance; and, when considered only in his own domains, at highest, was but little in comparison of the other horns or kingdoms; though being allowed to exercise power in the rest of the kingdoms, and their power and strength being given to him, he was so formidable that none could withstand him, or make war with him, (Rev. 17:13; 13:4).

By his rise and original from among the other horns or kingdoms, and his connexion with them; he is said to come up among them. When the northern barbarous nations broke, into the empire, and set up ten kingdoms in it, this little horn sprung up among them; and while they were forming kingdoms for themselves, he was contriving one for himself; they arose at the same time, and reigned together: so the ten horns in the Revelation, which are the same with these, and are there, as here, interpreted ten kings, are said to receive power, as kings, one hour with the beast (Rev. 17:12), the same as this little horn. Indeed in verse 24 this little horn is said to rise after them, the other ten; not after the ten kingdoms were at end, but after they were set up, and constituted, and established; as it was proper they should, since they

were to give their strength, power and kingdom to the beast (Rev. 17:13), by which he became a horn, a temporal prince. The Septuagint renders it behind them; which Mr. Mede understands of his growing up unawares, imperceptibly, unnoticed, and unobserved by them, till he overtopped them. He is said to be divers or different from the first horns; they only had and exercised a secular power, but he, besides his temporal authority, had and exercised an ecclesiastic and spiritual one; he not only had power over the bodies and estates, but over the souls and consciences of men; and even over the other ten horns or kingdoms, which they had not over one another. hence he is represented by two beasts in the Revelation, the one describing him in his secular, the other in his spiritual authority, as we shall see anon; and this made him different from other kings and princes: Moreover, before him three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots, or, as in verse 20, before whom three fell, and which is interpreted (v. 24) of his subduing three kings or kingdoms; which according to Sir Isaac Newton, were the exarchate of Ravenna, the kingdom of the Lombards, and the senate and dukedom of Rome. The bishop of Cloger, more lately, has expressed them thus, Campagna of Rome, the exarchate of Ravenna, and the region of Pentapolis; these were plucked up by Pipin and Charlemagne, kings of France, and given to the Pope, and were confirmed to him by their successor Lewis the pious; and make up what is called the patrimony of St. Peter; and in memory of this a piece of Mosaic work was made, and put up in the Pope's palace; in which were represented St. Peter with three keys in his lap, signifying the three keys of the three parts of his patrimony; and to show his sovereignty over them, the pope to this day wears a triple crown. How surprisingly does the prophecy open unto us! An event is here predicted above a thousand years, twelve or thirteen hundred years, before it was accomplished.

This little horn is further described by its eyes and look; its eyes were like the eyes of man; strange for a horn to have eyes, stranger still for the horn of a beast to have eyes as the eyes of man. These are thought by some to denote the pretended sanctity and religion of the pope of Rome, or antichrist, who, though a beast, would be thought to be a man, a religious creature; others think they design his pretended modesty, humanity and courtesy, when he is all the reverse; but rather his insight into the sacred scriptures, and

controversies about them; he pretends to setting himself up to be an infallible interpreter of them, and judge of all controversies; though these eyes seem better to signify what he really had, and not what he pretended to; and so may denote his sagacity and penetration, his craft and cunning, his looking out sharp to get what power and dominion he could, both temporal and spiritual; and his watchfulness and carefulness to keep what he had got, that none encroached upon it, or took part of it away from him and they may also design all instruments and means by which he inspects his own affairs, and those of others; particularly the order of the Jesuits, which are, as his eyes, every where; spies in all kingdoms and courts, that pry into the mysteries of state, and by one means or another get knowledge of what is done in the councils and cabinets of princes: and how many eyes this horn had, is not said; nor is it easy to say how many the Pope has; he has as many as Argus, and more too, and these sharp and piercing; his look is said to be more stout than his fellows; either than his fellow-bishops, claiming an authority over them, giving out that he is universal bishop or rather, than his fellow-horns, the kings and princes of the earth: having a look more bold and daring, more arrogant and impudent; assuming that power and authority to himself they do not; all power in heaven, and in earth; a power to depose kings, and absolve their subjects from allegiance to them; a power over the minds and consciences of men or, as it may be rendered, whose appearance is greater than his fellows; makes a greater show and figure, appears in greater pomp, splendor and glory than the kings; unless this can be understood of the society and college of his cardinals.

This horn is also described by its mouth, and what that spoke; it is said to speak great things, yea very great things; as the Pope of Rome has, in favor of himself; as that he his head of the church, and Christ's vicar on earth: declares himself infallible, and to have a power over the kings and princes of the earth; nay, he is said to speak great words against the Most High; setting himself up as a rival, and upon an equality with him; taking upon him to forgive sin, and to make laws binding on the consciences of men, contrary to the scriptures; and preferring his own decrees, and the traditions of the church, to the word of God; and thus the beast of Rome is described in Revelation 13:5, 6.

This horn is described by what he did, or thought to

do; he is said to make war with the saints, and prevail against them and wear them out; which respects the wars of the popes of Rome with the Waldenses and Albigenses, whom they slew in great numbers, and got the victory over; and what by their oppressions and persecutions, murders and massacres, have tired and near wore out the patience of the saints and whereas the beast, the same with this little horn, shall make war with the two witnesses, and overcome and slay them; the saints will then seem to be quite wore out and consumed, when their dead carcasses will lie in the streets of the, great city unburied; so that they will seem to be all destroyed, and be thought by the Papists to be so; and hence that rejoicing and sending gifts to each other, because these witnesses are no more (Rev. 11:8-10), also he shall think to change times and laws, which in chapter 2:21 is ascribed to God as peculiar to him, and joined with removing and setting up kings; which is what the Pope of Rome has taken to himself; to alter the forms and constitutions of kingdoms, and to set up and pull down kings at his pleasure, and free their subjects from obligation and obedience to them; as also to change the use of times and seasons, by setting apart holy days for the commemoration of his canonized saints; and by appointing such days in the week, and such a season in the year, for abstinence from meats; as well as also to change laws, the laws of God and man, and dispense with both, and make new laws and canons to be observed. And this power of his was to continue until a time, and times, and the dividing of time, or half a time, as in Revelation 12:14, where the same way of speaking is used, borrowed from hence; time signifies a year, the longest measure of time we have, times two years, and a dividing of time half a year; in all, three years and a half; the same with the forty two mouths, the time of the beast's continuance, (Rev. 13:5) and of the treading down of the holy city (Rev. 11:2), and which answer to 1260 days, the witnesses prophesy in sackcloth, verse 3, by which are meant so many years; and so long the little horn or beast is to continue; but when this time is up, then his dominion shall be taken away, and be consumed and destroyed; yea, because of the words this horn spake, the beast will be slain, his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame (Dan. 7:11, 26), the whole empire shall be destroyed, the capital of it shall be burnt with fire, the ten kings shall hate the whore, eat her flesh, and burn her with fire; this will be

the catastrophe of the little horn. And now, who that attentively considers how every part of this vision and prophecy has been exactly fulfilled, except the last, can hesitate in his mind, or doubt one moment of the certain performance of that, even the utter destruction of this little horn, or antichrist? The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this, as well as all the rest.

2dly, Another famous prophecy of antichrist, and his destruction, we have in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12 where he is described,

By his names and characters; he is called the man of sin; one addicted and given to sin in a grievous manner, not notoriously sinful, a spiritual wickedness in high places; one guilty of all manner of sin, as the Popes of Rome have been; lying, perjury, adultery, incest, sodomy, simony, sorcery, and every thing that is bad: hence their seat is called Sodom and Egypt, and the antichristian whore, the mother of harlots, and abominations of the earth, all centering here; and therefore with great propriety is he said to be the son of perdition, a name given to Judas that betrayed our Lord (John 17:12) and rightly belongs to antichrist, who is the Apollyon and destroyer of the souls of men, by his false doctrine and worship, and will himself go into perdition: he is also represented as he that opposeth; that opposeth Christ, and is an adversary of his, and therefore called antichrist: he opposes him in his offices; in his kingly office, by asserting himself to be the head of the church; in his priestly office, by pretending to offer up Christ again in the sacrifice of the mass, when he by one offering has perfected the whole work of atonement; and in his prophetic office by coining new doctrines and articles of faith moreover, he exalteth himself above all that is called God; above the gods of the heathens, who ascribe the government of the heavens to one, of the earth to another, of the sea to another, and of the winds to another; but this haughty creature assumes all power to himself, in heaven, earth and hell: he exalts himself above angels, who are called gods (Ps. 8:4). In his bulls he has commanded angels to take such a soul out of purgatory, and to carry such a one to heaven: and above all civil magistrates, who are called gods (Ps. 82:5), assuming a power over them to depose them at pleasure making an emperor to hold his stirrup whilst he alighted from his horse and got upon it, and trampling on his neck, using those words in Psalm 91:13, and throwing a king under

his table to lick bones, whilst he was eating: yea, he sitteth in the temple of God as god, shewing himself that he is god; he rose up and appeared in the church of God, at least so by profession, where he took his place, and, becoming apostate, here he continues, and shows himself as if he was God; admitting his creatures and flatterers to call him God on earth, and our Lord God the Pope; receiving worship from them, and assuming that which is the peculiar prerogative of God, to forgive sin. Moreover, he is called the mystery of iniquity; Mystery is one of the names of the whore of Babylon, and was formerly put upon the mitres of the Popes: it may respect both doctrines and practices, which were set afoot in the apostles time, and began to appear and work in Simon Magus, and his followers, and which centered in the papacy. Once more, he is called the wicked one (anom), a lawless person; that dispenses with the laws of God and man, setting up himself above all law; giving out that he is not subject to any human judicature; that he is the spiritual man that judges all, but is judged of none, being not accountable to any; yea, though he should lead millions of souls to hell, yet none ought to say, "O Lord the Pope, what dost thou?"

He is described in this prophecy by his appearance, and manner of entrance, and his influence over men. There was something that let or hindered him from making his appearance sooner than he did, which being removed, he was to be and has been revealed; this was the Roman empire and emperors, which so long as they were, and Rome the seat of their empire, he could not take his place and seat, and appear in his pomp and grandeur; but this let was removed, partly by Constantine conquering the heathen emperors, abolishing paganism, and establishing Christianity in the empire, and bestowing great riches on the church; but more so by removing the seat of the empire from Rome to Byzantium, called after his name Constantinople, which opened the way for the bishop of Rome to take his place; and chiefly and last of all, the empire being divided into eastern and western, the latter became extinct in Augustulus, the last of the Roman emperors, who resigned to Odoacer, who took upon him the title, not of emperor of Rome but king of Italy, and retired, from Rome to Ravenna; and the seat being empty, was soon filled by the Pope of Rome, and he quickly appeared in his grandeur and glory; whose coming was after the working of Satan;

he came in like him, a deceiver, a liar, and a murderer, and under his influence, and by his assistance: with all power; with pretensions to all power in heaven and in even to power next to omnipotence: and signs and lying wonders; pretending to work miracles, though all were shams and lies, of which the popish legends are full; and under a show of righteousness deceived many; and meeting with carnal professors that loved not the truth, they were given up in a judicial manner to believe his lies, as, that he was head of the church, Christ's vicar, had a power to forgive sin, and grant pardons and indulgences; particularly that great lie of transubstantiation, that he and his priests have power to transmute the bread and wine in the Lord's supper into the very body and blood of Christ; receiving which lies spoken in hypocrisy, they bring damnation upon themselves. And here give me leave,

To observe another passage, though not in this prophecy, yet delivered out by the same inspired writer, which predicts some of the notorious doctrines and practices of antichrist; it is in 1 Timothy 4:1-3 where the apostle foretells a departure from the faith in after-times, and the appearance of seducing spirits, who should teach doctrines of devils. The doctrines of demon-worship; like that of the heathens, their demons being a middle sort of beings between God and men, and mediated between them; and such are the angels and saints departed, the Papists direct men to pray unto; and which is called worshipping devils and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone, and wood (Rev. 9:20), forbidding to marry; matrimony, though God's ordinance, and honorable, is forbidden popish priests, and celibacy is enjoined, under a notion of sanctity and purity; and which is the source of great debauchery and uncleanness among them: commanding to abstain from meats: as on Wednesdays and Fridays in every week, and during the quadragesima or Lent, the fast of forty days. And now whereas it is most clearly manifest, that all these characters of antichrist, and all these things predicted of him hundreds of years before his appearance, exactly answers to the Pope of Rome, and have been punctually performed; there can be no reason to doubt of the certain performance of what the same prophetic spirit has declared concerning his destruction; as that the Lord shall consume him with his mouth, and destroy him with the brightness of his coming; that is, by the spiritual and powerful preaching of the gospel, attended with the presence

of Christ in the beginning of his spiritual reign; when the whole earth will be enlightened with his glory, and antichrist, and all antichristian darkness, doctrine and worship shall disappear; and the rather this is to be credited, since it receives confirmation from a prophecy of Isaiah, delivered many hundreds of years before this, in much the same language, and from whom the apostle seems to borrow his words; for speaking of Christ, he says, he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked: that wicked lawless one, antichrist: The Lord in his great zeal will perform this.

3dly, I will just observe, in brief, the account we have of antichrist in the book of the Revelation: in chapter thirteen he is described, both in his civil and ecclesiastic capacity, by two beasts; the one rising out of the sea, that is, out of the commotions made in the empire by the northern nations; when he appeared as a temporal prince, having his seat on the seven-hill-city, signified by seven heads, and power over the ten kingdoms or ten horns; and is compared to a leopard for his swiftness and insidiousness in obtaining power; to a bear for his cruelty, and to a lion for his strength and terror; and became so powerful, notwithstanding the deadly wound, as to be admired and feared by all the world; and is described much in the same manner as the little horn in Daniel, having a mouth speaking blasphemies against God, his tabernacle and people: and power to make war with the saints, and overcome them, and permission to continue exactly the same time. The other beast, an emblem of him in his ecclesiastic capacity, is said to rise out of the earth; from the dregs of Christians, earthly, carnal and corrupt, from an apostate church; and pretending to great humility, calling himself *servus servorum*; having two horns like a lamb, as if very meek, humble and harmless; but spake like a dragon, when he uttered his bulls and anathemas: he is represented as exercising all the power he had as a temporal prince, to oblige the world to worship him, and as doing lying miracles to deceive men; enjoining them to worship his image on pain of death, and causing all to have his mark in their right hand or forehead, or else be deprived of the common privilege of mankind in buying and selling; all which has been done by the Romish antichrist; and the account is concluded with the number of his name 666, about which there have been many conjectures; but none bid fairer than the ancient one of Ireneus,

which is Lateinos, the letters of which amount to this number; this was the name of a man, a king of Italy. Now the church of Rome is the Latin church: its service is in the Latin tongue; the Pope is head of it; and his seat is in the Latin empire. In chapter seventeen antichrist is represented by a woman sitting on a beast with seven heads and ten horns, which designs him in his twofold capacity as before; and as sitting on many waters, interpreted of people and nations; and is described as a whore by her dress and attire, by her fornication, filthiness and murder; all which exactly points at, and has been fulfilled in the church of Rome. And now, who that considers these things, and observes the exact accomplishment of them, but will see abundant reason to believe, that what is said of the ruin of this antichrist shall be performed; that the seven vials of God's wrath shall be poured out on the antichristian states; that the whore shall be burnt with fire, and that her seat Rome, mystical Babylon, shall meet with the same fate, and the beast go into perdition? The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this (Rev. 16:1; 17:8, 16; 18:10).

Secondly, The increase of the kingdom of Christ in the latter day, foretold in this verse, will be owing to the vast numbers of Gentiles that shall be called, and to the conversion of the Jews. Many and ancient are the prophecies concerning the calling of the Gentiles; as, that when Shiloh, or the Messiah should come, the gathering of the people should be to him; that he should be set up as an ensign to them, and they should seek to him, and he be a light unto them, and the covenant of them; and the abundance of them should be converted to him (Gen. 49:10; Isa. 11:10; 43:6; 60:4, 5); which had their completion in part in the first times of the gospel, by the ministry of the apostles every where; and especially when the Roman empire, or the whole world became Christian; and also at the time of the Reformation; but as yet they have not had their full accomplishment, as they will when the kingdoms of this world shall become Christ's, and all kings and nations shall serve and worship him: and since they have been in part fulfilled, we may be assured of the full performance of them; since we have seen the kingdom of the stone cut out without hands, as Mr. Mede distinguishes, we need not doubt of the kingdom of the mountain, which will fill the whole earth, taking place: the conversion of the Jews, as a body, as a nation of men, is what is predicted,

and will make much for the increase and glory of Christ's kingdom. That people have been of old the subject of prophecies, which in a variety of instances have been fulfilled. It was foretold to their great ancestor, Abraham, that they his posterity should be strangers, and serve in a land not theirs in much affliction four hundred years, and then come out with great substance (Gen. 15:13, 14), as it is well known they did at that exact time; their going to captivity in Babylon, and their return from thence at the end of 70 years, were predicted many years before these events (Jer. 25:11, 12; 29:10), which were punctually accomplished: the various straits, difficulties, and distresses these people should come into their sins, at different times; the besieging of their cities, and the dreadful famine they should be reduced to, so as to eat their own flesh, and delicate women their own children, as at the siege of Samaria, and at the siege of Jerusalem, both by the Chaldeans and Romans; and their dispersion all over the world, and even the very characters of their enemies, are given us, being of a far country, of a fierce look, and of a language they understood not: all these, with many other things, are foretold by Moses in Deuteronomy 28:20-68, some of them, at the distance of two thousand years, and which have had their exact accomplishment: but what is most surprising of all, is the continuance of this people as a distinct people, notwithstanding all this, as it was said they should, and as the Lord promised he would not cast them away, destroy them utterly, or make a full end of them, as he has of other nations their enemies (Lev. 26:44; Jer. 30:11); who are no more, nor their names to be heard of any where, as the Edomites, Moabites, Ammonites, and others; but these are still in being; yea, what is more wonderful, that several of those nations among whom they are now dispersed, have been even since their scattering among them, so mixed and confounded with other people, that they are not able to distinguish one from another, or trace their original, as particularly in Spain, France and England; yet, these people remain a distinct people, as

they do every where, without any king over them, not having their own magistrates, and without the observance of many of their own laws: now what can be the reason of this? no other, than as the tribe of Judah was kept a distinct tribe till the Messiah came, that it might appear that he sprung from it, according

to prophecy; so the Jews are kept a distinct people unto the time of their conversion, that they may be manifest to all the world. Moreover, even the ignorance and blindness of this people, their unbelief and rejection of the Messiah, and their obstinate persistence in it, are the fulfilling of prophecy; both our Lord, and the apostle Paul, when they speak (John 12:37-41; Rom. 11:8-10) of these things, refer to ancient prophecy, as being no other than what were foretold. Seeing then all these things concerning them have been accomplished, we ought most firmly to believe, that what concerns them in futurity also will; as that they shall seek and find the Lord, and David their king; that a spirit of grace and supplication shall be poured on them, and they shall look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn; and shall turn to the Lord, and receive him as the Messiah, and embrace his gospel and ordinances; and so all Israel shall be saved in a spiritual sense, and shall return to their own land, and resettle there, as is foretold they shall (Hos. 3:5; Zech. 12:10; 2 Cor. 3:16; Rom. 11:25, 26; Ezek. 37:21, 22): The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

Thirdly, By the above means the kingdom of Christ will be set up in the world in greater glory than now it is, of which we have no reason to doubt; especially when we observe the several steps which were to be taken, and have been taken towards the advancement of it; as the opening of the seven seals, and blowing of six of the trumpets. The seven seals are so many several steps, and gradual advances to introduce the gospel, kingdom and church of Christ into the world. The opening of the first seal brought the gospel into the Gentile world, in which Christ is represented riding on a white horse with a bow, and conquering, and to conquer; the second, third and fourth seals opened, brought the sword, famine and pestilence into the Roman empire, as God's judgments for the ill usage and persecution of the preachers and professors of the gospel; and the fifth seal represents the souls under the altar crying for vengeance on their enemies for shedding their blood; and the sixth opened brings utter destruction on the whole Pagan empire, as such, signified by the darkening of the sun, moon and stars, and by other things. And here one might have expected that the kingdom of Christ would have been now set up in all its glory: but though here were peace and prosperity introduced into the church of God, and it was greatly enlarged; yet the worldly wealth

and riches brought into it, issued in corruption and apostasy of it; and brought in the papacy, which arose, and continued, and still does, and stands in the way of Christ's kingdom. The seventh seal opened, brings in seven angels with seven trumpets to blow, six of which are blown already. The first four blown, brought in the northern nations, the Goths, Huns, Vandals, &c., into the western empire, which overrun several countries, entered Italy, sacked and burnt Rome itself, signified by the burning mountain, and spread darkness and ignorance over all the empire, designed by the smiting of the sun, moon, and stars; and which broke it to pieces, and divided it into ten kingdoms, signified by the ten toes in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and the ten horns in Daniel's vision. The fifth trumpet brought in Mahomet and his Saracens, the locusts; and the sixth trumpet the Turks, the four angels loosed at the river Euphrates into the eastern empire, which set up a kingdom there that still continues. And now since six of these trumpets have been blown, and the effects have followed predicted by them; why should we not most firmly believe, that the seventh trumpet will be blown, when the mystery of God will be finished: when the kingdoms of this world will become our Lord's; when he will take to himself his great power and reign; when he will destroy them that destroy the earth, and give a reward to his servants, and to all that fear his name! The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this (Rev. 10:7; 11:15-18).

Fourthly, As by the above events, the spiritual reign of Christ will take place in the world, so by his second coming the personal reign will be introduced, which will last a thousand years; and from the fulfilment of prophecy concerning the first coming of Christ, which is predicted in the context, as we have seen, we may most strongly argue the certain performance of all that respects his second coming. He came at first: exactly at the time pointed out in prophecy; before the scepter departed from Judah, while the second temple was standing, into which he came, as he was to do, and just at the expiration of Daniel's weeks. All characters and circumstances in prophecy meet in him; all things concerning him in the law, psalms and prophets, had their fulfilling end in him; concerning his birth, and the place of it: his mean appearance in the world; his doctrines and miracles; his sufferings and death, and many particular circumstances respecting them; as the betraying of him by one of his disciples; selling him

for thirty pieces of silver; crucifying him between two thieves; piercing his hands, feet and side; giving him gall and vinegar to drink; casting lots on his vesture, with other things; also his resurrection from the dead, ascension to heaven, and session at the right hand of God. And since these things have been completely fulfilled, what room or reason is there to doubt that he will appear a second time without sin to salvation? The angels at his ascension affirmed he would descend from heaven, as he ascended: the apostle Paul assures us he shall descend from heaven with the voice of an archangel and be revealed from thence with his mighty angels; and he himself has said no less than three times, in the close of the canon of the scripture, Lo, I come quickly. Let us believe therefore that he will come, and make all things new; produce new heavens, and a new earth, and set up his tabernacle among his people, and dwell with them, and they reign with him; The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this. Which leads me,

To consider to what the performance of all this will be owing; to the zeal of the Lord of hosts: he is the Lord of hosts or armies, the maker of the host of heaven, and the disposer of them, and rules among them, and does whatever he pleases; nothing is impossible with him, or too hard for him; and as Abraham believed that God, who promised, was also able to perform; so should we believe, that whatever the Lord of hosts has prophesied of, he is able to fulfill, and will fulfill; his truth and faithfulness are engaged, as for the performance of his promise, so of his prophecies; he is the unchangeable Jehovah, God that cannot lie, and who never repents of what he has spoken, but makes all good: his zeal moves and puts him upon it; which may be understood either of his wrath and indignation against his enemies, that jealousy of his that smokes against them; that zeal and vengeance with which he is sometimes clad: this will put him upon performing all that he has said concerning antichrist, against whom his indignation must be raised; who has spoke great things against him, and blasphemed his name, opposed his Son, his kingdom and interest, and persecuted his people: or else it may design his great love and affection. As zeal with men, when right, is no other than fervent charity, burning love, and flaming affection, so it may be considered here; and mean his love for himself, his zeal for his own glory, which is his ultimate end in creation, in providence, in his works of

grace, and which will be answered in the destruction of antichrist, and setting up the kingdom of his Son in the world: also his strong love and affection to Christ, both as his own Son, and the mediator between him and his people; and therefore it may be depended on, he will make him his first-born, higher than the kings of the earth: to which may be added, his great love to his church and people; which has been so great as to give his Son for them, to become incarnate, and to suffer and die in their room, and to make him king over them to protect and defend them; and therefore it need not be doubted that the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to them, according to promise and prophecy (Dan.7:27); The zeal of the Lord of hosts, the zeal of his house, and for it, will perform this. I shall close with a word or two.

What has been said will serve greatly to support the credit of divine revelation; the sacred Word will appear from hence to be indeed the Word of God, and not the word of men; we may be assured the scripture is divinely inspired, and is a sure word of prophecy; for what else could have foretold such numbers of events, which have been exactly fulfilled: particularly what relate to Jews and Papists, who are two such living and standing proofs of the truth of the divine revelation, that all the Deists in the world are not able to set aside? Likewise, this may serve to encourage our faith, as to the performance of whatsoever has been spoken by the Lord; for if he performs all things for us in providence, as he does for particular persons, as Job, David, and others, as he did; then much more may we believe that he will perform all that he has said he will do for himself, for his Son, and for his church and people in the world. But then, though he has so particularly prophesied of, and so peremptorily promised these things, yet he will be enquired of by his people to do them. We should therefore pray continually to him, and give him no rest day nor night until they are accomplished; and for the accomplishment of which we should quietly wait; for there is an appointed time, and when that comes there will be no tarrying: Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days (Dan. 7:12). I add no more but this wish, the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting of Christ (2 Thess. 3:5).

4 THE WORDS OF DAVID, THE WORDS OF JEHOVAH, FATHER, SON, AND SPIRIT.

2 SAMUEL 23:2, 3.

The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his Word was in my Tongue: the God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me.

Having considered in a former discourse the preceding verse, which contains a line description of David, that tends to recommend to our notice those last words of his recorded in the following verses. I shall now proceed to show how they are further recommended to us, from the author of them: for they are to be considered not so much the words of David himself, as the words of a divine person spoken by him, This we may gather from the text. The Spirit of the Lord spake by me. They were his words, and not merely David's. It was the God of Israel that said, it was the Rock of Israel that spake to him and by him. From which we may notice,

I. The author of these words as represented in these several different expressions, which all tend to recommend them to our most serious consideration. And then,

II. The words themselves, which the divine person or persons spake in, by, and to David.

I. The author or authors of them, for these words do not appear to be David's words, properly, but another's, even the Lord's.

1. It is observed, the Spirit of the Lord spake by him. He did not speak what he did, from his own spirit, nor out of his own heart, according to the dictates of his own mind; but the Spirit of the Lord spake by him. We read of some in the times of Jeremiah, "who ran and were not sent, who prophesied, and the Lord had not spoken unto them (Jer. 23:21). The same sort of persons are described by the prophet Ezekiel, "as speaking out of their own hearts, and following their own spirit" (Ezek. 13:2, 3). They said those things which their own carnal minds suggested unto them, and which they judged would be pleasing to natural and carnal men, whereby they might get introduced among them, and so serve their own purposes, either with respect to applause or worldly wealth. And this being the case, some persons pretending to divine and spiritual things, speaking not by the Spirit of God, but from their own spirit, makes the caution the apostle John gives necessary. Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God, because many false prophets are gone forth into the world (1 John 4:1).

All who pretend to speak by the Spirit of God are

not to be believed: they speak only out of their own hearts, and follow their own spirits, therefore are to be tried by the word of God, to see whether what they say is agreeable to that or no. What David said was not from his own spirit, but the Spirit of the Lord spake by him. He, and other holy and good men, spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit of God; for prophecy came not of old time by the will of man. Even those who were the true prophets of the Lord, and by whom the Spirit of the Lord spake: they could not prophesy, they could not deliver out any thing as from God when they pleased. It was not at their option, it was not according to their will; no, but just as they had an impulse upon their spirits by the Spirit of God. Even Balaam, though a false prophet, yet in the hands of God and under his direction at that particular time, of which he was sensible, was obliged to say, he could not go beyond the commandment of the Lord (Num. 24:13), or say more or less than what was suggested to him.— Nay, if Balak would give him his house full of silver and gold, it could not have been otherwise: he could not go beyond the commandment of God, to do either good or bad.

Now if this was the case with Balaam, we may reasonably conclude, that what the prophets of the Lord spake, was not according to their own will; but according to the will of God, and by the Spirit of God. This was so well known, that Zedekiah, King of Israel, puts this question to Jeremiah, who was a true prophet of the Lord, Is there any word, from the Lord? (Jer. 37:17). He knew very well Jeremiah could say nothing to any purpose, that he could depend upon, unless he had a word from the Lord: and that he gives according to his sovereign will and pleasure.

Well, these last words of David were spoken by him, not out of his own heart, not out of his own spirit, not out of his own head, as pleased himself: but by the Spirit of God. And much less were what he said, from an evil spirit: the spirit that works in the children of disobedience, or what is called the spirit of the world, which rules and governs in the world, and in worldly men. We have received, says the apostle, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things which are freely given us by God (1 Cor. 2:12). Now it was this Spirit of the Lord that spoke by David. Who is of God, comes from God, is of the same nature with the divine Father, and proceeds from him: so our Lord describes the Holy

Spirit as proceeding from the Father (John 15:26). What is meant by that proceeding, we know not; we are unable to explain it: we must take it as it is. This we are sure of; that the Holy Spirit is of God, comes from God, and is of the same nature with him, So also he is from the Son, and therefore is called the Spirit of the Son (Gal.4:6).

A dispute there was in ancient times, and that in the churches—whether the Spirit proceeded from the Son as from the Father? It is most certain he proceeded from the one as from the other: but as to the modus of it, it is not in the power of a finite mind to conceive of. This we know, it is the Spirit which is of God: possessed of the same nature, and of the same divine perfections with God the Father, and with the Son, from whom he proceeds. He is eternal, He is called the eternal Spirit (Heb. 9:14): so from everlasting to everlasting, God. He is omnipresent: a perfection which only belongs to God. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit or whither shall I flee from thy presence? (Ps. 139:7). There is no such thing. He is every where; and therefore must be God. He is a God omniscient: he searches the deep things of God, and reveals them to his people. He can, and has foretold things to come. He, the Spirit of Christ in the prophets, foretold the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Omnipotence is ascribed to him: miracles such as are above the power of nature, and contrary to the laws of nature, are done by him, in confirmation of the truths of the everlasting gospel. You read of wonders, and miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, by which the gospel was at first continued. Now these abundantly prove him to be the true God, as he is represented. He is Jehovah, whom the Israelites rebelled against; they are said to vex the Holy Spirit (Isa. 63:10). It was Jehovah who said, in a vision of Isaiah, who will go for us? (Isa. 6:8). In the Acts of the Apostles He is said to be the Lord, the Holy Ghost. He is expressly said to be God: lying against him is said to be lying against God (Acts 5:3, 4). The saints are called the temples of God; and this reason is given for it, because the Spirit dwells in them. He is likewise denominated, the Lord, the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:17): that is, Jehovah the Spirit.

The same works which are said to be done by the Father, may also be ascribed to the Holy Spirit. The work of creation, this may be ascribed to him. He not only moved upon the face of the waters, and brought the indigested chaos into order after its creation; not

only did he garnish the heavens; but he it was that made them: for by the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them, by the Breath or Spirit of his mouth (Ps.33:6). He is expressly said to be concerned in making man. Elihu says, The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life (Job 33:4). These are works that prove him to be the true God. Worship is also to be paid unto him. He is not only to be prayed unto as the Father and the Son are (the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ (2 Thess. 3:5); where he is manifestly distinguished from the Father and the Son); but he is prayed unto along with them (2 Cor. 13:14). The ordinance of baptism is directed to be performed in His name equally as in the name of the other two divine Persons (Matthew 28:19).

Now it was the Spirit of God, or God the Spirit, that spake by David; the Spirit of the Lord spake by me: the same that spake by the rest of the inspired writers. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God: holy men spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Pet. 1:21): and so did David. It is expressly said, in a quotation from a Psalm of his, that the Holy Ghost spake by the mouth of David (Acts 1:16). The Spirit of the Lord spake by me. It may be properly enough rendered, the Spirit of the Lord spake in me: so respects an internal revelation of the mind and will of God unto him, which he was to declare unto others, which was made by the Spirit of God unto his prophets and inspired writers. He illuminated them, or gave them a clear and distinct view of things internally. So the prophecy of Hosea is said to be the beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea; so it is rendered, though it may as well be rendered, in Hosea. The Apostle Peter does with great emphasis express it of the inspired writers, that the Spirit of Christ which was in them, testified of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow (1 Pet. 1:11).

Now inasmuch as the Spirit of the Lord spake by David, then what he said and delivered under his impulse, influence, and inspiration, must be reckoned the word of God; and should be received, not as the word of man, but as it is, in deed, and in truth, the word of God. So we are to account David’s Psalms to be a part of the word of God, (and a most excellent part indeed!) and of Christ who speaks in them. Hence the Apostle says, Let the word of Christ dwell in you

richly: and what does he mean by the word of Christ? He particularly seems to have regard to the words of David; since it follows, teaching and admonishing one another, in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs (Col. 3:16). These are the words of Christ, at least a great part of them: the reason is, that the Spirit of the Lord spake in and by David, in penning and delivering these Psalms. Moreover, we should regard what the Lord say by David; because what he delivered was spiritual. That which is born of the Spirit, is Spirit (John 3:6): so, what any man says under the influence of the Spirit is spiritual. What David said by divine inspiration was spiritual; and therefore with propriety are his Psalms, in the passage before referred to, called spiritual songs: not only because the matter in them is spiritual, but because the Author of them was the Spirit of God.

It also follows from hence, that what David spake under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, must be holy, for the Spirit of God is holy: an epithet peculiar to the Third Person, called the Holy Spirit, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him? (Luke 11:13). All that comes from him must be holy. The Law of God is holy; the Gospel is holy; the Scriptures are holy. They are called the Holy Scriptures: the reason is plain and clear; because they come from the Holy Spirit of God; therefore the whole matter of the Scriptures must be holy. The Law is holy, just, and good (Rom. 7:12). The Gospel is so; all the doctrines and truths of it are holy (the doctrine which is according to godliness (1 Tim. 6:3)). They open not a door to licentiousness, as many who are ignorant of them foolishly object, knowing nothing of the power of them; for the grace of God teaches men, that denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. Therefore, I say, if David spake what he did by the holy Ghost, then what he said must be holy.

It must be true also; because the Spirit that spake by him is the Spirit of Truth. How often does Christ give him that epithet: Even the Spirit of Truth which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me (John 15:26): and again, when the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all truth (John 16:13). Now, inasmuch as what was said by David, and by any other inspired writer, was by the Spirit of God, the Scriptures must be the Scriptures of truth: for no lie is of the Truth (1 John 2:21).

This also being the case, David speaking by the Spirit of God, as well as all other holy and good men, it follows, that the blessed Spirit is the best interpreter of the Scriptures. It is He that can most truly lead into all truth, and make application of it; lead men into the truths contained in the Psalms of David; open their understandings, that they may understand them. It is He also that can best assist us in singing the psalms which he himself is the inditer of: most wisely therefore did the Apostle resolve, in the strength of divine grace, to sing with the Spirit as well as with the understanding (1 Cor. 14:15).

The Spirit of the Lord spake by me. And it is added, His word was in my tongue. His word: the word of the Spirit of God was in my tongue. Not only did he indite the matter, but he gave him the express words wherewith to deliver that matter.—Some have been of opinion, that the inspired writers of the word of God had only the matter thereof dictated to them, or their minds furnished within views of things, but that they were left to clothe those ideas with words of their own. If this had been the case, if there had not been infallibility with respect to words as well as to matter, they might have made use of improper ones, which would not have conveyed to our minds the proper ideas of things; so that we should have been at an uncertainty with respect to faith and practice. But this was not the case: words were also suggested unto them, by which they were to express those ideas, those impulses upon their minds. His word was in my tongue. What they said, they said, not in words which man's own wisdom taught, but in words which the Holy Ghost taught (1 Cor. 2:13). The very words they were directed to make use of, as well as the matter. We are said to be nourished up in the words of faith and sound doctrine (1 Tim. 4:6): not with doctrine, but the words of doctrine: not doctrines as to the matter of them—but the very words of those doctrines are laid down in the Scriptures; and therefore we are commanded to hold fast the form of sound words (2 Tim. 1:13)—sound speech that cannot be condemned (Titus 2:8)—which must be that which is under the direction and inspiration of the Spirit of God. The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue—or on my tongue; impressed there; even his very words were so: and thus his tongue became as the pen of a ready writer (Ps. 45:1). Words flowed from him most readily, and he most faithfully delivered and

penned them as the Lord says, He that hath my word let him speak my word faithfully (Jer. 23:28). Now this being his word, the word of the Spirit of God, when it comes not in word only but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, it must answer some valuable ends and purposes—for the conviction of sinners, for their conversion, for their illumination and instruction, for the working of faith in them, for the encouragement of hope: it must be effectual to lead them into all truth, effectual for their consolation, and answer all the divine purposes.

2. There is another person that is said to speak by David—The God of Israel. God: He that at the first creation of all things said, and it was done—commanded, and it stood fast (Ps. 33:9). He the great God who said, Let there be light, and there was light: He that said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters: He that said, Let the waters be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear: He that said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit-tree yielding fruit: He that said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven: He that said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life: He that said these things, and they were immediately done (Gen. 1). He spake by David. The God of Israel said. The God of Israel: He that spake to Israel upon Mount Sinai, and said in an audible voice, I am the Lord the God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt out of the house of bondage (Ex. 20:2). And which was a most wonderful event; for who of any nation (as Moses said to the Israelites) ever heard the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, and lived? Most amazing it was, that God should speak in the manner he did upon Mount Sinai. The same God of Israel said to David what follows.

The God of Israel: that is, the covenant God of Israel. He was so to Israel in a literal sense. He was the covenant; God of their ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. The God of the Hebrews, the God of Israel: so he calls himself. When he sent Moses to demand the free dismissal of the people of Israel out of Egypt, Moses says unto Pharaoh, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go. Moses also speaks of a very solemn avouchment of this relation between God and Israel. Thou hast (says he) avouched the Lord this day to be thy God—and the Lord hath avouched thee this

day to be his peculiar people (Deut. 26:17, 18). Now this is to be understood in a national way; but God is the God of his spiritual Israel; the God of all Israel, whether Jews or Gentiles. He is the God of all whom he has chosen for his peculiar people, whom Christ has redeemed by his precious blood, and who are effectually called by divine grace. He is their covenant God in a special sense. This covenant was made with Christ from everlasting. I have made a covenant with David my servant; that is, with the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, with whom that covenant stands for ever. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips (Ps. 89:34).

This is a covenant of grace, we commonly call it so, because it consists of the blessings of grace; and because it is founded on the free sovereign mercy of God. I have said mercy shalt be built up for ever, “and therefore I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant” (Ps. 89:2, 3). It is called the covenant of peace which shall never be removed (Isa. 54:10), because the grand article in it is peace and reconciliation by Christ Jesus the Lord: contrived, agreed upon, and settled in that covenant. It is also called the covenant of life, as well as of peace, because the blessings of life spiritual and eternal were secured in it; all those spiritual blessings wherewith the Lord’s people are blessed in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. 1:3); but the most grand and principal article in this covenant is, the Lord being the God of his people. They shall be my people, and I will be their God (Jer. 24:7). Men may be temporally happy with the things of this world; but happy, beyond all expression happy, is he whose God is the Lord. This is the grand article of the covenant of grace, that God is the covenant God and father of his people in Christ Jesus. “I will be a father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (2 Cor. 6:18). This relation always continues: he is their God, and their guide even unto death. Now here we have the God of Israel speaking to David: and what line said, must needs be true, because it is God who said it. He is a God of truth, and cannot lie; and therefore whatever he has delivered out, as his mind and will, must be true: let God be true, but every man a liar (Rom. 3:3, 4). Since it is God that said it, I say it must be true; and as he is the God of Israel, it must be for the good of spiritual Israel. He can say nothing but what is so. All that is contained in the sacred writings, is for the good

of spiritual Israel. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16). The whole of the sacred Scriptures as well as the book of Psalms, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope (Rom. 15:4). And he who is the God of Israel that spake by David, could give the best account of the covenant of grace. This is one part of the last words of David “although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant:” and who but Israel’s covenant God could give the account he does, of the covenant he has made with them? It is a wonderful instance of his condescending grace, that he should say any thing to the sons of men! Marvelous that he should speak to Israel face to face, as he did; that he should commune with Moses from off the mercy-seat; and that he should speak to his dear children as he does, and disclose the secrets of his heart’s love unto them!—The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant (Ps.25:14).

Now what the God of Israel says, ought most certainly to be attended to. “The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.” The Lord God hath spoken, (says Amos) who can but prophesy? (Amos 3:8) and when he speaks in compassion to the sons of men, who can but hearken?

3. The Rock of Israel spake to me. The Rock of Israel: which may be understood of the same person still; hence the word Rock in Scripture is often used as expressive of Deity,—as in that passage, Their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges (Deut. 32:32): that is, their God is not as our God, as the Psalmist says. Who is a Rock save our God? (Ps. 17:31). Or, it may be understood of Christ, the second person in the glorious Trinity; and it will not be any difficulty, I think, to observe a Trinity of persons in this account.—Here is the Rock of Israel, the second person: and then here is the Spirit of the Lord, that spake by him: all the three divine persons. A glorious testimony of a Trinity of persons in the Godhead.

The Rock of Israel, who appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: who delivered Israel out of the hands of Pharaoh: called by Moses, his God, and his Fathers’ God (Ex. 15:2). The Rock of Israel; he that

was typified by that Rock Israel drank water out of in the wilderness; of which the Apostle testifies that Rock was Christ (1 Cor. 10:4); a type of him.—The Rock of Israel, or, he who is the safety and security of Israel; the Rock in whom is everlasting strength; that Rock of Refuge which is for saints to apply to in every trouble: The name of the Lord is a Strong Tower, and thither the righteous run and are safe.—The Rock of Israel; on which the spiritual Israel of God is built; the church of God, against which the gates of hell can never prevail: that one and only foundation laid in Sion: that sure foundation, on which, whosoever builds shall be safe:—that Rock of Israel on which every single believer is built; for he is the foundation of the apostles and prophets. All the saints under the old and new testament dispensation are laid on this foundation. Every wise and good man lays his soul, and the salvation of it, upon this Rock, which will bear it against all storms, and tempests whatsoever. He is the rock, and the foundation of all our faith, hope, spiritual peace, and comfort. The foundation of our faith, the anchor of our hope, and the spring of our peace and comfort. A glorious Rock indeed! If there be any consolation it is in Christ Jesus (Phil. 2:1). This is the Rock of Israel, that spake in, by, or concerning David as his type: The Rock of Israel spake by me.

I should now have proceeded to consider what the Spirit of the Lord spake by David; what words were in his tongue; what the God of Israel said, and what the Rock of Israel spake by him: spake by him as the Psalmist of Israel; for the words may be connected with those, and the sweet Psalmist of Israel said—The Rock of Israel spake by him, directed him what to speak: which serves to prove the divinity of the Book of Psalms; it is a part of the sacred Scriptures given by inspiration of God. It is also a testimony of the truth of that Book, and of what is contained therein: a greater testimony sure we can never have, since all the Three divine persons appear in it: there is the God of Israel, the Rock of Israel, and the Spirit of God. There are Three that bear testimony; and if we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater. The Rock of Israel spake to me, or concerning me: concerning me as a type of Christ. Christ is the Alpha and the Omega of the Psalms: they all testify of him, concerning his offices, concerning his grace, concerning the work of salvation and redemption; and particularly concerning what he is in himself, what he

endured and suffered for his people, what office he bears, what a low estate he should be brought into, to what glory he should be advanced, and of what use and service he should be to the sons of men.

This also serves to establish the character of David as a prophet, which the Apostle gives him in Acts 2:30, where he quotes some passages of Scripture out of the Psalms, and argues that David, being a prophet, said so and so. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he, seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ. He then cites from the 16th Psalm. His soul was not left in hell, neither did his flesh see corruption. There are other passages in the same Psalm, quoted in this chapter, which speak of David as a prophet. All which prove, that the God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake by him. We may then conclude, that we ought to receive what is delivered there, as the Word of God.

But what these Three divine persons said to David, or spake by him, chiefly respects what follows; as, he that ruleth over men, must be just, ruling in the fear of God: or, that there should be such a Ruler (meaning the Messiah), who should be as the light of the morning, even a morning without clouds, as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain. But the consideration of these things I must defer to another discourse.

(Editors Note: Roman Numeral II. was not recorded as a part of this sermon or any sermon following in this series.)

5 FAITH IN GOD AND HIS WORD, THE ESTABLISHMENT AND PROSPERITY OF HIS PEOPLE:

A Sermon,
Preached at a Wednesday's Evening Lecture, in
GREAT EAST-CHEAP,

Dec. 27, 1753.

2 Chronicles 20:20

Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established blessed; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.

In the beginning of this chapter, we have an account of an invasion of the land of Judea in the time of Jehoshaphat, by the neighboring nations, who joined in confederacy against the Jews. These people were always a typical people, and in this their case

and circumstances were an emblem of the church and people of God; who in their present state are militant. They are surrounded with enemies, as the Jews were, which are many, lively and strong; they have numerous fleshly lusts which war against their souls; and some enemies that are not flesh and blood, but spiritual wickednesses, with whom they wrestle; and even the whole world is against them, and hate, oppose, and persecute them, in one shape or another, to the uttermost; so that upon one account or another, for the most part, without are fightings, and within are fears (2 Cor. 7:5).

The method of Jehoshaphat and his people took in this their distress, was to seek the Lord by prayer, and ask help of him. Prayer is a special piece of the Christian armor; it is the last that is mentioned in the account of it; it is the dernier resort of believers, and which they often use to good purpose and great advantage. There were some sort of devils in Christ's time, who could not be dispossessed by any other means; Satan has often felt the dint of this weapon of our warfare, and dreads it; and dreaded it has been by some of his instruments. Mary queen of Scots used to say, that she dreaded more the prayers of John Knox, a famous Reformer, than ten thousand armed men; so effectual is the fervent prayer of the righteous, as for the bringing down the blessings of the covenant of grace upon them, so for the intimidating of their enemies, and for their protection from them.

The excellent prayer of Jehoshaphat on this occasion is recorded; which begins with taking notice of the place of the divine residence, heaven; in like manner as our Lord taught his disciples to pray, saying first of all, Our Father which art in heaven (Matt. 11:9); and of the sovereignty of God over all the kingdoms of the world: and of his uncontrollable and irresistible power; and of his being the covenant God and Father of his people; all which are necessary to be observed by us in our addresses to him, to raise in our minds just ideas of him, and to encourage our faith and hope in him. The royal saint goes on to make mention of the works of God of old; his works of power and might, of grace and goodness, in driving the heathens out of the land of Canaan, and giving it to the seed of Abraham for ever; from whence he hoped and concluded, it would not be given up again into the hands of their enemies. He takes notice of the sanctuary or temple that was built in it, where Jehovah dwelt, granted his

presence to his people, and heard and helped them in the times of their distress; which was a type of Christ's human nature, the temple of his body, the true tabernacle which God pitched, and not man, in which dwells all the fulness of the Godhead; and for the sake of him the Lord hears and answers the prayers of his people, when they look, as Jonah did, towards his holy temple (Jonah 2:4); and which, with great pertinency, is here observed. Next the ingratitude of their enemies is taken notice of; when Israel came out of Egypt, and passed through the wilderness, they were bid not to meddle with or distress the Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites, but turn away from them, as they did; who now reward them evil for good, by attempting to dispossess them of the land given them to inherit: and therefore it was hoped the Lord would judge their cause, and right their wrongs; since the king and his people had no power to oppose such a numerous army that was come up against them; but their eyes were to the Lord, and on him was their dependence, and with him they left the issue of things.

The Lord presently showed himself to be a God hearing and answering prayer; for immediately, as the king and all the people stood before the Lord to hear what he would say unto them, the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jahaziel a Levite, who stood up and prophesied, and bid the people not to be dismayed at the number of their enemies; told them where they were to be met with; assured them of victory, nay, that they had no need to fight, the Lord would fight for them; and that they had nothing to do, but to stand still and see the salvation of God; which message Jehoshaphat and the people received with faith, with holy fear, bowing their heads and worshipping; and so fully assured were they of the truth of what was promised them, that they sung praises of God, before the deliverance was wrought; upon which they marched out to meet the enemy, when Jehoshaphat at the head of his army addressed it in the words first read; believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established blessed; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper: "do not trust in your numbers, nor in your strength, courage, and skill; but trust in your covenant-God, so shall ye be strengthened, confirmed, and animated to engage your enemies with true fortitude of mind; believe what he has said by his prophets, particularly Jahaziel, who has just now delivered a message from him to you; so shall ye succeed against your enemies,

and obtain a complete victory over them." This is the sense of the words respecting the present case; but they may be applied to believers in any age or period of time, in whatsoever case or circumstances they may be; the main and principle thing in them is faith or believing; concerning which,

I shall consider the kind and nature of it.

The objects of it, as here expressed, the Lord God and his prophets.

The advantages arising from it, establishment and prosperity.

I shall consider the kind and nature of faith: There are various sorts of faith, as the apostle suggests, when he says (1 Cor. 13:2), though I have all faith; that is, all sorts of faith, which he supposes a man may have, and not have charity, love of true grace; he means all sorts but one, namely, special faith; for whoever has that, has charity or love: for faith worketh by love (Gal. 5:6): however there are several sorts or kinds of faith.

There is a faith of miracles, or of doing miracles; and which the apostle in the above words has in view, since it follows, so that I could remove mountains; referring to what our Lord said to his disciples; if ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; nothing shall be impossible unto you (Matt. 17:20). Christ, when he gave his disciples a commission to preach the Gospel, gave them power of working miracles to confirm it; he gave them power over unclean spirits to cast them out, and to heal all manner of diseases; and Judas no doubt had this power as well as the rest; for a man in these times might have such a faith, and such a power, and yet not have that special faith which issues in salvation. We read (Matt. 7:22, 23) of some that cast out devils in the name of Christ, and yet are not, and will not be known and acknowledged by him as his.

There is a faith which is commonly called an historical faith; which is a mere assent to a set of propositions as true, and which are true in themselves as,

That there is but one God: that there is a God may be known and believed by the light of nature, may be concluded from the things that are made by him; and that this God is but one, is the voice of reason and revelation; the language both of the Old and of the New Testament; the faith of Jews and Christians; and it is right to believe it; and which may be done where

there is not true special faith: thou believest that there is one God, thou dost well; the devils also believe and tremble (Jam. 2:19); that is, they believe there is one God, and know there is but one, and tremble through fear of his awful majesty.

With this sort of faith, a man may believe all that is said and is true of Jesus Christ; as that he is God over all blessed for ever, the true God of eternal life: that he is the Son of God, and Savior of the world; that he is God and man in one person; that he became incarnate; that he suffered and died for the sins of men; that he was buried, and rose again from the dead; that he ascended up to heaven, is set down at the right hand of God, and will come a second time to judge the world; all which a man may believe, and yet be destitute of the true grace of God. There are indeed some strong expressions in the epistle of the apostle John, where he says, that every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God (1 John 4:2); and whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God (1 John 5:1): whereas now there are whole nations that believe these things, of multitudes of whom it cannot be thought that they are regenerate persons. It will help us over this difficulty a little, by considering times, and times: in the apostles times, these truths were generally denied; the whole world, Jews and Gentiles, opposed them; and then for a man to believe and profess them in the face of all opposition, and under the scandal of the cross, was a great matter; it was reckoned a proof of true grace, and a criterion of a man's regeneration: but now, since Christianity is established, and become the religion of nations, to believe all this is no mark or sign of being born again; for such a national faith is no better than the faith of Indians and Mohammedans, only it happens to have a better object; for the ground and reason of it is the same; namely, being born and brought up among those who generally believe in the same way. Though it may be, the true sense of the above expression is this; that Christ is come in the flesh, or is become incarnate, is on the side of God and truth; and that whoever believes that Jesus of Nazareth is the true Messiah, is a regenerate person; that is, not barely assents to this truth; but whereas his work, as the Messiah was to make atonement for sin, and procure the pardon of it, and bring in everlasting righteousness, and obtain salvation for men; he deals by faith with him for these things; with his atoning sacrifice for the expiation of

sin; with his blood for pardon and cleansing; and with his righteousness for justification; receives him as a Savior, and depends upon him for life and salvation; otherwise, barely believing him to be the Messiah, is no other than what the devils themselves do; who in the days of his flesh knew and owned him to be the Christ, the Son of God (Luke 4:34, 41).

With this sort of faith a man may believe all the doctrines of the gospel, and yet not have the root of the matter in him, or true grace. Men may have the whole form of gospel-doctrine in their heads, and deny the power of it, or not feel it in their hearts; they may believe the things concerning the kingdom of God and Jesus Christ, as Simon Magnus did, or however professed to do, and yet be, with him, in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity. Yea, many have had such a degree of knowledge in evangelical things, as to be able to preach the gospel clearly and distinctly, to prophesy or preach in Christ's name, and yet knew him not spiritually and experimentally, nor were known by him; they may speak with the tongues of men and angels, have all knowledge and all faith of this kind, and yet be without charity or true love to God, to Christ, and to divine and spiritual things. Indeed, without believing the gospel of Christ, and the things concerning him, there can be no true faith in him; men cannot be children of light without believing the light of the gospel, or giving credit to the gospel-revelation; and therefore our Lord exhorts men to believe in the light, that they might be children of the light (John 12:36): the way and means of being so, is to attend unto and believe the gospel-scheme; but then this may be believed, and yet men fall short of the true light of special grace.

This faith is but temporary faith, a believing for a while; and it need not be thought strange if persons that have only this should make shipwreck of it, and put away a good conscience; and which is no instance of a true believer's falling away from grace; whereas those who have true faith, and live by it on Christ, are not of them that draw back into perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul; which brings me to observe,

That there is a special and spiritual faith, to which salvation is annexed; with which he that believes shall be saved, according to the gospel-declaration; and which directs and encourages sensible sinners to look to Christ, and believe in him, assuring them

they shall be saved. The scheme of salvation the gospel publishes and proclaims, is, that it is by grace through faith in Christ: hence, I suppose, it is, that this sort of faith is commonly called saving faith, to distinguish it from others; though I think not with strict justness and propriety, and could wish the phrase was disused; since it seems to derogate and detract from the glory of Christ, who is the only Savior, and to carry off the mind from the object of faith, to the act of it. But be this as it will:

This sort of faith is not of a man's self; it does not owe its original to the creature; it is expressly denied to be of man; that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God (Eph. 2:8); it is not the effect of pure nature; it is not the produce of man's free-will and power; all men have not faith (2 Thess. 3:2): there are few that have it, and those that have it, have it not from nature, but by the grace of God. No man, says Christ, can come unto me; that is, believe in him, for coming to Christ, and believing in him, are the same thing, except it were given him of my Father (John 6:65). And again, no man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me, draw him (John 6:44); that is by the influence of his Spirit and grace.

Nor is this sort of faith of the law of works; for as the law is not of faith (Gal. 3:12), so neither is faith of the law; the law is not so much as the means of it, nor does it reveal the object, nor require the act, or direct and encourage to it; it is not the means of true faith in Christ; faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17); but by what part of it? not the law, but the gospel; received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith (Gal. 3:2)? That is, by the preaching of the law, and works of it, or by the preaching of the doctrine of faith? By the latter, and not the former: and as the Spirit is not received in that way, or by such means, so not the graces of the Spirit, and particularly faith. How should it come this way, since the law does not reveal the object of it, Christ, or give the least hint concerning him? By the law is the knowledge of sin (Rom. 3:20); but not the knowledge of a Savior from sin: did it reveal Christ to a poor awakened sinner, it would not work that wrath in his conscience, or leave him without hope of mercy, as it does; and if it knows nothing, and makes known nothing of the object of faith, how can it be thought it should require the act of it? does it require an act upon an unknown object? does it require men to believe in

an object it does not reveal, or give the least discovery of? How should they believe in consequence of such a requirement, of whom they have not heard the least title from the law? Nor does the law give any direction or encouragement to souls to believe in Christ; its language is, do this and live (Gal. 3:12), but not believe in Christ and be saved (Acts 16:31); this is the voice of the gospel, and not of the law. Should it be said that faith is reckoned among the weightier matters of the law (Matt. 23:23); this is to be understood either of fidelity, of faithfulness among men, or of trust in God, as the God of nature and providence, &c., giving credit to the revelation of his will, and the worship of him according to it.

True faith in Christ, comes from another quarter than from the covenant of works, and flows in another channel; it is a blessing of the covenant of grace, of that covenant which is ordered in all things and sure (2Sam. 23:5); for the glory of God, Father, Son, and Spirit, and for the good of the covenant-ones; it provides all blessings of grace for them for time and eternity, and among the rest faith in Christ Jesus. This lays open and exposes a mistaken and false notion of some, who assert, that faith and repentance are conditions of the covenant of grace, when they are the blessings of it, included in that promise; a new heart also will I give unto you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh (Ezek. 36:26); and these are gifts without repentance, which God never revokes or takes back, or suffers to be of no effect. Faith in Christ is the fruit of electing grace, and is as sure as salvation itself; the one is in the decree of the means, the other in the decree of the end; that decree of election which secures the end, salvation, secures also the means, sanctification of the spirit, and belief of the truth (2 Thess. 2:13); or faith in Christ, who is the truth; so it has been in all ages, now is, and ever shall be, that as many as were ordained unto eternal life believed (Acts 3:48). Hence true faith is called the faith of God's elect (Titus 1:1); it being certain, proper and peculiar to them; and this is the true reason why one believes, and another does not; as our Lord says of some, ye believe not, because ye are not my sheep (John 10:26): the sheep which the Father gave unto me in election, and in the covenant of grace: let any man rise and give a better reason if he can, that this that Christ has given, why one believes in him,

and another does not. Believing in him is the pure gift of God, of his rich, sovereign and distinguishing grace; he gives it to one, and denies it to another, as he pleases: he hides the things of Christ, and of the gospel, from the wise and prudent, and does not vouchsafe unto them faith in them; and reveals them unto babes; and gives them faith in his Son; and no other reason can be given than his sovereign pleasure: even so, Father, says Christ, for so it seemed good in thy sight (Matt. 11:26).

Special faith in Christ is of the operation of the Spirit of God: he produces it by his mighty power in the soul; he enlightens the mind, reveals the object, brings near Christ, his righteousness and salvation, and enables the sensible sinner to look unto him, lay hold on him, and receive his as his Savior and Redeemer; hence he is called the Spirit of faith (2 Cor. 4:13); because he is the author of it, who begins and carries on, and will perform the work of faith with power: the principal use of which grace is to receive all from Christ, and give him the glory. God has put this honor upon it, to constitute and appoint it to be the receiver-general of all the blessings of grace. It receives Christ himself as the Father's free-gift; it receives out of the fulness of Christ, even grace for grace, or an abundance of it; it receives the blessing of righteousness from the Lord of justification; it receives the remission of sins through his blood, according to the gospel-declaration; it receives the adoption of children, in consequence of the way being opened for it through the redemption which is in Christ; it receives the inheritance among them that are sanctified, the right unto it, and the claim upon it; and to this post it is advanced, that all the glory might redound to the grace of God; it is of faith, that it might be by grace (Rom. 4:16): there are other uses of faith, and actings of it, which will be observed under the following head. I now proceed to consider,

The objects of faith, as in the words directed to, the Lord God and his prophets. 1st, The Lord our God, who is the one Lord to be believed in; hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord (Deut. 6:4); from which passage the ancient Jews^[1] have established the doctrine of a Trinity of persons in the godhead, as well as the doctrine of the Unity of the divine Being; and certain it is, that Father, Son, and Spirit, are the one God; and each, and every one of them, are to be believed in, and are the proper objects of faith.

God the Father is the object of faith, who is to be believed in; and to believe in him is not merely to believe his existence and perfections, for he is a fool indeed that believes there is no God; nor merely to believe in him as the God of nature and providence, and to trust in him for the preservation of life and the continuance of the blessings and mercies of it, and to glorify him for them; though there are some who believe there is a God, yet do not glorify him as such, nor trust in his goodness, nor are thankful for providential favors: but to believe in him with a special faith, is to believe in him as he has proclaimed his name in Christ, a God gracious and merciful, pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin (Ex. 34:6); it is to believe in him as our covenant-God and Father, for so he is to his people in Christ; he is to them what he is to him, as he says, I ascend to my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your God (John 20:17): it was a noble act of faith expressed by David, I trusted in thee, O Lord; I said, thou art my God (Ps. 31:14); and such should believe that this God, who is their God, will be their God and guide even unto death; since covenant-relation always subsists, and can never be made void. And whereas the Father of Christ stands in the relation of a Father to his people; it becomes them, having had the testimony of the Spirit of adoption, witnessing to their spirits that they are the children of God, to call him in faith, and with a filial fear and reverence, their father, and not turn away from him: to believe in him, is to believe in his everlasting and unchangeable love; and to believe that it is so, and their interest in it, it being shed abroad in their hearts by the Spirit given unto them; this love being declared unto them by the Lord himself, and affirmed in the strongest terms, saying, I have loved thee with an everlasting love (Jer. 31:3); of which he has given full proof, not only by his choice of them in Christ, and by the redemption of them through him, but by drawing them with loving-kindness to himself in effectual vocation; it should be believed: it is a glorious act of faith of the apostle's when he says, 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. 8:38-39); this is to be rooted and grounded in it. To believe in God the Father, is to believe in him as the

God of all grace, the author of it; that his grace is sufficient for us in all times of need; that he is able to cause all grace to abound toward us; and that he will supply all our wants, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus: it is to believe in his promises, which are exceeding great and precious; that he is faithful who has promised, and will perform; that he will never suffer his faithfulness to fail, nor any good word which he has spoken; that all his promises are yea and amen in Christ: it is to believe in his power, that he is able also to perform and make good what he has said; and likewise that there is in him everlasting strength, and that, according to his promise, as our day is, our strength shall be; and that we are, and shall be kept by his power, through faith, unto salvation.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is also the object of faith: ye believe in God, believe also in me (John 14:1), says Christ himself; who is God as well as the Father, and to be believed in equally with him: the gospel directs to faith in Christ, and it is the principal thing it encourages; the ministers of it point him out to sensible and distressed sinners, saying, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and ye shall be saved (Acts 16:31): the sum of the gospel of the word of faith is, that if thou shalt confess with the mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (Rom. 10:9, 10). The Targum, or Chaldee paraphrase of our text, is, believe in the word of the Lord your God; where the Paraphrast, by the memra Jehovah, or word of the Lord, does not mean the written word of the Lord, the scriptures; nor the oral word of the Lord, what was spoken by the prophets, as it is said he sometimes does; since it follows in the same paraphrase, believe in his law, and in his prophets; wherefore it is to be understood of the essential Word, the Son of God, who is to be believed in; and various are the acts of faith which are exercised on him, or believing on him is expressed by various things.

Faith in Christ is signified by seeing him, and looking unto him; an unknown Christ cannot, but an unseen Christ is, and may be, the object of faith: faith is the evidence of things not seen (Heb. 11:1), the principal of which is an unseen Christ: the believer by faith beholds the glory of his person, the fulness of his grace, the excellency of his righteousness,

the preciousness and efficacy of his blood, and the suitableness of his salvation; and it looks to him, for peace and pardon, for righteousness, eternal life and happiness; and keeps looking to him as the author and finisher of faith. It is a motion of the soul towards Christ; it looks at him, gazes with admiration and pleasure on the glories of his person, and the riches of his grace, but goes out unto him; faith is the soul's coming to Christ, which it is encouraged to do, by his kind invitation; come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (Matt. 11:28); and by his gracious declarations and resolutions, that he will in no wise cast out him that cometh to him (John 6:47): yea, it is expressed by a swift motion to him; by a fleeing to him for refuge under a sense of sin and danger; by running to the name of the Lord for safety, which is as a strong tower; and by turning into the strong-hold Christ, as prisoners of hope: to believe in him, is not only to behold him with an eye of faith, to flee and come unto him in a way of believing, but to lay hold upon him, and embrace him; for Christ is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon him, and happy is every one that retaineth him (Prov. 3:18): it is to lay hold upon the skirt of him that is a Jew; to lay hold upon his righteousness; to lay hold upon his strength; to lay hold on him as the mediator of the of the covenant; to hold him fast, and not let him go; saying with Job, though he slay me, yet will I trust in him—he also shall be my salvation (Job 13:15, 16). Faith in Christ is a leaning on him, while passing through this wilderness; it is a recumbency, a relying upon him for salvation; a staying a man's self upon the mighty God of Jacob; laying the whole stress of his salvation on him; casting all his care, and all his burdens on him, who has promised to sustain him and them; believing he is able to keep him from falling, and to keep what he has committed to him: for to believe in Christ, is to give up all into his hands, our souls, and the eternal concerns of them; to expect all grace, and all the supplies of it from him, even all grace here, and glory hereafter: it is in one word, to deal with his person for acceptance with God; with his blood for pardon and cleansing; with his sacrifice for atonement: with his righteousness for justification; with his fulness for every supply of grace, looking for his mercy unto eternal life.

The Holy Spirit of God is likewise the object of faith; we read and hear of faith in God, and of faith in

Jesus Christ, but very little of faith in the Holy Ghost; and yet as he is the one God with the Father and the Son, he is equally to be believed in as they are: and we are not only to believe his being and perfections, his deity and personality, his offices as a sanctifier and comforter, and the operations of his grace on the souls of men; but there are particular acts of faith, trust, and confidence, to be exercised on him: as he is God, he is to be worshipped, and this cannot be done aright without faith; he is particularly to be played unto, and there is no praying to him, nor praying in him, without faith; we are to trust in him for his help and assistance in prayer, and indeed in the exercise of every religious duty, and even of every grace. I fear ministers of the word do not trust in him as they should do in the discharge of their work, nor private Christians in the performance of theirs: and besides all this, there is an act of special faith to be put forth upon him, as upon the other two persons; for as we are to trust in God, the Father to Keep us through his power to salvation, and to trust in Christ for the salvation of our souls, and to trust the salvation of them with him; so we are to trust in the Holy Spirit for carrying on and finishing the work of grace on our souls, who is equal to it; we are to trust the whole of it with him, and be confident of this very thing; as we may be, as of any one thing in the world, that he, the Spirit of God, which hath begun a good work in us, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:6).

2dly, The prophets of the Lord are to be believed; first the Lord, and then his prophets, being set by him, and coming from him, bringing a message from him, and declaring his will; so the children of Israel at the Red sea believed the Lord and his servant Moses (Ex. 14:31).

By the prophets are meant the prophets of the Old Testament, who are to be believed, since they spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; the Spirit of the Lord spoke by them, and his Word was in their tongue (2 Pet. 1:21; 2 Sam. 23:2): he dictated to them what they should say; he led them into all the truths they delivered; he indited the scriptures of truth, and therefore they ought to be credited as such: nay, not only all scripture is given by inspiration of God, even all the writings of the prophets; but whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope; the whole of scripture is

profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness (Rom; 15:4; 2 Tim. 3:16); which several advantageous uses should the more recommend the writings of the prophets to our faith and love; and especially since they contain many things in them concerning Christ, the more immediate object of special faith; there are many things in the Psalms, and in the law, and in the prophets, concerning him; Moses wrote of him, and all the prophets bear witness of him, of his person, offices, and grace, of what he should be, and what he should do and suffer; they testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow; and especially we, at this time of day, have great reason to believe the prophets, since the far greater part of what they prophesied of, is exactly come to pass. The prophecies of Isaiah, concerning the captivity of the Jews, and their deliverance from it by Cyrus, who is mentioned by name a hundred and fifty years or more before he was born, have been punctually fulfilled. Also Daniel's prophecies concerning Darius king of Persia, and Alexander the Great, under the names of the ram and he-goat, and of the kings of Egypt and Syria, and what should be done in their times; and not only these, but others of greater importance, concerning the Messiah, his birth of a virgin, the place of his birth, his miracles, sufferings, and death; his resurrection from the dead, ascension to heaven, and session at the right hand of God, the effusion of the Spirit, and the spread and success of the gospel in the Gentile world, as well as the destruction of the Jewish nation, for their rejection of him; on account of all these things, and more, the prophets of the Old Testament claim our faith and credit.

The prophets of the New Testament are to be believed. The apostles of our Lord are by him called prophets and wise men; some of which, he says, the Jews would kill, and crucify, and others scourge (Matt. 23:34): they are so called, both because they were extraordinary preachers of the word, and foretellers of things to come, and on both accounts were to be believed. John the divine, was eminently a prophet in both respects, as he was a faithful dispenser of the word, and bore record of it, and of the testimony of Jesus, and as he foretold things to come under a divine inspiration: his Revelation is a prophecy of what should be in the world and church, from his time, to the second coming of Christ: great part of which has

already been fulfilled; and there is all the reason in the world to believe the rest will be accomplished. The sayings in it are the sayings of God, and they are faithful and true; believe what he has said by this his prophet. The ordinary and common preachers of the word are called prophets and their preaching prophesying (1 Cor. 14: 3, 4, 5, 29, 32, 37); and though we are not to believe every spirit, and every man that pretends to be a spiritual man and a prophet, but try the spirits whether they are of God, by his word, the standard of faith and practice; because many false prophets are gone out into the world (1 John 4:1): yet such who bring the doctrines of Christ with them, such as are agreeable to the word of God, which are taken out of it, and established by it, ought to be believed and received, not as the word of man, but as in truth the word of God.

The whole of divine revelation is to be believed, which God has made by his prophets, whether of the Old or of the New Testament; and which is all comprehended in these words our Lord began his ministry with, believe the gospel (Mark 1:15); not to believe this, is the damning sin of unbelief, so much spoken of in the New Testament; this was the sin of the Jews, and in which the greater part died, that they believed not the Jesus was the Messiah, and other important truths concerning him, though they came with such full evidence; this is the sin of all, to whom the external revelation of the Gospel comes, and they believe it not; this is the sin of the Deists of the present age, of all deniers, rejecters, and despisers of the Gospel; who either neglect to examine the evidence of it, or notwithstanding the evidence of it, reject and condemn it: what will the end of such persons be, that obey not the gospel of Christ, that do not embrace, but neglect or despise it? They will be punished with everlasting destruction; he that believeth not this revelation shall be damned. This is the condemnation, the cause and aggravation of it, that light is come into the world and men love darkness rather than light (John 3:19); the darkness of nature, rather than a divine revelation. This sort of unbelief, and not want of special faith in Christ, is the cause of men's damnation. No man will be lost or damned, because he has not this faith; to say that God will damn any man because he has not this special faith in Christ, is to represent him as the most cruel of all beings, as the Arminians say we make him to be; to damn a man for that which

is solely in his power to give; for no man can believe in Christ with this sort of faith, unless it be given him of his Father; and which yet he determines not to give unto him, as unto all the non-elect: and which man never had in his power to have or to exercise, no, not in the state of innocence. Can any man believe, that God will ever damn a man on such an account as this? This is just such good sense, as if it should be said, that a malefactor dies at Tyburn, for want of receiving the king's pardon, he did not think fit to give him; it is true, if the king had given his pardon, and he had received it, it would have saved him from dying; but then it is not the want of the king's pardon, or of his receiving it, that is the cause of his condemnation and death, but the crimes he was charged with, and convicted of in open court. So, though if it pleases God to give men special faith in Christ, for the remission of their sins, they will certainly be saved; but then it is not the want of this faith in the blood of Christ, for the pardon of sins, that is the cause of any man's condemnation and death, but the transgressions of the law of God, and the contempt of his gospel they have been guilty of. As is the revelation which is made to men, such is the faith that is required of them. If there is no revelation made unto them, no faith is required of them; and unbelief, or want of faith in Christ, will not be their damning sin, as is the case of the heathens; for how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher (Rom. 10:14)? No, they will be condemned, not for their want of faith in Christ, or his gospel, which they never heard of, but for their sins committed against the law and light of nature; as many as have sinned without the law, shall perish without law (Rom. 2:12): if a revelation is made, this is either external or internal; if only an external revelation is made, the faith required is an assent unto it, and a reception of it; and such who do not attend to the evidence it brings with it, or reject and despise it, shall be damned: but if besides the external revelation and internal revelation is made by the spirit of wisdom, in the knowledge of Christ; or God by his word calls men effectually by his grace, and reveals his Son in them, as well as to them; this sort of revelation comes with such power and influence upon the mind, as certainly to produce a true and living faith in the soul, which infallibly issues in eternal life and happiness; and of such persons, and such only, acts of special faith in Christ, are required: and though the

sin of unbelief is often found in them, it is such as is consistent with true faith in Christ, and which in the issue is overcome by it: this is the sin of unbelief, that is opposite to special faith, and obstructs it in its acts; but partly because it is pardoned with the other sins of believers, and partly because it is finally subdued and vanquished, it is never the damning sin of any. So I think the truth of things stands. I proceed,

To consider the advantages arising from faith in God, and in his word, establishment and prosperity. Now, though establishment is annexed to faith in the Lord our God, and prosperity to faith in his prophets; yet this is not so to be understood, as if establishment only followed upon faith in God, and not upon faith in his word; and as if prosperity was the consequence of faith in the word only, and not of faith in God; whereas, as on the one hand, the prophets and ministers of the word, are the means of establishing believers; hence the apostle Paul was desirous of imparting the spiritual gifts he had received, to the end the saints might be established (Rom. 1:11), and speaks of God as of power to establish men, according to his gospel (Rom. 16:25); so, on the other hand, spiritual peace and prosperity flow from faith in God, who keeps such in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on him, because he trusteth in him (Isa. 26:3); wherefore these things are to be considered, not in a strict separate sense, but promiscuously, as they are the joint effects of both faith in God, and in his word.

1st, Establishment; which is to be understood, not of the state of believers, but to their hearts, frames, graces and duties.

Not of the state of the people of God, which is in itself firm and stable, and cannot be made more so: they are safe in the arms of everlasting love; they are not only engraven by the Lord upon the palms of his hands, and set as a seal upon his arm, but also as a seal upon his heart. Nothing in heaven, earth, or hell, can separate them from his love; it is invariably the same, in whatsoever condition or circumstance they are; when he hides or chides, he still loves; he rests in his love; it is more immovable than rocks or mountains. They are fixed in the hands of Christ, out of whose hands neither sin, nor Satan, nor the world can pluck them, and out of which they shall never fall. What was said by the queen of Sheba, concerning Solomon, with respect to Israel; because thy God loved Israel, to establish them for ever, therefore made he thee

king over them (2 Chron. 9:8), may be said of Christ, with respect to his people; that because he loved the saints, and in order to establish them for ever and ever, he put them into the hands of Christ, where they are safe from all danger, and from every enemy. They are secured in the covenant of grace, which is sure and immovable; its blessings are the sure mercies of David; its promises are yea and amen in Christ; it is established on better promises than any other covenant; and the persons in it can never be removed out of it. They are settled on the rock of ages, on which the church is built, against which the gates of hell can never prevail; they are built on a sure foundation God has laid in Zion; so that, though storms and tempests of corruption, temptations, and afflictions should beat upon them, they stand unmoved against them all, being built on a rock. They are in a state of grace, in which they will ever remain; they are in a state of justification, and shall never enter into condemnation; they are in the family of God, by adopting grace, out of which they will never be turned; for, if a son, no more a servant, but an heir of God through Christ (Gal. 4:7); they are in a state of regeneration, and can never be unborn again; they have the principle of grace, which springs up unto eternal life: these things are so chained together, that not one link can ever be broken; whom he did predestinate, them he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified (Rom. 8:30). Now this establishment does not arise from faith, nor is it by it; if all the faith that ever was in the world, from Adam to this moment, was engrossed and possessed by one man, it would not make his state, God-ward, a whit the surer and firmer that it is. But,

The hearts of God's people are very unsettled, and need establishing; they melt like wax, and flow like water, through fear, and want of stronger faith. They are unstable as water, as is said of Reuben, and do not excel (Gen. 49:4); their frames are changeable and various; one while their mountain stands strong, and they say they shall never be moved; presently God hides his face, and their souls are troubled (Ps. 30:6, 7): one that could say, the Lord is my portion, therefore will I hope in him, soon comes into such distress as to put his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope (Lam. 3:24, 29); he whose love is as strong as death, exceeding fervent and ardent, the coals thereof give a most vehement flame, which many waters cannot

quench (Cant. 8:6, 7); through the prevalence of corruption, the force of temptation, and the snares of the world, waxes chill and cold. And he that seemed to be steadfast in the faith, falls from some degree of his steadfastness in it; and instead of quitting himself like a man, is like a child tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, wavers in his profession, slackens in his duty, and is negligent of it. Now faith in God, and in his word, has a tendency to establish the heart, and make it fearless; he shall not be afraid of evil tidings, even he whose heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord; his heart is established, he shall not be afraid (Ps. 112:7, 8): as is a man's faith, so are his other graces; if faith is in lively exercise, hope will be lively too, and be as an anchor sure and steadfast; his love will abound, for faith works by it; he will become established in the truths of the gospel he believes, and has an experience of; he will be more stable and constant in the discharge of duty; he will be steadfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58).

2dly, Prosperity arises from faith in God and his word; not temporal, but spiritual prosperity; not prosperity of body, but prosperity of soul, such as Gaius had, whom the apostle John thus salutes, Beloved, I wish above all things, that they mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth (3 John 2); on which soul-prosperity faith has a very great influence. The soul is in good health and in a prosperous condition, when there is an appetite for the word; when it hungers and thirsts after righteousness; when it desires the sincere milk of the word; when it finds it, and eats it by faith; when the word is mixed with faith upon hearing, and it is taken in and digested by it; as also when a soul has a comfortable view by faith of the forgiveness of its sins through the blood of Christ: sins are diseases, pardon is the healing of them; and then is a believer in a prosperous condition, when the sun of righteousness rises on him with this healing in his wings (Mal. 4:2); and when he, the inhabitant of Zion, shall not say I am sick; the reason of which is, because the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity (Isa. 33:24): so likewise when a man has much spiritual peace and joy through believing in the righteousness of Christ for his justification; in his blood for the remission of his sins; and in his sacrifice for the atonement of them; and spiritual joy is such a certain concomitant or consequence of faith, that it is called the joy of faith (Phil. 1:25); and

whoever is possessed of it must, in a spiritual sense, be in prosperous circumstances. Such a one is fat and flourishing, and all he does prospers: and as prosperity in the text carries in it an idea of victory over enemies, this may be ascribed to faith; it is by faith the believer resists Satan and his temptations: by holding up the shield of faith, he quenches his fiery darts, and obtains a conquest over him; as he does also over the world, the men, things and lusts of it: This is the victory the overcometh the world, even our faith; who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God (1 John 5:4, 5)? What heroic actions, what wonderful things have been done by faith! Men through faith have subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, &c (Heb. 11:36), and such must be in prosperous and flourishing circumstances.

From the whole we learn, what an excellent and precious grace the grace of faith is; what use it is of, what purposes it serves, and what influence it has upon the stability and prosperity of the believer; it is a pity it should be put out of its place; for when it keeps its place, it is very useful and serviceable; but if it is put in the room of Christ, it is good for nothing. Careful we should be, not to ascribe that to the act, which belongs to the object. It may be known, whether a person has this grace or no; for where it is, Christ is precious, to them that believe he is precious (1 Pet. 1:7); it works and shows itself by love to him, his word and ordinances, his people, and his ways; and it is attended with good works, the fruits of righteousness; for faith without works is dead (Jam. 2:26): and if persons are satisfied that they have this grace, they should be thankful for it, and attribute it, not to the power of their own free-will, but to the free Grace of God, whose gift it is; for it comes along with the abundant and superabundant grace of God in conversion. And such who have it should pray for an increase of it; since their stability and prosperity have such a connection with it; and should guard against unbelief; and upon every appearance of it, pray as the poor man did, Lord, I believe, help my unbelief (Mark 9:24). To conclude, since such are the advantages of believing in God and his word, Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God (Heb. 3:12).

6 JEHOVAH'S PREROGATIVE AND HIS LOVE

TO PUT AWAY THE SINS OF HIS PEOPLE*2 Samuel 12:13*

—And Nathan said unto David, the Lord also hath put away thy Sin; thou shalt not die.

In the preceding chapter we have an account of the sin of David, which is here recited. I need not name it, it is too well known; and from which we may learn, what men, the best of men are, when left to themselves the Lord's people, not only before conversion, but even after they are called by grace, and have tasted that the Lord is gracious. What awful instances are Noah, Lot, Peter, and others. O how sinful is the heart of man, how deep the iniquity in it! What wickedness is there! If even a good man is left to himself, what will he not do?

Now, such examples as these are recorded, not for our imitation, but for our caution and from hence we learn this useful lesson, Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed, lest he fall (1 Cor. 10:12). And, moreover, these things stand upon record for the comfort and relief of such who have backslidden, fallen into great sins, and are brought to true repentance for them, such need not despair of the grace and mercy of God; for the sin of David, notorious as it was, and though attended with such dreadful aggravations, yet, according to the message brought him in our text, God put it away, that he should not die.

David for a considerable time, as it appears, was under great stupidity of mind; quite insensible of the evil he had committed; did not appear to have any remorse of conscience, or at least, not to be humbled before God for his sin, and make an acknowledgment of it, or discover any true repentance for it, not for a year, or thereabouts, as is plain from the history; but God will not suffer sin to lay upon any of his people, and especially not upon such an eminent servant as David was, unrebuked, without taking notice of it. The Lord will rebuke man for his iniquity some way or other; either by impressing a sense of guilt upon his conscience, by some awakening providence, or by the ministry of the word, or by sending his servants to reprove for it, and convince of it; which was the case here. He sent Nathan the prophet: one whom David was familiar with, and who had been brought up in his court; a very proper person to be a messenger to him; a man that knew how to speak to a king, and address him in a decent and becoming manner; as appears from the context. He does not take upon him to speak

in an abrupt, or use him in a rough way; but by a fable, an apologue or parable, leads him into the nature of his sin, and fulfils the message that God had sent him with. He delivers out a parable unto him, concerning two men in one city; a rich man and a poor man. The rich man had many flocks and herds; the poor man had but one ewe lamb. A traveler came to the rich man's house, and he thought fit to entertain him; but instead of taking a lamb or kid out of his own flock, he takes the poor man's lamb, and dresses that for his guest. So Nathan represents the case to David; who was so enraged, that this man should behave in such a manner, that he at once pronounces him worthy of death; As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing, shall surely die; and he shall restore the lamb fourfold: upon which Nathan says to him boldly, Thou art the man. Thou art the man that hast done this, or what is equivalent unto it: and then sets forth his sin in its proper colors; threatens, in the name of God, what should be done to him; that the sword should not depart from his house, because he had shed innocent blood; that one of his own family, a son, should rise up and ravish his wives and his concubines. David was then smote to the heart, and cried out, as in the former part of the verse, I have sinned against the Lord. "I own my sin, acknowledge it, and repent of it. I am sorry for it." It is but a short confession that he here makes, but it was a full one; attended with brokenness of heart, contrition of soul, real contrition and sincere repentance; as it is plain from the fifty-first Psalm, that penitential Psalm, which was penned on this occasion. Nathan, who was thoroughly satisfied with the genuineness of David's repentance, being under the impulse of the Divine Spirit, and directed by the Lord, then said unto David, The Lord also hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die. He hath put away thy sin; he will not impute it to thee, or place it to thy account: he will not charge thee with it, or punish thee with death, though thou deservest to die. Thou shalt not die, either a bodily, spiritual, or eternal death. It is as much as if he had said to him, Thy sin is forgiven thee. He had authority from God to say this to him for his comfort, under the conviction and distress of mind which he now was fallen into. So sometimes God makes use of a gospel minister for the declaring of pardoning grace and mercy to his people. We have an instance of this in the sixth chapter of Isaiah; when the prophet, sensible of his iniquity, confessed it. with

a great deal of concern and trouble; and, perhaps, in some sort of despondency, said, Woe is me, for I am undone! I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts (Isa. 6:5). Now to relieve the prophet, under a sense of his impurity and the consequences of it, one of the Seraphim (who may be considered as an emblem of a gospel minister), flew to the altar, and took a live coal from thence (an emblem of the sacrifice which our Lord Jesus Christ has made for sin), and applied it unto the lips of the prophet, saying, Thine iniquity is taken away and thy sin purged. Thus gospel ministers are made use of, in the hand of the blessed Spirit, for the relief of his people under a sense of sin, to direct them to the pardoning grace and mercy of God to sinners.

It is the will and pleasure of Jehovah, that when his dear children are distressed on account of sin, that they should be comforted; and the ministers of Christ are charged to do this. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, to her very heart, and cry unto her that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins (Isa. 40:2). In this light, I apprehend, we are to understand the words of the text: from which I observe the following things.

I. That it is the work of God, and his only, to put away the sin of his people. The Lord also hath put away thy sin.

II. That those whose sins are put away by the Lord, shall not die; either a spiritual or eternal death, The Lord hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die.

I. It is the Lord's work, and his only, it is his act, and deed, to put away sin from his people. Of this, they themselves are sensible; and therefore, under a sense of sin, apply to him for the removal and putting of it away: hence Job says, I have sinned; what shall I do unto thee, O thou Preserver of men?—Why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away mine iniquity? (Job 7:21); plainly intimating, that no other could pardon and forgive, or take away his sin, but the Lord himself, against whom he had sinned: and hence David, when he was under a strong and full conviction of the sin he had been guilty of, here referred unto, in the fifty-first Psalm, that penitential Psalm penned on this occasion, entreats, that God would blot out his transgressions, and cleanse him from his sin (Ps. 51:1, 2); which is the same thing as in the text, putting away his sin from him. This is the Lord's act, and his only.

And sometimes we may observe, Jehovah puts this plea into the mouths of his people, and encourages them to ask it of him: thus he speaks to backsliding Israel, Take with you words and turn to the Lord; say unto him, take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously (Hosea 14:2). And the Lord does do so: as he did to Joshua the High Priest, represented as clothed with filthy garments, to whom he said, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee; and I will clothe thee with change of raiment (Zech. 3:4).

That we may the better understand what is contained in this part of our text, which concerns the act of God in putting away the sin of his people, we shall consider,

1. What that is which is put away. Sin.

2. What is meant by putting it away. And then,

3. Shall show that this is God's act and deed, and his only to put away sin. Nathan the prophet does not take it upon himself: he speaks of it clearly as the act of God, the Lord hath put away thy sin.

1. What that is which the Lord puts away from his people, and that is iniquity. "The Lord hath put away thy sin." Sin, which is that abominable thing that he hateth; which he cannot bear the sight of. "He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity (Hab. 1:13): so far is he from taking any delight and pleasure in sin; and therefore to put it away, must be most agreeable to himself. It is loathsome and abominable in the sight of his people; they loath it, and they loath themselves for it: it is what is hateful to them; the things which they do, they hate, as the apostle did (Rom. 7:15). Wherefore, to put away this from them, which is so abominable to God, so loathsome and hateful to themselves, must be a desirable thing; quite agreeable to them.

The Lord has put away thy sin: sin, which sets men at a distance from God. Man was in fellowship with his Maker, and continued so till sin entered; then he was driven out of Eden's garden, that pleasant spot, and a state of separation from God took place. In this state are all men, by nature; and they must have eternally continued so, they must have been everlastingly separated, and heard that dreadful sentence, Depart ye cursed, into everlasting fire (Matthew 25:41), had not sovereign grace interposed.

Men, even all men, through sin, are in a state of estrangement, alienation and distance from God: even God's elect themselves, as in a state of nature, are

so; but they are reconciled, made nigh by the blood of Christ, and brought into open and near communion with God, through the power of divine grace upon them. And yet, even those who are brought into such nearness, and have communion with him, may, through sin, be set at a sort of distance from him; though not separated from him with respect to union and interest; yet with regard to sensible communion and fellowship they may. Your iniquities have separated between you and your God; and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear (Isa.54:2). Now to have that put away, that whisperer, which separates chief friends, must be a desirable thing by the saints themselves.

The Lord hath put away thy sin. Sin, which is a burden, an heavy burden, too heavy for the saint to bear; he groans under the weight of it: we groan, being burdened, says the apostle (2 Cor. 5:4). Not he only, and other ministers of the word but all the people of God in common. They groan under the weight of indwelling sin: especially when it breaks forth into practice in any open way and manner. Then do the iniquities of God's people pass over their heads as an heavy burden, too heavy for them to bear. This produces distress of soul, and inward confusion; such as is intolerable, without discoveries of pardoning grace and mercy; for a wounded spirit who can bear? Now to have sin put away, which is the cause of all this, must be a very desirable thing.

Sin is the cause of all soul sorrow and distress to God's people, as it was to David. It was the occasion of the breaking of his bones, and by reason of this he had no rest; no soundness in his flesh, because of his sin (Ps. 38:3). His loins were filled with a loathsome disease, and he was in great distress of soul on that account; which makes even the most holy man upon earth to say, O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? (Rom.8:24). Now to have sin, the cause of all soul sorrow and distress, put away, is a desirable thing.

"The Lord hath put away thy Sin." The sin which he had been guilty of and which was only chargeable upon himself, was not to be attributed to God, who had suffered it, or to Satan, who had tempted him to it: for it was his own sin; for "every man is drawn aside of his own lust and enticed." He had no one to charge with it but himself. Thy sin, which thou hast owned and acknowledged to be thine, confessed it with

sorrow, humiliation, repentance, and contrition: thy sin, who hath said, my sin is ever before me (Ps. 2:3); thy sin the Lord has put away. And all this may, in the first sense, respect the sin he had been guilty of with respect to Uriah; yet it is not to be restrained hereunto, but takes in all other sins. David had an application of pardoning grace and mercy, with respect to all his sins, and therefore he calls upon his soul, and all that is within him, to bless the Lord, who had forgiven him all his iniquities (Ps.102:1,2,3): and indeed, where one sin is forgiven, all are forgiven. God forgives all manner of iniquity for Christ's sake; and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses from all sin (1 John 1:7). But,

2. What are we to understand by putting away sin? "The Lord hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die."

This is not to be understood of removing sin as to the being of it. God does not put away the sin of his people in this sense, in the present state of things. He could do it if he would: that is not to be doubted. He could have dispossessed the Canaanites from the land of Canaan at once; but he chose not to do it: he drove them out by little and little. And he could, at first conversion, clear his people of all those corruptions of nature which are in them; for this he does at death, when this earthly house of their tabernacles is dissolved; this house that is infected with leprosy when the timber and stones are removed, and carried into the grave; all sin is removed, and there is nothing left but the spirits of just men made perfect. I say, he that can do it at death, could do it at first: but that is not his pleasure. No. As he left the Canaanites in the land for wise reasons, so he does the corruptions in the hearts of his people for if there were no corruptions in them, there would be no trial of their faith. Well then, God does not put away sin, the being of sin from his people: it dwells in them, it did in an apostle; sin dwelleth in me (Rom. 7:17).

A most awful soul-deception some are under, who imagine they are free from sin. What will they say to that text which must stare them in the face: if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us (1 John 1:8). God puts away the sin of his people; but not as to the being of it; no, that continues. There is such a thing as the weakening of the power of sin in them; or there is a putting off the old man, though there is not a putting him away. A putting him off, according to the former conversation, and a

putting on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness (Eph. 4:24); but then this is their own act, under the influence of the Spirit of grace. They are exhorted to put off the old man, and to mortify the deeds of the body; and, to encourage them, it is said, If ye through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live (Rom. 8:13). But what I am speaking of, and what our text speaks of, is what is God's work entirely. The Lord hath put away thy sin. The promise is, sin shall not have dominion over you (Rom. 6:14); and it is made good: but sometimes sin overcomes them; and it had been so with poor David. It could not then be said, that the Lord had put away his sin, as to the being of it; for perhaps his lust never was stronger than at that time. He found what the apostle said, to be his own experience (though the apostle never sinned as this good man did). I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members (Rom. 7:23). Poor David, with a witness, was brought into captivity to the law of sin and death, through the prevalence of indwelling corruption. It could not be said of him then, "the Lord hath," as a past act, "put away thy sin;" i.e. as to the being of it, as it never was stronger in him than it had now been.

Nor is this to be understood of the taking away a sense of sin from him. He had been in a strange stupor of mind for many months; insensible of the evil he had been guilty of; but now, awakened with the message of the prophet, attended with the power and Spirit of God, he had such a lively sense of sin as perhaps he never had before. O what a heart-felt sense of it must he have had when he said, I have sinned! Now his sin stared him in the face, and his conscience was stung with it: he had a strong sensation of it indeed. Now he "found no rest in his bones because of his sin." The hand of the Lord pressed his conscience sore in impressing his sin on his mind, which impression was a lasting one.

But this must be understood as a discovery of pardoning grace and mercy to him. The Lord sometimes comes and says to a poor sinner, laboring under a sense of sin, I, even I, am he that blot out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins (Isa. 43:25). Or, as our Lord Jesus Christ himself said to the man sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee (Matthew

9:2), to backsliders Jehovah is pleased to say, I will heal your backslidings (Hosea 4:4). And sometimes he sends such a message as this by a servant of his, as he did to David by Nathan; the Lord hath put away thy sin; that is, he will never charge it upon thee, nor punish thee for it.

Various are the ways the Lord takes to put away the sins of his people: I will just run them over. The first of these is, his determination, and resolution not to impute sin unto them. This was a resolution and determination taken up in his divine mind from everlasting. God was in Christ reconciling the world (of his chosen people) unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them (2 Cor. 5:19). It was his determined will, not to impute their trespasses unto them; that is, not to charge them upon them, or place them to their account. And if God will not, who dare say any thing to the charge of God's elect? O happy man, whom the Lord will not charge with sin! "Blessed is the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered; blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity" (Ps. 32:2). This is Jehovah's first step the resolution of his mind from eternity was, not to reckon sin to his people, or charge them with it.

Then he has promised, in the everlasting covenant of grace, that he will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins, and their iniquities, he will remember no more (Heb. 8:12). And this promise of grace is made known in all ages for the comfort of his people; for, to him (that is, to Christ) give all the prophets (all from the beginning of the world) witness, that through his name, whosoever believes in him, shall receive remission of sins (Acts 10:43). And he has proclaimed his name, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin (Ex. 33:6,7).

Moreover, he set forth his own Son to be a propitiation for sin, or foreordained him (as the word signifies) to be a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of his people: and in consequence of this purpose, he sent him, in time, to be this propitiation, that is, to make reconciliation for their sins, and bring in an everlasting righteousness.

In order to this, he took off all the sins of his people from them, and put them upon Christ: transferred them all upon him; so, saith the Scripture, the Lord

hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all (Isa. 53:6). And so made him sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

This mystery and wonder of divine grace is emblematically held forth to us by the High Priest putting all the iniquities and all the transgressions of the children of Israel upon the head of the scape goat. It is said, And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send them away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness; and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited (Lev. 16:21, &c.). Now just so, Jehovah put all the sins of his people upon his Son, who agreed to it, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself: as it is said, Once, in the end of the world, hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself (Heb. 9:26). To put away sin, to abolish it, to make it null and void, as the word signifies, so that it shall have no power to condemn those for whom Christ suffered: hence there is said to be no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus (Rom.8:1). Yea, Christ, by the sacrifice of himself, has so put away sin, that it shall be no more. It is finished; the body of sin is crucified and destroyed (Rom. 6:6): and it is put at a distance, removed from them; the Lord removed the iniquity of that land in one day (Zech. 3:9). The iniquities of all his people in that one time, when Christ bore their sins in his own body on the tree, and made full satisfaction to divine justice for them, were removed as far as the East is from the West, to the utmost distance; signified by the scape goat bearing the sins of Israel into the wilderness, and a land uninhabited: removed so as not to be seen by the avenging eye of God's justice. Having regard to this work of Christ, God sees no iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel (Num. 23:21): when their sins are sought for, they shall not be found, because he has pardoned those whom he hath reserved (Jer. 1:20); which is the same thing as putting away sin. He has cast them behind his back, and into the depths of the sea, so as never to be remembered any more; that is to say, never to be charged upon them. They are justified by Christ's righteousness and satisfaction, from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses. All their iniquities are pardoned, they are justified, and so shall most certainly he glorified.

These are the steps Jehovah has taken for the putting away the sins of his people: Now,

3. This is God's own act and deed. None can put away sin but himself. There is a sense indeed, in which it may and is, put away by others; thus, sin may be put away by the civil magistrate's punishing a malefactor for his sin; so tile judges of Israel were directed, by various laws, to put away the iniquity of Israel; as may be seen in the thirteenth chapter of Deuteronomy, where mention is made of a false prophet, who, upon conviction, was to be put to death; and it follows, so shalt thou put away the evil from the midst of thee (Deut.17:5). Put the evil man away, and so put away the guilt of his sin from the nation, on which it would have laid, had they not punished the man with death, as the law required.

So, with regard to idolatry, and other sins. When a person was convicted of idolatry, he was to be put to death (Deut.17:5); and it follows, "so shalt thou put the evil away from among you" (Deut. 17:7). So the man that dealt presumptuously, and would not hearken nor submit to the sentence of the court of judicature; he was to be put to death, that so they might put away evil from Israel. Hence, you see, there is a sense in which sin may be put away by man; the civil magistrate.

So also sin may be put away by heads of families: by not conniving at it, by severely rebuking for it, and checking it. It was more than once suggested by Job's friends, when they thought him a had man, that he had connived at sin in his family; hence says Zophar, If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away; and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacle (Job 11:14). What is meant by putting away sin is, not suffering wicked men to dwell in his house. So likewise Eliphaz, says, If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up, thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles (Job 22:23): thou shouldest not connive at sin, but put it away. In this sense, sin may be put away by man.

Also, as it respects the forgiveness of sin. One man may forgive another. Good men ought to do it: as they have received pardon themselves, they ought to forgive others, for Christ's sake; nor can any expect forgiveness at the hands of God, that will not forgive the iniquities of their fellow Christians.

Ministers of the gospel, they are to remit sin; but this is to be understood only declaratively, publishing the full pardon of sin to the Lord's people: otherwise,

it is not in their power to forgive sin; they can do no more than Nathan did. He does not say, "I have put away thy sin;" but the Lord, hath put away thy sin. The utmost the ministers of the gospel can do, is to declare, that whosoever believes in Christ, shall receive the remission of sins. To attempt more than this, is Antichristianism: this is what Antichrist assumes, and is a part of what is delivered by that mouth which speaketh blasphemies (Rev. 13:5).

It is the Lord's act, and his only, to put away sin in that sense which has been considered. It is his prerogative, against whom it is committed, whose righteous law is broken; and who is that Law-giver, who is able both to save and to destroy. The word used in the Hebrew language for forgiveness of sin signifies, a lifting of it up. Now this is what God only can do. Sin is such a heavy thing, God only could lift it up, and put it upon his Son; and he only can lift it up from the conscience of a sinner laboring under a sense of it. A man himself cannot do it; and all the friends he has in the world cannot lift it up from the conscience, when it lies heavy there. It is God's work; all that man can do will not move it. Neither the blood of bulls nor of goats, under the legal dispensation, could take away sin. All humiliation, repentance, tears, duties, and the like, cannot take away sin; no, it is the Lord alone that must do it: souls, therefore, are directed to him for the putting it away. He does (as before observed) put words in their mouths, and bids them say, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously (Hosea 14:2).

This is God's act, and it is a past act too; so Nathan speaks of it as such, "the Lord hath put away thy sin." He does not say the Lord will, but the Lord hath put away thy sin. Forgiveness of sin is a past act.; it was made in eternity, as it respects a non-imputation of it; and, as it regards the removing and putting it upon Christ, this is God's act; and this is a past act of sovereign mercy, an act of special grace and abundant goodness. Yea, I may add, it is an act of justice, as it is founded on the blood, righteousness, and sacrifice of Christ; if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). Now I am to observe,

II. That those whose iniquities the Lord puts away, shall not die. This may, in a sense, respect a corporal death, which David might be in some fear of; for the sin he had committed required such a death. He had shed blood; and it is said, Whoso sheddeth man's

blood, by man shall his blood be shed (Gen. 9:6). The sin of adultery, which he had been guilty of, demanded death; The man that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death (Lev. 20:10). Now though David, being in so high a station as he was, and so greatly esteemed of the people, might have nothing to fear from a court of judicature, or of being called to account, or dealt with according to the rigor of the law of God, yet he might be in fear that God would, by his own hands, strike him dead, as he did Nadab and Abihur, Corah, Dathan, and Abiram, or Annanias in the New Testament; for though the magistrate might not do it, he knew God could do it, and he might think he would do it; therefore, says Nathan, "The Lord hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die," a corporal death.—I do not see there is any reason to omit this sense.

And we may observe, the Lord's people, though they do indeed die a corporal death, good men, as well as bad men, "Our fathers, where are they?" yet those from whom God hath put away their sins, do not die this death as a penal evil. Though they die, they do not die under the curse; the sting of death is taken away, and death is a blessing to them. Blessed are the dead, which die in the Lord (Rev. 14:13).

But this may rather have reference to spiritual and eternal death. Those whose iniquities the Lord has put away shall not die a spiritual death: they may be in such circumstances as look like it; things that remain may seem ready to die; they may reckon themselves as free among the dead; but true grace cannot die, it is an immortal seed, a well of living water, springing up unto everlasting life (John 4:14). Nor shall such persons die the second death; that shall have no power over them:

whosoever believeth in me (says Christ) shall never die; believest thou this? (John 11:26). Those, whose iniquities are forgiven, whose sins are put away, in the sense we have been speaking of, they shall never die an eternal death—But, to draw to a conclusion,

A soul that is made sensible of sin, whose conscience is burdened with it, and wants to have it removed, and to be comforted, let such make their application to God; for it is he only that can put away sin. And when souls are brought to a true sense of sin, make an ingenuous confession of it, and have true repentance

unto life that needs not to be repented of, these have a great deal of reason to hope and believe that God will put away their sins; that he will manifest his pardoning grace unto them, as he did to David. When he owned he had sinned, then he had a message brought him from the Lord, by one of his servants; “The Lord hath put away thy sin, thou shalt not die.”

And when souls are favored after this manner, with applications of pardoning grace and mercy to them, what obligations do they lay under to love the Lord, who has shewn so much love to them. What reason have they to be thankful unto him, and with David, to call upon their souls, and all that is within them, to bless his holy name, who has forgiven them all their iniquities, who hath redeemed their life from destruction, and crowned them with loving kindness and tender mercies.

7 THE DOCTRINE OF PREDESTINATION STATED, AND SET IN THE SCRIPTURE LIGHT

In Opposition to Mr. Wesley’s Predestination calmly Considered, with a Reply to the Exceptions of the said Writer to The Doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints.

Mr. Wesley having declared himself the author of the Serious Thoughts upon the Perseverance of the Saints, to which I lately returned an answer; has been pleased to shift the controversy from perseverance to predestination: contenting himself with some low, mean and impertinent exceptions to a part of what I have written on the subject of perseverance; not attempting to answer any one argument advanced by me in vindication of it; and yet he has the assurance in the public papers, to call this miserable piece of his, chiefly written on another subject, A full answer to Dr. Gill’s pamphlet on perseverance; any other man but Mr. Wesley would, upon reflection, be covered with shame and confusion; though to give him his due, in his great modesty, he has left out the word full in some after-papers; as being conscious to himself, or it may be, some of his friends pointed it to him, that it was an imposition on the public, and tended greatly to expose himself and his cause since he has left me in tile full possession of all my arguments; which I will not say are unanswerable, though I think they are; and it looks as if Mr. Wesley thought so too, seeing he has not attempted to answer one of them; yet this I may say, that as yet they are not answered at all, and much

less is a full answer given unto them.

And now, though I might be very well excused following him in this wild pursuit on the subject of predestination; since he has not meddled with my argument from it for the saints perseverance; since he has not pursued that subject, as his title promises; and since throughout the whole he does not argue, only harangue upon it; and that only a part of it, reprobation, which he thought would best serve his purpose; yet for the sake of weak and honest minds, lest through his subtlety, they should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ; I shall endeavour to state the doctrine of predestination, and set it in a true light according to the Scriptures, with the proofs of it from thence; and take notice of the principal objections raised by Mr. Wesley in his harangue on that part of it which respects reprobation; and then close this treatise with a reply to his trifling exceptions to what I have written on the subject of the saints perseverance.

As to the doctrine of predestination, it may be considered either,

I. In general as respecting all things that have been, are, or shall be, or done in the world; every thing comes under the determination and appointment of God “he did, as the assembly of divines say in their confession, from all eternity, unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass;” or, as they express it in their catechism, “God’s decrees are the wise, free and holy acts of the counsel of his will whereby, from all eternity, he hath, for his own glory, unchangeably fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass in time:” and this predestination and fore-appointment of all things, may be concluded from the fore-knowledge of God; known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world, *απ αιωνος* , from eternity (Acts 15:18); they were known by him as future, as what would be, which became so by his determination of them; for, the reason why he knew they would be, is, because he determined they should be: also from the providence of God, and his government of the world, which is all according to the counsel of his own will (Eph. 1:11): for he does every thing according to that, or as he has determined in his own mind. Eternal predestination in this sense, is no other than eternal providence, of which actual providence in time is the execution. To deny this, is to deny the providence of God, and, his government of the world, which none

but Deists and Atheists will do; at least it is to think and speak unworthy of God, as not being the all-knowing and all-wise and sovereign ruler of the world, he is once more the very wonderful thing, prophecy, or foretelling things to come, could not be without a predestination of them; of which there are so many instances in Scripture such as the stay of the Israelites in Egypt, and their departure from thence; the seventy years captivity of the Jews in Babylon, and their return at the end of that time; the exact coming of the Messiah at such a certain time; with many others, and some seemingly the most casual and contingent; as the birth of persons by name a hundred or hundreds of years before they were born, as Josiah and Cyrus; and a man's carrying a pitcher of water, at such a time, to such a place (1 Kings 13:2; Isa. 44:28; 45:1; Luke 22:10, 13): how could these things be foretold with certainty, unless it was determined and appointed they should be? There is nothing comes by chance to God, nothing done without his knowledge, nor without his will or permission, and nothing without his determination; every thing, even the most minute thing, respecting his creatures, and what is done in this world in all periods and ages of time, is by his appointment; for the proof of which see the following passages.

- Ecclesiastes 3:1, 2-To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven; a time to be born and a time to die, &c. a time fixed by the purpose of God for each of these.

- Job 14:5-Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass. Chapter 23:14, He performeth the thing that is appointed for me, and many such things are with him.

- Daniel 4:35-And he doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what dost thou?

- Ephesians 1:11-Being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.

- Acts 15:18-Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. Chapter 17:26—and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.

- Matthew 10:29, 30-Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fail

to the ground without your Father; but the very

hairs of your head are all numbered.

II. Predestination may be considered as special, and as relating to particular persons, and to things spiritual and eternal; whereas predestination in general respects all creatures and things, even things temporal and civil.

First, Christ himself is the object of predestination; he was fore-ordained to be the mediator between God and man; to be the propitiation for sin; to be the redeemer and saviour of his people; to be the head of the church; king of saints, and judge of the world: hence he is called, God's elect, and his chosen one; and whatsoever befell him, or was done unto him, was by the determinate council and fore-knowledge of God; even all things relating to his sufferings and death in proof of which read the following Scriptures.

Romans 3:5-Whom God hath set forth, προεθετο, fore-ordained to be a propitiation.

- 1 Peter 1:20-Who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, that is, to be the Lamb slain. See chapter 2:4.

- Luke 22:29-And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me.

- Acts 18:31-Because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained. See also chapter 10:42.

- Isaiah 43:1-Behold my servant, whom I uphold, mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth. See Matthew 12:18.

- Luke 22:22-And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined, but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed.

- Acts 2:23-Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God, ye have taken, &c. Chapter 4:28—For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.

Secondly, Angels also are the objects of predestination, good and bad; the blessed angels are chosen unto life, and to continue in their happy state to all eternity: and their perseverance therein, and eternal felicity, are owing to the eternal choice of them in Christ their head; I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things (1 Tim. 5:21). The evil angels are rejected of God, and left in that miserable estate their apostasy brought them into, without any provision

of grace and mercy for them: they are delivered into chains of darkness, to be reserved to the judgment of the great day; and everlasting fire is prepared for them, according to the determinate counsel and will of God, (2 Pet. 2:4; Matthew 25:41).

Thirdly, Predestination which the Scriptures chiefly treat of, is what respects men, and consists of two parts, election and reprobation; the one is a predestination unto life, the other unto death.

I. Election, which is a predestination unto life, is an act of the free grace of God, of his sovereign and immutable will, by which from all eternity he has chosen in Christ, out of the common mass of mankind, some men, or a certain number of them, to partake of spiritual blessings here, and happiness hereafter, for the glory of his grace.

1. The objects of election are some men, not all, which a choice supposes; to take all would be no choice; called therefore, a remnant according to the election of grace (Rom. 11:3). These are a certain number, which though unknown to us, how many, and who they are, are known to God; the Lord knows them that are his (2 Tim. 2:19). And though they are in themselves a great multitude, which no man can number (Rev. 7:9), yet when compared with those from whom they are chosen, they are but few; many are called, but few chosen (Matthew 20:16). These are chosen out of the same common mass of mankind, be it considered as corrupt or pure; all were on an equal level when the choice was made; hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour (Rom. 9:21)? these are not whole nations, churches, and communities, but particular persons, whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life; Jacob have I loved, &c. salute Rufus chosen in the Lord: according as he hath chosen us in him &c. (Rom 9:13; 16:13; Eph. 1:4), not a set of prepositions, but persons; not characters, but men; or not men under such and such characters, as believers, holy, &c., but men as having done neither good nor evil; before they had done either (Rom. 9:11).

2. This act of election, is an act of God's free grace, to which he is not moved by any motive or condition in the object chosen: wherefore it is called the election grace; concerning which the Apostle's reasoning is strong and invincible; and if by grace, then it is no more of works, other wise grace is no

more grace; but if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work (Rom. 11:5, 6), it is according to the sovereign and unchangeable will of God, and not according to the will or works of men; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will (Eph. 1:5), and again, verse 11, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will; hence it stands immutably firm and sure, even the purpose of God according to election, not of works but of him that calleth (Rom. 9:11).

3. This act of election is irrespective of faith, holiness, and good works, as causes or conditions of it; faith flows from it; is a fruit and effect of it, is secured by it, and is had in consequence of it: as many as were ordained unto eternal life, believed (Acts 13:48), hence it is called the faith of God's elect (Titus 1:1), and though holiness is a means provided in the act of election, it is not the cause of it; men are chosen, not because they are, but that they should be holy (Eph. 1:4), good works do not go before, but follow after election; it is denied to be of them, as before observed, and it passed before any were done (Rom. 9:11; 11:5, 6), they are the effects of God's decree, and not the cause of it; God hath fore-ordained them that we should walk in them (Eph. 2:10),

4. The act of election was made in Christ, as the head, in whom all the elect were chosen, and into whose hands, by this act of grace, were put their persons, grace, and glory; and this is an eternal act of God in him; according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4), and so the apostle tells the Thessalonians (2 Thess. 2:13), God hath from the beginning chosen you unto salvation; not from the first preaching of the gospel to them, or from the time of their conversion by it, but from the beginning of time, even from all eternity, as the phrase is used in Proverbs 7:23, hence nothing done in time could be the cause or condition of it.

5. What men are chosen unto by this act are, grace here, and glory hereafter; all spiritual blessings, adoption, justification, sanctification, belief of the truth, and salvation by Jesus Christ. Salvation is the end proposed with respect to men; sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth are the means appointed and prepared for that end. Ephesians 1:4, 5, Hath chosen us in him,—that we should be holy and

without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children, &c. 2 Thessalonians 2:13, We are bound to give thanks to God alway for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord; because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. 1 Peter 1:2, Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. 1 Thessalonians 5:9, For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.

6. Both means and end are sure to the chosen ones, since this is an act of God's immutable will; these are redeemed by the blood of Christ: he died for their sins, and made satisfaction for them; they are justified by his righteousness and no charge can be laid against them; they are effectually called by the grace of God; they are sanctified by his Spirit; they persevere to the end, and cannot totally and finally be deceived and fall away, but shall be everlastingly glorified: Romans 8:33, Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? it is God that justifieth: Who is he that condemneth! That is, the elect. It is Christ that died, that died for them. Romans 8:30, Whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. Matthew 24:24, For there shall arise false Christs, and false Prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders, insomuch that if it were possible they shall deceive the very elect; but that is not possible.

7. The ultimate end of all this, with respect to God, is his own glory; the glory of all his divine perfections; the glory of his wisdom in forming such a scheme, in fixing on such an end, and preparing means suitable unto it; the glory of his justice and holiness, in the redemption and salvation of these chosen ones, through the blood, righteousness, and sacrifice of his Son; and the glory of his rich grace and mercy exhibited in his kindness to them through him; and the whole of it is, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved (Eph. 1:6).

This now is the Scripture doctrine of predestination, or that part of it which is called election; from whence it appears to be absolute and unconditional, irrespective of any thing in man as the cause and condition of it. Mr. Wesley believes, that, "election is a divine appointment of some men to eternal happiness;" so that he owns a

particular and personal election, and calls it an eternal decree; but believes that it is conditional: but if it is conditional, the condition is to be named; let him name the condition of it: let him point it out to us, and in what passage of Scripture it is; this lies upon him to do, and I insist upon it, or else he ought to give up his unscriptural notion of conditional election. Mark 16:16. is no expression of this decree, but a declaration of the revealed will of God: and points out to us what will be the everlasting state of believers and unbelievers: But believers, as such, are not the objects of God's decree; it is true, indeed, that they who are real believers, are the elect of God; but then the reason why they are the elect of God is not because they are believers, but they become believers, because they are the elect of God; their faith is not the cause or condition of their election, but their election the cause of their faith; they were chosen when they had done neither good nor evil, and so before they believed: and they believe in time, in consequence of their being ordained unto eternal life, from eternity: faith is in time, election before the world was; nothing temporal can be the cause or condition of what is eternal. This is the doctrine of the Scriptures; if Mr. Wesley will not attend to these, let him hear the articles of his own church; the seventh of which runs thus:

Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed by his counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour. Wherefore they which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God, be called according to God's purpose by his Spirit working in due season: they through grace obey the calling: they be justified freely: they be made sons of God by adoption: they be made like the image of his only begotten Son Jesus Christ: they walk religiously in good works, and at length by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity.

This is an article agreeable to the Scripture; an article of his own church; an article which he as a true son of the church, has treacherously departed from; an article which Mr. Wesley must have subscribed and sworn to; an article which will stare him in the face as long as subscriptions and oaths stand for any thing with him.

The doctrine of election, as above stated, standing in so glaring a light in the sacred Scriptures, and appearing with such evidence, as is impossible for all the art and sophistry of men to set aside; the other branch of predestination necessarily follows, which we deny not, but maintain. Mr. Wesley would have an election found out which does not imply reprobation; but what election that can be, the wit of man cannot devise; for if some are chosen, others must be rejected; and Mr. Wesley's notion of election itself implies it; for if, as he says, "election means a divine appointment of some men to eternal happiness;" then others must be left out of that choice, and rejected. I proceed therefore,

II. To the other branch of predestination commonly called Reprobation; which is an immutable decree of God, according to his sovereign will, by which he has determined to leave some men in the common mass of mankind, out of which he has chosen others, and to punish them for sin with everlasting destruction, for the glory of his power and justice. This decree consists of two parts, a negative and a positive; the former is by some called preterition, or passing by, a leaving some when others are chosen; which is no other than non-election; the latter is called pre-damnation, being God's decree to condemn or damn men for sin.

First, Preterition is God's act of passing by, or leaving some men when he chose others, according to his sovereign will and pleasure; of which act of God there is clear evidence in the sacred Scripture; as well as it is necessarily implied in God's act of election which has such clear and uncontestable proof. These are *οι λοιποι*, the rest, those that remain unelected whilst others are chosen; the election hath obtained it; or elect persons obtain righteousness, life and salvation, in consequence of their being chosen; and the rest are blinded (Rom. 9:7), being left, they remain in their native darkness and ignorance, and for their sins are given up to judicial blindness and hardness of heart. These are they that are left out of the book of life, whilst others have their names written in it; of whom it is said, whose names are not written in the book of life (of the Lamb) from the foundation of the world (Rev. 13:8; 17:8).

Secondly, Pre-damnation, is God's decree to condemn men for sin, or to punish them with everlasting damnation for it: And this is the sense of the Scriptures; and this is the view which they give us

of this doctrine (Prov. 16:4), The Lord hath made all things for himself, yea, even the wicked for the day of evil. Not that God made man to damn him; the Scripture says no such thing, nor do we; nor is it the sense of the doctrine we plead for; nor is it to be inferred from it. God made man neither to damn him, nor save him, but for his own glory, that is his ultimate end in making him, which is answered whether he is saved or lost: but the meaning is, that God has appointed all things for his glory, and particularly he has appointed the wicked man to the day of ruin and destruction for his wickedness. Jude verse 4, For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation: But who are they? They are after described ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. Hence the objects of this decree are called vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, that is, by sin (Rom. 9:22). And now what is there shocking in this doctrine, or disagreeable to the perfections of God? God damns no man but for sin, and he decreed to damn none but for sin.

Thirdly, This decree, we say, is according to the sovereign will of God, for nothing can be the cause of his decree but his own will let the object of that part of the decree, which is called Preterition, be considered either in the corrupt or pure mass of mankind, as fallen or unfallen creatures, they are to be considered in the same view, and as on an equal foot and level with those that are chosen and therefore no other reason can be given, but the will of God, that he should take one, and leave another. And though in that branch of it, which is an appointment of men to condemnation, sin is the cause of the thing decreed, damnation; yet; it is the will of God that is the cause of the decree itself, for this invincible reason; or otherwise he must have appointed all men to damnation, since all are sinners: let any other reason be assigned if it can be, why he has appointed to condemn some men for their sin, and not others.

Fourthly, God's end in all this is the glorifying of himself, his power and his justice; all his appointments are for himself, for his own glory, and this among the rest; What if God willing, to shew his wrath, his vindictive justice, and to make his power known, in the punishment of sinners for their sin, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction! (Rom 9:22).

The doctrine of reprobation, considered in this light, has nothing in it contrary to the nature and perfections of God. Harsh expressions, and unguarded phrases, which some may have used in speaking or writing about this doctrine, I will not take upon me to defend: but as it is thus stated, I think it is a defensible one, equally as the doctrine of election, and is demonstrable by it. The Scriptures are indeed more sparing of the one than of the other, and have left us to conclude the one from the other, in a great measure, though not without giving us clear and full evidence; for though reprobation is not so plentifully spoken of, yet it is clearly spoken of in the sacred writings; wherefore, upon this consideration we judge it most proper and prudent, not so much to insist on this subject in our discourses and writing; not from any consciousness of want of evidence, but because of the awfulness of the subject. This our opponents are aware of; and therefore press us upon this head, in order to bring the doctrine of election into contempt with weak or carnal men; and make their first attacks upon this branch of predestination, which is beginning wrong since reprobation is no other than non-election, or what is opposed to election; let the doctrine of election be demolished, and the other will fall of course; but that will cost too much pains; and they find a better account with weak minds in taking the other method; a method which the Remonstrants formerly were desirous of, at the synod of Dort, could it have been allowed, a method which Dr. Whitby has taken in his discourse of the five points; and this is the method which Mr. Wesley has thought fit to take, and indeed he confines himself wholly to this subject: for though he calls his pamphlet, *Predestination Calmly Considered*; yet it only considers one part of it, reprobation, and that not in a way of argument, but harangue; not taking notice of our arguments from Scripture or reason, only making some caviling exceptions to it; such as have the face of an objection, shall gather up, as well as I can, from this wild and unmethodical performance, and make answer to. And,

1st, He desires it may be impartially considered, how it is possible to reconcile reprobation with the following Scriptures: Genesis 3:17 and 4:7; Deuteronomy 7:9, 12; 12:26-28. and 30:15; 2 Chronicles 15:1; Ezra. 9:13, 14; Job 36:5; Psalm 145:9; Proverbs 1:23; Isaiah 65:2; Ezekiel 18:26; Matthew 7:26; 11:20;

12:41; 13:11, 12; 22:8; and chapter 25; John 3:18 and 5:44; Acts 8:20; Romans 1:20; and 2 Thessalonians 2:10 (*Predestination Calmly Considered*, p. 13). In all which there is not a word that militates against the doctrine of reprobation; nor is any thing pointed at worthy of consideration: we know very well, nor is it contrary to this doctrine, that the curse came upon men for sin; and that it is that which renders them unacceptable to God, and is the reason why at last they shall find none with him, nor him favorable to them: there is a repentance which may be found in non-elect persons; instances of that kind do not at all weaken the doctrine. Matthew 13:11 and 12, proves it. The word any, is not in the original text in Job 36:5. It is certain there are some whom God despises, Psalm 53:5 and 73:20. It is pity but he had transcribed two or three hundred more passages when his hand was in; even the whole books of Chronicles, and the book of Esther, which would have been as much to his purpose as those he has produced.

2dly, He proposes the following Scriptures which declare God's willingness that all should be saved, to be reconciled to the doctrine of reprobation, Matthew 21:9; Mark 16:15; John 5:34; Acts 17:24; Romans 5:18 and 10:12; 1 Timothy 2:3, 4; James 1:5; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 John 4:14 (*Predestination Calmly Considered*, pp. 16, 17). Some of which do not respect eternal salvation at all, but the temporal salvation of the Jews; and others have nothing to do with salvation in either sense; some speak only of God's will to save his elect, to whom he is long-suffering; and others of his will, that Gentiles as well as Jews, should be saved; and that it is his pleasure that some of all sorts should be saved by Christ; neither of which militate against the doctrine of reprobation.

3dly, He thinks this doctrine is irreconcilable with the following Scriptures, which declare that Christ came to save all men; that he died for all; that he atoned for all, even for those that finally perish; Matthew 17:11; John 1:29; 3:17 and 7:14; Romans 14:15; 1 Corinthians 7:11; 2 Corinthians 5:14; 1 Timothy 2:6; Hebrews 2:9; 2 Peter 2:1 and 1 John 2:1, 2 (*Predestination Calmly Considered*, pp. 16, 17). But these Scriptures say not that Christ came to save all that are lost; or that he came to save all men, or died for all men, for all the individuals of human nature; there is not one text of Scripture in the whole Bible that says this: that which seems most like it is Hebrews

2:9, That he might taste death for every man; but the word man is not in the original text; it is only υπερ παντος , for every one; for every one of the sons of God, of the children, of the brethren of Christ, and seed of Abraham a spiritual sense, as the context determines it. As for the above-cited passages, they regard either the world of God's elect; or the Gentiles, as distinguished from the Jews; or all sorts of men; but not all the individuals of mankind: and those who are represented as such that should perish, or in danger of it, are either such who only professed to be bought by Christ or real Christians whose peace and comfort were in danger of being destroyed, but not their persons; and none of the passages militate against the doctrine under consideration.

4thly, This doctrine is represented as contrary to, and irreconcilable with the justice of God, and with those Scriptures that declare it, particularly Ezekiel 18 (Predestination Calmly Considered, p. 19). To which may be replied, that that chapter in Ezekiel concerns the people of the Jews only, and not all mankind; and regards only the providential dealings of God with them, with respect to civil and temporal things, and a vindication of them from inequality and injustice; and not spiritual and eternal things: or the salvation and damnation of men; and therefore is impertinently produced. And if any one does but seriously and impartially consider the doctrine as above stated, they will see no reason to charge God with injustice, or find any difficulty in reconciling it to his justice. In the first branch of this decree, called Preterition, let the objects be creatures fallen or unfallen, it puts nothing into them; it leaves them as it finds them; and therefore does them no injustice: in the other branch of it, appointment to condemnation, this is only but for sin; is there unrighteousness with God on that account? No surely; if it is not injustice in him to condemn men for sin, it can be no injustice in him to decree to condemn them for sin: and if it would have been no unrighteousness in him to have condemned all men for sin, and to have determined to have done it, as he doubtless might; it can be no ways contrary to his justice to condemn some men for sin, and to determine so to do; wherefore all that is said under this head is all harangue, mere noise and stands for nothing. Let the above argument be disproved if it can.

5thly, This doctrine is represented as contrary to the general judgment; and that upon this scheme

there can be no judgment to come, nor any future state of reward and punishment (Predestination Calmly Considered, pp. 26, 30): but why so? How does this appear? Why, according to our scheme, "God of old ordained them to this condemnation:" but then it was for sin; and if for sin, how does this preclude a future judgment? It rather makes one necessary; and certain it is, that a future judgment is agreeable to it, and quite inevitable by it; God decrees to condemn men for sin; men sin, and are brought to the judgment-seat of God, and are justly condemned for it. The judgment of God takes place, and the just reward of punishment pursuant to the righteous purpose of God, and according to the rules of justice. But this writer has the assurance to affirm, that we say, that "God sold men to work wickedness, even from their mother's womb; and gave them up to a reprobate mind, or ever they hung upon their mother's breasts." This is entirely false; we say no such thing; we say, with the Scripture, that men sell themselves to work wickedness as they grow up; and that God gives men up to a reprobate mind after a long train and course of sinning; and it must be a righteous thing with God to bring such persons to judgment, and condemn them for their wickedness. But then it is said they are condemned "for not having that grace which God hath decreed they never should have." This is false again; we say no such thing; nor does the doctrine we hold oblige us to it; we say, indeed, that the grace of God is his own; and whether it is the sense of the text in Matthew or no, it matters not, it is a certain truth he may do what he will with his own grace: we own that he has determined to give it to some and not to others, as we find in fact he does: but then we say, he will condemn no man for want of this grace he does not think fit to give them; nor for their not believing that Christ died for them; but for their sins and transgressions of his righteous law. And is not here enough to open the righteous judgment and proceed upon? Besides the sovereign decrees of God respecting the final state of men, are so far from rendering the future judgment unnecessary, that will proceed according to them, along with other things: for with other books that will be opened then, the book of life will be one, in which some men's names are written, and others not; and the dead will be judged out of those things which are written in the books, according to their works.—And whosoever is not found written in the book of life, shall be cast

into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:12, 15); I never knew you, depart from me (Matt. 7:23).

6thly, This doctrine is said to agree very ill with the truth and sincerity of God, in a thousand declarations, such as these, Ezekiel 18:23, 32:32; Deuteronomy 5:29; Psalm 81:12; Acts 17:30; Mark 16:15 (Predestination Calmly Considered, pp. 31, 33). To which I reply, that some of those declarations, concern the Jews only, and not all mankind; and are only compassionate inquiries and vehement desires after their civil and temporal welfare: and at most only shew what is grateful to God, and approved of by him, and what was wanting in them; with which they are upbraided, notwithstanding their vain boasts to the contrary. Others only shew what is God's will of command, or what he has made the duty of man; not what are his purposes man shall do, or what he will bestow upon him; and neither of them suggests any insincerity in God, supposing the doctrine of reprobation. The gospel is indeed ordered to be preached to every creature to whom it is sent and comes; but as yet, it has never been brought to all the individuals of human nature; there have been multitudes in all ages that have not heard it. And that there are universal offers of grace and salvation made to all men I utterly deny; nay, I deny they are made to any; no, not to God's elect; grace and salvation are provided for them in the everlasting covenant, procured for them by Christ, published and revealed in the gospel, and applied by the Spirit; much less are they made to others wherefore this doctrine is not chargeable with insincerity on that account. Let the patrons of universal offers defend themselves from this objection; I have nothing to do with it; till it is proved there are such universal offers, then Dr. Watts's reasoning on that head, will require some attention; but not till then.

7thly, It is said that the doctrines of election and reprobation least of all agree with the scriptural account of the love and goodness of God (Predestination Calmly Considered, p. 135). The doctrine of election surely can never disagree with the love and goodness of God; since his choosing men to salvation is the fruit and effect of his everlasting love and free grace; the reason why any are chosen is, because they are beloved of God; election presupposes love: this the apostle points out clearly to us, when he says, we are bound to give thanks always to God, for you brethren, beloved of the Lord; because God hath from the beginning

chosen you to salvation (2 Thess. 2:13). And the goodness of God greatly appears in consequence of this decree in the redemption of the chosen ones by Christ, in the regeneration and sanctification of them by the Spirit, and in bringing them at last to eternal glory and happiness according to his original design. But it may be, it is the doctrine of reprobation only, though both are put together by our author, that so ill agrees with the love and goodness of God. It is not inconsistent with his providential goodness; in which sense the Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works; and notwithstanding this decree, all men have a large share of this goodness of God; and though they may abuse this goodness, which will be an aggravation of their condemnation; this is their own sin and fault, and not to be charged on the decree of God, as this writer falsely does; who says, that God, according to us, gives men this world's goods on purpose to enhance their damnation; and every one of their comforts is, by an eternal decree of God, to cost them a thousand pangs in hell; whereas the abuse of mercies given, which will enhance their damnation, flows not from the decree, but from their own wickedness. The special mercy and goodness of God is denied to such indeed, which is at his sovereign will to give to whom he pleases; who will have mercy on whom he will have mercy: the act of election is an act of God's love, and flows from it; reprobation indeed flows from his hatred, which is an appointment to wrath; but then it is from his hatred of sin, which is no ways contrary to his being a God of love and goodness: besides there is a much greater display of the love, grace, mercy, and goodness of God in choosing some men to salvation and infallibly securing it unto them, and bringing them safely to the enjoyment of it, than in the contrary scheme: according to which not one man is absolutely chosen to salvation; salvation is not insured to any one single person; it is left to the precarious and fickle will of man: and it is possible, according to that scheme, that not one man may be saved; nay, it is impossible that any one man should be saved by the power of his own free-will. Let it be judged then, which scheme is most merciful and kind to men, and most worthy of the God of love and goodness. Upon the whole, the doctrine of reprobation, though set in so ill a light, and represented in such an odious manner, is a defensible doctrine when stated and cleared; nor are we afraid to

own and maintain it.

This cloven foot does not affright us; so Mr. Wesley calls (Predestination Calmly Considered, p. 11), as he thinks, beautifully, but most blasphemously, an act of the divine will; nor is this a millstone that hangs about the neck of our hypothesis, as he no doubt very elegantly expresses it (Predestination Calmly Considered, p. 77); but let me tell him, it will be his distinguishing mercy, if it is not a millstone about his own neck. From hence he wanders to free-will and irresistible grace: sometimes he is for free-will, sometimes for free-grace; sometimes for resistible, and sometimes for irresistible grace. When he can agree with himself, he will appear in a better light, and may be more worthy of notice. What he says of free-will on the one side and reprobation on the other, as agreeing or disagreeing with the perfections of God, may be reduced to one or other of the above objections, where they have had their answer.

It is scarcely worth my while to observe what he says of the covenant of grace (Predestination Calmly Considered, p. 52); which he owns he has no understanding of; and I believe him, as that "God the Father made a covenant with his Son before the world began, wherein the Son agreed to suffer such and such things and the Father to give him such and such souls for a recompense, in consequence of which these must be saved." And then he asks where it is written? And in what part of Scripture this covenant is to be found? Now not to inform or instruct Mr. Wesley, but for the sake of such who are willing to be informed and instructed, read Psalm 40:6-8; Isaiah 49:1-6 and 53:10-12; Psalm 89:3, 4, 28-36, in which will appear plain traces and footsteps of a covenant, or agreement, of a stipulation and re-stipulation, between the Father and the Son; in which the Father proposes a work to his Son, and calls him to it, even the redemption of his people; to which the Son agrees, and says, Lo I come to do thy will, O my God! and for a recompense of his being an offering for sin, and pouring out his soul unto death; it is promised he should see his seed and prolong his days, and have a portion divided him with the great, and a spoil with the strong. And that theme was such a covenant subsisting before the world began is clear; for could there be a Mediator set up from everlasting, as there was, and a promise of life before the world began made to Christ and put into his hand, and all spiritual blessings provided, and all grace

given to his people in him, before the foundation of the world; and yet no covenant in being? See Proverbs 8:23; Titus 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:1, 9 and Ephesians 1:3. The covenant of circumcision made with Abraham, and that made with the Israelites on mount Sinai, are no instances of the covenant of grace; but are covenants that are waxen old, and vanished away; and do not so concern us who are not under the law, but under grace: but however these covenants were conditional to them that were under them; the covenant of grace is absolute and unconditional to us, being made with Christ our head, who has fulfilled all the conditions of it.

But I proceed now to vindicate what I have written on the subject of the saints Final Perseverance, from the exceptions made unto it. Mr. Wesley says (Predestination Calmly Considered, p. 57), "this is so pleasing an opinion, so agreeable to flesh and blood, so suitable to whatever of nature remains in those who have tasted the grace of God, that I see nothing but the mighty power of God, which can restrain any who hear it from closing with it." Strange! that the doctrine of perseverance in grace and holiness, for no other perseverance do we plead for, should be so pleasing and agreeable to corrupt nature, besides much who have tasted the grace of God, as they have a principle of grace in them, cannot easily give into a doctrine which manifestly gratifies corrupt nature, but would oppose and reject it; surely it must come with very great evidence, that nothing but the power of God can restrain from closing with it; and which they close with, not to indulge their corruptions, but to encourage their faith and hope, and to promote holiness of heart and life; to which they are induced both by arguments, from experience, and from Scripture; the former it seems, weigh but little with those who believe the possibility of falling; and the latter are not plain and cogent. There are some Scriptures, it is said, against perseverance, and determine the other way; the arguments from them have been considered in a former treatise; to which Mr. Wesley has made some exceptions, and to which I shall now make a reply.

The first text produced against the perseverance of the saints, is Ezekiel 18:24. When the righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, &c. This passage, and the whole context, I have observed wholly and solely regard the house of Israel, and is impertinently produced. Mr. Wesley calls upon me to prove this.

What proof would he have? Let him read the chapter, and he will see it with his own eyes; the house of Israel is mentioned by name, and that only; the addresses are only made to them; the expostulations and reasonings are only with them; and the exhortations are unto them; the dispute is between God and them, the charge against God is brought by them; and the answer to it is returned to them. Let Mr. Wesley disprove this if he can; it lies upon him to point out any other person or persons than the house of Israel, to whom any passage in the chapter is directed. The righteousness of the righteous man, spoken of in it, I have affirmed to be his own righteousness, and not the righteousness of faith nor is there the least hint of the sanctifying grace of the Spirit in the account of it. To disprove this, Mr. Wesley refers to verse 31. Cast away from you all your transgressions—make you a new heart, &c. Monstrous! This is a most evident proof that the Jews had no true righteousness; that notwithstanding their pretensions to it, they had not cast away their transgressions, and were without any inward principle of grace or holiness. I further observe, that what as said of the righteous man, admitting him truly righteous, is only a supposition. This Mr. Wesley flatly denies. But if he reads over the chapter to which he directs, he will find the facts supposed and not asserted, verse 5, If a man be just, &c. verse 10, if he beget a son—that doth not any of these duties, &c. verse 24, If he beget a son that seeth all his father's sins, &c. and in the passage under consideration, verse 24, When the righteous man turneth away from his righteousness; that is, if he should; and so it is rendered in the Vulgate Latin version, and by Pagnine, and is the sense of our own translation; for a supposition is as well expressed by when, an adverb of time, as by the conjunction if: For instance; when Mr. Wesley writes more to the purpose, he will deserve more attention; that is, if he should. Whereas I explained the death in verse 26, of one and the same death, a temporal death for sin; it is no unusual thing for one and the same thing to be expressed by different words; and which may be the case here, without any force upon the text, or making it speak nonsense; for which I have given a reason that is not taken notice of: and that this death is a temporal, and not an eternal one, is clear, because it was now upon them, and of which they complained, and from whence they might be delivered by repentance and reformation; and which, I say again, cannot be said of

eternal death, when a person is once under it. Upon the whole, as this chapter relates not to eternal salvation or damnation, the passage from it is an insufficient proof of the apostasy of real saints.

The second text of Scripture brought in favor of the said, doctrine, is 1 Timothy 1:19, holding faith and a good conscience, which some having put away, concerning faith have made shipwreck: in which I have observed, that it does not appear, that these men referred to, whose names are mentioned in the next verse, ever had their hearts purified by faith; but were ungodly men, and so no instances of the apostasy of true believers. To this no reply is made. I further observe, that putting away a good conscience, does not necessarily suppose they had it, but rather that they had it not; which I support; by the use of the same word in Acts 13:46, where the Jews are said to put the word of God from them. This instance Mr. Wesley says makes full against me, it being undeniable they had the word of God till they put it away. But this I must deny; they never had it; they never received it, never gave their assent to it, or embraced it, but contradicted and blasphemed it; and so is an instance of the use of the word to my purpose. It is owned by him that men may have a good conscience in some sense, without true faith; but such is not that the apostle speaks of, because he exhorts Timothy to hold it. Be it so; yet it does not appear that these men had such a conscience that arises from a heart purified by faith; putting it away, we see, does not prove it; and, besides, it deserves consideration, that it is not said they made shipwreck of a good conscience, which it does not appear they even had, but of faith which they once professed, even the doctrine of faith: but that faith means only the doctrine of faith, wants better proof, he says. What proof would he have? I have shewn that the phrase is never used but of the doctrine of faith, and have pointed to the places where it is so used; nay have pointed out the particular doctrine of faith they made shipwreck of. It lies upon him to disprove this. From the whole it appears, that this also is an insufficient proof of the apostasy of real saints.

The third text of Scripture insisted on as a proof of the doctrine, is Romans 11:17-24, concerning the breaking off of the branches, and cutting off those that are grafted into the olive-tree; which olive-tree I understand not of the invisible church, but of the outward gospel-church-state, or the visible gospel-

church. This Mr. Wesley says, I affirm, and he proves the contrary. But though I affirm, yet not without a reason for it; a reason which he takes no notice of, nor makes any reply to: and how does he prove the contrary, that it is the invisible church? Why, because it consists of holy believers which none but the invisible church does. But does not the visible church consist of such? Are there no holy believers in it? Read over the epistles to the visible churches, and you will find the members of them are called holy and believer's, saints and faithful in Christ Jesus. I observe that those signified by the broken branches, were never the believers in Christ, and so no instances of the apostasy of such. To this he replies, That he was not speaking of the Jews. Very well, but I was; but of the Gentiles, exhorted to continue in his goodness, and so true believers; and yet liable to be cut off. So they might be, though it does not necessarily follow from the apostle's exhortation; which is to be understood not of the goodness of love, and favor of God; but of the goodness of a gospel-church state, the ordinances of it, and an abiding in them, and walking worthy of them; or otherwise they were liable to be cut off from the church-state in which they were. This is said to be a forced and unnatural construction, and requires some argument to support it. But what else could they be cut off from? If the olive-tree in which they are said to be engrafted, is not the invisible, but the visible church, as is proved by an argument not answered; then the cutting off from the olive-tree, must be a cutting off from that. And whereas there is a strong intimation that the Jews, the broken branches, may be grafted in again; why may not those be grafted in again which are cut off, when restored by repentance, which is often the case. It remains then, that this passage of Scripture does not in the least militate against the final perseverance of the saints.

The fourth text of Scripture quoted as against the doctrine of perseverance, is John 15:1-5, concerning the branches in Christ the vine, which abide not, are taken away, are cast forth and withered, and are cast into the fire and burned. I observe that there are two sorts of branches in Christ, the one fruitful, the other unfruitful; the one in him by regenerating grace, the other only by profession; of the latter are all the above things said, not of the former. This Mr. Wesley says is begging the question, and taking for granted the point to be proved: far from it, I answer to the instance

alleged, by distinguishing the different branches in the vine; I prove the distinction from the text and context; as well as illustrate it by time instances of the churches in Judea and Thessalonica, being said to be in Christ; all the members of which cannot be thought to be really in him, but by profession. There are some that never bore fruit, and so never gave any evidence of their being true believers, and consequently can be no instances of the apostasy of such. There are others that bring forth fruit and are purged, that they may bring forth more fruit, and whose fruit remain, and are instances of perseverance. Let it be proved, if it can, that any of those who never brought forth any fruit, that we read of, were true believers in Christ; or ever received true grace or life from him, that are said to be cast out and burnt; and that any of those who brought forth fruit and were purged and pruned by the Father of Christ, that they might bring forth more fruit, ever withered away and were lost. Till this is done, this passage will be of no service for the apostasy, or against the perseverance of the saints.

The fifth text of Scripture pressed into this argument is, 2 Peter 2:20, 21, concerning those that have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of Christ, being entangled therein and overcome. Of whom I observe, that it does not appear that those persons had an inward experimental knowledge of Christ; which is what ought to be proved, or else it furnishes out no argument against the perseverance of real saints. Had it been such, I add, they could not have lost it. This Mr. Wesley calls begging the question. It might seem so, if my argument had rested here; but I gave reasons why such a knowledge cannot be lost: which he conceals and takes no notice of; as the promise of God, that such shall follow on to know him, and the declaration of Christ, that eternal life is inseparably connected with such knowledge (Hosea 6:3; John 15:3). Escaping the pollutions of the world does not prove the persons to have such knowledge, or to be real saints, since it signifies no more, I say, that an outward reformation. Here, he says, I aim at no proof at all. Let him make more of it, if he can. He owns that these persons might be called dogs and swine before their profession of religion, and after their departure from it, but not whilst under it: but unless it can be proved that they passed under a real change, and were truly converted, which their having knowledge and escaping the pollutions of the

world are no proofs of; they might as well deserve the appellation during the time of their profession, as before and after. If any thing is done to any profession from this instance, it should be proved that these men had an inward spiritual and experimental knowledge; that from dogs and swine they became the sheep of Christ, and had the nature of such, and from the sheep of Christ became dogs and swine again; or it can never be thought to be any proof of the final and total falling away of true believers.

The Sixth text produced in favor of the saint's apostasy, is Hebrews 6:4-6, which speaks of enlightened persons, and such that have tasted the heavenly gift, &c. falling away. Upon which I observe, that the words contain only a supposition, if they fall away. Mr. Wesley says, there is no *if* in the original. I reply, though it is not expressed, it is implied, and the sense is the same, as if it was; and that the words in the original lie literally thus; It is impossible that those who were once enlightened—*καὶ παραπεσοντας*, and they falling away, to renew them again to repentance; that is, should they fall away, or if they fall away. Here Mr. Wesley rises up in great wrath, and asks, "Shall a man lie for God? Either you or I do;" and avers, that the words do not literally lie thus; and that they are translated by him, and have fallen away, as literally as the English tongue will bear; and calls upon all that understand Greek to judge between us. I am well content, and extremely desirous they should, and even willing to be determined by them, which is the most literal version, mine, which renders it as a participle as it is; or his, which renders it as a verb, which it is not. I am supported in mine by the authority of the great and learned Dr. Owen (On Perseverance, c. 17), whose knowledge of the Greek tongue no one will scruple, that is acquainted with his writings: he says, that *verbum de verbo*, or literally the words lie in the text, and they falling away, just as I have rendered them. Take some instances of the participle of the same tense, both in the simple theme of the word, and in other compounds, as so rendered by our translators; *πεσων* (1 Cor. 14:25), falling down on his face; *προσπεσουσα* (Luke 8:47), falling down before him; *περιπεσοντες* (Acts 27:41), falling into a place where two seas met. Did these learned men lie for God? Mr. Wesley's quibble is, because the participle is not of the present but of the aorist: the instances now given are of the same tense. Every one that has

learned his Greek Grammar knows that the aorist or indefinite, as he names it, is so called, because it is undetermined as to time, being used both of time present, and of time past (Of which see instances in Dugard's Greek Grammar, p. 126); and when of the latter, it is left undetermined, whether just now past, or sometime ago, is meant, but as the circumstances of the place shew: but let it be rendered either way, either in the present or past, the sense is the same, and the condition is implied; be it and they falling away, or and they having fallen away; for one or other it must be to render it literally; that is, should they fall away, or should they have fallen away; or, in other words, if they should. And now why all this wrath, rudeness, and indecency? Is this the calm Considerer, as the title of his book promises? The man is pinched and rages. This puts me in mind of a story of a country fellow listening with great attention to a Latin disputation; which a gentleman observing, stepped to him, and said, Friend you had better go about your business, than stand here idling away your time to hear what you do not understand. To which he replied, I am not so great a fool neither, but I know who is angry; suggesting by the temper of the disputants, one of them being very angry, he knew who had the better, and who the worst of the argument. And since Mr. Wesley has brought it to this dilemma, that either he or I must lie for God; I am very unwilling to take it to myself, seeing no reason for it: and therefore without a compliment, must leave it to him to get out, and off, of it as he can. But to return to the argument; let it be a supposition or a fact contained in the words; the question is, who these persons supposed, or said to fall away are, and from what they fell? There is nothing in the characters of them, as has been observed, which shew them to be regenerated persons, real saints, and true believers in Christ. This ought to be proved, ere they can be allowed to be instances of the apostasy of such; whereas they are distinguished from them, and are opposed to them, verses 7-9. There is nothing in the account of them, but what may be said of a Balaam, who had his eyes open and saw the vision of the Almighty, and of such who are only doctrinally enlightened; or of a Herod that heard John gladly, and of the stony-ground hearers, who received the word with joy; or of a Judas who had no doubt both the ordinary and extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, and a power of performing miraculous works, called the powers of

the world to come, or the gospel dispensation. So that from hence nothing can be concluded against the perseverance of the saints.

The seventh passage of Scripture brought into this controversy, is Hebrews 10:38. The just shall live by faith, but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him: But very impertinently; since he that is said to live by faith, and he that is supposed to draw back, is not one and the same person. Mr. Wesley asks, "Who is it then? Can any one draw back from faith, who never came to it?" To which I answer, though he cannot draw back from faith he never had, yet he may draw back from a profession of faith he has made. In order to make it appear, that one and the same person is meant, Mr. Wesley, finding fault with our translation, renders the words thus: If the just man that lives by faith draws back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. This translation I call inaccurate. He desires to know wherein; I will tell him. *Eav*, if, is by force removed from its proper place, even from one sentence back to another; inserting the word that before live is doing violence to the text; rendering *ζωεται*, that lives, as if it was of the present tense, when it is future, and should be shall live. Leaving out *και*, and or but, which distinguishes two propositions; so confounding them and making them one. And after all, were one and the same person meant, it is only a supposition, which, I say again, proves no matter of fact; let Mr. Wesley shew that it does if he can: it is a clear case, that the just man in the text, and he that draws back, are two sorts of persons; it is most manifest, and beyond all contradiction, that in the original text in Habakkuk 2:4 the man whose soul is lifted up with pride and conceit of himself, and is not upright in him, has not the truth of grace in him, is the person who both according to the Apostle and the Seventy is supposed to draw back; from whom the just man that lives by faith is distinguished, and to whom he is opposed: and by the Apostle two sorts of persons are all along spoken of in the context, both before and after; besides, that these two must be different and not the same, is evident, since it is most surely promised the just man, that he shall live; which would not be true of him, if he drew hack to perdition. So that this also is an insufficient testimony against the perseverance of the saints.

The eight text of Scripture made use of to prove the Apostasy of true believers, is Hebrews 10:29, Of how

much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing. The stress of this proof lies upon the person being sanctified with the blood of the covenant, who is supposed to be the same that trod under foot the Son of God. But I have observed that the antecedent to the relative he is the Son of God, and so consequently he, and not the apostate, is said to be sanctified with the blood of the covenant; wherefore the words are no proof of the apostasy of truly sanctified persons. Mr. Wesley says I forgot to look at the original, or my memory fails. Neither, is the case. However, I have looked again to refresh my memory, had it failed; and find indeed other words going before, but no other substantive but *υιος*, the Son of God, to whom the relative he can refer; and that this does refer to the Son of God in the clause immediately preceding, is not a singular opinion of mine that learned Dutchman Gomarus (Comment in Heb. 10:29), and our very learned countrymen Dr. Lightfoot (Harmony, &c. p. 341), and Dr. Owen (On Perseverance, p. 432), of the last age, and Dr. Ridgley (Body of Divinity, Vol. II, p. 125), of the present, are of the same sentiment. But admitting that it refers to the apostate, since this may be understood of his being sanctified or separated from others by a profession of religion, by church- membership and partaking of the Lord's Supper, in which the blood of the covenant is represented; and of his being sanctified by it in his own esteem and in the esteem of others, when he was not inwardly sanctified by the Spirit; this can be no proof of the apostasy of a real saint. It should be proved, that this sanctification is to be understood of inward sanctification, or else it proves not the point in debate. Mr. Wesley thinks it may be so understood, and that for this reason; because the words immediately following are, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace. Surprising; that a man's having done despite to the Spirit of grace, should be a proof of his having been inwardly sanctified by him; which might more reasonably be thought to be a proof of the very reverse. So then it remains, that this passage also does not militate against the doctrine of the saints final perseverance.

Mr. Wesley has thought fit to add several other texts, which he proposes to consideration, as proving that a true believer may finally fall; but as he has not

advanced any argument upon them, I shall not enter into any examination of them, and of the weight they bear in this controversy; and besides, they being such as either do not respect true believers, about whom the question is, or only them falling from some degree of grace and steadfastness of it, and do not design a total and final falling away; or else they only intend persons receiving the doctrine of grace and a falling from that, and so are nothing to the purpose. And unless something more to the purpose is offered, than yet has been, I shall not think myself under any obligation to attend unto it.

8 TRUTH DEFENDED: BEING AN ANSWER TO AN ANONYMOUS PAMPHLET, ENTITLED,

Some Doctrines in the
Supralapsarian Scheme impartially examined
by the Word of God.

Lately to my hands an anonymous pamphlet, entitled, *Some Doctrines in the Supralapsarian Scheme impartially examined by the Word of God*. The author of it is right, in making the word of God the rule and standard by which doctrines and schemes are to be tried and examined. To the law and to the testimony; if men speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. (Isa. 8:20) He sets out with large declarations of his regard to the sacred writings, which to swell the performance are too often repeated, even ad nauseam; and yet, in his very first paragraph, drops a sentence not very agreeable to them, if any sense can be made of it: "All opinions and maxims, he says; that correspond not with this divine rule, we should either entirely reject, or at least refuse to admit as articles of our faith." But why not entirely reject them, without any hesitation? why this disjunctive proposition? why this softening clause added? If it can be thought to be so, or to convey a different idea from the former, as it is designed it should; though I should think, to refuse to admit doctrines and maxims as articles of faith, that do not correspond with the divine rule, is the same thing as to reject them as articles of faith. The man seems to write in the midst of hurry and surprise. Since he has met with schemes and opinions so exceedingly shocking and stunning, it would have been advisable for him to have sat down and waited until he was better come to, and more composed, before he put pen to paper, and committed his frightful apprehensions to writing.

And indeed one would have thought he has had time enough to have recovered himself from the surprise he has met with, seeing it is near four years ago, since the more modern pieces he has taken notice of were published to the world.

I. The examination begins with the foundation principle of the Supralapsarians, as he calls it, that "God chose his people without considering them as fallen creatures." He does well to begin with their foundation-doctrine; for if he can demolish the foundation, the superstructure must fall; if he can pluck up what he supposes to be the root of many false opinions, the branches which grow from it will die in course. But though this received opinion of theirs, as our author styles it, is a denomination one, or that from which they are called Supralapsarians, yet it is far from being a foundation principle, or a fundamental article of faith with them; nor do they consider this point, in which they differ from others, as the principal one in the doctrine of election: They and the Supralapsarians are agreed in the main points respecting that doctrine; as, that it is an eternal act of God; that it is of certain particular persons; that it is unconditional, irrespective of faith, holiness, and good works, as causes and conditions of it; and that it entirely springs from the good-will and pleasure of God. The Contra-Remonstrants were not all of a mind concerning the object of predestination, but did not think it worth their while to divide upon that account. Nay, some of them were of opinion that it was not necessary to be determined, whether God, in choosing men, considered them as fallen, or as not yet fallen provided it was but allowed that God in choosing considered men in an equal state, so as that he that is chosen was not considered by God either of himself, or by his own merit, or by any gracious estimation, more worthy than he who is not chosen. That famous Supralapsarian, Dr. Twiss, declares that "as for the ordering of God's decrees, upon which only arise the different opinions touching the object of predestination, it is merely apex logicus, a point of logic." The decrees of God may be distinguished into the decree of the end, and the decree of the means, that they may the better be conceived of by our finite understandings; which are not able to consider all things at once, and together, as they lie in the divine mind, but of one thing after another; and that without dividing and separating of God's decrees, or supposing

any priority or posteriority in him. Now the decree of the end must be considered before the decree of the means; and that what is first in intention, is last in execution, and so vice versa. Let then eternal life and glory, or a state of everlasting communion with God, be the end of election, as it is with respect to man, then the creation, permission of Adam's fall, and the recovery out of it, are the means in order to that end. It follows, that in the decree of the end, man could not be considered as a fallen creature, but as yet not created; because the creation and the permission of the fall belong to the decree of the means, which is an order of nature after the decree of the end. For if God first decreed to create man, and to permit him to fall, and then decreed to bring him to a state of eternal life and happiness; according to this known rule, that what is first in intention is last in execution, this strange absurdity will follow, that man will be first brought into a state of eternal life and happiness, and then created and permitted to fall. Let the end be the manifestation of God's glory, which certainly is the supreme end of election, then the means are creation, permission of sin, redemption, sanctification, and in a word, complete salvation; which though they are materially many, yet make up but one formal decree, called the decree of the means. Now according to the former rule, the intention of the end must be first, and then the intention of the means; and, consequently, man cannot be considered in the decree of the end, the manifestation of God's glory, as yet created and fallen; because the creation and permission of sin belong to the decree of the means, which in order of nature is after the decree of the end. But if, on the contrary, God first decreed to create man and permit him to fall, and then decreed to manifest the glory of his grace and mercy, in his eternal salvation; according to the above rule, that what is first in intention is last in execution, and so vice versa, it will follow, that the glory of God's grace and mercy are first manifested in the eternal salvation of man, and then he is created and suffered to fall. Likewise it is to be observed, that the several things mentioned in the decree of the means, creation, permission of sin, and salvation, are not to be considered as subordinate, but as co-ordinate means, or as making up an entire, complete medium. We are not to suppose that God decreed to create man that he might permit him to fall, or that he decreed to permit him to fall, that he might save him: but that he

decreed to create him, permit him to fall, and to save him notwithstanding his fall, that he might glorify his grace and mercy. Nor are we to conceive of them after this manner, that God first decreed to create man, and then decreed to permit him to fall; for it would follow that man, in the execution of these decrees, is first permitted to fall, and then he is created: Nor thus, that God first decreed to create man, and permit him to fall, and then decreed to save him; for, according to the former rule, man would first be saved, and then created and permitted to fall. These are some of the reasonings of the Supralapsarians; particularly of Dr. Twiss, as may be seen in his *Vindiciæ*, and in his *Riches of God's love*, against Hord. This poor man, that takes upon him to write against the Supralapsarians, would do well to try his skill in unraveling and destroying this kind of reasoning: But alas his capacity will never reach it. I am afraid the very mention of these things will increase his surprise and fright. However, since he has taken upon him to object to this opinion of the Supralapsarians, it will be proper to hear what he has to say. And,

1. He proposes to shew, that this doctrine is destitute of support from the scripture, and tells us, he has often wondered what part of sacred writ can be produced to support it; and that he has been searching and trying to know the language of the divine word concerning election; and shall therefore mention, and in a few words, comment upon those scriptures which, says he, I judge, are only necessary to be considered in this dispute; and these are, 1 Peter 1:2, Ephesians 1:3, 4 and Romans 8:29. If the man is really ignorant, as I am inclined to think he is, and does not know what parts of sacred writ the Supralapsarians have produced to support their doctrine, he has acted a weak part in meddling with the controversy; if he does know, he has acted a worse in concealing of them. He promises to mention and comment on those scriptures, which he judges are only necessary to be considered in this dispute; but he ought to have mentioned the scriptures, which the men he opposes judge necessary to be considered in this dispute; and to have shewn the misapplication of them, and that they are not pertinent to their purpose; is this impartially to try and examine, by the word of God, the Supralapsarian scheme, as his title promises? every one knows, that knows any thing of this controversy, that the scriptural part of it is about the sense of the ninth chapter of the

epistle to the Romans; and the question is, whether the Sublapsarian, or the Supralapsarian scheme, concerning the objects of election and reprobation, is most agreeable to the sense of the apostle in that chapter; particularly, whether the Supralapsarian scheme, of God's choosing some, and leaving others, considered as unfallen, as having done neither good nor evil, does not best agree with the account the apostle gives in verses 11-13 of the election of Jacob, and rejection of Esau; and more especially whether it does not best agree with the same apostle's account in verse 21, of the potter's making of the same lump one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? This author should have mentioned these scriptures, and commented upon them, and answered the arguments of the Supralapsarians from them; in particular, those of that eminent Supralapsarian, Theodore Beza, in his notes upon the last of these texts, which I shall transcribe for this man's sake; and he may try whether he is capable of answering of them. "Those who, by the mass, or lump, says this great man, understand mankind corrupted, do not satisfy me in the explanation of this place: for first, it seems to me, that the phrase of informed matter, neither sufficiently agrees with mankind, either made or corrupted. Moreover, if the apostle had considered mankind as corrupted, he would not have said, that some vessels were made to honour, and some to dishonour but rather, that seeing all the vessels would be fit for dishonour, some were left in that dishonour, and others translated from that dishonour to honour. Lastly, if Paul had not rose to the highest degree, he had not satisfied the question objected; for it would always have been queried, whether that corruption came by chance, or whether, indeed, according to the purpose of God, and therefore the same difficulty would recur. I say, therefore, Paul using this most elegant simile, alludes to the creation of Adam, and rises up to the eternal purpose of God, who, before he created mankind, decreed of his own mere will and pleasure, to manifest his glory, both in saving of some whom he knew, in a way of mercy, and in destroying others, whom he also knew, in righteous judgment. And verily, unless we judge this to be the case, God will be greatly injured; because he will not be sufficiently wise, who first creates men, and looks upon them corrupt, and then appoints to what purpose he has created them: nor sufficiently powerful, if when he has

taken up a purpose concerning them, he is hindered by another, so that he obtains not what he willed; nor sufficiently constant, if, willingly and freely he takes up a new purpose, after his workmanship is corrupted."

As for the scriptures mentioned by our author, as opposing the Supralapsarian scheme, I shall not trouble the reader, by observing the mangled work he makes with them, and the low and mean comments he makes upon them; I shall only say, that it will be readily owned, that sanctification, obedience, and conformity to the image of God and Christ, are things included in the decree of election: but do these things necessarily suppose, that the persons whom they concern, were in that decree considered as impure, unholy, disobedient, and in a want of conformity to the image of God and Christ? were not the elect angels chosen to sanctification, obedience, and conformity to the image of God? will any one say, that these things supposed them to be, or that in the decree of election, they were considered as impure, unholy, disobedient, and in a want of conformity to the image of God? But, admitting that these things, with respect to men, suppose them in such a case; it should be observed that they belong to the decree of the means, and therefore fall short of proving that God, in the decree of the end, or in decreeing men to eternal life and happiness, for the glorifying of himself, considered them in such a state; since the decree of the end, in order of nature, is before the decree of the means; unless we can suppose the all-wise being to act in such manner as no wise man would, namely, first fix upon the means, and then appoint the end. Now if God first decreed to create man, permit his fall, and then sanctify and conform him to the image of his Son, before he decreed to glorify himself in his salvation, the consequence will be, that God is first glorified in the salvation of man; and after that, man is created, suffered to fall, is sanctified, and conformed to the image of Christ; because what is first in intention, is last in execution. There is one thing more I would observe, and that is, that this author delivers it as the settled opinion of the Supralapsarians, "that we were not elected as holy and obedient beings, but to the end we might be such:" And I am much mistaken if this is not the settled opinion of all Sublapsarians, except such as are in the Arminian scheme. But what is this mentioned for? why, to shew that the Supralapsarians are inconsistent with themselves, and guilty of so flagrant a contradiction,

as is not to be reconciled by any. But where does it lie? “why, whereas they affirm, that we were not the Almighty’s choice, because we were holy; but that he did choose us to be made holy, and yet in that choice, beheld us free from all defilements and deformity.” But this author must be told, if he does not know it, that the Supralapsarians, in considering men not yet created, and so not fallen, as the objects of election, suppose them neither good nor bad, righteous or wicked, holy or unholy, but in the pure, that is in the mere mass of creature-ship, not yet made, much less corrupted, and as having done neither good nor evil; now is this such a flagrant contradiction, never to be reconciled, that men considered neither as holy or unholy, as obedient or disobedient, should be chosen to holiness and obedience?

2. This author proceeds to shew, that “the doctrine of the Supralapsarians is repugnant to their own opinion of God’s eternal foreknowledge, according to which he was pleased to make his choice.” To which I reply; that the Supralapsarians will readily own, that the omniscient Jehovah did, at one view, see, and perfectly behold, whatsoever would come to pass, throughout all ages of time; and that he has an universal prescience of all creatures and things, in their different states and circumstances; but then they will deny that election proceeds upon, or that God has been pleased to make his choice according to this his general and eternal prescience. It is true, that those who are elected, are elected according to the foreknowledge of God the Father; (1 Peter 1:2; Rom. 8:29) and whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. But these passages are not to be understood of the universal prescience and foreknowledge of God; for then all men would be elected and predestinated, for whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate; but all men are neither conformed to the image of Christ, nor predestinated to be so; it remains, that the foreknowledge, according to which election and predestination proceed, is God’s special foreknowledge of his own people, and which is no other than his everlasting love to them, which is the source and spring of his choice of them; and the meaning is, that whom he foreknew, that is, in his eternal mind knew, owned, approved of, loved with an everlasting love; he chose them to salvation, and predestinated them to be conformed to the image of his Son.

3. This writer goes on to observe, that “this doctrine of God’s choosing his people without considering them as fallen creatures, tends to lessen the infinite grace and mercy of God in their election.” I reply; that though it has been a matter of controversy between the Supralapsarians, and others, whether election is an act of mercy, yet not whether it is an act of grace; they, with the scriptures, (Rom. 11:5, 6) affirm, that election is of grace, springs from the sovereign grace and good pleasure of God, and is not influenced by, or to be ascribed to the works of men; but then they cannot observe, that it is ever said to be of mercy. Regeneration is ascribed to the mercy of God, 1 Peter 1:3, so is forgiveness of sins, Luke 1:77, yea, our whole salvation, Titus 3:5, but never election, nor that, but salvation is said to be of God, that sheweth, mercy, Rom. 9:15. Their reasons, among many others, too many to mention, why it cannot be an act of mercy, are, because the angels are elected, but not of mercy; the human nature of Christ is elected, but not of mercy. They argue, that supposing it should be admitted, that election is an act of mercy, it must either be *actus elicited*, an actual will of being merciful, or *actus imperatus*, the act of shewing mercy itself; not the latter, because that supposes persons not merely foreknown as miserable, but in actual being, and in real misery, and is a transient act upon them; whereas election puts nothing in the persons chosen: if it is an act of mercy, it must be the former, God’s actual will of being merciful; but this does not necessarily presuppose misery, or miserable objects, it being internal, and immanent in God, and the same with his mercy itself; and would have been the same, nor would God have been the less merciful, if the world had not been, and there had never been a miserable object on whom to display it. The act of election does not presuppose men sinners and in miserable, nor indeed can it; for should it presuppose sin, it would presuppose the decree of the permission of sin; and the permission of sin would be first in God’s intention, than man’s salvation of God’s mercy, and consequently would he last in execution; than which nothing can be thought of more absurd. Besides though election is not an act of mercy, yet it is far from having any tendency to lessen the mercy of God, and does, even according to the Supralapsarian scheme, abundantly provide for the glorifying of it; since, according to that, the decree of the end is, the glorifying of the

grace and mercy of God, tempered with justice; The decree of the means provides for the bringing about of this end, which includes creation, the permission of sin, the mission of Christ, sanctification, and complete salvation; so that the elect of God may well be called vessels of mercy; since through such means, they are brought to eternal life and glory; though, in the decree of the end, they are considered as not yet created and fallen, than which nothing can more tend to advance the free grace and mercy of God.

4. This author urges, that “this way of stating election strikes severely against the justice of God, in passing by the rest of mankind, not included in this decree; for hereby they are rejected as creatures only, and not as sinful creatures.” It is very strange, that election should severely strike against the justice of God, when, according to this way of stating it, it is a choice of persons to eternal life and happiness for the glorifying of the grace and mercy of God, mixed with his justice; and so as much provides in end and means, for the honour of divine justice, as for the glory of grace and mercy: and it is stranger still, that election should be a passing by the rest of mankind, not included in this decree: I suppose he means reprobation; for he has an extraordinary hand at putting one thing for another. Now let it be observed, that though the Supralapsarians do not consider reprobation as an act of justice, but of sovereignty, yet not of injustice; nor does their way of stating it at all strike at the justice of God. They suppose, that God, in the act of preterition, considered the objects of it as not yet created and fallen; and determined, when created, to leave them to their own will, and deny them that grace which he is not obliged to give: and where is the justice of all this? But then, though they do not premise sin to the consideration of the act or preterition, yet they always premise it to the decree of damnation; which this author, as is generally done, confounds together. They say, that as God damns no man, but for sin, so he decreed to damn no man but for sin: and surely this cannot be thought to strike severely against the justice of God. It is true, they do not look upon sin to be the cause of the decree of reprobation, *quoad actum volentis*, which can only be the will of God; but *quoad res volitas*, the cause of the thing willed, damnation. Besides, this way of stating the decrees of election and reprobation, respecting men, can no more strike at the justice of God, than the way of stating these

decrees, respecting angels, does: which can not be done in another way: for the elect angels could never be considered as fallen; and therefore the other angels, who were passed by, and rejected at the same time, must be rejected as creatures only, and not as sinful creatures; unless it can be thought that the angels were not chosen and passed by at the same time, nor then considered in a like state; and that God chose some of them upon their foreseen holiness and obedience, and rejected the rest upon their foreseen rebellion and disobedience: and if so, why may not the election and rejection of men be thought to proceed upon the same foot? which none, that I know of, will come in to, but such that are in the Arminian scheme. This theme our author says he has been at ways cautious of meddling with, lest he should darken counsel for want of knowledge; and it is pity he meddled with it now, since he discovers so much ignorance of it: who can forbear thinking of the common proverb? Thus having considered what he calls the foundation doctrine of the Supralapsarians, he proceeds,

II. To examine some of the doctrines which grow from this root, as the natural offspring of it, and appear with the same complection; and begins,

1. With their doctrine of eternal justification. What this author says, I am persuaded, will never meet with general credit, “that eternal justification is the natural offspring of the Supralapsarian doctrine, respecting the objects of election, not considered as fallen creatures.” He goes all along, I observe, upon a false notion, that whatever is thought, or said to be done in eternity is a Supralapsarian doctrine: whereas the Sublapsarians themselves allow election to be from eternity, before the foundation of the world, and so believe the fall of Adam, though not without the consideration of it; and in this they differ from the Supralapsarians. I know a reverend Divine, now living in this city of London, who, if I mistake not, reckons himself among the Supralapsarians, and says, that they dig deepest into the gospel; and yet is a strenuous opposer of justification from eternity; and even before faith: on the other hand, there have been some who have thought, that the object of election is man fallen, and yet have been for justification before faith. For my own part, I must confess, I never, considered justification from eternity, any other than a Sublapsarian doctrine, proceeding upon the surety-ship engagements of Christ, and his future satisfaction and righteousness; upon which

foot the Old-Testament saints were openly justified, and went to heaven long before the satisfaction was really made, or the justifying righteousness brought in; and, indeed, if the objects of justification are the ungodly, as the scripture represents them to be, they must be considered as fallen creatures; However, if the doctrine of eternal justification is the natural offspring of the former, and appears with the same complection, and is to be maintained with equal force of argument, we have no reason to be ashamed of it: and I am sure we have no reason to be in any pain on the account of the opposition this doughty writer makes unto it: he says, we have exceeded all the bounds of revelation in our inquiries after it, and then barely mentions three or four places of scriptures, which speak of justification by faith; and concludes, that therefore there is no justification before it; an extraordinary way of arguing indeed! When justification by faith no ways contradicts justification before it; nay, justification perceived, known, enjoyed by faith, supposes justification before it; for how should any have that sense, perception, and comfort of their justification by it, if there was no justification before it? He proceeds to observe the order or chain of salvation, in Romans 8:30, where calling is represented as prior to justification; an objection I have formerly answered in my Doctrine of Justification, to which I refer the reader, and take the opportunity of observing, that neither this author, nor any other, have attempted to answer the arguments there made use of in favour of justification before faith: I will not say they are unanswerable; but I may say, that as yet they are unanswered: this author, if he pleases, may try what he can do with them, and it might have been expected in this his performance; but instead of this, he sets himself, with all his might, against some other doctrines, which he represents as Supralapsarian, as calculated to favour the scheme of eternal justification, and as branches of it; as,

1. "That God was eternally reconciled to the elect; and that no scripture can be produced to prove that the Lord Jesus did come to procure reconciliation for them; and that wherever Christ is said to make peace by his blood, It is to be understood only of his reconciling the sinner to God." Whether he refers to anything that has been published, or dropped in private conversation, or who the persons are, that affirm this, I know not: I greatly fear he has both misrepresented their words and meaning. I must

own, I never heard of any such thing as an eternal reconciliation of God to the elect. Reconciliation supposes former friendship, a breach of it, and a conciliation of it again; which is inconsistent with the everlasting, invariable, and unchangeable love of God to them. God was indeed from everlasting reconciling, not himself to the world, but the world of his elect to himself; (2 Cor. 5:19) that is drawing the scheme and model of their reconciliation by Christ, or settling the way and manner in which reconciliation, atonement, and satisfaction for their sins, should be made; and accordingly made a covenant of peace with his Son, appointed him to be their peace, and in the fulness of time sent him to make peace by the blood of his cross, and laid upon him the chastisement of their peace; and who has actually made reconciliation for their sins; and so they, even when enemies, were actually reconciled; that is, their sins were actually expiated and atoned for to God, by the death of his Son. This is the doctrine of reconciliation the scriptures speak of, and which I never knew before was ever reckoned a Supralapsarian doctrine: for surely reconciliation, atonement, or satisfaction for sin, which are synonymous terms, expressive of the same thing, must suppose persons sinners herein concerned. Let it be farther observed, that God from all eternity loved his elect with an invariable love; that he never entertained any hatred of them, or was at enmity with them; that there is no such thing as a change in God from hatred to love, any more than from love to hatred; that our Lord Jesus Christ did not by his atoning sacrifice procure his Father's love to the elect, seeing his being a propitiation for sin was a fruit, effect, and evidence of that love Agreeably, the scriptures never speak of God's being reconciled to his elect either in eternity or in time, but of their being reconciled to him and not so much of the reconciliation of their persons, as of a reconciliation for their sins; whereby their persons are reconciled, not to the love and affections of God, which they always shared in, but to the justice of God, which insisted upon a satisfaction to a broken law; which being given, both love and justice are reconciled together, righteousness and peace kiss each other, in the affair of their salvation. Now, there is nothing in this doctrine of reconciliation that is opposite,

(1.) To the sin-offerings and peace-offerings under the law, since these were made to the God of Israel for the people of Israel, whom God loved above all people

that were upon the face of the earth, and were typical of that atoning sacrifice, in which indeed were discovered the severest resentment of justice against sin, and yet the clearest evidence of strong love and affections to persons then enemies, and destitute of love to God: Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 4:10) In this both type and antitype agree, that the reconciliation is not of God to men, but for men to God; though this author says, "it is past all dispute, that the party to be reconciled is God;" when it is the very thing in dispute between us. It is no where said of the sacrifices of the law, that God was reconciled by them to the people of Israel; and it is no where said of the sacrifice of Christ, the antitype of them, that God is by it reconciled to his elect; though I am content that God should be said to be reconciled to his elect by the death of Christ, provided no more is meant by it than satisfying of his justice, not a conciliating or procuring his love and favour. The author's reasoning on the denial of this, that the reconciliation must be made to the house of Israel, or for the God of Israel, or with the sinner or the sin, is so stupid and senseless, that it deserves no consideration

(2.) Nor does this doctrine, which denies that Christ came to reconcile God to sinners, oppose, as is suggested, what is prophesied of him in the Old Testament, or what is affirmed of his performance in the New; since, though it was prophesied of him, that God should make his soul an offering for sin; (Isa. 53:10) and it is affirmed of him, that he gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God; (Eph. 5:2) yet it is neither said that he should, or that he did do this for the elect, to remove any enmity in the heart of God against them, or to turn any hatred of his into love towards them, or to purchase and procure the love and affections of God for them: so far from this, that because they had a peculiar share in the love and affections both of the Father and the Son, the Father made the soul of his Son an offering for them, and the Son gave himself an offering unto God on their account. The Old Testament says, that the Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honourable; (Isa. 42:21) and the New Testament says, that Christ has so loved his, that he has given himself for them, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savour; (Eph. 5:2) a but neither the one nor the other say, that either God was to

be, or that he is, hereby reconciled to his elect, or they hereby ingratiated into his affections. What is written in Colossians 1:20, Corinthians 15:3, Hebrews 2:17, Colossians 2:14, Ephesians 1:7, perfectly agree with the doctrine of reconciliation I am now contending for; nor does this oppose that plain scripture, Romans 5:1, Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus. We have no need to remove the stop in the text; though how this author dare venture to alter the reading of it, and render the words peace in God, or what is his reason for it, I know not. The peace the text speaks of, does not design the peace, reconciliation, and atonement made by the blood of Christ, but the effect of it; even an inward conscience peace, which believers have with God, or God-ward, through Christ the donor of it, springing and arising from faith's apprehending an interest in the justifying righteousness of the Son of God.

(3.) Nor does this doctrine lessen, or tend to frustrate the great and important ends of our Saviour's sufferings and death, as this author attempts to prove. The ends of his sufferings and death were to bring the elect to God to make reconciliation for their sins, to reconcile them to God; and accordingly they were even when enemies, reconciled to God by the death of his Son. (1 Peter 3:18; Dan. 9:24; Heb. 2:17; Rom. 5:10) Where does the scripture ever represent the end of Christ's sufferings and death to be, to reconcile God to his elect; that is, to remove any enmity in his heart against them, or to procure for them his love and favour? but on the contrary, it represents the sufferings and death of Christ as fruits and evidences of his matchless and surprising love to them. God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. (Rom. 5:8) The doctrines of reconciliation and justification, thus viewed in the light of scripture can never clash with the satisfaction of Christ, nor tend to lessen and frustrate it; since reconciliation is no other than satisfaction and atonement to the justice of God, and justification proceeds upon the foot of satisfaction, and everlasting righteousness. Nor is there room or reason for that stupid inference and conclusion, that because Christ came to reconcile sinners to God, therefore he became an offering to the sinner, and not to God. There is a twofold reconciliation the scriptures speak of; the one is obtained by the price of Christ's blood, the other by the power of his grace: you have them both in one

text, Romans 5:10, For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. The meaning of which is; that if, when the elect of God were in a state of nature, and so of enmity to God, atonement was made for their sins by the sacrifice and death of Christ, which is strongly expressive of the amazing love of God to them; then much more being by the Spirit and grace of God reconciled to this way of peace, pardon, atonement, life and salvation, they shall be saved, through the interceding life of their Redeemer.

(4). This doctrine, as it has been stated, does not render the offices of Christ, as mediator, intercessor and high priest, needless, yea, of none effect; unless this author can imagine, according to his own scheme, that it is the sole work of the mediator, intercessor and high priest, to reconcile God to the elect. This we indeed say is no part of his work, in such sense, as to conciliate the love and favour of God to them; but does it follow, from hence, that his office is needless, and of none effect? Is it not needful, to reconcile the elect to God, to make reconciliation for their sins? Is he not useful, as mediator, to be their advocate and intercessor, their way of access to God, and acceptance with him, and of conveyance of all he blessings of the covenant of grace to them, whence he is called the mediator of it? I would also ask this author, if he thinks when God is reconciled to the elect by the death of his Son, or rather when they believe; for it seems there is no reconciliation before faith in Christ, the blood, sacrifice and death of Christ will not effect it, according to these men, till faith has given the finishing stroke: I say, I ask this author, whether he thinks that the office of Christ, as mediator, ceases? for, according to his way of reasoning, it should cease, when reconciliation is really made. Whereas Christ, after believing as well as before, is the mediator between God and man, and ever lives to make intercession for us. (1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 7:25) We are able to prove that Christ was set up as mediator from everlasting that his mediation was always necessary, and ever will be; that, as he is the medium of all grace now to us, he will be the medium of all glory to all eternity. To conclude this head; our author seems to be convinced that John 3:16, expresses the love of God to his elect, antecedent to his giving and sending of his Son to be the propitiatory sacrifice; since he docs not attempt to offer any thing against the

exposition, or to give another sense of it.

2. "Another branch of their (Supralapsarians) eternal justification, is said to be their refusing to pray for the pardon of sin, any otherwise than the manifestation of it to their consciences." Strange! that pardon of sin should be a branch of eternal justification, when it is a distant blessing from it; as, I think, I have sufficiently made to appear in my treatise concerning it: stranger still! that refusing to pray for it should be deemed a branch of it: and what is of all most wonderful, is, flint this should he reckoned a Supralapsarian point, when pardon of sin supposes sin, and sin supposes the fall; anti whether it is to be conceived of as in the divine mind, from eternity, or as passing into successive acts in time, as men sin, or as manifested to their consciences, the objects of it cannot be considered otherwise than as sinners, fallen creatures; and therefore is a Sublapsarian, and not a Supralapsarian doctrine. Is this man qualified to examine the Supralapsarian scheme? He proceeds to try this practice of refusing to pray for the pardon of sin any otherwise than the manifestation of it to the conscience, by the example of the holy men of God, and by the advice and direction of our blessed Lord and Saviour. He might have spared the pains he has taken in collecting the instances of praying for the pardon of sin, since the question is not, whether the saints, in any sense, should pray for it; for we allow, that they have done it, that they are directed to it, and should do it; but the question is, in what sense they have done it, and should do it? Now we apprehend, that when believers pray for the pardon of sin, that their sense and meaning is not, nor should it be, as if the blood of Christ should be shed again for the remission of sin, or as if complete pardon was not procured by it, or as though this was to be obtained by their praying, tears, humiliation, and repentance, or that any new act of pardon I should arise in the mind of God, and be afresh passed; but when they pray in this manner, their meaning is, either that God would, in a providential way, deliver them out of present distress, or avert those troubles and sorrows they might justly fear; or, that they might have the sense and manifestation of pardon to their souls, fresh sprinklings of the blood of Jesus, and renewed applications of it to their consciences; and this, we believe, is both their duty and interest to do daily, since they are daily sinning against God, grieving

his Spirit, and wounding their own consciences. The instance of the apostle's advising Simon Magus to pray, is not to pray particularly for the pardon of sin, or that the evil thought of his heart might be forgiven him, as this author suggests; but to repent and pray in general; and this is added by way of encouragement, If perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. However, I will not contend with him about it, since nothing in this controversy depends upon it. He goes on to observe, that,

3. "The third branch of their eternal justification is, that God loved and delighted in the elect as much while in their sinful state, and in the height of their rebellion against his laws, as when they are converted, and made obedient to his ways." That God loves his elect, and delights in them, as considered in Christ, and so as justified in him before the foundation of the world, I firmly believe; and which is far from being a licentious way of talking, or from being any contradiction to the holiness of God: but that his love to them, and delight in them as such, should be a branch of their eternal justification, is what I confess I never was acquainted with before; and what is more news still, is, that this spurious tenet, as this author in his great wisdom and modesty calls it, is built upon eternal union with Christ, which he represents as a false and sandy foundation: whereas the persons he opposes, consider the everlasting love of God to his elect as the foundation, yea, the bond of their eternal union. Of this one would think he could not be ignorant; but really every page, and almost every line, discover such stupidity and ignorance, that it is not at all to be marvelled at. He goes on, in his former way, to consider this tenet of God's loving and delighting in his elect, while in their unconverted state with the rest, as a Supralapsarian point; and which he calls a common maxim of the Supralapsarians. I entreat this author, that he would never more attempt to write about Supralapsarian principles, or to try and examine the Supralapsarian scheme, until some of his friends, patrons, or editors, have better informed him concerning them. What, is this a Supralapsarian tenet, that God loves and delights in his elect while in their sinful state, and in the height of their rebellion? Surely these persons must be considered as sinners, as fallen creatures; and therefore as this author has stated the point, it must be a Sublapsarian, and not a Supralapsarian one. Had he indeed represented

it as our sense, that God loved and delighted in his elect, as in Christ from all eternity, above the fall, and without any consideration of it, he had done us more justice; and this would have bid fair to have been deemed a Supralapsarian point: but this would not have answered his wicked design; I can call it no other, which is to suggest to weak minds "that God loves and delights in the sins and rebellions of his elect, or loves and delights in them considered as sinners, and rebellious persons;" this we abhor, as much as he: for what else can reflect dishonour on the Christian religion, or strike at the doctrine of God's holiness, or stand diametrically opposite to all practical godliness, or oppose those scriptures which speak of God as hating sin, and abhorring the workers of iniquity? Not the doctrine of God's loving and delighting in his elect, as considered in Christ, in whom they cannot be considered otherwise than as holy and righteous. We know that men in an unconverted state cannot please God, that is, do those things which are well-pleasing to him; and yet their persons may be acceptable in his sight, not as considered in themselves; for so they cannot be, even after conversion, notwithstanding all their humiliations, repentance, tears, prayers, and services; but as considered in Christ, in whom, and in whom alone, they are the objects of God's love and delight. But it seems we are to hear of this again; and therefore at present I shall take my leave of it, till we know what he has farther to object.

4. He proceeds to prove "that these authors (the Supralapsarians) in order to support their doctrine of eternal justification, have very unjustly affirmed that our blessed Saviour was by imputation a sinner; yea, that he became very sin." I shall content myself in making some general observations upon his long harangue on this head, which will serve to discover his weakness and ignorance.

(1.) I observe, that as his title page promises an examination of some doctrines in the Supralapsarian scheme, and his assurance leads him on; so, according to his usual way, he affirms that the doctrine of Christ's being made sin, or a sinner by imputation, or of the imputation of sin to Christ, is a doctrine in the Supralapsarian scheme, or a Supralapsarian notion; whereas imputation of sin supposes sin, and that supposes the fall; wherefore the persons whose sins were imputed to Christ, and in whose room and stead he bore them, must be considered as sinners and fallen

creatures. And hence it appears to be a Sublapsarian, and not a Supralapsarian doctrine.

(2.) I take notice of the unfair and disingenuous dealing of this writer. He first proposes to prove, that it is unjustly affirmed that Christ was by imputation a sinner, and immediately alters the state of the question, and represents it as the notion of the Supralapsarians, that Christ was really the sinner, and made truly and properly sin, and made sin, or a sinner, in a proper sense; whereas though with Dr. Crisp, we affirm, that there was a real transaction, a real imputation of sin to Christ, and that the really bore the sins of his people in the Protestant sense, as opposed to that of the Papists, who sneeringly call every thing imputed, putative, fantastic and imaginary, with whom our author seems to join: but then we say that Christ is only the sinner by imputation, or was only made sin this way; not that sin was inherently in him, or that it was committed by him; in which sense only he can be truly, properly, and really the sinner. And this is what Dr Crisp himself says, and that in the very passage this man takes upon him to confute: "Christ, says he, stands a sinner in God's eyes; though not as the actor of transgressions, yet as he was the surety." This observation alone is sufficient to set aside all the trifling and impertinent reasonings of this writer on this head.

We are not afraid, nor ashamed to say, that Christ was made original and actual sin in this sense; that is to say, that original sin, and the actual sins of God's people, were imputed to Christ, and he bore them and made satisfaction to justice for them: Nor can we observe any absurdity in descending to particulars, and saying that the swearing the lying, blasphemy, &c. of God's elect, were laid upon him, imputed to him, and he took them upon him, and bore them away: Nor does this reflect upon the holiness of God, as this man suggests, in making his Son by imputation the worst thing that ever was in the world; since there never was any one thing in the world which so much discovers the holiness of God, and strictness of his justice, than his giving his Son to be the propitiation for our sins; which could not be done without the imputation of them to him: Nor does this act of imputation make God the author of sin, any more than the imputation of the righteousness of Christ makes the Father the author of that righteousness; nor does this reflect dishonour, either on the divine or human nature of Christ, since neither of them can be defiled with sin

but, on the other hand, serves much to express the wondrous love, grace, and condescension of Christ, that he who knew no sin, should be made sin for us.

(3.) I observe the rudeness of the man, in representing the doctrine of the imputation of sin to Christ, or his being made sin by imputation, "as vile and ridiculous, and equally as pernicious as Transubstantiation; a scheme not to be freed from inexplicable perplexities, and vile nonsense; calling it ridiculous doctrine, spurious stuff, yea, blasphemy;" when it is the doctrine of our reformers, of all sound Protestant divines, never denied by any but Socinians and Arminians, or such as he inclined to them: Wherefore had he thought fit to have rejected it, yet for the sake of so many valuable men who have espoused it, he ought to have treated it with decency. Nor can I pass by his rude treatment of Dr. Crisp and Mr. Hussey; the one he represents as guilty of blasphemy, or something like it, and an addle-headed man, that knew not what he wrote; and the other, as a ridiculous writer; when they were both, in their day and generation, men of great piety and learning, of long standing and much usefulness in the Church of Christ; whose name and memory will be dear and precious to the saints, when this writer and his pamphlet will be remembered no more.

(4.) I observe, this author treats the doctrine of Christ's being a sinner by imputation, as a novel doctrine, and embraced by men of a vehement thirst after novelty. I have already hinted, that this was the doctrine of the first reformers, and all sound Protestant divines, that our sins were imputed to Christ, and Christ's righteousness imputed to us. This was the faith of the ancient church, in the first ages of christianity, as appears from a passage of Justin Martyr, one of the most early christian writers extant; "What else," says he, speaking of Christ, "could cover our sins, but his righteousness? In whom could we, transgressors and ungodly, be justified, than in the only Son of God? Ω O sweet. change! O unsearchable performance! O unexpected benefits! that the transgression of many should be hid in one righteous person: and the righteousness of one justify many transgressors." Yea, some of the ancient writers have expressed themselves in terms full as exceptionable as what Dr. Crisp has made use of: so Chrysostom; "For he hath made that righteous one a simmer, that he might make sinners righteous: indeed he does not only say so, but what was much more; for he does not express the habit, but

the quality; he does not say, he made him a sinner, but sin itself; that we might be made, he does not say righteous, but righteousness, even the righteousness of God." So Oecumenius; "Christ," says he, "was the great sinner, seeing he took upon him the sins of the whole world, and made them his own." So Austin; "He, that is, Christ, is sin, as we are righteousness; not our own, but God's; not in ourselves but in him; even as he himself is sin; not his own, but ours: not in himself, but in us." Some of them have been very express, as to Christ's bearing the filth of sin; particularly Gregory of Nyssa; "For," says he; speaking of Christ, "having translated to himself the filth of my sins, he imparted to me his own purity, and made me a partaker of his beauty." And in another place, says he, "the pure and harmless one took upon him or received the filth of human nature; and passing through all our poverty, came to the trial of death itself." And elsewhere he says, "purity was in our filth; but the filth did not touch that purity;" meaning, that the holy nature of Christ was not defiled by it. I shall not now take notice of some later writers; perhaps I may hereafter: I hope this will be sufficient to clear the doctrine from the charge of novelty.

(5.) I cannot overlook the wretched vanity and ignorance of the man about tropes and figures. Though I cannot but think his learned friend, or friends, who had the supervisal of his performance, have been far from acting the kind, faithful, and friendly part, in suffering him to expose himself as he has done; he tells us that "it is very evident, that all the scriptures that they (Dr. Crisp, and others) depend upon as plain proofs that Christ was made very sin for us, are metonomies, which is a figure frequently to be met with in the Bible;" and then by an asterisk, we are directed to the margin, where, for the sake of the poor, illiterate Supralapsarians, a definition is given of a metonymy, which is this; "a metonymy is a changing, or putting one thing, or more, for another:" "and," says he, in the body of his work, "sometimes you have the cause for the effect, and sometimes the effect put for the cause;" and among the instances he produces, this is one, that unbelief is put for faith. Now, not to take notice that a metonymy is a trope, and not a figure, nor of his miscalling it metonymy, instead of metonymy, which might have been thought to have been an error of the press, but that it is so often repeated; I say, not to take notice of these things; he says, "a metonymy is a

changing, or putting one thing, or more, for another;" but surely it is not a changing, or putting any one thing for another; it looks as if he thought so, seeing, among his examples, he makes unbelief to be put for faith. There is a metonymy of the cause and effect, subject and adjunct, but never of contraries; as grace and sin, vice and virtue, faith and unbelief are: this looks more like the figure antiphrasis, than the trope metonymy. Our author, by his new figure in rhetoric, will be able, in a very beautiful manner, to bring off the vilest of creatures, that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. (Isa. 5:20) Let me ask this author, since he has put this instance among his examples of a metonymy of the cause for the effect, and of the effect for the cause; let me, I say, ask him, whether he thinks unbelief is the cause faith, or faith the cause of unbelief; and seeing he has got such a good hand at metonymies, we will try what use he can make of them in explaining the scriptures in this controversy.

(6.) The scriptures made use of to prove the imputation of sin to Christ, or that Christ was made sin by imputation, are, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Isaiah 53:6. Now our author "hopes to make it plain, that these scriptures are as truly figurative texts as those are that represent Christ to be a lion, a star, a door, a rock, a vine," &c. and observes that "all the scriptures depended on as plain proofs, that Christ was made very sin for us, are metonomies." But he should have observed, that the scriptures which speak of Christ as a lion, a star, a door, a rock, a vine, &c. are metaphors, and not metonymies; and could he produce any, where Christ is said to be made a lion, a star, a door a rock, a vine, &c. there would appear a greater likeness between them, and such a text which says, he was made sin for us: he fancies the doctrine of transubstantiation is as well supported by scripture as this doctrine; that the constructions we put upon the texts in dispute about it, are as gross as those the Papists put on such as they produce in favour of theirs; which is not very surprising, since he seems to have an opinion of popish doctrines, and to be verging that way; for in one part of this performance of his, he frankly acknowledges, that he has no high opinion of popish doctrines, which supposes that he has an opinion of them, and begins, at least, to think a little favourably of them, though not highly. But Jet us attend to time texts in dispute; the

first is, 2 Corinthians 5:21. For he hath made him to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him who knew no sin; which, he says, has been notoriously wrested, and observes, that “this text in both parts of it, is metonomically spoken, and is the cause put for the effect; and the native language of it is, that God made his dear Son a sin-offering for us, that we might partake of the promised blessings, or the righteousness of God in him.” Admitting the words are to be taken in a metonymical sense, yea, that the meaning is, that Christ was made an offering for sin; they are not a metonymy of the cause for the effect; for sin is not the cause, though the occasion of a sin-offering; there might have been sin and no offering for it: offering for sin is not an effect necessarily arising from it, but what purely depended on the will and pleasure of God; but taking the words in the sense of a sin-offering, it is, as Piscator observes *Per metonymiam subjecti occupantis in veteri Testamento usitatam*. Besides, this sense of the words is so far from destroying the doctrine of the imputation of sin to Christ, that it serves to confirm it: For as the typical sin-offerings under the law, had first the sins of the people put upon them by the priest, and typically imputed to them, and were bore by them, Leviticus 10:17, before they could be offered for them; so our Lord Jesus was first made sin, or had the sins of his people imputed to him, or he could never have been made an offering for them. I deny, that *salva justitia Dei*, consistent with the justice of God, Christ, an innocent person could ever bear even the punishment of our sins, or be made a sacrifice for them, or die for them, as he did, according to the scriptures, if they had not been imputed to him; punishment could never have been inflicted on him, if sin had not been reckoned to him. Though I see no reason why sin, in one and the same sentence here, should have two different meanings, as it must have, according to this sense of them, he hath made him, to be sin for us, who knew no sin: the word sin, last mentioned, cannot be meant of an offering for sin: for it is not true, that Christ knew no sin-offering, when multitudes had been offered up under the law; but the meaning is, that he never was guilty of sin; and yet he who never was guilty of sin, was made so by imputation, that is, had the guilt of our sins imputed to him; which well agrees with, and may be confirmed by the latter part of the text, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Now in the same way

that we are made the righteousness of God, was Christ made sin: we are made the righteousness of God by imputation, that is, the righteousness of Christ, who is both God and man, is imputed to us; so Christ was made sin by imputation, that is, our sins were imputed to him. What this author says concerning our being made the effects of God’s righteousness or faithfulness, I own, I cannot, for my life form any idea of; and though he has attempted to explain it, he has left it inexplicable; I choose not to use his own phrase, inexplicable nonsense. Before I dismiss this text, I would take notice of one very extraordinary observation of this author’s; which is, that this way of reasoning to prove Christ a sinner, will prove that all men, that have the righteousness of Christ imputed to them, are their own saviours; his argument is this: “if by the imputation of our condemning sins to Christ he was made a sinner, then, by the imputation of his saving righteousness, we are made saviours.” But, with his leave, this does not follow; but the truth and force of the reasoning stands thus: If by the imputation of our condemning sins to Christ he was made a sinner, and condemned as such, then, by the imputation of his righteousness, we are made righteous, and saved as such; for not sinner and saviour, but sinner and righteous, salvation and condemnation, are the antitheses. Give me leave to subjoin the sense of two or three of our principal reformers, and sound Protestant divines, of this passage of scripture, who wrote long before Dr. Crisp’s time. Calvin upon the text says; “How are we righteous before God? namely, as Christ was a sinner; for, in some respects, he sustained our person, that he might become guilty in our name; and as a sinner, be condemned, not for his own, but the offences of others seeing he was pure, and free from all fault, and underwent punishment due, not to himself, but to us;” which agrees with what he says on Galatians 3:13. “Because he sustained our person, therefore he was a sinner, and deserving of the curse; not as in himself, but as in us.” Beza on the place, has these words; that “the antithesis requires, that rather Christ should be said to be made sin for us, that is, a sinner, not in himself, but on the account of the guilt of all our sins, imputed to him; of which the two goats were a figure, mentioned Leviticus 16.” Piscator, as well as Beza, having mentioned the other sense of Christ’s being made a sin-offering, adds, “rather sin here, by a metonymy of the adjunct,

signifies *summum peccatorem*,” the chief sinner; “inasmuch as all the sins of all the elect were imputed to Christ; which exposition the following antithesis favours, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him; that is, righteous before God; namely, by a righteousness obtained by the sacrifice of Christ; imputed to us by God.” So that though the words may be taken in a metonymical sense; yet they are not a metonymy of the cause for the effect, but a metonymy of the adjunct: so *scelus* is put for *scelestus*, by Latin authors, as here sin for the sinner.

I now proceed to what our author has to say to Isaiah 54:6. The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. This text he says, Dr Crisp makes the foundation of his several sermons, to prove that our blessed Lord was made a sinner and says, that he very injudiciously affirms, that it is the very fault, or transgression itself, that the Lord laid upon Christ; but he purposes to make it plain, that he is mistaken in his opinion about this text, and that it was not the crime or fault, but the punishment due to us for our sins, that was laid upon Christ, which, he thinks, is evident from verses 3, 7. To which I reply; that the punishment due to us for sin, could not have been laid upon Christ, nor could he have been wounded for our transgressions, or bruised for our sins, or have been oppressed and afflicted, had he not had our sins laid upon him, that is, imputed to him: nor is it inconsistent with the holiness of God, to take either original sin, or our actual sins and transgressions, even particular sins, and lay them upon Christ; since this was done in order to shew his infinite holiness, his indignation against sin, and the strictness and severity of his justice in the punishment of it; nor is this inconsistent with the nature of sin, nor any rude and extravagant way of thinking of it, which surely may as truly and properly be put, or laid upon Christ, as the iniquities and transgressions of the children of Israel in all their sins, which mean their very crimes, were typically put and laid upon the scapegoat. This writer goes on to observe, that the prophecy in Isaiah 53:4, Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows, was fulfilled by our Lord’s healing the diseases of the people, Matthew 8:16, 17, and argues, that if the text in Isaiah 53:4 is to be construed in the same method as the sixth and eleventh verses are, the consequence will be, that our Lord bore the palsy of the Centurion’s servant, and the fever of Peter’s wife’s mother: this, he thinks, will

greatly hamper our scheme, so that we shall not be able to produce any thing consistent with it, free from inexplicable perplexities and vile nonsense. But what reason can be given, why the expressions in the several places, should be interpreted in the same way? What though our Lord, in his state of incarnation, being a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs, is said to bear the griefs, and carry the sorrows of men, because he had compassion on them, and sympathized with them in their sickness, which put him upon healing of them; and in such sense, bore them as a parent bears the sicknesses of a child, or a husband bears the infirmities of a wife; for we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; does it therefore follow, that this must be the sense of Christ’s bearing our sins when he suffered for them as our surety? Can it be thought that he sympathized with our sins, or with us on the account of them, which put him upon suffering for them, as he is said to bear or sympathize with men’s sicknesses and diseases, or with them upon the account of them which put him upon healing of them?

(7.) The imputation of the filth of sin to Christ, and his bearing of it, would come next to be considered; but our author has not thought fit to make use of any arguments against it, and therefore I do not think myself obliged to enlarge upon it; only would observe, that filth and guilt are inseparable from sin; and therefore if sin is laid upon Christ, and imputed to him, guilt and filth must be likewise: nor can I see how we can expect to be cleared of the one and cleansed from the other, unless Christ bore them both, when his soul was made an offering for sin, and his blood was shed to cleanse from it. This writer would, indeed, be nibbling at it, but knows not how to go about it; and only cavils at, some expressions of Mr. Hussey’s concerning it. Whether, in Psalm 100:7, there is any allusion to the brook Cedron, or Kidron, over which our Lord went in to the garden, I will not say; but I see not why that black and unclean brook, or common-sewer, may not be an emblem of the pollutions and defilements of sin; which being laid on Christ when he passed over that brook, made him so heavy and sore amazed in his human nature, as to desire the cup might pass from him. As to what Mr Hussey says of our iniquities being put into this bitter cup, and of his drinking of it, and of the torrent of our sins and blacknesses running into his soul with that wrath; this

is not to be understood of sin being inherent in him, or of his being defiled with it, the contrary to which he solidly proves; but only of the imputation of them to him, and of his susception of them; for he says, "It was not pain or torture abstractly in the bitter draught, but pollution, the dregs of our sins, sin being the only impure thing in God's account, and so the spot of sin, the filth and pollutions of sin, were imputed to him by his Father and put upon Christ's account, and mingled with his wormwood cup, that it made his holy soul to tremble." Nor is the simile he makes use of a foolish one, of a drop of ink, or poison, falling upon a fiery globe of brass, without leaving any sully mark upon it, or receiving any stain or pollution by it; nor does it tend to extenuate the flood of the filthiness of sin, that has been running ever since Adam; nor is it unsuitable to the imputation and susception of it; which is all he means by his drinking of it; but is designed to set forth the infiniteness of Christ, and of his power to resist the infection and stain of sin; as may be seen at large in this valuable writer; who himself frankly owns, "that the similitude is imperfect, to set out the matter in the deep mysteries of this gold tried in the fire, or the person of Christ in his sufferings; the greatest of which was, the Father's imputation of our sins to him." What our author further observes concerning some texts of scripture, engaged by the Supralapsarians, to speak for their opinions of eternal justification and adoption, being what is introduced by him, with reference to a living author, I leave it to him to answer for himself; who, I doubt not, will make a proper and suitable reply. I proceed,

Secondly, To defend the doctrine of eternal union, which this author calls a "branch which grows from the fruitful root of the Supralapsarian tree; which," says he, "they style eternal, actual, union." As this author particularly refers to myself, throughout his performance on the head of union, I take leave to ask him, Where has he found eternal union in any writings of mine, styled eternal, actual union? I have carefully avoided calling justification, or union from eternity, actual; though for no other reason than this, lest in any should imagine, that I considered them as transient acts of God upon the elect, which require their personal and actual existence; for otherwise, as I believe, that eternal election is actual, and eternal reprobation is actual, as they are immanent acts in God; so, I believe, eternal justification is actual, as it

is an immanent act in God that justifies; and eternal union is actual, as it is arm act of God's everlasting love to his elect, whereby he has knit and united them to himself. I go on to ask, where have I said, or who has told this man, that a non-entity was united to an existence? The language with which this expression is clothed, manifestly shews, it to be of his own shaping. The elect of God, though they have not an *esse actu*, an actual being from eternity; yet they have an *esse representativum*, a representative being in Christ from everlasting, which is more than other creatures have, whose future existence is certain; and therefore at least capable of a representative union from eternity, and which has been readily owned by some divines, who are not altogether in the same way of thinking with myself. However, it seems eternal union is a branch which grows from the fruitful root (not from the body) of the Supralapsarian tree. Poor creature! it is plain he knows nothing of the Supralapsarian tree, as he calls it, either root, body, or branch; for as he is pleased to explain the meaning of eternal, actual union, it is this, "that they," I suppose he means the elect, "had actual union with Christ, whilst they were in their sins;" and if so, they must be considered in their union with Christ, as fallen creatures; and then it will follow, that this is a branch which grows from the Sublapsarian, and not the Supralapsarian tree. But passing these things, I shall now attend to what he has to object to what I have written on the subject of union. And,

(1.) Whereas I have undertaken to prove that it is not the Spirit on Christ's part that is the bond of union to him, I endeavoured to do it by observing that the Spirit is sent down, and given to God's elect, in consequence of an antecedent union of them to Christ; and that he, in his personal inhabitation, operations and influences of grace in them, is the evidence, and not the efficient cause of their union. That an elect person is first united to Christ, and then receives the spirit in measure from him, and becomes one spirit with him, I though was pretty evident from 1 Corinthians 6:17. He that is joined unto the Lord, is one spirit. From whence I concluded, and still conclude, that a person becoming one spirit with Christ, or receiving the same spirit Christ has, though in measure, is in consequence of his being joined or united to him: and not that he first becomes one spirit, or receives the same spirit from Christ, and then is joined or united

to him. The sense of the text is evident, and admits of no difficulty: But, says this writer, "it evidently proves that the Spirit of Christ dwells in all that are united to him." I grant it, that the Spirit of Christ dwells in all that are united to him, sooner or later, but the question is, whether the indwelling of the Spirit is antecedent to their union, or in consequence of it? If it is in consequence of it, then that is not the bond of union; If it is antecedent to it, it must be before faith; for, according to this man's scheme, union is by faith, and there is none before it: and so the absurdity he would fain leave with me, follows himself; "that the holy Spirit dwells with unbelievers." To illustrate this matter, of a person's receiving the Spirit from Christ, in consequence of union to him, I made use of a simile taken from the head and members of a human body, and the communication of the animal spirits from the one to the other, in consequence of the union between them. This author, though in his great modesty he owns that he is poorly skilled in philosophy, a concession he needed not have given himself the trouble to make: yet thinks himself capable to make it appear, that I am not a little wanting in the application of my argument; I suppose he means simile; for I am often obliged to guess at his meaning. But what is it he fancies is wanting? In what is it inapplicable? Does it not exactly tally with what I am speaking of? But instead of shewing the want of application, or any disparity in the case, which he does not attempt, he puts me upon proving, "that there is any life in the head of a body natural, when the members are all dead; on that the life of a natural body is all extinct before the head dies, or that the head can subsist without any living members, or that the body natural is destitute of natural life, when united to a living head;" things I have no concern with, and which are no part of the simile I make use of; and which is made use of by me only to shew, that as the animal spirits from the head are communicated to the members of the body, not antecedent to union between them, or in order to effect it, but in consequence of it: so the Spirit of Christ is communicated from him, the head, to the members of his body, not antecedent to their union, or in order to effect it, but in consequence of it: whence it follows, that he cannot be the bond of this union; and by this I abide. For the proof of the Spirit's being the evidence of communion, and so of union, and therefore not the bond of it, I produced I John 3:24, and chapter 4:13.

Only the first of these scriptures is taken notice of by this writer; who fancies that the former part of this text was disagreeable to me, and therefore left out by me. I declare I was far from thinking it to be so; and am well content it should be transcribed at large, it being a witness for, and not against my new notion, as he is pleased to call it: And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him; and hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us. The meaning of which is, that those persons, who under the influences of the Spirit of God are enabled to keep the commandments of God, dwell in him, and he in them; that is, they have communion with him, as the effect of union to him; for these acts of indwelling are not uniting acts, but acts of communion, in consequence of union; of which the Spirit being given them, is an evidence. Now could it be proved that Christ dwells in his people by his Spirit, though the scripture no where says so, but that he dwells in their hearts by faith; yet it does not follow that he is united to them by his Spirit, because this act of indwelling is an act of communion: not this, but his everlasting love, which is the foundation of his dwelling in them, is the bond of union. That the Spirit is the seal of covenant-love and of union with Christ, will not he denied: But then his being a seal, is no other than his being a certifying evidence and witness of these things. Now from the spirit's being a witness and seal of union, this man suggests that he must be the bond of it; because the party that seals, is the principle of the bond: where his poor wandering head is running upon a pecuniary bond: a bond in writing, by which a man is bound to another; and in which he most miserably blunders; seeing it is not the principal, or he to whom the bond is made, but the debtor, on he who obliges himself to the other, that signs and seals: Whereas the thing in dispute is, a bond of union between persons, by which they are united to each other. Nor will it be denied that the Spirit quickens and regenerates us, begets and maintains spiritual life in us; but then all this is in consequence of union to Christ: nor is it by this spiritual life which he begets and maintains, that we have union with our living head, but we have this spiritual life as the effect of that union, and thereby have communion with him: and though the elect of God, whilst dead in trespasses and sins, have no communion with Christ, yet there is a sense in which they are united to him then; which

union is the ground and foundation of their being quickened.

(2.) I have also affirmed that faith is not the bond of union to Christ, and desired those who plead for union by faith, to tell us whether we are united to Christ by the habit or act of faith; and since there are different acts of it, whether our union is by the first, second, third, &c. acts of believing? To which our author has not thought fit to return any answer. I go on to argue, that if union is by faith as an habit, it is not by faith on our part, because faith, as such, is the gift of God; and if it be by faith as an act of ours, it is by a work; for faith, as such, is a work; and then not by grace, since works and grace cannot be blended. To which this author replies: "what if we have union with Christ in that part which lies on our side the question, by acts of ours, unto which we are enabled by the spirit of God, who works faith in us; does this tend to lessen the exceeding grace of God?" I answer, that what he says of the Spirit's working faith in us, is right, but that regards faith as an habit; though that there is a part lying on our side the question, to bring about our union to Christ by an act of ours, I utterly deny: Strange! that an uniting act or a bond of union, must be parted, that there should be a part belong to us, and another to the Spirit of God? But to his question I answer, that to ascribe our union to Christ in part to acts of ours, though enabled to them by the Spirit of God, does lessen the grace of God: and I argue thus, that if to ascribe election in part to works, to any acts of ours as to faith, though enabled to it by the spirit of God, would tend to lessen the glory of grace in it; so to ascribe our union to Christ to any acts of ours, to faith as such, though enabled to it by the Spirit of God, would tend to lessen the glory of that grace and love of Christ, which is the alone bond of it. This writer farther suggests, that I incline to admit the grace of love to be the union-bond; and argues, that that being an act of ours, it must consequently be esteemed a work, and so be liable to the same difficulty: whereas, though I observe, that had our divines fixed upon the grace of love as the bond of union, it would have been more plausible and feasible than their fixing upon faith; yet I am far from an inclination to admit of it, when I affirm, in so many words, that "it is not our love to Christ, but his love to us, which is alone the real bond of our union to him." I proceed to observe, that "faith is no uniting grace, nor are any of its acts of

a cementing nature." This man fancies I am guilty of such a flagrant contradiction, as is not to be produced in any book besides; because I add, "faith indeed looks to Christ, lays hold on him, embraces him, and cleaves unto him; it expects and receives all from Christ, and gives him all the glory." These sentences, it seems, are closely united; and yet an agreement between them cannot be proved. I own I am not so quick-sighted as to see any contradiction, much less a flagrant one, in them. Was I sensible of it, I should be thankful for the discovery. I perceive that the acts of laying hold on, embracing and cleaving to, are thought to be uniting acts. I confess I never thought that whatever my hand lays hold on, is united to it, or one with it. I now lay hold on my pen, and hold it in my hand, make use of it, take it up, and lay it down at pleasure; I do not find they are one, but two distinct things; my pen is not one with my hand, nor my hand with my pen, nor do they both make one third thing. I never knew that one person's embracing another was an uniting their person's together, or that any union or relation between them commenced upon such an act. When the apostles exhorted such who were partakers of the grace of God, to cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart, it can never be thought that their exhortation was to unite themselves to the Lord with purpose of heart, since these were persons already united to him. All these acts of looking to Christ, laying hold upon him, embracing of him, and cleaving to him, are acts of faith performed under the influences of the Spirit, in consequence of union to Christ; and are such, in which believers have communion with him. He seems displeased with what I say, that "a soul can no more be said to be united to Christ by these acts, than a beggar may be said to be united to a person, to whom he applies, of whom he expects alms, to whom he keeps close, from whom he receives, and to whom he is thankful." This, he says, deserves no answer. The reason I guess is, because he can give none. However, I will take his own instance, of a distressed beloved child's looking to, embracing of, cleaving to, and hanging about its tender father, with entreaties and expectations of supply; and deny that these are uniting acts, or such as unite the father to the child, or the child to the father; but are all in consequence of a relation, a relative union, that subsisted between them antecedent to these acts.

I farther observe, that union to Christ is the

foundation of faith, and of all the acts of believing, or seeing, walking, receiving, &c. That faith is the fruit and effect of union, even of what is commonly called vital union: for as there must first be an union of the soul and body of man, before he can be said to live, and there must be life, before there can be reason; so there must be a union of the soul to Christ, before it can spiritually live: and there must be a principle of spiritual life, before there can be faith. This I thought also was fully and fitly exemplified in the simile of the vine and branches, which must first be in the vine before they bear fruit; and may be illustrated by the engrafture of the wild olive-tree into a good one; and concluded, that union to Christ is before faith, and therefore faith cannot be the bond of union. The substance of what is replied to this is, “that though we cannot produce good fruit until we are in union with Christ the living head, yet there is no absurdity in saying, that there is life produced in the soul, previous to our union with him;—and that a spiritual work (an awkward way of talking; why not the Spirit?) which begets a spiritual life in us, is necessary to meeten (meet) us for union to him the living head.” And though he approves the argument, yet does not believe the application of it agreeable to truth; namely, that because there is an union of the soul and body of man before he can be said to live, that therefore the soul of man must be united to Christ before he has spiritual life. In a word, though he agrees that there must be a principle of life, before there is any exercise of faith, yet denies that there was union to Christ, before this principle was wrought. Now let it be observed, that the union I am here speaking of, is what is commonly called vital union; an union in time, at conversion, which is no other than Christ formed in us; upon which a principle of spiritual life is immediately produced; for he that hath the Son, hath life; and then follow faith, and the exercise of it. Therefore this union cannot be by faith, nor faith be the bond of it, since it follows upon it: for though, as upon the union of the soul and body, life is immediately produced; yet the union in order of nature, must be considered previous to life. So though, upon the formation of Christ in us, called the vital union, the principle of spiritual life is immediately produced; yet the formation of Christ, or the union of him to us, must be considered antecedent to this life. No, says this man; there is life produced in the soul, previous to our union with Christ, in order

to it; yea, to meeten for it: whence it must unavoidably follow, that a man may have a principle of spiritual life, and yet be without Christ; be separate from him, and without union to him; contrary to the express words of the apostle, He that hath not the Son of God hath not life. (1 John 5:12) Besides, does this doctrine give honour to the glorious head of influence, Christ Jesus, which teaches that a man may have a principle of spiritual life, without union to him, the living head; and in order to meeten for it, and consequently elsewhere, from another quarter? What appears most plausible, at first view, in favour of this preposterous notion, is the instance of the scion, that must have life previous to its engrafture. But pray what kind of life is it that the scion of the wild olive-tree lives, before its engrafture into the good olive-tree? it is a life agreeable to its nature: it is the life of the wild olive-tree, not of the good olive-tree. So men before conversion, before Christ is formed in them, live, not a spiritual life, a life of grace, but a life of sin; there is no principle of spiritual life, before Christ is formed in the soul. The simile of the vine and branches, in John 15:4, 5, he thinks is of no service to me, but rather against me; since there would be no need of the exhortation, abide in me, if no act or acts of ours are concerned about maintaining union with Christ: and observes, that abiding in Christ is by faith, and the same with standing by faith, Romans 11:20, and argues, that if our standing and abiding in Christ are by faith, then do we hold union thereby; and whatsoever holds us to union, is the bond of it. To which I need only reply, that the phrases of abiding in Christ, and standing by faith, regard the perseverance of the saints, in consequence of their union to Christ. Now though perseverance is by faith, or faith is the means of perseverance, under the powerful influence of grace; yet it does not follow that it is the bond of union since both perseverance, and faith, by which we persevere, are the effects of it. I observed, from the above passage, that “Faith is a fruit of the Spirit, which grows upon the branches that are in Christ the vine; and that these branches must be first in the vine, before they bear this fruit.” This author wonders who will attempt to deny it. Very well; if no body will attempt to deny it, the cause is given up, the point is gained: for if persons must be first in Christ the vine, that is, united to him, before they bear the fruit of faith, that is, believe in him; it follows, that union is before faith, and that faith is the fruit

and effect, and not the bond of it. The simile of the wild and good olive-trees, he says, I have borrowed piece-meal, and have omitted to quote it (the text) in the margin. I own, I borrowed the simile from Romans 11:17, &c. as being an apposite one; but never thought, nor do I think now, that the passage has any reference to the engrafture of souls into Christ, but into a visible church-state: For if engrafture into Christ is intended, it will follow, that persons may be engrafted into him, that is united to him, and yet be broken off from him; which supposes their entire apostasy from him; which none will give into, unless they are far gone into Arminian principles. The plain meaning of the passage is, that the Jews, who rejected the Messiah, were broken off from their visible church-state, or from being the visible church of God; and the Gentiles, that believed, were taken into it: and that the Jews, when they believed, would be again grafted or taken into a visible church-state. Hence the whole of our author's reasoning, about the necessity of faith, and the removal of unbelief, antecedent to an engrafture into Christ, as founded upon this scripture, comes to nothing.

(3.) Having proved that neither the Spirit on Christ's part, nor faith on ours, is the bond of union, I proceeded to shew that the everlasting love of the Father, Son and Spirit, is the bond of the union of the elect unto them. To this, not one syllable is replied: But whereas I observe that there are several things which arise from, and are branches of this everlasting love-union, and which I apprehend make it appear that the elect are united to Christ before faith; this author has thought fit to make some remarks upon them.

I observe, from Ephesians 1:4, that there is an election-union in Christ from everlasting: my meaning is, that election is an act of God's everlasting love, in which the objects of it were considered in Christ; and how they could be considered in Christ, without union to him, is, what I say, is hard to conceive. So that I apprehend, that as eternal election is a display of God's everlasting love to his people, it is an instance also of their eternal union to Christ. No, says this man; election is a fore-appointing persons to an union as the choice of stones for a building, or of a branch for engrafture. Had the text in Ephesians 1:4, run thus, according as he hath chosen us to be in him, or that we might, or should be in him; this sense of election would have appeared plausible: but the

words in connection with the preceding verse runs thus, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him; and therefore will not admit of such an interpretation as this, "that it was according to the eternal design of God, to bestow divine and special favours upon them, when in Christ; or that they were chosen to divine and special blessings, through Christ;" but that they were blessed with these divine and special blessings in Christ, according as they were chosen in him. I do not say that election is the uniting act, that is, the everlasting love of God; nor do I see any absurdity, in supposing union previous to this choice, though I think they go together; but this I say, that in election, men are considered in Christ, and so is a proof of eternal union to him; and by this I abide, until something else is offered to confront it.

I have also said, that there is a legal union between Christ and the elect from everlasting, the bond of which is the surety-ship of Christ, and so he and they are one, in a law-sense, as surety and debtor are one: and likewise, that there is a federal union between them from everlasting; Christ being considered as head, and they as members with him in the covenant of grace. This writer is of opinion, that the legal and federal union is one and the same; I am content they should be thought so: my design hereby is not to multiply unions, or as though I thought there were so many distinct ones, believing that God's everlasting love is the grand original bond of union, and that these are so many displays of it, proving it; and particularly, that it is before faith, the main thing I had in view. The relations of surety and debtor, head and members, conveying different ideas, I thought it proper to consider them apart; however, I am willing they should go together, provided neither of them is lost: but I observe, the former of these is entirely sunk by this author, and no notice taken of it; for though they both relate to one and the same covenant, yet are to be distinctly considered; and if Christ is not to be considered as the surety of his people, as one with them, in a law-sense, as surety and debtor are one; what foundation is there for his satisfaction for them? nay, not only so, but even the relation of head and members is dropped by this author, under a pretence that it has been already proved, that there is no being in Christ before faith, as members of his body; and goes on to consider the relation of husband

and wife, which is not at all mentioned by me; and calls upon the men of the Supralapsarian scheme, to produce any text of scripture that informs us that God, in either of the persons of the Godhead, calls any of the children of men his spouse, or wife, or bride, before they are made so by a mutual covenant. The reader will be apt to conclude, from a large citation out of Dr Goodwin, that it was made by me under the present head; whereas it stands in another part of my book, and made, together with some others, from Dr. Witsius, and Mr. Richard Taylor, with no other view than to observe to the Gentleman I wrote the Letter to, that there was no reason why the assertors of eternal union should be treated as ignorant and enthusiastic preachers, when men of such characters as above, had, in some sense, asserted it. Now, though I do not think myself obliged to take any further notice of this citation, not being made to vindicate my sense of union, yet I cannot but observe the rudeness and pertness of the man, in treating so great a man as Dr. Goodwin was, in the manner he does; and at once pronounce, that what is said by him, is not worthy to be esteemed either good divinity, or good argument. He next falls foul upon a passage of mine in another part of my book, and upon another subject, where I say that the gift of God himself to his people, in the everlasting covenant, is a gift and instance of his love to them before conversion. This he denies, and says, the scriptures which mention this gift, evidently prove the contrary; the scripture he produces, is Hebrews 8:10, from Jeremiah 31:33, and observes, that this covenant is a mutual agreement between God and converted people; for you read here, says he, that the laws of God were to be written upon their hearts, and in their minds, before God is their God, and they are his people. To which I reply, that there is not the least evidence from any of these passages, that this covenant is a mutual agreement between God and any people, converted or unconverted; nor is there any such thing as a mutual covenant between God and fallen creatures; the mutual covenant talked of at conversion, is all a dream and fancy. The covenant here spoken of, is wholly and entirely on the part of God, and seems rather to respect unconverted than converted persons; since one branch of it regards the writing and putting of the laws of God in their hearts and minds, which concerted ones have already; nor is this mentioned as the cause or condition of his being

their God, but rather, his being their God in covenant, is the ground and foundation of this; since this is mentioned in Jeremiah 32:38, previous to his promise of giving one heart, and one way, and putting his fear into them; all which suppose them unconverted. In a word, our author thinks, that the covenant of grace is not an uniting covenant, no relation arising from it between God and his people, between Christ and his members; it is only a settling the conditions, and laying a sure foundation for a federal union with his people, that is, upon the conditions of faith and repentance so that the covenant of grace from eternity, is only a foundation for a covenant. I am content he should enjoy his own sentiments, without reproaching him with inexplicable nonsense.

But since he has called upon the Supralapsarians to produce a text, wherein any of the children of men are called by God, in either of the persons of the Godhead, his spouse, wife or bride, before they are made so by a mutual covenant, I propose to his consideration, Isaiah 54:1, 5, 6, where Christ is called the husband of the Gentile church, and she his wife, long before it was in being; and even in the text he himself mentions, Ephesians 5:23. Christ is said to be the head of the church, even as the husband is the head of the wife; which includes the whole general assembly and church of the first-born, even all the elect, converted or unconverted.

The next union I mention, is the natural union that is between Christ and his people; in this, our author say's, is nothing but what agrees with the holy scriptures, and so it passes without a censure. The last I take notice of, is a representative one, both from everlasting and in time. This man imagines I have given away the cause, by acknowledging that the natural union was not in eternity, since hereby the notion of an eternal representative union is entirely destroyed; for, adds he, it is exceeding remote from all the rules of argument, to suppose that Jesus Christ represented the elect people as members in him, when he had no meaner nature than divine. This writer is, no doubt, acquainted with all the rules of argument: but what does the man mean, when he talks of Christ's having no meaner nature than divine? I hope the reader will excuse my warmth, when such a horrid reflection is made upon the divine nature of the Son of God; no meaner nature! This supposes, indeed, the human nature to be meaner, but implies the divine nature to

he mean; or, where is the degree of comparison? he suggests, that Christ could not represent the elect in eternity in less he had human nature from eternity; and that there could not be a real union of the persons of the elect in eternity, without their real existence. I reply that it was not necessary, in order to Christ's being the Mediator, Head, and Representative of the elect in eternity, that he should be then actually man, only that he should certainly be so in time: besides, there was a federal union of the human nature to the Son of God from eternity, or the human nature had a covenant subsistence in the second person from everlasting. Nor was the real existence of the persons of the elect necessary to their real union to Christ, only that they should certainly exist: I call their union real, in opposition to that which is imaginary; for surely the love of Christ to the elect, from everlasting, was real, which is the bond of union, though their persons, soul and body, did not really, or actually exist. He proceeds to consider the import of some other texts of scripture, which, he says, we are subject to imagine favour our fond notion of eternal union; though he considers but one, and that is 2 Timothy 1:9. Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling; not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began. This grace he sometimes takes for a promise of grace, sometimes for grace in the covenant itself; yea, he says, it evidently intends our calling; so that according to him, our calling must be before the world began. But be it what it will, whether a promise of grace, or a purpose of grace, or grace itself, it was given to us in Christ, before the world began, and no that our argument depends: if we were in Christ when this grace, or promise of grace, was given, we were united to him; for how we could be considered in him, without union to him, he would do well to acquaint us.

I must, in justice to this author, before I conclude this head, acquaint my reader, that he has quoted some, what he calls plain texts of scripture, to shew that the sacred book does most evidently set aside the opinion of eternal union, yea, or of union before faith: the scriptures are, Romans 8:9 and 16:7, 2 Corinthians 5:17, all which I have before taken notice of in the Letter he refers to; and all that he remarks is, that I will needs have it, that these scriptures intend only the evidence of union with Christ from everlasting;

which sense he does not attempt to set aside; only that the phrase, If a man is in Christ, he is a new creature, he says, supposes that none but new-born souls are united to him; whereas the meaning is, that whoever professes himself to be in Christ, ought to appear to be so: and yet after all this, this man has the front to say, that man are not united to Christ until they believe, has been proved by almost innumerable scriptures and arguments; when he only produces three scriptures, and not one argument from them. This man is resolved to carry his point at any rate, right or wrong; he sticks at nothing.

Thirdly, We now come to a point this author discovers a great item, and eager desire to be at, namely, the doctrine of God's love and delight in his elect before conversion. He has been two or three times nibbling at it before, and I have already exposed his folly in placing it in the Supralapsarian scheme, when it can no other than a Sublapsarian doctrine.

1. In my Letter above referred to, I write concerning the invariable, unchangeable, and everlasting love of God to his elect, and give instances of his love to them, not only in eternity, but in time, and that even while they are in an unconverted estate, from Romans 5:6, 8, 10, 1 John 4:10, Ephesians 2:4, 5, Titus 3:3-6, which this writer thinks fit to pass by in silence. I then mention three gifts of God, which are instances of his love to his people before conversion, not to be matched by any after it; namely, the gift of Himself, the gift of his Son, and the gift of his Spirit. This man denies that either of these are given to the elect before conversion. As for the first, he says, "God never gives himself to any of the children of men until they believe;" and suggests, that the scripture I produce, I will be their God, and they shall be my people, proves it; being, as he thinks, a mutual covenant between God and converted people: but I have shewn already, that it is not a mutual covenant between God and others; and that the promises of it suppose the persons it concerns unconverted; and, indeed, God's being the God of his people, is the first ground and foundation-blessing of the covenant; and the reason why any covenant-blessing, and among the rest, conversion, is bestowed upon any of the sons of men, is, because he is their covenant-God and Father: so that, consequently, he must stand in this relation to them before conversion. Besides, if they are his people before conversion, though not openly to themselves and others, 1 Peter

2:10, yet secretly to him, Psalm 110:3, Matthew 1:21, he must be their God before conversion; for these two relate unto, and suppose each other. He does not deny that Christ was a gift of God's love before conversion; but fancies that I have receded from what I proposed; since, as it is expressed by me, he is only given for them. I answer; My proposition is, to shew that there are such gifts of God before conversion, as are instances of his love to his people then; and surely Christ being given for them, is an instance of God's love to them, John 3:16. He seems to triumph upon this, and says, "could he have proved his proposition, he had certainly laid a strong, if not an improvable (I suppose it should be immoveable) foundation for his doctrine." Well, if this will do, I am able to prove that Christ was given to his people in his incarnation, before he was given for them in his sufferings and death; To us a child is born, to us a son is given, Isaiah 9:6, and I hope it will be allowed, that the gift of Christ, in his incarnation, extended not only to the believers of that age in which he was born, but to all the elect, to all the children for whose sake he partook of flesh and blood. As to the third and last of these gifts, he judges, "that the Spirit is not given to any of the children of men till they are converted, or at that very instant;" and gives broad intimations, as if he thought the was not given at all, until he is given as a comforter. The text in John 16:8, which my expressions refer to, he seems to intimate, does not repaid the conviction and conversion of men, but the reproving of the world. I will not contend with him about the sense of the text; it is enough to my purpose, if it will be but allowed, that the Spirit, of God is the author of real conviction and conversion; who therefore must be considered as sent, and given, antecedent to conviction and conversion, in order to begin, carry on, and finish the work of grace, when he finds men dead in sin, devoid of all grace, in a state of nature; and therefore, surely, must be a gift and instance of God's love to them, whilst in that state.

2. In order to prove that the love, of God to his elect, from everlasting, is a love of complacency and delight, I observe, that his love to his Son, as Mediator, is such a love; and that whereas God loves his people with the same kind of love he love his Son, which I prove from John 18:22, it must needs follow, that the love he bears to them, is a love of complacency and delight. This author thinks I have strained and forced the text I

mention beyond its real meaning; and that my notion is unfairly inferred from it; he believes I know the word as is of the comparative degree, and rarely intends equality: if I do not know, I am sure he cannot tell me; it is only his ignorance of the comparative degree, that will excuse him from designed blasphemy against the Son of God. His learned reviser and editor should have informed him, that as, of itself, is of no degree, but is according to the word to which it is joined; it is used in forming comparisons, and is an adverb of likeness and equality. He seems to be conscious that it sometimes, though rarely, intends equality; and gives himself a needless trouble to collect together several texts, where it signifies likeness: I could easily produce others, where it is expressive of equality; see John 1:14 and 10:15, Philippians 2:8, 2 Corinthians 10:7. However, I am content it should signify likeness, and not equality, in the text mentioned; let it be a likeness of a very minute or small degree, I hope it will be allowed to be of the same kind; and if this is granted, my arguments stands good; "that if God has loved his Son with a love of complacency and delight from everlasting, and he has loved his elect with the same kind of love from everlasting, with a like love, though not to the same degree; then he must have loved them from everlasting, with a love of complacency and delight."

3. I go on to observe, that Jesus Christ loved the elect from everlasting with a love of complacency and delight, as they were presented to him in the glass of his Father's purposes and decrees; my meaning is, as they were presented to him in all that glory his Father designed to bring them to; which I prove from Proverbs 8:31, and see no reason why the Father's love should not be the same. This man thinks, that the text in Proverbs, refers to the delight Christ had in the fore-views of his people, having his own, and his Father's beautiful image impresses upon them; or rather, that it refers to a farther view which the Son of God took of the most perfect state of his members upon earth, in the kingdom-glory. And why may not the thought be carried a little farther, that Christ was not only rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth, in the fore-views of his people dwelling with him, and he with them, here on earth; but that his delights were with the sons of men, as fore-viewed by him all that ultimate glory they are to enjoy to all eternity; and then we are agreed? Now let it be observed, that this

complacency and delight in them, was taken in from everlasting, as abundantly appears from the context; nor could any immediate state, as that of nature, make any alteration in this love of delight. Christ loved them before they were in a state of nature, and while they were in it, though not as considered as unregenerate and rebellious sinners, or because they were so; which is the vile insinuation all along made; but as the whole election of grace stood presented to him a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; just such as he will present them to himself another day.

4. I farther observe, that God's choosing his people in Christ before the foundation of the world, is an act of love springing from delight in them, even as his choice of the people of Israel (which was an emblem of the choice of the true and spiritual Israel) was owing to the delight he had in them; to prove which, I cite Deuteronomy 10:15 and add, that all the favours and blessings God bestows upon his people in time, such as bringing them out of a state of nature, or out of any distress or difficulty, in a word, their whole salvation, arise from his delight in them; for the proof of which, I mention Psalm 18:19 and 149:4, Jeremiah 32:41, Zephaniah 3:17. This writer is of opinion, that what I have asserted, that God's choice of his people in Christ, as an act of Love springing from delight, requires more proof than I have produced, or than any man is able to produce. I suppose, he will not deny that God's eternal choice of his people in Christ, is an act of love; if he does, let him consider 2 Thessalonians 2:13, though he may as well deny it to be an act of love, for the same reason that he denies it springs from delight, namely that God chose them to be holy, and without blame before him in love; and from thence conclude, that this early choice was not the effect of his love to them, any more than of his delight in them; but that they might be objects of his love, as of his delight, when united to his Son: But surely, if they were chosen in Christ, they must be considered in union with him, and must be the objects both of love and delight; since Christ is the beloved Son of God, in whom he always was, is, and ever will be well pleased, and with all those that are in him. To illustrate this matter, I mention the choice of the people of Israel, as a representation of the choice of the people of God, which is owned to be thus far right: but when I affirm that this was owing to previous delight in them; it is said, this requires more

proof than Deuteronomy 10:15, for it is not said, that the Lord delighted in this people, and therefore he chose them; but that he delighted in their fathers to love them, and chose their seed after them. I answer; that the love with which the Lord loved the people of Israel, was the same love with which he loved their fathers; and therefore if he loved their fathers with a love of complacency, so he loved them the children; which is the ground and foundation of his choosing them; see Deuteronomy 7:6, 7. God's bringing his elect out of a state of nature, is owing to his great love, Ephesians 2:4, 5, which, surely, it would not be called, was it separate from delight; and as that, so all after-blessings and favours spring from the same kind of love, for which I produce the above scriptures. Though my design there is not to prove by them, that God loves his elect with a love of complacency and delight while no a state of nature; my readers will not be at a loss about my design in producing of them, nor think themselves remarkably trifled with; when they cannot but observe, that my view is apparently this, that as electing and regenerating grace springing from God's love of delight in his people, so all the after-blessings of grace and glory, in one continued chain, arise from the same: whence it will appear, that God's love of complacency in his people, is invariably the same, through every state of nature, grace, and glory.

5. I have observed, that the distinction of a love of pity and benevolence, and of complacency and delight, is made by some popish schoolmen, and is subversive of the mature and perfections of God; and represents him such an one as ourselves, subject to change; that his love, like ours, alters, and by degrees increases, and, from a love of pity and benevolence, passes into a love of complacency and delight. This author seems displeased that this distinction should be ascribed to popish schoolmen, since he is apt to believe, that there is (it should be are) very few of that pretended church (of Rome, I suppose he means) so remote from the grossest tenets of Arminianism, as to allow of it. I can tell there have been many in that church, more remote from Arminianism by far, than he himself is; and should I tell him, that some of them have been Supralapsarians, it would have equal credit with him: however, be it so, that this distinction came from them, though he has no high opinion of popish notions, which, as I observed before, supposes that he has an opinion of them, yet he shall not very willingly

part with it; much good may it do him, I do not envy his possession of it; let him make the best use of it he can. He fancies that what I have said concerning Christ being “the object of his Father’s love and wrath, at one and the same time; that as he was the Son of God, he was always the object of his love and delight; but as he was the sinner’s surety, and while bearing the sins of his people in his own body on the tree, he was the object of his displeasure and wrath,” is as subversive of the nature and perfections of God, and represents him as liable to change as this distinction does; since here is a change from delight to the greatest displeasure, an from that to delight again. I answer, for the farther explanation of what I have said, let it be observed, that I conceive that Christ was in no other sense the object of divine wrath and displeasure, as the sinner’s surety, than as he had the effects of wrath, that is, punishment due to sin, inflicted on him, which he sensibly felt; but then at the same instant, God took the utmost delight and pleasure in him, even as the sinner’s surety, viewing him standing in the room and stead of his elect, with patience, courage, and greatness of soul, bearing all that was laid upon him, and giving full satisfaction to law and justice. It pleased the Lord to bruise him, Isaiah 53:10. Therefore doth my Father love me, says Christ, because I lay down my life, John 10;17. So that here was no change from delight to displeasure, even when and while he bore the effects of that wrath, or that itself, which was due to others.

6. I cite a passage from Aristotle, in which that philosopher affirms, that benevolence is properly neither friendship nor love; and that no man can be said to love, who is not first delighted with the form or idea of the object: and, for my own part, I add, I cannot see that that can be love, which is without any delight in the object said to be loved; an instance in some expressions of a man to his wife, and a parent to a child, declaring love without delight; which seem contradictory. This man at once falls foul upon the poor philosopher, as having asserted what is contrary to reason and experience; and then turning himself to me, says, “I would ask this gentleman if he never saw an object whose miserable estate engaged his compassion, and disposed him to shew friendship, by affording some relief to the miserable creature, though there was no delightful form in the object, nor any thing but misery to engage his kindness? What, is not that love, which disposes one man to relieve another in

misery and necessity?” But it should be observed, that the philosopher is speaking of one thing, and this man of another. Aristotle is not speaking of benefaction, beneficence, or doing well, relieving a miserable creature; but of benevolence, wishing well to another: And I hope this will serve to cool his resentment against him. Let me, in my turn, ask this man, if, upon the sight of a miserable object, my pity is engaged so far as to wish him well, but give him nothing, whether this wishing well, this benevolence of mine is either love or friendship? Nay, supposing it is carried farther, and my benevolence passes into beneficence, I relieve the poor object; should not thus be considered rather as an act of humanity, than either properly of friendship or love? I confess I never thought, when I have given alms to a poor object, I did it to shew an affection of love, or as any act of friendship to him; I little thought that a relation of friendship between us arose from such an act, or that the poor creature and I commenced friends upon it. Upon the instances of love without delight, I ask what kind of love would this be thought to be? He answers, why, probably, a love of compassion and benevolence: and, as things will be circumstanced, great love too; that is, when the wife is lewd, and the son rebellious. I reply, that it is very possible, and sometimes so it is, when either of these is the case, that delight in the object continues; so that love appears to be great indeed, real, and hearty: But when things are come to such a pass, that there is no delight in the object, I cannot but be of opinion, that real hearty love and affection is gone too. And what may be said or done that looks like love, arises from the relation which still subsists, and a sense of duty which that obliges to, and not from real love and affection. But what he thinks is the strongest evidence against the notion of love being attended with delight in the object loved, is the advice of Christ to his disciples, saying, Love your enemies; bless them that curse you: do good to them that hate you: and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; (Matthew 5:44) And I do not know but it may, and yet fall short of proving what it is brought for. I apprehend, the love with which Christ exhorts in is people to love their enemies, is not to be understood quoad affectus, his respecting the internal affection of love: I cannot believe that Christ requires of me that I should love a persecutor as I do my wife, my children; my real friend, or brother in Christ; but quoad affectus, as to

the effects; that is, I am required to do those things as they lie in my way, and according to my ability, as a man would do to his neighbour, whom he loves; that is, feed him when hungry, and give him drink when thirsty. And so are we taught to understand this advice of Christ by the apostle Paul, in Romans 12:19-21. But after all, supposing it could be proved that there is a foundation for such a distinction among men, as love of pity and benevolence, and a love of complacency and delight, I would not be over confident about these things. Though I must confess I cannot see how mere pity can be love, or barely benevolence, or wishing well, it love; yet I say, supposing this, it does not follow that there is such a distinction in the love of God, especially towards the same persons, as they pass into different estates; which is to make the love of God to change by degrees, as the love of mutable creatures; and from one kind of love to pass into another, and from a lower to an higher degree: A thought to be abhorred by all those who know and believe what he says to be true; I am the Lord, I change not. This author next reverts to the instance which I mention of a man's saying to his wife, "I love you well, though I can take no delight in your person, nor pleasure in your company;" as a contradiction to his expressions of love; and observes, that I have wounded my notion of God's delighting in his elect, whilst in a state of nature, unless I can prove that he dwells with, and takes pleasure in the company of these his enemies. I reply, that I do not think that God loves or delights either in the persons, or in the company of his people, considered as sinners, as unconverted persons, as in a state of nature, as enemies to him; but as considered in Christ, and viewed in all that glory he designs to bring them to. And thus as the delights of the Son, so the delights of the Father, from everlasting, before the earth was, were not only in, but with them: They were not only rejoicing in them, but delighting themselves with them, in the fore-views of their dwelling with each other, and enjoying each other's company to all eternity.

And thus I have gone as far in my answer, as this author has in examining the Supralapsarian doctrines. It is much, when his hand was in, that he did not take under his examination some other doctrines handled in the letter he refers to; such as God's seeming no sin in his people, the non-necessity of good works to salvation, mortification, and the like; which he might

as well have forced into the Supralapsarian scheme, as some others. He has indeed a fling or two at the doctrine of repentance, seems greatly concerned that legal repentance is not to be valued and regarded, and thinks that this reflects upon the preaching of John the Baptist, Christ, and his apostles; whereas it was an evangelical repentance, and fruits meet for the same, which were preached up by them. He concludes, that the repentance which I allow sinners may be exhorted to, stands more remote from the power of the creature than legal repentance; as though I thought sinners were to be exhorted to it, as within the compass of their own power: whereas my express words are, "To exhort even to evangelical repentance, as within the compass of the power of man's will, and as a condition of the covenant of grace, and a term of acceptance within God; and in order to make peace with God, and gain the divine favour, which is the rant of some men's ministry; I say, to exhort to repentance with such views, and on such considerations as these, is low mean stuff; too mean for, below and unworthy of a minister of the gospel." One vile reflection upon the doctrine of forgiveness of sins, through the blood of Christ, I cannot omit taking notice of, when he says, "I am ready to believe that God, in infinite wisdom, does require it (legal repentance) as necessary to forgiveness, in all capable beings." What! is not the blood of Christ which was shed for the remission of sin, sufficient to procure it, without legal repentance being necessary to it? I observe this author is very fond of this way of preaching, and is very desirous that others would engage in it. Was I thought worthy, or capable of giving advice, my advice to him would be not only to preach repentance towards God upon the gospel-scheme, but faith in our Lord Jesus Christ; only I should be afraid the man will put unbelief for faith. I should advise him to content himself in making use of what talents he has in preaching the word, and not scribble in the manner he does: But if he must needs be an author, let him write upon moral subjects, against the prevailing vices of the age, open profaneness, and impiety, things he may be better acquainted with, than evangelical truths, or Supralapsarian principles.

S I R,

9 THE DOCTRINES OF GOD'S EVERLASTING LOVE TO HIS ELECT, AND THEIR ETERNAL UNION WITH CHRIST: TOGETHER WITH SOME OTHER TRUTHS,

STATED AND DEFENDED,

IN A LETTER TO DR. ABRAHAM TAYLOR.

Having had the happiness of hearing, and since of reading, your two Discourses, Of the Insufficiency of Natural Religion (See Lime Street Lecture, ed.); I cannot but express a satisfaction with your method of treating the argument; nor would you have heard from me in this public manner, had you not, in your performance, fallen foul on some of your friends, whilst you was engaging with the common adversary.

When I heard your first discourse on this subject, I observed a paragraph which gave me some uneasiness. I determined to take notice of it to you, as I had opportunity and knowing I should be present when you condescended to submit your discourses to the correction of some friends, I purposed humbly to offer some reasons for either dropping or altering the paragraph; but, to my great satisfaction, I found myself under no necessity of doing it. The passage I refer to being omitted in reading, I concluded from hence, that upon a revisal of your discourses, you had seen reason in your own mind to strike it out but, since reading your sermons, now made public, I find it stands, and, if I mistake not, with some additional keenness and severity: your reason for this you best know. Your words are these (A Defence of some important Doctrines of the Gospel, by several Ministers, Vol. I, p.48).

“It has been said, that during the times of our civil commotions, there was little preached up but faith in Christ; and that the duties of morality were little insisted on: it is certain that some ignorant enthusiastic preachers insisted then much on eternal union with Christ, and that sin could do a believer no harm; but all wise and thoughtful men abhorred such immoral conceits.”

What I have to complain of in this passage, is as follows:

I. The lameness and impertinence of it. You observe, “It has been said, that during the times of our civil commotions, there was little preached up but faith in Christ, and that the duties of morality were little insisted on.” One would have expected that you would have given an answer to this charge, and it looks as if you had designed it, by your making mention of it, but you neither grant nor deny it; and, instead of doing either, as you ought to have done, you put off the objection, by saying, “that some ignorant

enthusiastic preachers insisted then much on eternal union with Christ, and that sin could do a believer no harm.” Things which are not in the charge, and no way to your purpose to make mention of. Without taking upon me to be a dictator to you, you might have with truth allowed, that during those times, faith in Christ was very much preached up, though not to the exclusion of moral duties; and, with a great deal of justness, you might have observed, that the power of godliness very much prevailed; that the duties of religion were much practiced; that the Lord’s day was strictly and religiously observed; that social worship was attended on constantly; that family and closet-devotion were kept up with much strictness; and that morality, in all its branches, was in a very flourishing condition in those times, when faith in Christ was so much insisted on. This I am very sensible you are capable of observing; but you chose rather to fling at the doctrine of eternal union with Christ, and to introduce that in an awkward way, and by joining it with a disagreeable notion of sin’s doing a believer no harm, to draw an odium upon some good men in those times, whom you call “ignorant enthusiastic preachers,” and through them to strike at some who are now in being.

II. It does not appear to me matter of fact, that in those times eternal union with Christ, and that sin could do a believer no harm, were much insisted on, as you say. I know not, indeed, what acquaintance you may have with the pulpit performances of those times. For my own part I can only judge of their preaching by what they have printed; and, I presume, that if these doctrines are any where to be met with, they are to be found in the writings of such, who, in those times, were branded for Antinomians; such as Eaton, Saltmarsh, Simpson, Town, Richardson, and Crisp; whose writings I have carefully perused, and find no reason to conclude that those doctrines were much insisted on, as you say. By reading the works of these authors, I have been confirmed in the truth of an observation made some years ago, by the learned Hoornbeeck: “For I perceive, says he, while heads of doctrine are made up by the adversaries, rather than the authors themselves, out of their dissertations, books, and sermons, that sometimes their sense is not sufficiently taken, nor happily expressed; and that both here and there a great deal, indeed, is said, but not much to the purpose; and that they either do not

understand, or mistake the thing in dispute.” As to the doctrine of eternal union with Christ, however consistent it may be with some principles of theirs, I do not perceive that they take any notice of it; and some of them seem to have no notion of it, but tread in the common beaten path of union by the Spirit of Christ, and faith in Christ.

Eaton, in his *Honey-Comb of Free Justification*, has these words (Chp. 15. Pp.437-38): “Christ will have no foul leprous members united and made one with him; and therefore he first washeth us in his own blood, and makes us clean from all our sins, and then knits and unites us as fit members into his ownself. The order also and natural dependence of these benefits (that is, justification and union) upon one another, confirm the same; for we cannot be knit into Christ before we have the Holy Ghost dwelling in us: the Holy Ghost comes not to dwell in us before we be reconciled to God; and we are not reconciled to God before we have all our sins abolished out of God’s sight, but when all our sins are abolished, and we made perfectly holy and righteous, from all spot of sin in the sight of God freely, then the Holy Ghost comes and dwells in us, and knits and unites us, as fit members, into the blessed body of Jesus Christ; then we are, by the wedding garment alone of Christ’s righteousness, made, above our sense and feeling, fit brides for so glorious a Bridegroom.” And in another place, he has these words (p. 443): “This union and conjunction then is the cause that I am separated from myself, and translated into Christ and his kingdom, which is a kingdom of grace, righteousness, peace, joy, life, salvation, and glory; yea, by this inseparable union and conjunction, which is through faith, Christ and I are made, as it were, one body in spirit.”

Simpson, another of those men who were called Antinomians in those times, expresses himself on the subject of union after this manner, when he is speaking of the use of faith in justification (Sermon III on Eph. 2:8, 9; p. 116): “So that by faith, says he, though we are assured of God’s love in the first place, yet we are not only assured, but likewise Christ is applied unto us; we are united unto him, and do enjoy all things in him, and receive all good things from him.” And in another place (Ibid. p. 129); “A believing man is bone of the bone, and flesh of the flesh, and one spirit with the Lord Jesus: there is a close and near union and application of Christ to the soul by faith.”

Saltmarsh says nothing in what I have seen of his, concerning eternal union; and what he says of union itself, is not very intelligible; yet it seems as though he had no other notion of being in Christ, or of being united to Christ, but by faith. He observes (*Free Grace, or the Flowings of Christ’s Blood Freely to Sinners*, p. 66-7); “That the pure spiritual and mystical fountain of the mortification of sin, is the being planted together in the likeness of Christ’s death, our old man being crucified with him (Rom. 6:6). 6. Our union with Christ our Head, our Righteousness, our Vine.” And, a little after, he has these words: “Now that power wherein we are perfectly mortified, is our union with Christ, our being planted in the fellowship of his death, &c. and that wherein we are imperfectly, or in part mortified, is in that transformed nature, or spiritual nature, the body of sin being in a believer, more or less, till he lay down this body and take it up a more glorious one; so as a believer is to consider himself dead to sin, only in the fellowship of Christ’s death mystically, and to consider himself only dying to sin in his own nature spiritually: so as in Christ he is only complete, and in himself imperfect at the best. We are complete in him, saith the apostle (Col. 2:10), yet there is such a power and efficacy, and mighty working in this mystical union and fellowship with Christ, that he shall find sin dying in him from this, the Spirit working most in the virtue of this.” And in another place, he says (Ibid. p. 141); “A believer hath a twofold condition, in Christ, in himself; yet he ought ever to consider himself in Christ by faith, not in himself.” And elsewhere he observes (Ibid. p. 156-7): “The word says, that we are complete in Christ, and righteous in Christ; but when I repent, or love, or obey, I believe, I am in Christ; and therefore my love, and repentance, and obedience, is such as I may believe, though not in themselves, yet in him to be good and spiritual.”

Town, another writer of those times, who was much charged with Antinomianism, says nothing of eternal union, but has many expressions in his writings, which shew that he had no other notion of union, but by the Spirit of God, and by the grace of faith, in one of his books he has these words (*The Assertion of Grace*, p. 4): “The righteousness of faith unites them, that is, the saints, to Christ, their Lord, head and Governor, that so henceforth they may be led by his free Spirit and swayed by the scepter of his kingdom.” And in the same treatise, he asks (p. 74), Where doth

the, law speak a syllable of our conjunction and union with Christ through faith, whereby Christ and the believer become one body in spirit?" And in another place (p. 118); "By faith we being united and married to Christ, do by him bring forth fruits to God, even perfect obedience imputatively, and inchaotive holiness through the operation of his Spirit, received by the ministry and doctrine of faith, and not of the law." Though, in another passage in the same book (p. 11, 12), he makes the ordinance of water baptism to be the saints union with, and insition (grafting) into Christ. His words are these: "That ordinance, speaking of baptism, is a true, spiritual, and real engrafting of them into Christ (1 Cor. 12:13), so that faith is but the revelation of what was secret and hid before, or an evident testimony, and lively and comfortable apprehension and application in the conscience of the person of what was conferred and made his before;" that is, if I understand him, in baptism. In another of his hooks, he has these expressions (The Re-assertion of Grace, p. 12): "Let the poor sinful, miserable, and lost soul, first be united and married to him, in whom dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead, and in whom she is then complete, wanting nothing (Col. 2:9, 10), then tell of duties." Again (Ibid. p. 20), "If you do truly good works, you do them in Christ, abiding in him (John 15:4), in whom you are alive, and walk continually by faith.—Now the soul cannot walk in Christ, nor have union with him, save by faith." Once more (Ibid. p. 105), "Can man's nature be changed, says he, till he be united and engrafted into Christ, the true Vine? And doth not virtue come by that insition and union?" And in some pages after (Ibid. p.126), "It is by the Spirit that the soul cometh to union with Christ." And, in another of his treatises (Monomachia; or a single Reply to Mr. Rutherford, &c. p. 37), he has these words "Faith cometh by hearing, and after faith comes actual union."

The only writers, in the times referred to, that I have met with, who assert even union before faith, are Richardson (Answer to Dr. Homes, p. 111-12), and Crisp (Christ Alone Exalted, Vol. I, Sermon VII, p. 104, Vol. III, Sermon VII, p. 597, 599, 600; Sermon VIII p. 609, 614-617), who yet speak not a word of eternal union; neither do they, or the writers above-mentioned, professedly treat of the doctrine of union in any sense, but only take notice of it as it falls in their way. I read their books with greedy expectation of

frequently meeting with the doctrine of eternal union, in hopes of finding arguments for the confirmation of it, and of receiving more light into it, which I believe to be an eternal truth. Eternal union was so far from being a subject much insisted on in those times, as you say, that I do not find it was insisted on at all.

As to the notion of sin's doing a believer no harm, Eaton, Saltmarsh, Simpson, and Town, say nothing of it; nor have they any thing like it, that I have met with, in their writings; and I could easily fill up whole pages with passages out of them in which they express their abhorrence and detestation of sin, and their great regard to a holy life and conversation.

Richardson and Crisp are the only writers, in those times, that I have observed to make use of any expressions of this kind. As for Richardson, he has but one single passage which looks any thing like this notion, that sin does a believer no harm; which is this (Justification by Christ Alone, p. 21): "If all things work together for our good, then, says he, all falls, pains, diseases, crosses, afflictions, &c. do us no hurt, but work for our good; all things work for our good (Rom. 8:28)." And yet this is no more than what many sound divines have said, who never were charged with Antinomianism; when they assert, that all things, even the sins of God's people, are overruled by a kind and good Providence for their good, as their afflictions and crosses are; and by falls into sin doing no hurt, he means the hurt of punishment, as is evident from the whole of his reasoning and argument in that place. He clearly hints, in many places, at the hurt that comes by sin, with respect to a believer's peace and comfort, the damage it does to others, and the dishonor it brings to God; "Be afraid to sin, says he (Counsels, p. 98), and use means to prevent it; consider God hath forbidden it (Rom. 6). Consider sin in the nature of it, in the root and fruit of it: it is the price of blood; there is no true sweetness in sin, no contentment no satisfaction in it, why you should desire it? it fills the soul with wounds, sorrow, bitterness, shame; let experience speak." And, in another place, he says (Counsels, p. 150-51): "We should be afraid to sin, 1. because it is forbidden by God. 2. It is dishonorable to him. 3. It encourageth others to sin. 4. It will fill our souls with sorrow to sin against so loving a Father and to dishonor him, &c. Having sinned, if but in the least measure, we should be so fain from covering it with any pretence or excuse, that we should abhor it, and ourselves for it, with the

greatest detestation?" And elsewhere he says (Divine Consolations, p. 245); "Be sure ye allow yourself in no sin, but in the strength of God hate and abhor, with the greatest indignation, all sin, and the appearance of it; it is better to die than to sin. There is that which accompanieth sin, which strikes at a believer's peace and comfort; it will damp, straiten, and oppress the soul; it will hinder their comfort, joy, and peace in God, unless God doth wonderfully strengthen their faith in him; we find by experience, that sin is a lett to our faith and comfort, it having often unsettled and disquieted us in our peace and comfort, though we ought not to be so."

Crisp is the only writer that expresses himself freely and largely on this subject; and with the least guard (Christ Alone Exalted, Vol. I. Sermon X, p. 157; Vol. III. Sermon I, p. 509-14; Sermon II, p. 528-29; Sermon III, p. 46, &c.); and yet when he says, that "believers need not be afraid of their sins, his meaning is not, that they need not be afraid of sins committed, as Hoornbeeck, Witsius, and Chauncy, have justly observed; and when he says, that "the sins of believers can do them no hurt: by hurt he means, the hurt of punishment, penal evil, or the penal effects of sin which believers are freed from, and therefore shall never enter into a state of condemnation, Christ having bore their sins, and made satisfaction to justice for them; but then he speaks of sin, in its own nature, as odious and dreadful to believer's, and of bitterness and evil, as the certain fruits of it. The Doctor, I verily believe, used these expressions in a sound sense, and with a good design; not to encourage persons in sin, but to relieve and comfort the minds of believers, distressed with sin; yet, I must confess, I do not like the expressions, but am of opinion they ought to be disused.

And now surely, Sir, this single author's using of this expression, and that not in the gross and vile sense of it, cannot be sufficient to bear you out, in saying, that sin's doing a believer no harm, was much insisted on in those times: I can hardly think you have any reference to Archer's book, called Comfort for Believers about their Sin and Troubles; in which the author exhorts believers not to be oppressed and perplexed for their sins: though he acknowledges that godly sorrow and true shame become them, and says, that till they have it, God will not own them. He asserts in so many words, "that we may safely say, that God is, and hath

an hand in, and is the author of the sinfulness of his people." (Horresco referens!) and what is enough to make one shudder at the reading of, he says, that "all the sins which believers are left to, they are through and because of the covenant of grace left to them; and the covenant implies a dispensation of sinning to them, as well as other things:" And adds, "By sins are they as much nurtured and fitted for heaven, as by any thing else." All which is blasphemous, vile and abominable; and for which if I mistake not, the book was ordered to be burnt by the common hangman. I say, I can hardly think you can have reference to this author; for though he asserts this notion in the grossest sense, and in the vilest manner, yet it unhappily falls out for you, that this man was not for eternal union, but for union by faith; he frequently observes, that faith immediately unites to Christ, and is the bond of union to him, and what brings the Holy Ghost into the soul. If you had this author and his book in your eye, you should rather have said, that "union by faith, and sin's doing a believer no harm, were much insisted on in those times." But,

III. What I have further to complain of, is your joining the harmless doctrine of eternal union with that hurtful one, as it may be taken, of sin's doing a believer no harm. You could have no other view, than to bring the doctrine of eternal union into disgrace, and an odium upon the asserters of it, as if there was a strict connection between these two, and as if those who espoused the one, held the other. The notion of sin's doing a believer no harm, was never a received tenet of any body or society of Christians among us; no, not even those who have been called Antinomians. It is not the sentiment of those who are branded with the name in this day. I am well informed, that some churches, who are despised as Antinomian, have cast some out of their communion, for holding this notion in the gross sense of it. I wish some churches, that reckon themselves more orthodox, would shew a like zeal against Arianism, and in the behalf of Christ's proper Deity. There are, indeed, I hear, a scattered scandalous set of persons in the Fen Country, the disciples of one David Culey, who was cut off from a church in Northamptonshire, and was infamous for his blasphemy and scandalous life, who have imbibed this notion, and live answerably to it, but are disregarded by all persons of seriousness and sobriety. It was not a general received notion of those who are

called Antinomians, a little before or during the time of our civil commotions. Dr. Crisp is the only person that speaks it out, and yet not in the gross sense of it, as has been observed. All that their adversaries have said of them, is not to be relied on; such unworthy writers as Edwards and Paget, I give no credit to. Mr. Crandon speaks of some Antinomians in Somersetshire, with whom he was acquainted, and he gives us a catalogue of their sentiments; but nothing like this is taken notice of by him: nay, it does not appear that the Antinomians in Germany, the follower of Islebius Agricola, from Luther's account of them, I held any such notion. Sledian, in his Commentaries, takes notice of them, and of their tenets. His short account of them is this: "This year, that is, 1538, sprung up the sect of them who are called Antinomians; they say, that repentance is not to be taught out of the decalogue, and oppose those who teach, that the gospel is not; to be preached, but those whose hearts are first shaken and broken by the preaching of the law: they also assert, that whatever a man's life may be, and how impure soever, yet is he justified, if he only believes the promises of the gospel." This last assertion of theirs is somewhat ambiguous, and may seem to favor this notion, of sin's doing a believer no harm, as this author has delivered it: if his meaning is that they held that a man may be justified by faith in the gospel-promise, without sanctification; or though he allows himself in a continued impurity of life, this is a contradiction to the grace of God; but if his meaning is that they held that a man may be truly justified by faith in Christ, though his former life has been never so impure; this is a truth of the gospel, and gives no countenance to this doctrine. Of all that I have met with, none more roundly assert it than Eunomius, and his followers, who lived in the fourth century. "It is reported of this man, that he was such an enemy to good manners, that he should assert that the commission of any sin whatever, and a continuance therein, could not hurt any one, if he was but a partaker of that faith which was taught by him." This man was a disciple of Aetius, whose followers were called from him Aetians; of whom Epiphanius writes, that they were unconcerned about holiness of life, or any of the commands of God, and spoke very slightly of sin. Iræneus has a passage concerning the Valentinians, which comes up to this notion; it is this: "As that which is earthly cannot partake of salvation, for they say it is incapable of it; so again, that which

is spiritual, by which they mean themselves, cannot receive corruption, by whatsoever actions they may be concerned in. Just as gold being put into dirt, does not lose its beauty, but retains its nature, nor can it receive any hurt from the dirt: so they say, that they may be concerned in some material actions, and not be at all hurt, or lose the spiritual substance: hence the most perfect of them do all those things which are forbidden, without any manner of fear." And then instances eating things sacrificed to idols, attending on the worship of the heathens, frequenting the theatres, and indulging themselves in all fleshly lusts. The Gnostics, Carpocratians, Saturninians, Basilidians, with many others, embraced such-like impure notions: which, it is probable, they received from Simon Magus, the Father of heresies, who allowed those who believed in him and his Helena, to live as they list! These things I take notice of, to shew by whom this tenet has and has not been received; and, to support the justness of my complaint against you, in joining the doctrine of eternal union with it, when they never went together, as I can learn, or were ever received by the same persons.

IV. I observe that you call the doctrine of eternal union, as well as that of sin's doing a believer no harm, an immoral conceit. I do not well know what you mean by an immoral conceit; every imagination of the thoughts of the heart being only evil, is an immoral conceit; all sinful lusts in the mind are so: When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth, sin; and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death (Jam. 1:15). An immoral conceit, properly speaking, I apprehend, is the first motion, thought, and imagination of sin rising up in the mind; how this is applicable to the doctrine of eternal union, I see not: but, I suppose, your meaning is, that the doctrine of eternal union is a conceit and fiction of some men's brains, which has a tendency to promote immorality, and encourage persons in it. That it is no conceit, which has its foundation only in the fancy and imagination of some men, but a truth contained in the sacred scriptures, I hope to make appear. Was it a mere conceit, why you should reckon it an immoral one, I know not; if it is a conceit, it is an harmless one; nor can it be reasonably thought to have a tendency to promote immorality and profaneness any more than the doctrine of eternal election has, by which the holiness of God's people is infallibly secured unto them; for God has chosen

them in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy, and without blame before him in love (Eph. 1:4). Now how persons can be in Christ, chosen in him, and yet not united to him, or how there can be an eternal election of persons in Christ, and yet no eternal union of them to him, is what I do not understand; and as eternal election secures the holiness of the saints, so does eternal union. It is because Christ has loved them with an everlasting love, and by loving them, has united them to himself, and become the Head of them, and one with them, therefore he has given himself for them, that he might redeem them from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works (Titus 2:14); and does also send down his Spirit into their hearts, to renew and sanctify them; to implant grace in them, to enable them to perform good works, in which he has before ordained that they should walk, and to hold on in faith and holiness to the end. Redemption from sin, the sanctification of our hearts, all the good works done in faith, and perseverance in grace to the end, are the fruits and effects of eternal union to Christ. In what sense then it is an immoral conceit, or how it tends to promote immorality, you would do well to tell us, or acknowledge that you have abused it.

V. You call the persons who, you say, insisted much on eternal union, “ignorant, enthusiastic preachers.” One would have thought you might have spared this severe reflection, for the sake of some, who have asserted an eternal union, that are above your contempt, and very far from any just charge of ignorance and enthusiasm. Dr. Goodwin. speaks of an election-union, a virtual and representative one, which the elect have in Christ before the foundation of the world (Vol. I. Part I, p. 62): “As in the womb, says he, head and members are not conceived apart, but together, as having relation to each other; so were we and Christ (as making up one mystical body unto God) formed together in the eternal womb of election.” Again (Vol. I. Part I, p. 64), “Were you so chosen in Christ, as that God never purposed you a being but in Christ, and then gave you this subsistence in Christ, never casting a thought upon you out of him; then reckon of no other being but what you have in Christ. Reckon not of what you have in honour, or what you are in greatness or parts; but reckon of what you were in him, before this world was, and of all the spiritual blessings wherewith he then blessed you; and likewise of what you are now

in him, by an actual union, as then by a virtual and representative one.” And in another place (Ibid. Part II, p. 215), “We were one with Christ before the world was: there is one way of union then; Jesus Christ in the human nature cometh down and represents us, doth what we have to do; here is now another way of union; Why? This is the reason; for we were one with Christ, by his undertaking for us only from everlasting; but we were one with him, by an active representation, when below on earth.” And elsewhere he says (Ibid. Part III, p. 40): “There is a threefold union with Christ; the first is relative, whereby we are said to be his, and he ours; as you know he is called our husband, and the church is called his wife; and before husband and wife company together there is such a relation made by marriage; and the husband may be in one place, and the wife in another, so that there can be no communion between them and yet be man and wife; so is the union between Christ and you as complete in the relation, before he acts any thing upon you, though he be in heaven, and you on earth, as if you were in heaven with him.” And so in another part of his works (Vol. III. Book V, Chp. 20, p. 347); he makes union to Christ to be before the Spirit, or faith, or any grace is given: His words are these: “Union with Christ is the first fundamental thing of justification, and sanctification, and all: Christ first takes us, and then sends his Spirit; he apprehends us first; it is not my being regenerate that puts me into a right of all those privileges; but it is Christ takes me, and then gives me his Spirit, faith, holiness, &c. It is through our union with Christ, and the perfect holiness of his nature, to whom we are united, that we partake of the privileges of the covenant of grace.” Witsius says, the elect “are united to Christ,—1. In the eternal decree of God.—2. By the union of the eternal compact, in which Christ was constituted, by the Father, the Head of all those who are to be saved.—3. By a true and real union, but what on their part is only passive, they are united to Christ when the Spirit of Christ first lays hold on them, and infuses a principle of new life;” And a little after adds; “Moreover, since faith is an act flowing from a principle of spiritual life, it is plain, that it may be said in a sound sense, that an elect man may be truly and really united to Christ before actual faith.” It is evident, that he allows not only an union to Christ in God’s eternal purpose, but a federal union with him from eternity, as the Head of the elect. Now

for the sake of these men and others that might be named, you might have forbore the heavy charge of ignorance and enthusiasm; and if not for the sake of them, yet surely for the sake of your own Father, who asserts an eternal representative union of the elect with Christ, and that in a book of which you yourself was the editor (Mr. Richard Taylor's Scripture Doctrine of Justification, pp. 14, 15). His words are these "It must, indeed be granted, that God, from eternity, decreed to justify elect sinners through Christ: and that as none but they are ever justified, so all that were decreed for justification are certainly justified. It must also be granted, that God, from eternity, entered into a covenant of grace with Christ, as the Head of elect sinners; wherein Christ as their surety, undertook for their justification.—It must likewise be granted, that there was a gift of all grace made to Christ for elect sinners, as he was their Head and Surety from eternity (2 Tim. 1:9). It must be farther granted, that all elect sinners had a representative union with Christ from eternity. When Christ was chose as their Head, they were chose together with him, as his members." In another page (Ibid. p. 19), he says: "Believers may, with the greatest delight and comfort, take a survey of their justification, in the different gradations, or progressive steps of it. God decreed their justification, and they had a representative union with Christ, as their Head and Surety, from eternity. This lays such a sure foundation for their justification, as cannot be overturned by the joint power of men and devils: they had a legal union with Christ, and were federally justified in him when he rose from the dead. This gave them a fundamental right to justification: they are actually united to Christ when they believe, and are then actually justified." You see that all wise and thoughtful men do not abhor eternal union as an immoral conceit: if you say that these men plead for a real and actual union by faith, you cannot deny that they also assert an union before faith, yea, an eternal union in some. sense; whereas you have reproached it, as an immoral conceit, and the preachers of it, as ignorant and enthusiastic, without any exception or explanation. You would do well to explain your sense, and clear yourself. For my own part, I should not greatly care to be reckoned ignorant, and especially enthusiastic, and yet think I may, in a safe and sound sense, insist upon the doctrine of eternal union.

And now, Sir, if it would not be thought tedious,

I would freely give you my sentiments concerning the doctrine of union. I am persuaded we shall not differ about the persons who are united to Christ, that these are God's elect, and they only; nor about the nature of the union itself, that it is an union of the whole persons, souls and bodies, of God's people to the whole person of Christ; though it is not a personal union, that is, such an one as the union of the divine and human natures in Christ; that it is real, solid, substantial, and not imaginary; that it is complete and perfect, and not gradual, or brought about by degrees, but finished at once, as our justification is; that it is exceeding close and near, and indissoluble, of which there can be no separation. What we are most likely to differ about, is, when God's elect are united to Christ, and what is the bond of their union to him. It is generally said that they are not united to Christ until they believe, and that the bond of union is the Spirit on Christ's part, and faith on ours. I am ready to think that these phrases are taken up by divines, one from another, without a thorough consideration of them. It is well, indeed, that Christ is allowed any part or share in effecting our union with him; though one should think the whole of it ought to be ascribed to him, since it is such an instance of surprising love and grace, than which there cannot well be thought to be a greater. Why must this union be pieced up with faith on our part? This smells so prodigious rank of self, that one may justly suspect that something rotten and nauseous lies at the bottom of it. I shall therefore undertake to prove, that the bond of union of God's elect to Christ, is neither the Spirit on Christ's part, nor faith on their part.

1. It is not the Spirit on Christ's part. The mission of the Spirit into the hearts of God's elect, to regenerate, quicken, and sanctify them, to apply the blessings of grace to them, and seal them up to the day of redemption, and the bestowing of his several gifts and graces upon them, are in consequence, and by virtue of a previous and antecedent union of them to the Person of Christ. They do not first receive the Spirit of Christ, and then by the Spirit are united to him; but they are first united to him, and, by virtue of this union, receive the Spirit of him. To conceive otherwise, would be as preposterous as to imagine, that the animal spirits, which have their seat in the head, should be communicated to, and diffused throughout the several parts of the body, without union to the head,

or antecedent to an union, and in order to effect it; as this would be justly reckoned an absurdity in nature, so is the other no less an absurdity in grace. A person is first joined, glued, closely united to Christ, and then becomes one Spirit with him; that is, receives, enjoys, and possesses in measure, the same Spirit as he does, as the members of an human body do participate of the same spirit the head does, to which they are united: he that is joined unto the Lord, is one spirit (1 Cor. 6:17). The case is this; Christ, as the Mediator of the covenant, and Head of God's elect, received the Spirit without measure, that is, a fulness of the gifts and graces of the Spirit: These persons being united to Christ, as members to their Head, do, in his own time, receive the Spirit from him, though in measure. They are first chosen in him, adopted through him, made one with him, become heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; and then, as the apostle says, Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father (Gal. 4:6). Besides, the Spirit of God, in his personal inhabitation in the saints, in the operations of his grace on their hearts, and in the influences of his power and love on their souls, is the evidence, and not the bond of their union to God or Christ, and of their communion with them: For hereby we know, says the apostle John (1 John 3:24), that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us. And in another place (1 John 4:13), Hereby know we, that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. There is, indeed, an union which the Spirit of God is the efficient cause of; but this is not an union, of God's elect to the Person of Christ, but an union of believers one with another in a church-state; which the apostle designs, when he says, For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). The bond of this union is peace and love; hence the saints are exhorted to walk with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:2, 3).

2. Neither is faith the bond of union to Christ. Those who plead for union by faith, would do well to tell us whether we are united to Christ, by the habit or principle of faith implanted, or by the act of faith; and since there are different acts of faith, they should

tell us by which our union is, and whether by the first, second, third, &c. acts of believing. If we are united to Christ by the habit or principle of faith infused, then our union is not by faith on our part; because faith, as a principle or habit, is a gift of grace, of the operation of God, and which Christ is the author and finisher of. And if we are united to Christ by faith, as an act of ours, then we are united to Christ by a work, for faith, as an act of ours, is a work; and if by a work, then not by grace; for, if by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace; but if it be of works, then is it no more grace, otherwise work is no more work (Rom. 11:6).

I have often wondered that our divines should fix upon the grace of faith to be the bond of union to Christ, when there is nothing in it that is of a cementing and uniting nature: it is not a grace of union but of communion. Had they pitched upon the grace of love, as the bond of union, it would have appeared much more plausible; for love is of a knitting and uniting nature; it is the bond of friendship among men; it was this which knit the soul of Jonathan to the soul of David, so that he loved him as his own soul. This is the bond of union of saints one with another: their hearts are knit together in love. Hence charity or love is called the bond of perfectness (Col. 2:2; 3:14). It was this which so closely joined and cemented the hearts of the first Christians one to another, insomuch that the multitude of them that believed, were of one heart and of one soul (Acts 4:32). Had our divines, I say, fixed upon this grace, as the bond of union to Christ, it would have looked more feasible, and might perhaps, have been the means of leading them into the truth of the matter. Some, indeed, tell us, that we are united to Christ by faith and love; but then they do not consider love as a part of the bond of union, but only as an evidence of that faith by which we are united; or their meaning is, that that faith by which we are united to Christ, is a faith that works by love. Dr. Jacomb (On Rom. 8:1) indeed, having treated of a mystical union between Christ and his people, the bond of which he makes to be the Spirit on Christ's part, and faith on theirs, and of a legal union between Christ and believers, the ground of which is Christ's suretyship, speaks of a moral union between them, the bond of which is love, even "a mutual, reciprocal, hearty love between Christ and believers; he loves them, and they love him, and by virtue of this mutual

love, there is a real and close union betwixt them.” And besides him, the learned Alsted is the only divine I have met with, who makes the bond of union to be the mutual love of Christ and his people. “This union, says he, is the mutual love of Christ and believers, or a mutual obligation of Christ and believers, to love one another.” Now though there is something of truth in this, yet it is not the naked, pure, and unmixed truth of the matter; for it is not our love to Christ, but his love to us, which is alone the real bond of our union to him; he loves his people, and by loving them, unites them to himself: and this is the ground and foundation of all their communion and fellowship with him, both in grace and glory.

Faith is no uniting grace, nor are any of its acts of a cementing nature. Faith indeed, looks to Christ, lays hold on him, embraces him, and cleaves unto him; it expects and receives all from Christ, and gives him all the glory; but then hereby a soul can no more be said to be united to Christ, than a beggar may be said to be united to a person to whom he applies, of whom he expects alms, to whom he keeps close, from whom he receives, and to whom he is thankful. Faith is a grace of communion, by which Christ dwells in the hearts of his people, which is an act (of) fellowship, as a fruit of union, by which believers live on Christ, receive of his fulness, grace for grace, and walk on in him as they have received him. Union to Christ is the foundation of faith, and of all the acts of believing, as seeing, walking, receiving, &c. A man may as well be said to see, walk, and receive without his head, or without union to it, as one can be said to believe, that is, to see, walk, and receive in a spiritual sense, without the head, Christ; or as an antecedent to union to him, or, in order to it. To talk of faith in Christ before union to Christ, is a most preposterous, absurd, and irrational notion.

Faith is the fruit and effect of union, even of what is commonly called vital union. Faith stands much in the same place in things spiritual, as reason does in things natural. There must first be an union of the soul and body of man, before he can be said to live; and there must be life in him before there can be reason, or the exercise of it; man must first become a living soul, before he can be a reasonable one; so there must be an union of the soul to Christ before it can spiritually live; and there must be a principle of spiritual life before there can be any faith, or the exercise of it. Now

as reason and the exercise of it, is a second remove from the union of the soul and body; so is faith, and the exercise of it, a second remove from person's union to Christ. There must be first a vital union to Christ, before there can be any believing in him. This is fitly and fully exemplified in the simile of the vine and branches, which Christ makes use of to express the union of his people to him: Abide in me, and I in you, says he (John 15:4, 5), as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the Vine, ye are the branches he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit. Now faith is a fruit of the Spirit, which grows upon the branches, that are in Christ the Vine; but then these branches must first be in the vine, before they bear this fruit; for the root of the righteous yieldeth fruit (Prov. 12:12). The branches of the wild olive tree must first be engrafted into the good olive tree, become one with it, and so partake of the root and fatness of it, before they can bring forth good fruit. Could there be the fruit of faith in Christ's people before their union to him, then the branches would bear fruit without the vine, without being in it, or united to it, contrary to our Lord's express words. From the whole, it may safely be concluded, that union to Christ is before faith, and therefore faith cannot be the bond of union; no, not on our part. Vital union is before faith. There always was a fulness of life laid up and reserved for all those who were chosen in Christ; there was always life in Christ the Head for all his members, which he, when it pleases him, in regeneration, communicates to them, and implants in them, though there is no activity or exercise of this life until they believe.

The everlasting love of God, the Father, Son, and Spirit, is the bond of the elect's union to the sacred Three. What may he said of the three divine Persons in general, is true of each of them in particular. They have all three loved the elect with an everlasting love, and thereby have firmly and everlastingly united them to themselves. Christ has loved them with an everlasting and unchangeable love, whereby his heart is knit unto them as Jonathan's was to David. He loved them as his own soul, as his own body, and the members of it. This is that cement which will never loosen, that union knot which can never be untied, that bond which can never be dissolved, from whence there can be no separation; for who shall separate us from the love of Christ? I am

persuaded, says the apostle (Rom. 8:35, 38, 39), 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. There are several unions which arise from or are branches of this everlasting love-union, which are all antecedent to our faith in Christ.

1. There is an election-union in Christ from everlasting: God hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4). This is an act and instance of everlasting love, by which the persons chosen are considered in Christ, and one with him. Christ was chosen as an head, his people as members with him. Nothing is more commonly said by those who are esteemed sound divines, than this: Now how Christ can be considered as an head, and the elect as members of him in this eternal act of election, without union to him, is hard to conceive.

Arminius and his followers, the Remonstrants, have frequently urged the text now mentioned in favor of election from faith foreseen, and their argument upon it is this: "None are chosen to salvation but in Christ; none are in Christ but believers, who are engrafted into Christ, and united to him by faith, therefore none are chosen to salvation, but those who are believers in sin Christ, are engrafted into him, and united with him." For they had no other notion of being in Christ, but by faith; like some others, who yet would be thought to be far from being in their scheme. But then, among other replies, they have been told by the Anti-Remonstrants, "That it is certain that we are chosen and regarded in Christ before we were believers; which is fully proved from several places of scripture, which plainly make it appear, that the elect have some existence in Christ, even before they believe; for unless there had been some kind of union between Christ and the members, Christ would not have been their head, nor could he have satisfied for them."

2. There is a legal union between Christ and the elect from everlasting: they are one in a law-sense, as surety and debtor are one; the bond of this union is Christ's suretyship, which is from everlasting, and in which Christ engaged, as a proof of his strong love and affections to his people. He is the surety of the better Testament, the *εὑνοῦς*, that drew near to God the Father in the name of the elect, substituted himself in their place and stead, and laid himself under

obligation to pay their debts, satisfy for their sins, and procure for them all the blessings of grace and glory. This being accepted of by God, Christ and the elect were looked upon, in the eye of the law, as one person, even as the bondsman and the debtor, among men, are one, in a legal sense; so that if one pays the debt, it is the same as if the other did it. This legal union arising from Christ's suretyship-engagements, is the foundation of the imputation of our sins to Christ, and of his satisfaction for them, and also of the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us, and of our justification by it. Christ and his people being one, in a law-sense, their sins become his, and his righteousness becomes theirs.

3. There is a federal union between Christ and the elect from everlasting. As they were considered as one, he as head, and they as members, in election; they are likewise considered after the same manner in the covenant of grace. Christ has a very great concern in the covenant; he is given for a covenant to the people; he is the Mediator, Surety, and Messenger of it. It is made with him, not as a single person, but as a common head, representing all the elect, who are given to him, in a federal way, as his seed and posterity. What he promised in the covenant, he promised for them, and on their account; and what he received, he received for them, and on their account. Hence grace is said to be given to them in him before the world began (2 Tim. 1:9); and they are said to be blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3).

4. There is a natural union between Christ and his people; for both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one; that is, of one nature; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren (Heb. 2:11). This is an union in time, but is the effect of Christ's love before time; Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same (Heb. 2:14). The nature he assumed is the same with that of all mankind, but was taken to him with a peculiar regard to the elect, the children, the spiritual seed of Abraham, who are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. Now this natural union, which is the fruit of Christ's everlasting love, is antecedent to the faith of New Testament saints.

5. It is sufficiently evident, that there is a representative union between Christ and the

elect, both from everlasting and in time, which is independent on, and prior to their believing in him. He represented them as their head in election, and in the covenant of grace, as has been already observed; and so he did, when upon the cross, and in the grave, when he rose from the dead, entered into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. Hence they are said to be crucified with him, dead with him, buried with him, risen with him, yea, to be made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Now all these several unions take their rise from, and have their foundation in, the everlasting love of Christ to his people; which is the grand original, strong and firm bond of union between him and them, and is the spring of all that fellowship and communion they have with him in time, and shall have to all eternity. It is from hence that the Spirit of God is sent down into our hearts to regenerate and renew us, and faith is wrought in our souls by the Spirit. Faith does not give us a being in Christ, or unite us to him; it is the fruit, effect, and evidence of our being in Christ and union to him. It is true, indeed, that God's elect do not know their being in Christ and union to him, until they believe; then what was before secret is made manifest; and because things are sometimes said to be, when they are only manifested to be, hence the people of Christ are said to be in Christ, when they are made new creatures; if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (2 Cor. 5:17). Being a new creature, does not put a man into Christ, but is the evidence of his being there; and without which he neither knows, nor ought he to profess himself to be in Christ: And so likewise, in another place, it is said, If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his (Rom. 8:9). He may be one of his chosen and redeemed ones, though he has not the Spirit of Christ as yet; but he cannot know this until he has the Spirit of Christ; for no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, that is, his Lord, but by the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. 12:3). The apostle Paul takes notice of some that were in Christ before him (Rom. 16:7); all God's elect were chosen together in Christ, not one before another: They had all together a being in him; but this in conversion is made known to one before another. There are different manifestations of union to different persons, and to the same persons at different times; for which Christ prays, when he says, that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us, that the world

may believe that thou hast sent me; and the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me (John 17:21-23). The full manifestation of it will be in heaven, when the saints shall be with Christ where he is, and behold his glory, and enjoy uninterrupted communion with him, as the fruit of their eternal union to him.

I should now, Sir, have closed this letter, were it not for a passage in your discourse Of the Doctrine of Grace as it Encourageth Holiness; in which, I apprehend, you have poured much contempt on several valuable and excellent truths of the gospel: I will repeat your words, and take leave to make some few strictures on them. They are these: "There have been some, who, by their life and conversation, have shewed, that they were far from being enemies to holiness, who have amused themselves with fancies about God's loving and delighting in his elect, while they were in a state of nature; of his seeing no sin in his people, and good works not being necessary to salvation; and who have been forward to condemn pressing men to duty, as legal preaching; and to speak of exhorting to repentance, mortification, and self-denial, as low and mean stuff (See a Defense of Some Import Doctrines of the Gospel by Several Ministers, Vol. II, p. 512)."

I. I observe that you esteem the doctrine of God's loving his elect, while in a state of nature, a fancy; and that those who hold this doctrine do but amuse themselves with a fancy. I must beg leave to say, that if it is a fancy, it is a scriptural one: I would not willingly say or write any thing that is contrary to the purity and holiness of God, or has a tendency to embolden vicious persons in a course of sin and wickedness; and yet cannot help saying, that the doctrine of God's everlasting, unchangeable, and invariable love to his elect, through every state and condition into which they come, is written as with a sunbeam in the sacred writings.

1. God's love to his elect is not of yesterday; it does not begin with their love to him, We love him, because he first loved us (1 John 4:19). It was bore in his heart towards them long before they were delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of his dear Son. It does not commence in time, but bears

date from eternity, and is the ground and foundation of the elect's being called in time out of darkness into marvelous light: I have loved thee, says the Lord to the church, with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee (Jer. 31:3); that is in effectual vocation. Many are the instances which might be given in proof of the antiquity of God's love to his elect, and as it is antecedent to their being brought out of a state of nature. God's choosing them in Christ before the foundation of the world, was an act of his love towards them, the fruit and effect of it; for election presupposes love. His making an everlasting covenant with his Son, ordered in all things, and sure, on account of those he chose in him; his setting him up as the Mediator of the covenant from everlasting; his donation of grace to them in him before the world began; his putting their persons into his hands, and so making them his care and charge, are so many demonstrative proofs of his early love to them; for can it ever be imagined that there should be a choice of persons made, a covenant of grace so well formed and stored, a promise of life granted, and a security made, both of persons and grace, and yet no love all this while?

2. The love of God to his elect is unchangeable and unalterable; it is as invariable as his own nature and being; yea, God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him (1 John 4:16). Hence it is that the blessings of his grace are irreversible, because they are gifts of him, who is the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning. Hence also it is that the salvation of God's elect does not stand upon a precarious foundation, as it would, if his love changed as theirs does; but he is the Lord, who changes not, and therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed. The several changes the elect of God pass under, through the fall of Adam, and their own actual transgressions make no change or alteration in the love of God. The love of God makes a change in them when he converts them, but no change or alteration is made in God's love; that does not admit of more or less; it cannot be said to be more ardent and intense at one time, than at another, it is always invariably the same in his heart. Love produced a wonderful and surprising change in him, who was afterwards the great apostle of the Gentiles, and of a blaspheming, persecuting, and injurious Saul, made a believer in Christ, and a preacher of the everlasting

gospel: but then this produced no change in God, nor in his love. God sometimes changes the dispensations of his providence to his people, but he never changes his love; he sometimes hides his face from them, and chides them in a fatherly manner; but at all times he loves them: he loves when he rebukes and chastens, and though he hides his face for a moment from them, yet with everlasting kindness will he have mercy on them; for he has said, The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed (Isa. 54:10). There is, indeed, no sensible manifestation of God's love to his elect before conversion, or while they are in a state of nature; and it must be allowed, that the manifestations of it to their souls after conversion, are not always alike; and that God's love appears more evident in some instances and acts of it, than in others; yet still this love as in his own heart, is unchangeably and invariably the same, as it needs must be, if he is God. Since then God's love to his elect is from everlasting, and never changes upon any consideration whatever, why should God's love to his elect, while in a state of nature, be accounted a fancy, and those who maintain it, be represented as amusing themselves with a fancy?

3. There are instances to be given of God's love to his elect, while they are in a state of nature: I have already observed some instances of it to his elect, from eternity. I will just mention one or two instances of it to them in time, and which respect them, while in a state of nature. Christ's coming into this world, and dying in the room and stead of the elect, are, at once, proofs, both of his own and his Father's love to them; God so loved them, as to give his only begotten Son; and Christ so loved them as to give himself for them, in a way of offering and sacrifice for their sins; at which time they were considered as ungodly, as being yet sinners, as enemies in their minds, by wicked works, and without love to God: for the apostle says (Rom. 5:6, 8, 10), When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us; for if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. Now certainly these persons were in a state of nature, who are said to be "without strength, to be ungodly, sinners, and enemies;" and yet God commended his

love towards them, when and while they were such, in a matchless instance of it: and so the apostle John makes use of this circumstance, respecting the state of God's elect, to magnify, to set off, and illustrate the greatness of God's love (1 John 4:10): Herein is love, says he, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. From whence it may strongly be concluded, that God loved his people while in a state of nature, when enemies to him, destitute of all grace, without a principle of love to him, or faith in him. Again, the quickening of God's elect, when dead in trespasses and sins, the drawing of them to Christ with the cords of powerful and efficacious grace in effectual vocation, are instances of his special grace and favor, and fruits and effects of his everlasting love to them. God who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (Eph. 2:4, 5). The time of the effectual vocation of God's people being come, fixed in his everlasting counsels and covenant, it is a time of open love to their souls, and that time becomes a time of life; for seeing them wallowing in their blood, in all the impurities of their nature, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind, he says unto them, when in their blood, live; yea, when in their blood he says unto them, live. The spirit of God, as an instance of God's love, is sent down into their hearts in order to begin, carry on, and finish a work of grace, when he finds them in a state of nature, dead in sin, devoid of all grace, impotent to all that is spiritually good: We ourselves also, says the apostle (Titus 3:3-6), were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another, *οτε*, when the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared; not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. If God did not love his elect, while in a state of nature, they must for ever remain in that state, since they are unable to help themselves out of it; and it is only the love, grace and mercy of God, which engage his almighty power to deliver them from thence. There are three gifts and instances of God's love to his people before conversion, which are not to be matched by any instance or instances of love after conversion; the one

is the gift of God himself to them in the everlasting covenant; which covenant runs thus: I will be their God, and they shall be my people: The other is the gift of his Son, to suffer and die in their room and stead, and so obtain eternal redemption for them the third is the gift of his Spirit to them, to convince them of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. And now what greater instance is there of God's love to his people after conversion? If the heavenly glory, with all the entertaining joys of that delightful state, should be fixed upon, I deny it to be a greater instance of God's love, than the gift of himself, his Son, and Spirit; and, indeed, all that God does in time, or will do to all eternity, is only telling his people how much he loved them from everlasting; all is but as it were, a comment upon, and an opening of that ancient act of his; nor has this doctrine any tendency to licentiousness, or to discourage the performance of good works. The consideration of this, that God loved me before I loved him, nay, when I was an enemy to him that his thoughts were employed about my salvation, when I had no thoughts of him, nor concern for myself, lays me under ten thousand times greater obligations, to fear, serve and glorify him; than such a consideration as this, that he began to love me when I loved him, or because I have loved him, can possibly do. Why then should this doctrine be accounted a mere fancy, which has so good a foundation, both in the word of God, and in the experience of his people; and the maintainers of it traduced as amusers of themselves with fancies?

II. Perhaps you will say, it is not merely the notion of God's loving his elect in a state of nature, but his loving them so as to delight in them, while in that state, that you condemn as a fancy, and the defenders of it, as amusing themselves with a fancy; since you join love and delight together, when you express yourself so freely on this head. There is a distinction which you may imagine will help you, which is that of a love of pity and benevolence, and of complacency and delight; with the first of these, say some, God loved his elect before conversion, and while in a state of nature, but not with the latter. It is an idle and ill grounded distinction of some ignorant, trifling, popish schoolmen, which some of our grave divines have been fond of, and have used, when they have thought it would serve their purpose; though it is subversive of the very nature and perfections of God, and represents him as altogether

such an one as ourselves, subject to change; that his love, like ours, alters, and by degrees increases, and, from a love of pity and benevolence, passes into a love of complacency and delight; it supposes that God first views his elect in a miserable state and condition, with whose misery he is touched, and is filled with bowels of compassion and pity towards them, which occasion some velleities (a mere wish not accompanied by actions) or wishes in his mind for their good; and these rise up at length into resolutions and purposes to do them good; which when he has, at least in some measure, executed, his affections glow, his love grows more ardent, and issues in complacency and delight. If this is not to make God changeable, and bring him down into the rank of mutable creatures, I know not what is. I could tell the friends of this distinction, though it may be no news to them, and perhaps they may find their account in it, that these same popish schoolmen have distinguished the love of God into amor ordinativus, a love in ordination, purpose and design, and into amor collativus, a love in gift, which is actually bestowed. This may suit well enough with the divinity of some men, who seem to be ready to give into such schemes as these; that God's love to his elect, before conversion, is only a purpose to love them when they are converted; that eternal election, is only a decree to elect persons in time; that the everlasting covenant is made with persons when they believe, of which faith, repentance and sincere obedience, are the conditions; and that there is no reconciliation of God's elect to him before faith; that the sufferings and death of Christ only make God reconcilable, but not reconciled; with such-like things as these, which I am almost tempted to call low and mean stuff. It is high time that these distinctions about the love of God, with that of an antecedent and consequent one, were laid aside, which so greatly obscure the glory of God's unchangeable love and grace. It must be an odd sort of love among men, that is separate from delight in the object loved. The philosopher tells me, that benevolence is properly neither friendship nor love; and that as benevolence is the beginning of friendship, so delight and pleasure, at the sight of the object, is the beginning of love; and that no man can be said to love, who is not first delighted with the form or idea of the object. Indeed, I cannot see that that can be love, which is without any delight in the object said to be loved: if a man should say to his wife, I love

you well, I wish you well and am willing to do you all the good offices I am able: but, at the same time, I can take no delight in your person, nor pleasure in your company; would not this be esteemed a contradiction to his expressions of love to her? So if a father should say to his child, I wish you well, I pity you in what you do amiss, and I design to do something for you, which may be for your good, but I can take no delight and pleasure in you as a child of mine; what kind of love would this be thought to be? The same may be observed in many other such-like instances.

God's love to his Son, as a Mediator, is an everlasting love; Thou lovedst me, says Christ (John 17:24), before the foundation of the world. This love was a love of complacency and delight; for Christ as Mediator, was from everlasting, then by him, that is, the Father (Prov. 8:30), as one brought up with him, and was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him. Now God loves his elect with the same love he loves his Son as Mediator. Hence Christ prays for the open and manifest union between him and his people; That says he (John 17:23), the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. If God therefore has loved his Son, as Mediator, from everlasting, with a love of complacency and delight, and he has loved his elect from everlasting with the same love he has loved him, then he must have loved his elect from everlasting with a love of complacency and delight: and, indeed how can it otherwise be, since the elect were always in Christ their Head, in whom they were chosen before the foundation of the world? And they could not be considered in him but as righteous persons, through his righteousness, with which God is always well pleased, because by it the law is magnified, and made honorable; and so Christ is often said to be God's beloved Son, in whom not with whom, he is well pleased (Matthew 3:17; 2 Pet. 1:17); which designs not his person only singly, but all the elect, as considered in him, who together with Christ, are the objects of God's eternal delight and pleasure.

It is certain that Jesus Christ has, from everlasting, loved the elect with a love of complacency and delight; for from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was, when there were no depths nor fountains, before the mountains and hills were brought into being, while as yet God had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world, Christ's delights were with the sons of men" (Prov.

8:31). The word in the Hebrew rendered delights, is expressive of the most intimate, sweet, ravishing delight and pleasure; and it being not only in the plural number, but also having its radical letters, especially its two first radical letters, doubled, which, in the Hebrew language, increases the signification of the word; it sets forth, that exceeding great delight and pleasure which Christ had in his people from everlasting; nay, he not only took delight in the persons of the elect, as they were presented to him in the glass of his Father's purposes and decrees, but took pleasure also in the fore-views of the very spots of ground where he knew his people would dwell: and hence he says, that he was rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth (Prov. 8:31). Now why God the Father should not, from everlasting, love the elect with the same love his son did, I know not.

Nothing is more evident than that God's choosing his people in Christ before the foundation of the world, is an act of love; and I will venture to say, it is an act of love, founded upon, and springing from his delight in them; even as God's loving and choosing of Israel (which was an emblem and representation of his special love to, and choice of the true and spiritual Israel of God) is owing to that delight he had in them; for it is said, The Lord had a delight in thy fathers, to love them; and he chose their seed after them, even you above all the people, as at this day (Deut. 10:15). And, indeed, all the favors and blessings which God bestows on his people in time, arise from his delight in them. His bringing them out of darkness into light, out of a state of nature into a state of grace, out of distresses and difficulties of every kind, springs from his delight in them. He brought me forth also into a large place, says David (Ps. 18:19); he delivered me, because he delighted in me. In a word, the whole salvation of the elect is owing to God's love of delight, with which he loves them. The Lord taketh pleasure in his people; and, as a fruit and effect of that he will beautify the meek with salvation: He has promised to rejoice over them, to do them good; and it is said, he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; and he will rest in his love, he will rejoice over thee with singing (Ps. 149:4).

Some, perhaps, will say, that the elect, while in a state of nature, are destitute of faith, which is very true; and since without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6), he can take no delight in them, while

in that state. The Remonstrants have urged this text in favor of election, *ex fide prævisa*; and their argument upon it is this: "That if it is impossible to please God without faith, it is impossible that any should be "chosen by God unto salvation, without faith: seeing to be chosen unto salvation, is the highest instance of God's love and good-will to man that he can shew him:" But "they have been told, by the Anti-Remonstrants, that though election is an act of God's great love and good pleasure, yet it may be without faith, since there is a sense in which persons may be said to please God before faith; for God is said even to manifest his love to his enemies,(Rom. 5:8, 10). If then he loved them when enemies, they must needs please him before they believed;" and that "although whatsoever is done without faith may be displeasing to God, yet God may be said to love some persons, whose actions displease him; so he loved the person of Paul before he was converted to the faith of Christ; yea, that there is a certain complacency in the person, if it be proper so to say, before his works and faith please God." And it is easy to observe, that the apostle is speaking, not of the complacency which God has in the persons of his people, but of that which he has in their works and actions. Now no works without faith can please God, such as praying, reading, hearing, and the like because whatsoever is not of faith, is sin. It is in this sense, that they that are in the flesh, that is, who are unregenerate, are in a state of nature, cannot please God (Rom. 8:8); for it may be as well expected to gather grapes of thorns, and figs of thistles, as that good works well-pleasing to God should be done by an evil man: but though man can do nothing without faith, that can please God, yet this does not hinder, but that the persons of God's elect, as considered in Christ, may be well pleasing to God before faith, and without it.

It may be further objected, that God's elect, while in a state of nature, are children of wrath, even as others, and therefore cannot be the objects of God's love and delight; for how can they be children of wrath, and yet objects of love at one and the same time? To which I reply, that "a person may be the object of love and delight, and of displeasure and wrath, at one and the same time, in a different respect." It is said of the Jews (Rom. 11:28), as concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes; but touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. But

this will be better exemplified in the instance of Jesus Christ, “who standing in two different relations, and sustaining two “different capacities, was at one and the same time the object of his Father’s love and wrath; as he was the Son of God, he was always the object of his love and delight; but as he was the sinner’s surety, and while bearing the sins of his people in his own body on the tree, he was the object of his displeasure and wrath, which he sensibly felt, and therefore it is said (Ps. 89:38), Thou hast cast off and abhorred; thou hast been wrath with thine anointed. And yet even then, when he poured out his wrath to the uttermost on him, on the account of his people’s sins, when he ordered justice to draw its sword, and sheath it in him, his love towards him, as his Son, was not in the least abated.” Thus the elect of God, being considered in different views, may be truly said to be children of wrath, and objects of love at one and the same time; consider them in Adam, and under the covenant of works, they are children of wrath, they are deserving of the wrath of God, and are exposed to the curse of the law; but then as considered in Christ, and under the covenant of grace, they always were, and ever will be, the objects of God’s love and delight.

This doctrine, I apprehend, is no ways contrary to the purity and holiness of God’s nature; it does not follow, that because God loves and delights in his elect, while in a state of nature, that he loves and delights in their sins: God is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon sin, with any approbation or delight (Hab. 2:13; Ps. 5). He is not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with him. We are obliged to distinguish between the persons and sins of God’s people after conversion; it is allowed that God loves and delights in their persons, though he hates their sins. Now why the same distinction may not be allowed before conversion, as after, I see not; since it is not any thing that is done by them, nor any thing that is wrought in them, that is the ground and foundation of God’s love to and delight in them; but his love to and delight in them is the ground and foundation of all that he does for them, or works in them. No doubt, what he works in them is well-pleasing in his sight, but their acceptance with God, and their persons being well-pleasing to him, does not lie in this, but in the beloved. When, Sir, these things are considered by you, I hope you will no longer esteem it a fancy, that God should love and delight in his people while in a

state of nature. But I go on,

III. To consider another evangelic truth, which, indeed, is the sum and substance of the gospel, and with the proof of which the scripture abounds, though you are pleased to condemn it is a fancy, and that is, that “God sees no sin in his people.” I know this doctrine has been most odiously traduced, and most widely misrepresented; but, I hope, when some few things are observed, it will plainly appear not to be a fancy, or a freak of some distempered minds, but a most glorious and comfortable doctrine of the gospel, and without which the gospel must cease to be good news and glad tidings to the sons of men.

1st, When it is asserted that God sees no sin in his people, the meaning is not, that there is no sin in believers, nor any committed by them, or that their sins are no sins, or that their sanctification is perfect in this life.

1. Sin is in the best of saints; to say otherwise is contrary to scripture, and to all the experience of God’s people; If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us (1 John 1:8). The ingenuous confession of the saints, their groans and complaints, and that continual war between flesh and spirit they feel in themselves, are so many proofs of sin’s being in them; nay, it is not only in them, but it lives in them. It is true, indeed, they do not live in sin, for then there would be no difference between them and unregenerate persons; to live in sin, is not only unbecoming, but contrary to the grace of God: but still sin lives in believers; though there is an inward principle of grace, and a mortification of the outward actions of sin, and a putting off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts; yet this old man is not changed, nor removed, much less destroyed. Moreover, sin is not merely in believers now and then, by fits and starts, as we say, but it dwells in them. Hence the apostle calls it, Sin that dwelleth in me (Rom. 7:17, 20); where it is not idle, but active and busy; it hinders all the good, and does all the mischief it can; it makes war against the soul, and sometimes brings it into captivity.

2. Sin is not only in the best of saints, but is also committed by them: There is not a just man upon earth, that doth good and sinneth not (Eccl. 7:20); nor is there any sin, but what has been, or may be committed by believers, excepting the sin against the Holy Ghost: their daily slips and falls, their frequent

prayers for the discoveries of pardoning grace, and the application of Christ's blood, which cleanseth from all sin, confirm the truth of this. It is true, the apostle John says, that whosoever is born of God, doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God (1 John 3:9); that is, as born of God, he neither does, nor can commit sin. What is that which is born of God? The new creature; the other I, distinguished from sin that dwelleth in him this never did, nor can commit sin; there are an old man and a new man in regenerate persons; the new man never sins, the old man does nothing else but sin; there are flesh and spirit in the saints; all sinful works are the works of the flesh, as all good works are the fruits of the Spirit. The work of grace, though imperfect, is not impure; nothing impure springs from it, nor is any thing impure to be attributed to it.

3. The sins of believers are sins, as well as the sins of others; they are of the same kind, and are equally transgressions of the law, as others are murder and adultery, committed by David, were sins in him, as well as they are as committed by others; yea, oftentimes the sins of believers are attended with more aggravating circumstances than the sins of other men, being acted against light and knowledge, love, grace and mercy. Though believers are justified from all sin by Christ's righteousness, and have all their sins pardoned through Christ's blood, yet their sins do not hereby cease to be sins. Justification from sin by Christ's righteousness, and pardon of sin through Christ's blood, free them from obligation to punishment due to sin, but do not destroy the nature of sin.

4. The work of sanctification is imperfect in this life it is a good work begun, but not finished; there is something lacking in the faith of the greatest believer; love is not come to its full growth and as for knowledge, it is but in part. There is a twofold sanctification; the one in Christ, this is complete and perfect; the other is derived from Christ, and wrought in the soul by the Spirit of Christ; this at present is imperfect. There is indeed a perfection of parts, but not of degrees; that is to say, the new creature has all its parts, but these are not grown up to the perfection they will arrive unto. The best of saints need fresh supplies of grace, which they would not, were they perfect: they disclaim perfection in themselves, though they wish for it both in themselves and others; when therefore it is said that

"God sees no sin in his people," neither of these things are designed by it.

2ndly, God's seeing no sin in his people, does not impeach his omniscience: nor is it to be considered as referring to the article of providence, but to the article of justification as I shall shew presently. God is omniscient, he knows and sees all persons and things; nothing is or can be hid from his all-seeing eye: His eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings; there is no darkness nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves (job 34:21, 22). All the actions of men, whether good or bad, are known to him, with their secret springs and principles from whence they flow; he sees the sins of his own people, as well as the sins of others, both in their first motions, and in their open productions; The Lord's throne is in heaven, his eyes behold, his eyelids try the children of men! the Lord trieth the righteous (Ps. 11:4, 5). About this there is no debate; they must be stupid indeed, if there be any; for my part, I never heard of any who deny that the omniscience of God extends to the sins of his people; it never was thought of, or designed, by this assertion, to limit or deny the omniscience of God; nor is it limited or denied by it. Though the phrases of seeing and knowing, are used as synonymous in the article of providence, yet never in the article of justification; there they are always distinguished: knowledge and sight are two things the one belongs to the attribute of God's omniscience, the other to the attribute of his justice: when therefore it is said, that God sees no sin in his people, the meaning is not, that he does not with his omniscient eye, see and know sin to be in them; but he does not see any iniquity in them with his eye of justice, or so as to punish them for their sins, or require satisfaction at their hands for them.

3rdly, Nor is the meaning of this proposition, that "God sees no sin in his people," that he takes no notice of them, nor resents them, nor chastises them, in a fatherly way, on the account of them. God does not, indeed, punish his people for their sins in a way of vindictive wrath and justice; for this is contrary to his justice, and must overthrow the satisfaction of Christ; for either Christ has perfectly satisfied for the sins of his people, or he has not; if he has not, they must satisfy for them themselves; if he has, it is contrary to the justice of God to punish for sin twice, or to require satisfaction, both of the surety and the

sinner: but though God does not punish his people for their sins, yet he chastises them in a fatherly way; he takes notice of their sins, lays his hand upon them, in order to bring them to a sense and acknowledgement of them; If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes; nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from them, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail (Ps. 89:30-33).

4thly, Though God sees sin in his people, as being but in part sanctified, yet he sees no sin in them, as they are perfectly justified; though he sees sin in them, with his eye of omniscience, yet not with his eye of revenging justice; though he sees them, in respect of his providence, which reaches all things, yet not in respect of justification; though he takes notice of his people's sins so as to chastise them in a fatherly way, for their good; yet he does not see them, take notice of them, and observe them in a judicial way, so as to impute them to them, or require satisfaction for them: God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them (2 Cor. 5:9): No, he has imputed them to Christ, he has beheld them in him, he has charged them to him, and Christ has made full satisfaction for them; and therefore who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died (Rom. 8:33, 34). God will not require satisfaction at the hands of his people for their sins; he will not punish them on the account of them; they shall never enter into condemnation; for there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit (Rom. 8:1). Was God to see sin in his people in this sense, and proceed against them in a forensic way, he must act contrary to his justice and set aside the satisfaction of his Son. A few things will make it plainly appear that God sees no sin in his justified ones, as such:

First, This will be evident, if we consider what Christ has done with respect to the sins of his people. These have been removed from them to him; they have been placed to his account, imputed to him, and laid upon him. All we, like sheep, have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all (Isa. 53:6); which he has bore in his own body, on the tree; yea, he is the

Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world; he has removed the iniquity of his people in one day: As he was wounded for their transgressions, and bruised for their sins, so he has washed them from their sins in that blood of his which cleanseth from all sin; by his righteousness he justifies them from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses; and by the sacrifice of himself, he has put away sin for ever; yea, he has finished transgression, made an end of sin, has made reconciliation for iniquity, and has brought in everlasting righteousness. This is the language both of the Old and New Testament, and if this be the case, as it certainly is, God does not, and cannot see iniquity in his people, since all their iniquity has been transferred on Christ, and it is all done away by him.

Secondly, This will be yet more evident, if we consider what God the Father has done on the account of the blood, righteousness, sacrifice, and satisfaction of his Son. He has freely forgiven all the sins of his people for Christ's sake; he has covered them with a covering of mercy, so as they are not visible; he has blotted them out of his sight, so as they are not legible to the eye of justice; yea, he has cast them all behind his back, and into the depths of the sea; insomuch that the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: such strong expressions as these from the mouth of the Lord of hosts, will sufficiently bear us out in asserting, that "God sees no sin in his people."

Thirdly, Add to this, the view in which the people of God are to be considered, and are considered by Father, Son, and Spirit, being clothed with the righteousness of Christ, and washed in his blood; they are complete in Christ; they are without fault before the throne, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing: Christ says to them, Thou art all fair, my love; and there is no spot in thee (Cant. 4:7). The church is a perfection of beauty in his esteem; all the saints are perfectly comely through the comeliness he has put on them; yea, they are, in the sight of God, in the eye of justice, unblameable and unproveable; and if so, then surely God sees no iniquity in them. One must transcribe a considerable part of the Old and New Testament to give the full proof of this doctrine.

If this is a fancy, it is the glory of the Bible, and the marrow of the Gospel; what most displays the riches of God's grace, the efficacy of Christ's blood, the

completeness of his righteousness, and the fulness of his satisfaction it is the foundation of all solid hopes of future happiness, what supports the life of faith, and is the ground of a believer's triumph. One would have thought, Sir, you might have forbore so severe a reflection on this truth, of God's seeing no sin in his people, since it is the *το ρητον*, the express words of the sacred oracles: He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel (Num. 23:21). I proceed,

IV. To another truth decried by you as a fancy; the assertors or which are ridiculed, as amusers of themselves with a fancy, which is, that "good works are not necessary to salvation." I am sensible, in some measure, what controversies have been in the world about this subject, and what extremes have been run into on both sides the question. There was a sharp contention among the Lutherans on this head. George Major asserted, that "good works are necessary to salvation:" on the other hand, Nicholas Amsdorsius said, that they were "noxious and pernicious to salvation:" neither of these positions are defensible, as they thus stand: Not the former; for though good works are necessary, upon many accounts, to answer several valuable ends and purposes, yet not necessary to salvation; though they ought to be performed by all God's justified and saved ones, yet not in order to their justification and salvation; though the people of God ought to maintain good works for necessary uses, yet these necessary uses do not design salvation, but other things, as I shall shew presently. Nor is the latter of these positions to be defended; for though good works are not necessary to salvation, yet not noxious and pernicious to it, unless when they are placed in the business of salvation, to the displacing of Christ and his righteousness; and then they are so far from helping forward, that they hinder the salvation of souls, being an *ignis fatuus*, which leads out of the way of salvation. The Papists and Protestants have warmly contested this point: the former say that good works are necessary to salvation, *per viam efficientiæ*, "by way of efficiency or causality;" to merit or procure salvation; which is the only sense in which the proposition can well be understood for if good works are necessary to salvation, it must be to procure it; for in what sense else can they be necessary to it? This is denied by the latter, and by them fully confuted; though some have made use of some distinctions, in order to qualify and

soften this proposition, that good works are necessary to salvation, by which they have betrayed the truth into the hands of the enemy, I shall attempt to shew,

First, That good works are in no sense necessary to salvation.

Secondly, What they are necessary to, or what are the necessary uses of them

First, I affirm that good works are not necessary to salvation in any sense.

1st, They are not necessary to salvation by way of causality, as having any causal influence on our salvation, or any part of it. Christ is the sole author of salvation; he came into this world to effect it; he has done it, it is finished, it is complete and perfect in itself; it needs nothing to be added to it to make it so: Christ is a rock, and his work is perfect; he is a Saviour in whole, and not in part; he will admit of no copartner or assistant in this matter. Good works have no concern, as causes, in our salvation; God, in saving persons, does not act according to them, nor by them, nor in consideration of them; for he hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began (2 Tim. 1:9). And says the same inspired writer elsewhere (Titus 3:5); not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but, according to his mercy, he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the holy Ghost. God saves his elect by Christ a way of pure grace and mercy, to the exclusion of good works having any hand therein; For by grace ye are saved, says the apostle (Eph. 2:8, 9), through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast. Good works are not to be placed in any rank of causes of our salvation whatever.

1. They are not the impulsive or moving causes of salvation. Nothing out of God can move him to do any thing; good works did not move him to take any one step relating to the salvation of his people; they did not move him to choose them unto salvation by Jesus Christ; he chose them in Christ before the foundation of the world, before they had done either good or evil; and so not because they were, but that they might be holy. This act of his sprung from his good will and pleasure, and is an instance of pure grace. Hence it is called the election of grace (Rom. 11:5, 6); and, adds the apostle, if by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace; but if it be of works,

then is it no more grace, otherwise work is no more work. Good works are the fruits, not the causes of electing grace; nor did these move God to make a covenant of grace with his elect in Christ, in which the scheme of salvation was fixed, the whole of it secured, and all blessings and promises put into the hands of the Mediator; nor was it good works that moved God to send his Son to obtain salvation, but his own free love and grace; nor what moved Christ to give himself for his people, since at that time they were without strength, ungodly, sinners, and enemies to him; in a word, it is not good works, but grace, which moves God to justify, pardon, adopt, regenerate, sanctify and glorify any of the sons of men.

2. Good works are not the efficient, procuring, or meritorious causes of salvation; for they are imperfect in the best of men; and were they perfect, yet the requisites of merit are wanting in them; for,

(1.) That by which we would merit, must not be due to him, of whom we would merit. Now all our works are previously due to God; he has a right to all our obedience, prior to the performance of it; and therefore when we have done all those things which are commanded us, we have done but that which was our duty to do.

(2.) That by which we would merit, must be some way or other be profitable to him, of whom we would merit: but can a man be profitable to God, as he that is wise may be profitable to himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous? or is it any gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect? If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand? Thy wickedness may hurt a man, as thou art, and thy righteousness may profit the son of man (Job 22:2, 3; 35:7, 8).

(3.) That by which we would merit, must be done in our own strength, and not in the strength of him, of whom we would merit: we must not be obliged to him for any thing in the performance of it; whereas all our sufficiency to think a good thought, or do a good action, is of God without him we can do nothing; it is by the grace of God we are what we are; and it is by the grace of God we do what we do; and therefore to him all the glory belongs.

(4.) There must be some proportion between that by which we would merit, and that which we would merit. Now there is a just proportion between sin and the wages of it, but none between good works and

eternal salvation; The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom.6:23).

In fine, if good works were the efficient procuring causes of salvation, then Christ died in vain; his obedience and sufferings must be useless, and of no effect; besides, boasting would not be excluded, which is God's design in fixing the method of salvation in the manner line has; for if men were saved by works, they would have whereof to boast.

3. Good works are not coefficient causes or con-causes of salvation, with Christ; they are not adjuvant or helping causes of it; they do not assist in, or help forward the business of salvation; it is done without them; Christ will not admit of any rival-ship in this matter: his own arm has brought salvation to him; he has alone effected it, and is the sole author of it; and therefore good works are needless in this respect. It is a rule in philosophy, *Quod potest fieri per pauca, non debet fieri per plura*; "What can be done by few, ought not to be done by more." There is a fulness, a sufficiency in Christ to salvation, therefore good works are not necessary to salvation.

4. Good works are not *causa sine qua non*, of salvation they are not conditions of salvation, or that without which persons cannot be saved; as is evident from the instances of the thief upon the cross, of elect infants dying in infancy, and of multitudes of others, as it is hoped, whom God calls in the last hour, upon their death—beds, who live not to perform good works. Now if good works are necessary to salvation, and persons cannot be saved without them, there none of those persons mentioned can be saved.

2dly, There are some worthy divines who utterly deny the efficiency or causality of good works in salvation, who yet think that this proposition, that "good works are necessary to salvation," may stand safely, and in a good sense, admitting some distinctions, which I shall briefly take notice of, and are as follow;

Some say, that good works are not necessary to salvation as causes, yet they are necessary, as means. This cannot be true, because every mean is the cause of that unto which it is a mean: and then good works must be tire causes of salvation, which has been disproved already. If good works are the means of salvation, they must be either the means of procuring it, or of applying it, or of introducing God's

people into the full possession of it; they are not the means of procuring salvation, for that is procured by Christ. alone without them; nor are they the means of applying it in regeneration or effectual vocation, because, properly speaking, before regeneration, or effectual vocation, there are no good works done by the sons of men they must be first regenerated, and called by grace; there must be an application of salvation; the gospel must become the power of God unto salvation, before they are capable of performing good works: We are his workmanship, says the apostle (Eph. 2:10), created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. Nor are they the means of introducing God's people into the full possession of salvation; for they that die in the Lord, rest from their labours, and their works follow them. They do not go beforehand to prepare the way for them, or to introduce them into the heavenly glory. Good works are not necessary, as means, either for the application or possession of salvation, neither for the incohesion or consummation of it.

Others make use of a distinction, which is Bernard's: which is, that though good works are not *causa regnandi*, "the cause of reigning," yet they are *via ad regnum*, "the way to the kingdom." But it ought to be observed, that Bernard does not say that they are *via ad regnum*, but *via regni*, "the way of the kingdom;" between which there is a great difference; for good works may be the way or course of such, who are of the kingdom of grace and belong to the kingdom of glory, when they are not the way to either. Christ is the way, the truth and the life; the only true, way to eternal life. Good works are to be performed by all that are in the way, Christ: they are the business of all such that walk in this way but they themselves not the way, unless it can be thought that good works are Christ.

Others say, that good works are necessary to justification and salvation; not *quoad efficientiam*, "as to the efficiency of them," but *quoad praesentiam*, "as to the presence of them;" and though they have no causal influence on salvation, yet the presence of them is necessary to salvation. That the presence of good works is necessary to all those who are justified and saved, that are capable of performing them, and have time and opportunity to perform them, I allow but that it is necessary to their justification and salvation, I deny; for if it is necessary, it must be necessary either

as a cause, or a condition, or a mean of justification and salvation; either of which has been disproved already.

Others say, that they are necessary antecedent to salvation, and that they are necessary to it, as the antecedent to the consequent: but, from the instances before mentioned, of the thief on the cross, of elect infants dying in infancy, with those whom God calls by his grace on their death-beds, it appears that salvation is where good works do not go before. It is true, indeed, that without holiness no man shall see the Lord (Heb. 12:14), that is, without internal holiness, without a principle of holiness in the heart. This must be supposed to be in the persons instanced in; but then there may be this, where there is no external holiness, or any performance of good works before men; and that either through incapacity, or through want of time and opportunity. And now lest it should be thought that I imagine that the performance of good works are unnecessary, I shall proceed,

Secondly, To shew in what sense they are necessary, and what are the necessary uses of them; for to say, that because they are not necessary to salvation, that therefore they are unnecessary to any thing else, is very illogical; though the scriptures nowhere say that they are necessary to salvation, yet they direct us to learn to maintain good works for necessary uses (Titus 3:14); which are these following:

1. They are necessary on the account of God, who has commanded them; We are under his law as creatures, and ought to do his will and pleasure; and as new creatures are under greater obligation still; we ought to perform good works in respect to the commands of God, to testify our obedience and subjection to him, and to shew the grateful sense we have of his mercies, both spiritual and temporal, as well as to answer some ends of his glory: Herein, says Christ (John 15:8), is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit. Nay, we not only glorify God ourselves by our good works, but are the means of others glorifying him likewise: Hence, says our Lord (Matt. 5:16), let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

2. Good works are necessary on the account of ourselves. They are useful to evidence the truth of our faith to the world, and discover to them the certainty of our election and vocation, who have no other way

of judging of either, but by our outward conversation; hereby we adorn the profession we make of Christ and his gospel; so that his name, his ways, truths, and ordinances, are not blasphemed, or spoke evil of through us: yea, hereby we exercise a conscience void of offence, both towards God and man.

3. Good works are necessary on the account of our neighbors, who as they are often injured by evil works, are helped and profited by good works. One part of the moral law is, to love our neighbor as ourselves: now as a turning from this holy commandment tends to our neighbor's injury, so a conformity to it issues in his good.

4. Good works are necessary on the account of the enemies of religion. A good conversation recommends the Gospel, and the truths of it, and may be a means of winning persons over to it; and if not, yet it silences the ignorance of foolish men, and shames such, and stops the mouth of those who reproach the Gospel of Christ, as a licentious doctrine, and falsely accuse the good conversation of the saints. From the whole, I hope, it appears on the one hand, that good works are necessary, and not trifling and indifferent things, that may, or may not, be done; or that they are useless, unnecessary, and insignificant; and on the other hand, that it is no fancy, but matter of faith, and what ought to be abode by, that good works are not necessary to salvation.

V. I observe that you describe such as assert that God loves and delights in his elect, while in a state of nature; that he sees no sin in his people, and that good works are not necessary to salvation, as persons "forward to condemn pressing men to duty, as legal preaching; and to speak of exhorting to repentance, mortification and self-denial, as low and mean stuff." The same complaint you make in another place.

1st, I cannot but wonder that you should esteem such culpable or blame-worthy, who condemn pressing men to duty, as legal preaching; for pressing men to duty, can be no other than legal preaching, or preaching of the law since duty can be referred to nothing else but the law, which obliges to it. Should they condemn pressing men to duty, as criminal, or deny that there ought to be any preaching, or that there is any use of the law, you might justly have blamed them. The duties which the law requires, ought to be in their place insisted on in the ministry of the word; they should be opened and explained; men

should be taught their duty to God and one another; they should be pressed: that is, if I understand it, be exhorted unto it, with gospel-motives and arguments, such as the apostles frequently make use of in their epistles. They should, at the same time, be told where grace and strength lie, and are to be had to assist them in it. The preaching of the law is of use both to saints and sinners; it is made useful by the Spirit of God to convince of sin; By the law is the knowledge of sin (Rom. 3:20); though by it is no knowledge of a Saviour from sin; it shews the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the deformity of nature, the imperfection of man's obedience, and what is requisite to his justification before God; though it leaves him ignorant of that righteousness which can only answer its demands, and render him acceptable in the sight of God. The law is a rule of walk and conversation to believers, as it is in the hands of Christ, and given out by him, as King of his church it contains the perfect and acceptable will of God; it points out what is, or what is not to be done; it is in its own nature spiritual, just and good, and very agreeable to the regenerate man, who delights in the law of God, after the inward man. But then pressing men to duty, is preaching the law, and that must needs be legal preaching, though it ought not to be branded within any odious or invidious character; for all duty belongs to a law; grace and promises of grace, belong to the gospel, but precepts and duty to the law. We have had a controversy among us lately about preaching Christ, in the latitude and restrictive way; and, no doubt, the people have been much edified and instructed by it; but men may controvert to the end of the world, it can never be proved, that preaching good works is preaching Christ, or that pressing men to duty, is preaching the gospel; unless it can be thought that good works are Christ and that the law is gospel. I am entirely for calling things by their right names; preaching duty, is preaching the law; preaching the free grace of God, and salvation by Christ, is preaching the gospel; to say otherwise, is to turn the gospel into a law and to blend and confound both together. Some very worthy divines, whose names I forbear to mention, did formerly talk of gospel-commands, gospel-threatenings, and gospel-duties, which, to me, are contradictions in terms; and I fear that this loose and unguarded way of talking, tended to pave the way for Neonomianism among us, which some few years ago, gave the churches so much disturbance, and the

bad effects of which we still feel.

2dly, "Exhorting to repentance, you say, is spoken of by these persons as, "low and mean stuff;" but you do not tell us what kind of repentance is meant, or with what views, or upon what considerations an exhortation to it is given. There is an evangelical and a legal repentance: Evangelical repentance has God for its object, and is called repentance toward God (Acts 20:21). It is the gift of Christ, who is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and forgiveness of sins (Acts 5:31); and is one of the graces of the Spirit of God, which he implants in the hearts of his people. It is that sorrow and concern for sin, which springs from and is heightened and increased by the discoveries of God's love; it is accompanied with views, or, at least, hopes of pardoning grace and mercy; it is a godly sorrow (2 Cor. 7:10), *ἡ κατὰ θεοῦ λύπη*, "a sorrow according to God," agreeable to the mind and will of God; a divine sorrow, which springs from divine principles, and proceeds on divine views: or it is a sorrow for sin, as it is committed against a God of holiness, purity, grace and mercy; which godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of; and therefore by no means to be spoken slightly of. Nor can exhortations to such kind of repentance, be treated as low and mean stuff, without casting contempt on. John the Baptist (Matt. 3:2; 4:17), Christ, and his apostles: who made use of them, either to shew the necessity of repentance, or to encourage the exercise of this grace in the saints, or to stir them up to an open profession of it, and to bring forth fruits in their conversation meet for the same. Legal repentance is a work of the law, and consists in outward confession of sin, and external humiliation for it, and an inward horror, wrath and terror, upon the account of it. It is a sorrow and concern for sin, not as it is in its own nature exceeding sinful, or as it is an offense to God, and a breach in of his law, but as it entails upon the sinner ruin and destruction; This is the sorrow of the world, which worketh death; and may be where true evangelical repentance never was, nor never will be, and therefore is not to be valued and regarded. Now to exhort to this kind of repentance, or even to evangelical repentance, as within the compass of the power of man's will, and as a condition of the covenant of grace, and a term of acceptance with God, and in order to make peace with God, and gain the divine favor, which you know is the rant of some men's

ministry; I say, to exhort to repentance within such views, and on such considerations as these, is low and mean stuff, too mean for, below, and unworthy of, a minister of the gospel.

3dly, You mention exhorting to mortification and self-denial, as treated by some, in the same slight and contemptuous manner. You know very well that much of what has been said and written concerning mortification, is low, mean, and trifling, and it would be mortification enough to be obliged to hear and read it. I confess, I have often been at a loss what divines mean by mortification of sin; if they mean a destroying the being of sin, a killing, a taking away the life of it in believers, which seems to be their meaning; this is contrary both to Scripture and all the experience of God's people. The word of God assures us, that sin is in believers, and they find it to be in them; yea, to be alive in them, though they do not live in sin. The old man is, indeed, put off, concerning the former conversation, but not put to death; he remains and is alive, and is sometimes very active, though he lies in chains, and is under the power and dominion of mighty and efficacious grace. There is a mortification of sin by the death of Christ; The old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed (Rom. 6:6). Christ has abolished, destroyed, made arm end of sin; through Christ's bearing the sins of his people in his own body on the tree, and through his death they are dead to sin, and live unto righteousness. But sin is not dead in them; there is no such thing as a mortification, a killing or destroying the inward principles of sin in believers, nor is it to be expected in this life. If, indeed, by mortification of sin, is meant a weakening the power of sin, so as that it shall not have the dominion over the saints; this is readily granted to be found in them: but then it will be difficult to prove that ever this is called mortification in Scripture. The mortification the Scripture speaks of, and exhorts to, does not design the mortification of the inward principles of sin, but the outward actings of it; it is a mortification of an external course of living in sin, and not a taking away the life of sin in the soul, as is evident from those places where any mention is made of it; mortify therefore, says the apostle (Col. 3:5, 7), your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry; in which ye also walked some time when ye lived in them; which last

words shew, that the apostle has respect to a walk, a conversation, a course of living in these sins; so when he says (Gal. 5:24), they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts, he means the works of the flesh, and the actings of unruly passions and deceitful lusts, as appears from the context; and when exhortations to mortification of sin, in this sense, are given, a special regard should be had to the gracious influences of the blessed Spirit; for, as the apostle says (Rom. 8:13), If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

As for self-denial, perhaps no persons are found more in the practice of it, than those you have described, however averse they may be to exhortations to it, made without taking any notice of the grace and assistance of the Spirit of God, as necessary to the exercise of it. They choose to suffer reproach, the loss of good name and reputation, to forego popularity, wealth, and friends, to be traduced as Antinomians, and reckoned any thing, rather than to drop, conceal, or balk any one branch of truth, respecting Christ and free grace. None are more ready to deny self-righteousness than they are, and to submit to the righteousness of Christ, on which they alone depend for justification before God, and acceptance with him; nor are any persons more powerfully and effectually taught to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world. And, you, Sir, are so kind as to say, that such who have amused themselves with what you call fancies, "by their life and conversation have shewed that they were far from being enemies to holiness." And you further add, "Far be it from us to charge some, who have gone into this way of thinking and talking, with turning the grace of God into wantonness."

I conclude, Sir, with assuring you, that I write not this with an angry and contentious spirit; I am willing to submit these things to the Scriptures of truth, which are the only rule of faith and practice; and would gladly enter into a sober controversy, and try whether they be mere fancies, or parts of that faith which was once delivered to the saints. If, Sir, you should think fit to give me an answer to this letter, I desire you would not so much attend to my inaccuracies in writing, which I know you are able to correct, as to the truths themselves herein asserted and defended. I wish you success in your learned studies.

I am, SIR, With all due respect, Yours, &c.

10 THE LOVE OF GOD CONSIDERED.

2 *Thessalonians 3:5*

And the Lord God direct your hearts into the Love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.

One principal part of the apostle's design in writing this epistle was to satisfy some persons in this church, who were shaken in mind, and troubled, as though The day of Christ was at hand. He assures them, therefore, in the second chapter, that it was not; for there were several things to be done previous thereunto: such as the removal of the Roman empire; the great apostasy that was to befall the churches; and the setting up the man of sin, the Papal Antichrist. He therefore exhorts them to steadfastness in the doctrines of the gospel; and wishes them a great many good things. In the beginning of this chapter, he desires them to pray for him, and the rest of the ministers of the gospel; hints what he would have them pray for, and the reason why. Finally, brethren, pray for us; that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified; that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for all men have not faith. And then, for their comfort, expresses his assurance of their final perseverance. But the Lord is faithful, who shall establish you, and keep you from evil. As also, his great confidence of their cheerful and universal obedience to the commands of God, saying, And we have confidence in the Lord, touching you, that ye both do, and will do, the things which we command you. In order to which, he puts up a prayer for them, in the words of the text. The Lord direct your hearts, &c. So that the words are a prayer of the apostle consisting of two petitions, namely, That the Lord would direct their hearts into the Love of God. And, that the same Lord would also direct their hearts into the patient waiting for Christ. It is the former of these that shall insist upon at this time. In order to explain which, I shall make the following enquiries,

- I. What are we to understand by the Love of God.
- II. What it is to have our hearts directed into it.
- III. Who this Lord is, who is prayed unto to do this for us. And, IV. What is the great usefulness of having our hearts so directed.

I. What we are to understand by the Love of God. This may be understood either actively or passively. Actively, of the love wherewith we love God. Or, passively, of the love wherewith we are loved by God.

In other words, by it may be meant, either our love of God, or God's love to us; and seeing the words will admit of either sense, I shall consider them in both. And by the Love of God, may be meant, our love to God; concerning which, let the following things be observed.

1. That this is the sum and substance of the moral law; at least, it is the main and principal part thereof, as may easily be collected from our Lord's answer to the lawyer's question, in Matt. 22:35, 40. The lawyer's question is, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Christ's answer is, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind; this is the first and great commandment. Love to God, urged under the gospel dispensation, is the same with that enjoined by the law of Moses. Christ and Moses agree in this, as appears from Deut. 4:4, 5. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. This is no new commandment of the gospel; only it is renewed under the gospel dispensation, and pressed with stronger motives.

2. Let it also be observed, that every man by nature, is destitute of love to God: nay, there is not only a want of affection, but even an aversion to him; yea, an enmity against him. For the carnal mind is enmity against God. One part of the character given of the Heathens (Rom. 1:30) who were left of God and given up to their own lusts, is that they were *θεοσυγεις*; which signifies, not only that they were hateful to God, but that they were haters of God. Likewise in the account the apostle gives of the degeneracy which shall be in the latter day, he says, (2 Tim. 3:4) Men shall be lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God. And this is not only the case of those persons now mentioned, but of all mankind even of God's elect themselves, while in a state of nature. For they, as well as others, are enemies in their minds, by wicked works. They live in a state of rebellion, and commit open acts of hostility against the God of heaven. They stretch out their hands against God, and strengthen themselves against the Almighty. They run upon him, even on his neck, upon the thick bosses of his buckler.

3. Let it be further observed, that love to God is a grace implanted in the heart, by the Spirit of God. This is one of the fruits of the Spirit; and is mentioned at the head of them, Gal. 5:22. The fruit of the Spirit is

love, &c. It is, with other graces, wrought in the soul at regeneration. That grace of the Lord, which comes in with it, flows into the sinner's heart at conversion; is exceeding abundant, with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. These two graces always go together; being implanted at one and the same time: by one and the same hand. And faith, particularly, works by love: and love is usually most warm, active, and vigorous, at first conversion. Insomuch, that the Lord takes special notice when it is left by us; according to Jer. 2:2. Thus saith the Lord, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Which leads me to observe,

4. The fervour of this love often abates; though the grace itself can never be lost. This frequently arises from the aboundings of sin, both in ourselves and others. Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold, according to Matt. 24:12. Very often, also it arises from an immoderate pursuit after the things of this world. Hence the apostle, 1 John 2:15, advises, not to love the world, neither the things that are in the world: for, says he, If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. That, is, there is but little evidence of love to God, in that man's heart, whose affections are set upon the things of this world. These things, though they cannot destroy the grace, where it is once wrought; yet they strike a very great chill upon it. The grace of Love indeed, cannot be lost; but then it may be left, as it was by the church at Ephesus, of whom the Lord complains, Rev. 2:4, saying, Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. He does not say, because thou hast lost it; the word signifying not *Amittere*, to lose; but *Remittere*, to remit, or abate, in the fervour of it. And this, all the people of God, more or less, sooner or later, experience to their great sorrow: especially in the day in which we live. Therefore,

5. There is great need to pray, with the apostle, that the Lord would direct our hearts into this love. That is, that he would work upon our hearts, and excite our love to God: stir and blow it up into a flame. This he does, by shewing us the vanity of all earthly enjoyments: what God is in himself, and what he is to his people. How worthy he is of their highest affection; and more especially, by shedding abroad the love of God in our hearts; than which nothing can more effectually do it. For we love him, because he first loved us, 1 John 4:19.

A sense of this, invigorates our love, ravishes our souls, and obliges us to say with the Psalmist, Whom have I in heaven but thee; and there is none upon earth, that I desire besides thee. Psalm 73:25. But I choose rather,

By the love of God here, to understand God's love to us; concerning the nature and glory of which, take the following hints.

1. As to the original of it, it is free and sovereign, Nothing out of God moved him to it. He did not set his love upon us, because of any loveliness in us; or because of any love in us to him. Not because of any loveliness in ourselves. For we were in no wise better than others, being by nature the children of wrath. Nor because of any love in us to him; for his love is prior to ours, as the cause is to the effect. And, indeed, he loved us, before we had done either good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand. No other reason can be given of God's loving his people, but his own *Ευδοχία*; his Sovereign good will and pleasure. Nor ought any other to be sought for, he loves them because he will love them. And though, perhaps, this may not be allowed to be a sufficient reason, by your men of reason; yet it is what the Holy Ghost thought fit to give us, and we should be satisfied with it, Deut. 7:7, 8. The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people (for ye were the fewest of all people); but because the Lord loved you.

2. As to the objects of God's love, it is special and discriminating. He loves some, and not others. It is true, he has a general love and regard to all his creatures. He is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. They all share in the bounties of his providence. He makes his sun to shine on the evil and on the good. He sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. But then, he has chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure. Hence he bestows peculiar blessings on those to whom he bears a peculiar love. David says, Psalm 106:4, Remember me with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: very plainly intimating, that it was special and discriminating; of a different nature from that which he bore to others. A full instance of this distinguishing love, we have in Mal. 1:2, 3, I have loved you, saith the Lord; yet ye say, wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob, and hated Esau. And, as I said before, no other reason can be given of this distinction, which God makes among the

lost sons of Adam, but his own sovereign will; who will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and will be gracious to whom he will be gracious, let a wrangling world say what they please.

3. As to its commencement, it is from eternity. God has loved his people with an everlasting love; and therefore with loving-kindness he draws them to himself in time. Many are the instances which might be given, in proof of the antiquity of this love. His choosing them in Christ, before the foundation of the world, was an act of his love, for *Electio præsupponit dilectionem*. Election pre-supposes love. His entering into an everlasting covenant with his Son, on the account of those he chose; his setting him up as the Mediator of that Covenant, from everlasting; and his donation of grace to them, in him, before the world began; are so many demonstrations of his early love to them. As also, his putting their persons into the hands of Christ, and so making them his care and charge. Because he loved the people (Deut 33:5), all his saints are in his hand. Now, can it ever be imagined, that there should be a choice of persons; a covenant of grace, so well formed and stored; a promise of life granted; and security given both for person and grace, and yet no love all this while? No, these things prove his love, and this love does not commence with ours; nor, indeed, with time; but bears date from eternity.

4. As to the duration of it, it is to eternity; for it reaches from one eternity to another. Having loved his own, which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. He loves them to the end of time, and will love them throughout the endless ages of eternity; for he rests in his love towards them, and from it there can be no separation. For 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. 8:38, 39.

5. As to the degree of it, it is unparalleled. It appears very great in the conversion of a poor sinner. Hence, says the apostle, Eph. 2:4, 5, God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ. But in sending his Son to die for sinners, it appears yet greater. Scarcely for a righteous man (says the apostle, Rom. 5:7, 8) will one die; but God commended his love towards us, in that while we were

yet sinners, Christ died for us. There is in those words a very beautiful gradation. The apostle seems to allude to the distribution of the Jewish people; among whom were three sorts of persons. One sort they called Righteous persons, very strict observers of the letter of the law; but did no more than just what they were obliged to do by the law. There was another sort called, Good men. These were very generous and liberal to the poor, and towards defraying all the expenses of the temple service, in which they exceeded the strict demands of the law. But then there was a third sort, called Wicked men; the profligate and abandoned part of the people, given up to their own lusts, and the very refuse of mankind. Now it is as if the apostle should say, scarcely for one of these righteous persons will one die, who will do no more than just what he is obliged to; yet, peradventure, for one of these good men, who were so generous (and, consequently, had the affections of the people) some would even dare to die. But who will die for those wicked, profligate, and abandoned wretches? Not one; but God commended his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Matchless, unparalleled grace!

6. As to the nature and quality of it, it is unchangeable. It is as invariable as his own nature; nay, it is his nature: for God is love. (1 John 4:16) The blessings of his grace are irreversible, because they proceed from him, who is the Father of lights, with whom there is nor variableness, nor shadow of turning. Hence also it is, that our salvation does not stand upon a precarious foundation; which it would do, if his love to us changed, as ours to him does. But he is the Lord, who changes not; therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed. God sometimes changes the dispensations of his providences towards his people; but never changes his love. He sometimes hides, and he sometimes chides; but at all times he loves. When he hides his face from his people, for a moment; he still, with everlasting kindness will have mercy on them. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee. (Isa. 54:8, 10) Love makes alterations in the condition of God's people; but those alterations make no change in God's love. Love made a strange alteration in the state of the apostle Paul; who, of a persecuting, blaspheming, and injurious Saul, was made, not only a believer in

Christ, but a preacher of the everlasting gospel. But this wonderful change in him, produced none in God, nor in his love. But if things be so, you'll say, "Then God loves his people with the same love, before conversion, as after." And where is the great hurt of saying so? For once, I will assert, he does; and a very few considerations will bring you to an acknowledgment of it. Let us a little consider, the instances of God's love, before and after conversion, and compare them together; from whence we may be able to conclude which exceeds. I might take notice of God's love in choosing them in Christ; in making a covenant of grace with him, on their account; and in putting both their persons and their grace into his hands which are all great instances of love, before conversion. But I shall only observe to you three great gifts of Gods love to his people before conversion; which, I think, can never be equaled by any instance after conversion. And they are these,

1. God's gift of himself to them: for God has, in his everlasting covenant (and this long before conversion) made over himself unto his people. The tenure of which runs thus, I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

2. The great gift of his Son to them, and for them; in which he has shewn the exceeding greatness of his love towards them. Herein is love, says the apostle, not that we loved God: (so far from it, that we were enemies to him; for it was, while we were yet sinners, that Christ died for us) but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 4:10; John 3:16; Rom. 5:6, 8, 10)

3. The great gift of the Spirit, who is sent into the hearts of God's people, previous to conversion, in order to effect that great work; namely, to convince of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. And now, having observed these things, I am ready to ask, Can any greater instance of God's love to his people, after conversion, be produced? If the heavenly glory itself should be mentioned, with all the joys of that delightful state; I deny it to be a greater instance of God's love, than the gift of himself, or that of his Son, or that of his Spirit. And, indeed, all that God does in time, or will do to eternity, is only telling his people, how much he loved them from everlasting; all is but, as it were, a comment upon that ancient love of his. If, then, no greater instance of love can be produced, after conversion, than was before, we need neither

to be afraid, nor ashamed to say, That God loves his people with the same love before conversion, as he does after.

This doctrine, I am sensible, is not easily digested; and therefore, many distinctions are formed, in order to lay it aside. Some distinguish God's love into Antecedent and Consequent; a distinction without any foundation in the word of God; and is, indeed, in itself a mere jargon of words, which convey no proper ideas of God's love: but such as are derogatory to the glory of his being and perfections, and serve only to introduce confusion and distress in the minds of men.

There is another distinction of God's love, which I have observed pretty much obtain among persons, though as groundless as the former. It is this, God loves his people before conversion, with a love of benevolence, or goodwill. He wishes them well; but he does not love them with a love of complacency, till after conversion. But purely the Lord Jesus Christ loved his people, with a love of complacency, before conversion; for, it is said, from the beginning, or ever the earth was, his delights were with the sons of men. (Prov. 8:23-31) The Hebrew word translated delights, is not only in the plural number, but its radical letters are doubled; which, according to the usage of that language, always increases the signification of the word: so that it is expressive of the exceeding greatness of Christ's delight and complacency, which he took in his people. Nay, he seems to have taken a pleasure in the fore-views of the very places where he knew his elect should dwell: for it is said, that he was rejoicing in the habitable parts of his earth. And now, why God the Father should not love them with the same love the Son did, I cannot see. God's love is invariably the same, as his nature and essence are. It does indeed appear more in some acts of God than in others and is more clearly manifest at one time than another; but in itself it is always the same. All the difference between God's love before, and after conversion, lies in the manifestation of it. It is manifested at, and after conversion; and that sometimes more, and sometimes less; but was not at all manifested before. But the change is in us, and not in God's love.

But if this doctrine be true, you will say, God must love his people in their sins. Well, and where is the hurt of saying he does? It would have been miserable, to all intents and purposes, with you and me, had he not done so. When he saw us wallowing in our

blood, in all the impurity of our nature, with our numerous sins and transgressions attending us; had not then his time, been a time of love, had he not then spread his skirt over us, and manifested his covenant grace to us, we had never been his. Perhaps it may be replied, according to this notion, God takes pleasure in the sins of his people, but where is the reason so to conclude? What, can no distinction be made between God's taking delight in the persons of his elect, and his taking delight in their sins? The distinction is allowed after conversion; that God loves the persons of his people, though he hates their sins. And why may not the same distinction he allowed before, as after conversion? We know that God is of purer eyes than to behold evil, or look upon iniquity: that he takes no pleasure in sin, neither shall evil dwell with him, but hates all the workers of iniquity. We abhor and detest all notions to the contrary; yet firmly believe the unchangeableness of God's love to his people. It may be asked, how is it possible that a person should be a child of wrath, and an object of love, at one and the same time? For the elect of God are by nature children of wrath even as others: how then at the same time can they be the objects of Love? I answer, how was Jesus Christ the object of his Father's Love and wrath, at one and the same time? Why it was as he bore two different characters, and stood in two different relations to his Father; viz. That of a Son, and that of a surety. As he was the Son of God, he was always the object of his love and delight; but as he was the sinner's surety, he was the object of his wrath and displeasure. Hence it is said, thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been wrath with thine anointed, (Psa. 89:38) with thy Messiah, or Christ. But yet even when he poured forth his wrath upon him to the uttermost, on account of the sins of his people; when he ordered Justice to draw the sword, and sheath it in him, his love towards him was not in the least abated. Thus also the elect of God, considered in different views, may be truly said to be the children of wrath, and yet objects of love at one and the same time. Considered in Adam, and under a covenant of works, they were children of wrath; exposed to the curses of God's righteous law, and liable to the wrath of God. But as considered in Christ, and under the covenant of grace, they always were, and ever will be the objects of God's love.

Nor has this doctrine any tendency to encourage licentiousness; or to discourage the performance of

good works; or to prejudice true humiliation for sin; but all the reverse. The consideration of this, that God loved me, before I loved him; nay, when I was an enemy to him; that his thoughts were running out on my salvation, when I had no thoughts of him, or concern for myself; lays me under ten thousand times greater obligations to serve, fear, and glorify him, than a supposition that he began to love me, when I began to love him, or because I did so, can possibly do. This may be a full answer to those who ask where is the usefulness of this doctrine?

7. If we inquire into the excellency of God's love, it is preferable to all creature enjoyments; thy loving kindness is better than life. And if so, it must be better than all the comforts and pleasures of life. The streams of this river of God's love, make glad the city of God. A sense of it makes the believer cheerful under all his trials, and fixes his confidence in God. How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. Psalm 34:7. But I proceed,

II. To enquire what it is, to have our hearts directed into this Love. And,

1. To have our hearts directed into the love of God, is to be led into it, as it were, by a straight line; for so the word *κατευθύ ναι*, here used, properly signifies. Now it is the work of the Spirit of God, to lead souls into the love of God, directly, at once, in a straight line; and not in a round about way, as some persons are led, being directed by false guides; who tell them, they must go through the valley of humiliation, and up the hill of obedience, before they can get into the love of God. But the Spirit of God; leads the soul directly into it, independent of all its obedience and humiliation for sin: which love, when directed into, will set persons in the road of obedience, and put them upon humiliation for sin, in another way and manner.

2. To have our hearts directed into the love of God, is to be led into it further and further; so as to be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth of it. This work is progressive, and may very well be represented by Ezekiel's waters; which were first up to the ankles, then to the knees, and then to the loins; but after that, they were waters to swim in, a river that. could not be passed over, Ezek. 47:3-5.

3. To have our hearts directed into the love of God, is to be led into it, so as to know our own particular

interest in it. Thus the apostle Paul knew that God loved him in particular, and was persuaded that nothing should be able to separate him from it, Rom. 8:38, 39.

4. To have our hearts directed into the love of God, is so to be led into it, as to have our hearts affected with it; and influenced by it. A man may have notions of God's love in his head, who never felt the power of it upon his heart: and I am afraid that some persons are more solicitous to have their heads filled with notions about it, than to have their hearts and lives influenced by it. But our apostle does not pray, that the Lord would direct their heads but their hearts, into the love of God. I now proceed,

III. To enquire who is meant by the Lord here; who is prayed unto to do this for the saints. The word *κύριος*, here used, is commonly in the New Testament applied to Jesus Christ; though the Holy Spirit is also sometimes signified thereby, as in 2 Cor. 3:17. Now the Lord is that Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. And, I am of opinion, that by the Lord, in our text, we are to understand the Holy Spirit; for he is very manifestly distinguished from God the Father, into whose love, and from Jesus Christ, into whose patient waiting for, the hearts of the saints are to be directed. So that we have here a proof of the doctrine of a Trinity of Persons. Besides, we are furnished from hence, with more arguments than one, in favour of the Divinity of the Holy Ghost; who is not only called the Lord, which is expressive of dominion: but is also said to direct the heart; which none but God can do. For the king's heart, and so every man's heart, is in the hands of the Lord, and in his only; as the rivers of waters, he turneth it whithersoever he will: (Prov. 21:1) and especially, he must be God, that can direct the heart into the love of God; which is one of the deep things of God, which the Spirit of God only can search into, and reveal to us. Besides, prayer is here directed to him; which is so considerable a part of divine worship, that it is sometimes put for the whole of it, as in Rom. 10:13, and therefore would never be offered up to the Spirit, was he not the true God. Now it is the work of the Spirit, to direct souls into the love of God. He not only takes of the things of Christ (his person, blood, and righteousness) and shews them to us, and our interest in them; but he takes also of the things of the Father, and particularly his love, he sheds it abroad in our hearts, and directs our hearts into it;

and, in so doing, acts the part of a Comforter to us. I now come,

IV. To enquire into the usefulness of having our hearts directed into the love of God. And,

1. It is very useful to increase our love to God. Never was love to God, to Christ, to his gospel, people, ways, and ordinances, more cold than it is now. Great need there is to have it revived and increased; and nothing can more effectually do it, than this, to have our hearts directed into the Love of God. It was this, which, being let down into our hearts, first produced our love to God; and which only can animate and excite it, when it is grown cold. According to the perception we have of God's love to us, does our love to him rise. Her sins, which were many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, same loveth little, Luke 7:4.

2. It is very useful to promote our love to one another. There is a very visible decay of brotherly love among the saints, in this day; as is manifest from those discords, divisions, contentions, and backbitings, which every where abound in churches. Now nothing is more likely to retrieve our love to one another, than to have our hearts directed into the love of God. The primitive saints having a large effusion of the Spirit upon them, and a large sense of the love of God to them, were full of affection to each other. Insomuch that they had no need to be stirred up; for they were taught of God to love one another. Nay, even in Tertullian's time, so strong and vehement was their love to each other, that the very Heathens could not but take notice of them, as they walked about the streets, and say, Vide, ut se invicem diligant. See, how they love one another! No greater incentive to this duty is there than the love of God and of Christ. Hence the apostle John, after having discoursed of the love of God in sending his Son to die for sinners, thus argues, Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another: well knowing, that nothing could more vehemently provoke unto it.

3. It is very useful to enlarge our obedience to God. And indeed, it seems to be with this view, that the apostle puts up this petition here. In the preceding verse he expresses his confidence in these Thessalonians, that they both did, and would do, the things that were commanded them: and in order to that, he prays, that the Lord would direct their hearts into the love of God; knowing, that nothing would

more enlarge their hearts, to run with cheerfulness in the ways of God's commandments. 'Tis this which constrains souls to live to the glory of God; and makes even those that were slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. Never was there more need of having our hearts directed into the love of God than now; when there is such a neglect of duty among professors; not only in their closets and families, but also in the church of God.

4. It is very useful to enable us to mourn for sin aright. We have great reason to be humbled before God, and to mourn both for our own sins, and for the sins of others. But we never mourn more, nor better, than when impressed with a sense of God's love. It is this which throws our humiliation for sin into a proper channel. Our sorrow for it never rises higher; nor are our shame for it, and detestation of it more increased, than when we are made sensible of God's pacifying love towards us. See Ezek. 14:61-63. It was a look of love from Christ that sent Peter out of the hall to weep bitterly, after he had so shamefully denied his Lord; and it was a discovery of Christ's love to the poor woman, which fetched those floods of tears from her eyes, and which put her upon washing Christ's feet therewith, and wiping them with the hairs of her head.

5. It is very useful to enable us to bear the cross of Christ cheerfully; and perhaps that may be the reason why this other clause is added, And unto the patient waiting for Christ. This may intend, either a patient waiting for Christ's second Advent, and is what our version seems to regard; or a patient bearing the cross for the sake of Christ. The words in the original, will admit of either sense. It is the saints' duty to bear all reproaches and trials, patiently, for the sake of Christ; and that, in imitation of him who has left them an example. And great need they have to consider him, who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself; lest they be weary, and faint in their minds. And not only a consideration of Christ's person, but a sense of God's love is very requisite to support them under adverse dispensations of providence; which when they have, they glory in tribulations; knowing, that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us. (Rom. 5:3-5) Wherefore the apostle maybe thought to pray, that their hearts might be directed into the

love of God, in order that they might patiently bear all things for the sake of Christ. Thus having considered the nature of God's love, and shewn you what it is to be directed into it, I shall close all with those hearty petitions of the apostle in the two last verses of the preceding chapter . . . Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

(Part 1: See Sermon 11b. for Part 2)

11 THE STABILITY OF THE COVENANT OF GRACE, THE SUPPORT OF A BELIEVER UNDER OUTWARD AND INWARD TROUBLES.

2 Samuel 23:5

Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure.

THE preceding verses have already been considered; an introduction, therefore, to the present discourse, is unnecessary: suffice it to say, our text contains part of the last words of David; in which we may observe,

I. A concession, or something that is granted, that things were not altogether right, or so with David as he desired and wished. Although my house be not so with God.

II. A strong expression of his faith in God, as his covenant God; yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant.

III. The nature and excellency of this covenant described, 1. As an everlasting one. 2. Ordered in all things; and, 3. sure.

I. Here is a concession, or something granted, that things were not altogether right, or so with David as he desired and wished: Although my house be not so with God.

1. By his house, may be meant his kingdom and government, In this sense we find the word used in the seventh chapter of this book; which the Lord, by Nathan, assures David that he would make him a house. Though he does not allow him to build the Temple, which he was desirous of; yet, says he, verse 11th, the Lord telleth thee, that he will make thee a house: that is, that he would establish a kingdom under him, and in his posterity, as it is explained in

the next verse: and when thy days be fulfilled, and thou, shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. That is what is meant by making him a house; and this is still further explained in the 16th verse, where it is said, and thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee. Thine house and thy kingdom: the last clause explains the former, and plainly shows what is meant by his house. In this sense we may understand it here; for a kingdom is as a house, or family to a king, and the subjects are as his children, and a good prince is the father of them: such a one was David.

Now David was sensible that the kingdom which was in his hands, which he had the government of, was not like the kingdom and government of the Ruler, ruling in the fear of God, before described. Mine house is not so with God: so bright, so splendid, so glorious as the kingdom and government of this great and illustrious person, whom I have been speaking of, who is like the light of the morning, even a morning without clouds, when the sun riseth; like the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain: but so it is not with me, with my kingdom and government. "Nevertheless, he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, though it is not so." Or, it may be read thus, Although my house, or kingdom, be not firm and stable: so some cause to render the words. "Though it is in some respects tottering;" it has been so in various instances; yet he hath made me an everlasting covenant.

When he was first set upon the throne, Abner set up Ishbosheth over the ten tribes, in opposition to him. When that difficulty was over, and David was made king over all Israel, in process of time, a son out of his own bowels, Absalom, rebelled against him; and caused him not only to flee from Jerusalem, but even to pass over Jordan's river, to be in safety from this rebellious son. When this rebellion was quashed, there was an insurrection made by Sheba, who blew his trumpet, and said, We have no part in David; neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse; every man to his tents, O Israel (2 Sam. 20:1): and all Israel it is said followed after him; only Judah clave to David. And after this, just before his death, (and it may be immediately before he uttered these his last words), Adonijah usurped the throne, and got himself proclaimed instead of Solomon. Now with

respect to all this, he might say, "Although my house, my kingdom, is not stable and firm, but in a tottering condition; yet God hath made with me an everlasting covenant." In which he may have respect either to the covenant of royalty, that there should not want one to sit upon his throne; and which in some sense may be said to be an everlasting covenant; for so it is represented in Jeremiah 33:20, 21; If (says the Lord) ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night; and that there should not be day and night in their season: then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne. Now David may have respect to this covenant of royalty. Though his kingdom had been tottering, yet the covenant that God had made with him would be firm and sure. Indeed some writers, especially Jewish ones, understand this in a quite different sense. Not as expressing any disorder in David's kingdom and government; but the reverse; they understand it thus, "Although my house be not so with God, so tottering, so unstable, and uncertain as the things before mentioned" The morning is sometimes a morning without clouds, as expressed in the preceding verse; and the sun rises with great brightness and clearness: at other times it is a morning with clouds; the heavens are covered with darkness, and all is gloomy, and every thing uncomfortable. Sometimes it is fine weather, at other times foul sometimes the sun shines, at other times it is in a cloud; but my house, my kingdom is not so uncertain and unstable. But then this must be understood with respect to his more remote and glorious offspring, the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ; whose throne is for ever and ever, and of whose government, and the peace thereof, there shall be no end whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom; and who reigns over the house of Jacob, and upon the throne of David, for ever and ever.

2. By his house may be meant his family. Although my house, my family is not so with God; some cause to render it, "though my house or my family is not, with God, mean, low, and despicable," as it had been in comparison with some families in Israel, (as he himself intimates when he says), Who am I, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? (2 Sam. 7:18). That is, what am I, a poor creature of mean extraction, and what [is] my family that I sprung from, that thou shouldst raise me to so much dignity? Jesse's

father was a mean person, comparatively speaking his family small in Israel, and Bethlehem his native town and place of residence, one of the least of' the thousands of Judah, Now with respect to this he might say, "although my house, my family is comparatively small; nothing in it for which any particular and special favour should be bestowed upon me, yet hath he made with me an everlasting covenant." Or this may have respect to the disorders in his family, to the many evils committed by one and another therein. They were guilty of some of the grossest crimes. Ammon committed incest with his sister. Absalom rebelled against his father. Adonijah usurped the throne: all which pressed hard, no doubt, upon this good man; and therefore he might say, "although my house, my family, be not right with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant."

These things prove that grace does not run in a carnal line, comes not by natural descent. Good men are not born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. There is nothing in carnal descent, or nothing to be depended upon on that account. This however must be a sensible affliction to this great and good man, to observe such disorder in his family, such sins committed by his children; but still this did not affect his covenant interest: although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant.

The afflictions of God's people, whether personal or domestic, do not affect their covenant interest. That remains always the same; David's afflictions were many; remember David and all his afflictions (Ps. 132:1). The phrase denotes his afflictions were not few, but many, very many. Many are the afflictions of the righteous (Ps. 34:19); but these do not at all affect their covenant interest, that remains unshaken notwithstanding all their afflictions, trials and exercises. The love of God towards them is the same, his affection for them is the same, he has the same special regard unto them: and takes the same special notice of them. He never withdraws his covenant mercy from his people. Covenant interest continues notwithstanding all these things. It is said the covenant of peace shall never be removed (Isa. 54:10): and it follows in the very next verse, O thou afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted. Of the very same persons this character is given, "afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted;" concerning whom God had that very

moment said, "my loving kindness shall not depart from thee; neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." So that covenant interest continues firm and unshaken, notwithstanding all afflictions. These are never to be considered as arguments against covenant interest; no, they are rather to be considered as evidences of it. For such whom the Lord loves he rebukes and chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives; whom he receives into covenant, and into covenant as a son of his. He often afflicts them; but then it is when it is necessary he should deal with them. Afflictions are fruits of the covenant of grace. This is what is said in covenant, if his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments: if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him; nor suffer my faithfulness to fail: my covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out from my lips (Ps. 89:30, 34). The afflictions of God's people make for their good. They work together for good; sometimes for their temporal good; as in the case of Joseph. For their spiritual good, the exercise of their graces; and that they may be made more and more partakers of his holiness. And for their eternal good; .for these light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work for us afar more exceeding and eternal weight of glory (2 Cor. 4:17).

3. By his house, he may mean himself; or, at least it is applicable to himself, his own heart; although my soul, my heart, be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure. Our Lord compares the man that hears his words, and acts according to them, to a wise man that builds his house upon a rock; and one that does not, to a foolish man, that builds his house upon the sand (Matthew 7:24, 27); that is, that builds himself, his faith, his hope, and his eternal affairs and concerns upon the one, or upon the other. So this phrase here is applicable to David, or any other good man's self, his own heart or soul, although that is not so with God; not so right as he could wish and desire nevertheless, covenant interest remains.

1. Though there be a great deal of sin, as there is in all good men a great many failings and infirmities in their lives and conversation, as there are in the best men upon earth: nevertheless, interest in the

covenant of grace continues. David was very sensible he had a great deal of sin in him, and that sin had been committed by him: O how does he bewail and lament himself under a sense of his sin. Innumerable evils have compassed me about; mine iniquities are more than the hairs of my head: therefore I cannot look up (Ps. 40:12), with delight, boldness, and pleasure, as I had used to do. Again he says, mine iniquities are gone over my head as an heavy burden, they are too heavy for me. There is no soundness in my flesh, because of my sin (Ps. 38:3, 4). It is so with every good man, more or less. It was so with the apostle of the Gentiles. In me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing (Rom. 7:18). I see a law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members (Rom. 7:23). And yet covenant interest remains. Though a man finds many workings of corruption in his heart, and breakings forth of it in his life; nevertheless covenant interest continues. Original and actual sin, were no bar to the admittance of God's people into the everlasting covenant of grace. He knew very well what they would be. He knew that they would be transgressors from the womb: that their neck would be as an iron sinew, and their brow as brass. He saw all this, and yet this was no hindrance, obstruction, or objection at all to his admitting them into his everlasting covenant of grace. Indeed, he is sometimes represented after the manner of men, as if he were struggling in his mind; expostulating with himself what he should do in this case: How shall I put thee among the children? (Jer. 3:19). Take thee into the everlasting covenant, and bestow blessings of grace upon thee; and give thee a goodly heritage of the host of nations; an eternal inheritance. How shall I do it when thou art, or wilt be so vile a creature? But grace overcomes all these struggles and difficulties, as they are, humanly speaking: hence it is said, I will be their Father, and they shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty (2 Cor. 6:18).

Sin, in the whole compass of it, in its blackest colors, was foreseen, and yet no bar to the admission of these persons into the everlasting covenant of grace. All the impurity of their nature, and the whole course of sin, during a state of unregeneracy, did not hinder covenant grace taking place in effectual vocation. Notwithstanding all that impurity of nature, in which the Lord's people are brought forth into the world, and in which they continue; and notwithstanding

they go on fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; they being, by nature, children of wrath, even as others; yet such is the great love wherewith the Lord has loved them, that he quickened them when dead in trespasses and sins. Though they are like the wretched infant cast out into the open field, to the loathing of their persons in the day they were born, lying in all the impurity of nature, and act agreeable to their nature; yet this did not prevent the Lord from looking upon them with a look of love; or hinder him from casting his skirt over them, and entering into covenant with them that is, manifesting his covenant to them, and they openly becoming his. Notwithstanding all their trespasses, original and actual, through the blood of this covenant, (so the blood of Jesus is called; Heb. 13:20), they are delivered out of the pit wherein is no water: and are encouraged to turn to the strong hold, as prisoners of hope. And they are, by this blood, cleansed from all sin. So covenant interest continues. "Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure."

2. Though it may be with the people of God, as it was with David; that they are guilty of many backslidings after conversion, after they are called by divine grace; nevertheless covenant interest continues. David was sensible he had been guilty of many backslidings; particularly in the case of Bathsheba and Uriah; and he continued a long time without a sense of the evil he had fallen into; but covenant interest still remained. In virtue of this, Nathan the prophet was sent to him, to convince him of his evil, bring him to a sense of it, to own and acknowledge it before God; and at the same time to inform him that he should not die, because his iniquity was put away: though at the same time, he is also told, that evil should spring out of his house; God would chastise him for the evil he had been guilty of; nevertheless his loving-kindness he would not utterly take from him, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail. So it is with the people of God, more or less. What is said of literal Israel, may be said of spiritual Israel, My people are bent on backsliding from me (Hos. 11:7); and, as the same prophet says, "Israel slideth back, as a backsliding heifer" (Hos. 4:16). As an heifer that cares not to be under the yoke; so the Lord's spiritual Israel are guilty of great departures from the Lord. O what sad departures do they sometimes make from the living God, through the power of unbelief in their

hearts, therefore they are called upon to "remember from whence they are fallen, and repent, and do their first works (Rev.2:5)." Yet, notwithstanding all, this covenant of grace still continues: covenant love is still the same. I will heal all their backslidings, and will love them freely. Notwithstanding their backslidings I will make it appear that I still love them, that my love is a free love: not depending upon any conditions in them. And I will make it known by forgiving their iniquities, for that is meant; or by making fresh applications of pardoning grace. In what a light is this set, in the forty-third chapter of the Prophecy of Isaiah: they made him to serve with their sins, they wearied him with their iniquities: by which is to be understood, that they were guilty of sins of omission and commission. Yet, says the Lord, I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own name's sake, and will not remember thy sins (Hos. 4:25). Covenant grace was still the same.

Covenant relation, therefore, is not broken off by these backslidings and apostasies from God. No; this is most clear from what is said in Jeremiah 3:14. "Turn, O backsliding children, saith the Lord, for I am married unto you." Turn, O backsliding children: what strange things, what wonders in grace are here! children, and yet backsliders! backsliders, and yet, children! children of God still. Turn, O backsliding children, for I am married unto you: the relation of husband and spouse still continues. The marriage relation still subsists notwithstanding all your sins. So again in the 22nd verse; Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings: and the answer is, behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God. Faith gets strength by such declarations of grace, and, notwithstanding all these backslidings, says, thou art the Lord our God.. Thou art our covenant God.

3. The dear children of God are liable to various temptations of Satan; and sometimes are prevailed upon to do those things that are disagreeable to their heavenly Father: yet covenant interest remains. "Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an ever lasting covenant." David had his temptations. We have mention made of a very sore one; Satan stirred him up to number the people of Israel (1 Chron. 21:1). He fell in the temptation, he suffered much, and his people too, through it, but still covenant interest remained. The best of men are liable to temptations. Peter was. Simon, Simon (says our

Lord), Satan hath desired to have thee; to have thee in his hands; to do with thee as he would; to harass, distress, and confound thee, but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not. The great apostle of the Gentiles, had a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him: and extremely distressed he was with it. He besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from him; so it is with all the people of God at one time or another. Those very persons, the Corinthians, whom the apostle describes as being washed, justified, and sanctified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God; he intimates, in the following verses, that they were liable to the temptations of Satan. Thus the best of men experience his temptations. Nay, even the Son of God himself did, he was in all points tempted as we are (Heb. 4:15); and that as violently as ever any of the people of God were; for what greater temptations can they be harassed with, than those with which he was assaulted? But, notwithstanding all the temptations of God's people, yet covenant interest remains. Our Lord has a sympathizing spirit with them, and rebukes the tempter. He says, the Lord hath chosen Jerusalem to rebuke thee. "Is not this one that I have chosen? is not this one that I have called by my grace: snatched as a brand out of the burning, and saved from everlasting ruin? and shall this dear child of mine fall by thy hand? the Lord rebuke thee Satan! What hast thou to do with him? he is one of mine." The Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations, he knows the fittest time to do it, and he does do it: though he suffers the enemy to go about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour, yet he does not suffer him to destroy any of his own children. What is the reason of all this? Covenant interest continues. Yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant.

4. They may be, and often are in great darkness of soul, and under great distress on that account; yet covenant interest remains. David knew what darkness and distress of soul was; hence those warm and fervent breathings of his Why standest thou afar off, O Lord? why hidest thyself in times of trouble? Again, Thou didst hide thy face and I was troubled. This has been the case of the best of men in all ages. The man that obeys the voice of the servants of the Lord, may walk in darkness and see no light. It is said, even of the church in general, that he hides his face from her; yet she expresses her confidence. When I sit in darkness the Lord shall be a light unto me (Micah

7:8); she was satisfied covenant interest still continued. Indeed unbelief prevails frequently in such dark and distressing circumstances; and the people of God are brought into such reasonings and doubts, in their own minds, about their covenant interest, as to say, the Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me (Isa. 49:14), when it is impossible he should; for they are engraven on the palms of his hands, and their walls are continually before him. And though he does hide his face from them for a moment, yet with everlasting kindness will he gather them; for as he has sworn that the waters of Noah shall no more go over the earth; so hath he sworn that he will no more be wrath with them, or rebuke them. Even though the mountains may depart and the hills be removed; yet his loving-kindness shall never depart, nor the covenant of his peace be removed. So that darkness of soul, the hidings of God's face, divine desertions, are no arguments against covenant interest.

5. The people of God are subject to great coldness, indifference, sleepiness, sluggishness, and slothfulness; it often attends them, as it did the Church when she said, I sleep but my heart waketh (Sol. Song 5:2); but still we find she was recovered out of this frame of soul, and brought to the exercise of strong faith in the Lord: this is my beloved, and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem (Sol. Song 5:16). All the virgins, wise and foolish, slumbered and slept.. This may befall the best of men, and yet notwithstanding that, their covenant interest remains.

6. Faith, hope, love, and other graces may not be in lively exercise. Faith is sometimes very low. All that a believer can say at most, is, Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief; but that does not affect covenant interest; it does not depend upon the lively exercise of grace. Though we believe not, yet he abides faithful: He is faithful to his promises, let it be with us as it will. Hope is sometimes in a very poor plight; almost gone. The church says, the Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him (Lam. 3:24): even the very same that before had said, my strength and my hope is perished from the Lord (Lam. 3:18). Yea, the same may be said of other graces; though low and upon the decline, covenant interest still remains. All this is supposed in the phrase, although my house be not so with God.

II. Here is a strong expression of covenant interest; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant.

What is this covenant that God had made with David? and with whom made? It cannot be the covenant of works made with Adam. A covenant was made with him consisting of these terms, that if he acted according to it, he should live; if not, he should die. And Adam was the federal head of all his offspring, and a type of him that was to come, our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:14). But now this covenant is broken this is no everlasting covenant. They have transgressed my covenant as Adam (Hosea 6:7). This is not a covenant ordered in all things and sure; far from it: hence the covenant of grace is said to be, a better covenant, established upon better promises (Heb. 8:6). Here is no provision made in this covenant for the pardon of sin; no provision made for a justifying righteousness; no provision made for life and salvation, This, therefore, can never be the covenant meant; for David says, this is all my salvation: but there is no salvation by the covenant of works. As no justification, so no salvation from thence. David is speaking of a covenant, from whence he derived abundance of comfort under the most distressing circumstances he could be in; but there is no such comfort to be derived from the covenant of works. By the law is the knowledge of sin; but not of a Saviour from sin. That law convinces men of sin, and curses every transgressor; dooms them to everlasting destruction, and so brings upon them a spirit of bondage. This, therefore, cannot be the covenant.

Nor yet the covenant of circumcision (as it is called) made with Abraham: that is done away, being a yoke that neither the Jews nor their forefathers could bear. This was so far from being ordered in all things and sure, that the apostle declares, to those who complied with it, Christ is become of no effect unto you. Whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace (Gal. 5:4).

Nor is this the Sinai covenant; for that was not an everlasting one. It is abolished and done away. Not ordered in all things and sure, for it gave way; otherwise there would have been no need for a second, as the apostle argues (Heb. 8:7).

The covenant which the sweet Psalmist of Israel, in his last dying words, has respect unto, is the covenant of grace: founded on grace; filled with the blessings of grace. It is called the covenant of peace (Isa. 44:10), because a grand article of it is peace and reconciliation with God, by Jesus Christ. He was sent to be our peace; to make peace for us by the blood of his cross. It is

called a covenant of life (Mal. 2:5), because a grand article in this covenant is life, and it secures everlasting life to his people; for this is one grand promise of it, that God hath promised unto us, eternal life (1 John 2:25).

Now this covenant is said to be made with David: made with his son and antitype, the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, who bears his name. I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant (Ps. 89:3). A covenant projected by God the Father: it was proposed by him to his Son Christ Jesus, who agreed unto it. A mere creature cannot make a covenant with God; for what has man to give to God, to agree upon with God? What terms can he propose, or have proposed, that he is capable of performing? None at all. When, therefore, God is said to make a covenant with men; the meaning is, he manifests his covenant made with Jesus Christ from all eternity. Therefore, when David says, he hath made with me an everlasting covenant; the meaning is, he hath made it manifest to me, that I have an interest in his everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure. This is the meaning of, Hearken unto me, and thou shalt live, and I will make with thee an everlasting covenant (Isa. 55:3). Can any suppose, that when one, under the influence of grace, hearkens to God, then God begins to make a covenant with him? no, the meaning is, God will manifest his covenant love and grace; shew them their interest in the blessings and promises thereof, so that their faith shall lay hold on this covenant, as David did under all those distressing circumstance he was in. Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant: I clearly see my interest in it, and by faith lay hold upon it, and upon the blessings and promises of it.

I should now have considered the nature of this covenant that David saw his interest in. That it is an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; but I must defer these things, with what follows, to another discourse.

(Part 2: See Sermon 11a. for Part 1)

12 THE STABILITY OF THE COVENANT OF GRACE, THE SUPPORT OF A BELIEVER UNDER OUTWARD AND INWARD TROUBLES.
2 Samuel 23:5.

Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath

made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation and all my desire, although he maketh it not to grow.

In our last discourse of this text, Three things were proposed for consideration.

I. David's concession, that things were not so with him, as he desired and wished.

II. The strong expression of his faith in God notwithstanding; as having made a covenant with him.

III. The nature of this covenant described as everlasting; ordered in all things, and sure.

The two former have been enlarged upon: what remains to be considered, is,

III. The nature of this covenant. It is said to be an everlasting one. That is, from everlasting to everlasting. It bears date from all eternity, and will continue so for evermore. It springs from the everlasting love of God to his people: that is the source of it. God hath loved his people with an everlasting love; not only with a love, which shall abide for ever; but with a love which was from all eternity; for, our Lord says to his Divine Father, Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me; and thou lovest me before the foundation of the world (John 17:23, 24). Now this covenant of grace, springs from this love of God; and is as early as that. Jehovah said, in his eternal mind, mercy, love and grace shall be built up for ever; and in order to it, makes this covenant (Ps. 89:2, 3). The basis and foundation of this covenant are, the purposes, decrees, and counsels of the most High; for he does all things after the counsel of his own will; and it may be depended upon, as a most sure and certain thing, that an affair, of so much importance as the covenant of grace is, could not be made any otherwise than after the counsel of his will, and depends upon that counsel; and his counsels of old are faithfulness and truth.

Jesus Christ is the Mediator of this covenant; so he is more than once called, in the epistle to the Hebrews. As such, he was set up from everlasting; from the beginning, or ever the earth was: and therefore the covenant of grace, of which he is Mediator, must be as early. He could not be the Mediator of a covenant, without the covenant itself. Add to this, that the sum and substance of this covenant was from everlasting. David considers the promises of it, and especially that grand promise in it, everlasting life by Christ, that was made before the world was; as it is expressly said, Titus

1:2, In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began. Now, there could be no such a promise as this, unless there was a covenant so early. All the blessings of this covenant are of an ancient date. They are styled the grace (or blessings of grace) given us in Christ before the world began (2 Tim. 1:9).

And as this covenant is from everlasting, so it is to everlasting, for God hath commanded his covenant for ever; Holy and Reverend is his name (Ps. 111:9): that is, he hath ordained and established this covenant of grace, so as to continue for ever; nothing shall ever be able to subvert it, or make it null and void. Notwithstanding all that is done by, or done unto, these covenant ones, God will not break his covenant, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his lips. Though they sin, and he chastises them for their sins; yet his loving-kindness he will not utterly take from them, nor suffer his faithfulness, in keeping the covenant, to fail. Though they may so provoke him, by their carriage and behavior, as to cause him to remove his face from them; yet his loving kindness shall not depart, neither shall the covenant of his peace be removed. This is a covenant that will never wax old, will never give way to another, or be succeeded by another; as the old covenant did, and was: no, it is an everlasting one, upon all accounts.

In the next place, it is ordered in all things. Ordered in all things to advance the glory of all the Three Divine Persons; who are jointly concerned therein. To advance and secure the glory of God the Father, and his eternal choice of persons to everlasting life and happiness, in all his purposes and decrees concerning them; which, through this covenant taking place, have their full and complete accomplishment. As also to advance the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God; who is the Mediator, surety, and messenger of this covenant: the federal head and representative of the body the church, and the Saviour thereof; that in all things he may have the preeminence. And to advance the glory of the blessed Spirit; whose office it is to be the applier of the grace of this covenant to take of the things of God and of Christ, and shew them unto those who are interested in them; and to convey and apply all grace, needful for them in time, till they come into an eternal world. This covenant is ordered in all things, for the security of all the covenant ones; who are all, for their safety, put into the hands of

Jesus Christ, the Mediator, who is able to keep them from falling, and to present them, faultless, before the throne of his Father. In whose hands they being put, are safe; for, as he will never suffer them to fall from thence, so none are able to pluck them out of his hands. This covenant is ordered in all things; all provision is made in it, for the good of the covenant ones, in time and in eternity. In this covenant are contained all spiritual blessings, all grace, all things pertaining to life and godliness: provision is made for the sanctification of the hearts of God's chosen, the justification of their persons, and the pardon of their sins. In short it contains all things needful for them here, and eternal glory and happiness hereafter.

And then it is a covenant that is sure. Sure to Christ, the Covenant Head; and sure to all the seed. Sure to Christ. All the promises made to him are sure as, that he shall see his seed; and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. And that he should be exalted on high; therefore, when he fulfilled the work, he said, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do; and now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee, before the world was (John 17:4,5). It is sure to all the seed, and spiritual offspring: all the promises of it made to them, in him, are yea, and amen. All the blessings and mercies of it, are the sure mercies of David; and the more sure, as they are put into the hands of Christ, their covenant head and representative: so their spiritual and eternal life is hid with Christ in God: safe and secure: and because he lives, they shall live also.

But I go on to consider the latter part of the text, in which,

I. David expresses his raised expectations upon this covenant; his great regard unto

it, and affection for it: This is all my salvation, and all my desire.

II. All this is maintained, notwithstanding the circumstances in which he then was: Although he maketh it not to grow. Though it was not a growing time and season with him and his; yet this his covenant was all his salvation, and all his desire.

I. We shall consider his raised expectations upon this covenant; his great regard unto it, and affection for it, or to Christ, the covenant head, with whom this covenant was made for the words may as well regard the one, as the other. The supplement may as well be, for he is my salvation, and all my desire; as well as

it may be supplied, as we do, this is all my salvation, &c. And, in as much as these two agree together, and fall in with each other, and indeed are not separated one from the other, we shall consider the words in both senses; as they may respect both the covenant which our version directs to, and as they may respect the Covenant Head, or he that is the Ruler over the people, before described.

1. As it may respect the everlasting covenant ordered in all things, and Sure: "for this is all my salvation, and all my desire." All my salvation (as if David should say), is provided for in it, and secured by it; flows from it, and depends upon it. "This is all my salvation;" or, "All my salvation is here;" a very comprehensive phrase, which includes temporal, spiritual, and eternal salvation. All salvation is of the Lord. Salvation, (says the Psalmist) belongs unto the Lord (Ps. 3:8): temporal as well as spiritual and eternal salvation, belongs to him: he is the author thereof, and to him the glory should be given; and particularly, the salvation of his people: the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord; and he is their strength in the time of trouble (Ps. 38:39). Even temporal salvation is of the Lord, as their covenant God and Father too; for he is their King and their God, working salvation in the midst of the earth: and every temporal deliverance is wrought for them by their covenant God, and in virtue of this covenant made with them. Covenant ones are saved in this covenant, in a temporal way, in order to be called. Saved they are from many evils in a providential way, while in an unconverted state, in order to be effectually called by the grace of God: and, indeed, all their temporal mercies are covenant mercies, as they come from a covenant God, and in a covenant way; when the mercies of the wicked, though the same for substance as theirs, are not covenant mercies. They are sometimes curses unto them; for the Lord curses their very blessings (Mal. 2:2). Hence it is, that the people of God have what they have, in a temporal way, with the favour of the Lord: hence it is, that a little that a righteous man hath, it is better than the treasures of many wicked: they are blessed, and they are loaded day by day, comparatively speaking, with benefits; for God is the God of salvation, in a temporal sense, and to God the Lord belong the issues from death (Ps. 68:20). But more especially, spiritual and eternal salvation is here meant, Spiritual salvation; by which is meant, the salvation of the spirit or soul: that salvation, which

concerns the spiritual and everlasting good of God's people, called the salvation of the soul (1 Pet. 1:9): and everlasting salvation, because it always continues. The fruits, effects, benefits and blessings thereof always remain; and therefore called an everlasting salvation. Israel shall be saved in the Lord, with an everlasting salvation (Isa.45:17). Now this began in the thoughts of God's heart; which were thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give them an expected end. In the purposes, resolutions, and determinations of his mind, who appointed his people, not unto wrath, which they deserved: but to obtain salvation, by the death of his Son. He, from the beginning, even from all eternity, chose them, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, as the means, unto salvation, the end, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. In virtue of those thoughts, which were thoughts of peace, and not of evil, this salvation becomes secured unto them for whom he predestined to everlasting life, them he also glorifies; that is, they are everlastingly saved. The scheme of this salvation was framed in the council of grace and peace, said to be between them both; that is, between the Father and the Son. Jesus Christ acted as the wonderful counselor. He is the angel and messenger of the great council; as in the Greek version (Isa. 9:6). God was in him, reconciling, or drawing the model and scheme, the means of reconciliation and salvation.

In the covenant of grace it was eternally settled who should be the saved ones, or partake of this great salvation; namely, those the Lord had a design of grace and mercy towards: and a love for; whom he determined to shew mercy unto, even the vessels of mercy, afore appointed unto glory. All that he hath given unto his Son, put into his hands, and made his care and charge; concerning whom he declares, that it is his will, that of all that he gave him, he should lose none, but raise it up at the last day. Even the whole Israel of God shall be saved in the Lord, with an everlasting salvation; consisting of Jews and Gentiles, the whole election of grace throughout the whole world; who are the all men God would have to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth.

It was also settled who should be the author of this salvation unto them: not angels, for Jehovah puts no trust in his servants, for he charges them with folly: nor men themselves, who are not equal to such a work as this, but the Son of God; of whom the Lord says,

I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them; not in this, that, and the other way, but by the Lord their God. This was proposed to the Son of God, and he became our surety and Saviour. Jehovah said to him, Thou art my servant, O Israel: or, it is my will and pleasure it should be so; in whom I will be glorified; and, if it is a light thing for thee to raise up the tribe of Jacob, and restore the presence of Israel, I will enlarge thy commission; thou shalt be a light to the Gentiles, and the salvation of my people, to the ends of the earth, or of all my chosen ones throughout the whole world. This was the proposal that was made to him; to which he agreed. When the question was put, Who shall go for the salvation of those chosen ones? he made answer, and said, "Here am I, send me:—lo I come, to do thy will, O my God." A covenant, a compact, and agreement was made immediately between the Father and the Son, upon this affair of so great importance and in consequence of this, he was sent in the fulness of time. Herein is love, the love of God the Father, in that he sent his Son to be the Savior of the world; and he sent him in the fulness of time agreed upon in this covenant. Christ came to seek and save them that were lost. This is the sum of the everlasting gospel, which is no other than a transcript of this covenant. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Moreover, all the blessings of salvation were provided and secured in this covenant; and therefore it may with great propriety be said, "this is all my salvation." It was not only settled who should be the saved ones; but what blessings they should be partakers of, and should enjoy to all eternity. Now these are all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3), which were given us in Christ before the world began, and upon which account this covenant is said to be, in the text, ordered in all things. For instance, one of these blessings is peace; from which this covenant, as before observed, is called the covenant of peace. It was foreseen there would be a breach between God and his creature man: that peace and reconciliation would be necessary. This was provided for; Christ was proposed to be the Peace-maker. He shall make peace with me (Isa. 27:5); and accordingly he became their peace, and made peace by the blood of his cross. Pardon of sin is another blessing of this covenant, not to be had by the covenant of works; such who sinned against Moses' law died without mercy. Through the blood

of this everlasting covenant is the remission of sins: one promise of it runs thus, I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more; and without shedding of blood there is no remission. Justification is another blessing of salvation, provided for in this covenant, Jehovah the Father appointed this work unto his Son, which he agreed to, even to bring in everlasting righteousness; and God promised that he should justify many upon the foot of that righteousness, and as a covenant God he does do it. Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles (Rom. 3:29)? He is; that is, the covenant God of the one, as well as of the other. Now how does this appear? Why in this instance, in as much as he justifies the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith; so that the justification of men, by the righteousness of Christ, received by faith, is a blessing of grace, which God, as a covenant God, bestows upon his people. Provision is also made in this covenant for the sanctification of the Lord's people. Another promise of it is, I will put my laws in their minds and write them in their hearts. I will sprinkle clean water upon them, and they shall be clean. I will give them a new heart and a new spirit. I will take away the stony heart, and give a heart of flesh. What an ample provision is here made for the sanctification of the covenant ones! Faith, repentance, and every grace are laid up in this covenant. Adoption is another blessing of salvation, and is secured in the covenant of grace. When God puts any among the children; it is a putting them into the covenant of grace; as he says, I will be their Father, and they shall be my sons and daughters. Upon this follows heir-ship; for, if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ Jesus. Heirs together of the grace of life. Heirs of an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. Heirs of salvation, as they are called (Heb. 1:14).

Well then, this being the case, that in this covenant it is provided who shall be saved, the Saviour, and the blessings to be enjoyed; with great propriety may it be said, all our salvation is in this covenant. It is secured by it, flows from it, and depends upon it. Then adds David, this is all my desire: and it is no wonder that it should be his desire, when all his salvation was in it; and it is every gracious soul's desire, to see more clearly his interest in it. David saw his interest in it no doubt; but still he desired to see it more clearly, as

every good man does, that he may more strongly take hold on the covenant, as it is expressed in Isaiah 56:4. Take hold on a covenant God, on Christ the Mediator of the covenant, and of the blessings and promises of it, and claim them as his. Every good man desires to be led more and more into this covenant, into the nature, fulness, and glory of it. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his covenant. Those to whom any thing of this covenant has been shewn, cannot but be desirous of being shewn more of it; and especially their full interest in it. They desire also to have a fresh application of covenant grace, and covenant blessings to them, which God hath promised. He says, hear and your souls shall live, and I will make with you an everlasting covenant: the meaning is, that he would manifest and apply unto them, the blessings of this covenant. It is the desire of every good man, that knows any thing of the covenant of grace, and the scheme of salvation by it, to be saved in this way; by and through the covenant of grace, and not of works. It is natural for men, until they are better enlightened, to desire to be saved by a covenant of works; first-convictions generally lead this

way, as in the three thousand persons: say they, what shalt we do? They talked of nothing but doing; so the apostle Paul, when first enlightened, said, Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do? And the jailor, what shall I do to be saved? And it is natural for every man to think and say, he must do something to be saved. But one that is better enlightened into the covenant of grace and the scheme of salvation, desires to be saved by this covenant of grace, and no other; saved by grace, and not by works. This is all my desire; or, my delight and pleasure; so the word here used signifies. And O! the delight a good, a spiritual man, has in the covenant of grace, and in the promises of it particularly, which are exceeding great and precious; and which being opened and applied to him, are like apples of gold in pictures of silver: he rejoices in them, when they are brought and applied unto him, more than one that finds great spoil. This is all his desire, comfort, and solace, in the most trying circumstances. When he beholds his interest in this covenant, he can glory even in tribulation; knowing that tribulation worketh patience, patience experience, and experience hope. Covenant love is shed abroad in his heart, by the Spirit. Let it be as it will with him, whatever changes he passes through, this covenant, the blessings and

promises of it, are the same; therefore he is not moved.

2. These words are applicable to the Ruler over men, before described; or the federal head with whom this covenant is made, and with his people in him; that is, our Lord Jesus Christ: so the supplement may as well be, He is all my salvation, and all my desire: i.e. Christ is so. "He is all my salvation:" He is styled "God's salvation." I have waited for thy salvation (Gen. 49:18): so called, because he is the salvation or Saviour of God's providing and appointing; and at other times he is called the salvation of his people, because they are the subjects of salvation; and they, under the influence of divine grace, choose him as their salvation or Savior, and will have no other, as Job said, He also shall be my salvation; and David, He is all my salvation; that is, he is the author of it. He was appointed to this work: he came, having salvation. He came with power and authority, as Mediator, to effect it; and he came (which was his end in coming), to seek and to save them that were lost; and is become the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him. He is the only author of salvation. There is salvation in him and no other. Saints are not to expect it from any other: nor will a truly sensible sinner, look to any other for salvation. All their salvation is in him; not a part of it only, but the whole of it. A sensible sinner looks to Christ for his whole salvation. He is the author of complete salvation. The redemption which he has wrought out, is a plenteous one; for he saves his people from all iniquity: saves them out of the hands of all that hate them; saves them to the uttermost. It is a complete salvation; and they that are saved are complete in him; and under the influence and witnessing of the blessed Spirit, they can claim their interest in him, and say, "He is all my salvation:" and in this the sensible sinner glories. What would it have been to David if that little word my were left out? if he could only have said, "He is all salvation?" But this was his peculiar support and happiness, that he could add, "He is all my "salvation, and all my desire." The most desirable one or, all desirable. He is said to be the desire of all nations (Hag. 2:7); that is, he ought to be so; of right, he should be so. In him all the nations of the earth are blessed, he is the desire of all sensible souls: these, with the church, will say, with my soul have I desired thee; and the desire of my soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. He is desirable, on various accounts; on account of the glory

of his person, the transcendent excellencies which are in him; he is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person. His glory is as the only begotten of the Father; he is possessed of all divine perfections; he is fairer than the children of men: white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousands; or, as in our text, all desire. And he is the desire of his people, on account of that fulness of grace there is in him: not only because the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily in him: but because it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness of grace dwell, for the supply of his people; and out of which they are supplied. They may say, as the Psalmist did, the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He is all their desire, as a Saviour, or on account of that salvation he is the author of: whom have I in heaven but thee (says the Psalmist) and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee. None among the angels in heaven, none among all the men upon earth, to be desired with Jesus Christ. There is such an efficacy in his blood for cleansing from sin; such an excellency in his righteousness, that a sensible sinner desires to be found in him, not having on his own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God, by faith. There is such a virtue in his sacrifice, for the expiation of sin, that he has put away sin for ever; and they are perfected that are sanctified (Heb. 10:14). There is so great salvation wrought out by him; so full, free, complete, perfect, lasting, and durable; so suitable to the circumstances of the sinner, that makes him all desire. He is all my desire. Truly gracious souls, that know any thing of him, they desire to know more of him: know more of his person, offices, and grace; to know more of him, and the power of his resurrection. And no wonder they should, since, this is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent: hence they make use of all the means of grace, for the improvement of their knowledge; that they may grow in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and arrive, at last, to the perfect knowledge of him; to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. Here all their desire is, not only to know him, but to have more communion with him: they know the sweetness of communion with Christ, and God in Christ; and when they have it, they can say with the apostle, truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. They pant after him, as the hart pants after the water-brooks: saying, when shall we come

and appear before God in Sion? His tabernacles are amiable and lovely; they long for his courts; their souls even faint for the living God, a day in his courts being better to them than a thousand elsewhere. Whenever they enjoy fellowship with Christ, it is so desirable to them, that they could wish it always continued: They say, with the disciples on the mount, it is good for us to be here; or to be absent from the body, that they may be present with the Lord. At certain seasons, their hearts are so drawn out after communion with him, that they desire to depart, and be with Christ, which is far better.—Thus, He is all their salvation, and all their desire.

II. All this is maintained, notwithstanding the circumstances in which David was, when he said these words, “All my salvation, and all my desire; although he maketh it not to grow.” Although I am in such circumstances, am not in so flourishing a state as I could wish, yet this covenant is all my salvation: or, this Ruler over men (who is said to be as time tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain), is all my salvation, and all my desire.

This may be understood both literally, and figuratively. Literally, of the natural produce of the earth and so the Psalmist may be considered in the like circumstances, and uttering the same expressions of faith as Habakkuk, when he says, Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flocks 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: I will rejoice in my covenant God, in what he is unto me, and hath provided for me. So says David here, “He is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he makes it not to grow:” though there might be a drought and famine in the land as lately had been.

Or this may be understood figuratively of a spiritual growth in grace; for there is such a thing as growing in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Faith sometimes glows exceedingly, love increases, hope abounds; and every grace is in lively exercise. At other times it is not so. Now, although he make it not to grow: although I am not in so flourishing a condition with respect to the exercise of my graces, yet he is all my salvation, and all my desire: or, this covenant of grace made with me, is all my salvation, and all my desire; things are all safe there, though I am uncomfortable,

with respect to my frames. Salvation does not depend upon our frames, nor upon the lively exercise of grace in us; it depends upon the unalterable covenant.

Or this may have respect to David’s family, particularly, although he make it not to grow: although my family are not in growing, increasing and flourishing circumstances; though one breach after another is made in it: first, Ammon cut off, then Absalom, and though so many uncomfortable things are there; yet this is all my salvation, and all my desire. Though the horn of David is not made to bud, as is promised; yet, this is all my salvation.

Or, rather this may have respect to the Messiah, the righteous One that should spring forth. “Although that branch does not spring forth as yet:” or thus, “Shall not this branch spring forth? Verily it shall; for a rod shall grow out of Jesse.” Now David knew, that though things were not so well as he could wish, yet this was his comfort, that there was an everlasting covenant made, in which his salvation was secured; though, as yet, the Messiah, the branch had not sprung forth, which he believed would, and which the Lord promised by Jeremiah, (23:5). So by one of the latter prophets, “Behold, I bring forth my servant the ‘Branch.’” Now this is all my salvation, and all my desire; although this branch, as yet, does not grow up out of its place, which he firmly believed, in virtue of this covenant, it would do.

But I shall now come to a close. Let us be led hereby to adore and admire the wonderful and distinguishing grace of God; that he should make such a provision in an everlasting covenant for any of the sons of men, in Christ Jesus. God was under no obligation so to do: it all flows from his free and unmerited love, that here are such promises made in it, and such blessings of grace provided. And notwithstanding those disorders we may be under at times, let not this weaken our faith in covenant interest; for notwithstanding them, as David observes, covenant interest abides. Although my house, my family, heart, life, and every thing else, is not as I could wish; yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant. Such who are interested in this covenant, need not fear wanting any good thing: it is ordered in all things. There is nothing that they need, but what is in this covenant; nor can they be in any condition of life whatever, but here is a promise made in this covenant, suited to their case and circumstances. I may say, they need not fear wanting any good thing;

for here grace and glory are provided. Blessed are they that put their trust in him. And let us earnestly desire that we may be more and more led into the nature and fulness of this covenant: may the desire of our souls be more and more towards it; may we see our interest in the blessings promises of it; and find them to be the support of our souls in all the circumstances of life, and in the views of death and eternity.

13 COVENANT INTEREST IN GOD, AND A VIEW OF WHAT IS IN HIM, AS A COVENANT-GOD, A SUFFICIENT ENCOURAGEMENT TO HIS PEOPLE, IN THE WORST OF TIMES.

1 Samuel 30:6. Last Clause.

But David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.

David was at this time in as great distress, if not greater, than ever he was in all his life. He had been persecuted from place to place by Saul, and his life often in imminent danger; but then he had friends along with him, to comfort and encourage him, to protect and defend him to the utmost of their power; but now it was otherwise: yet he encouraged himself in the Lord his God. Ziklag, the place where he and his men had dwelt for some time, the Amalekites taking the advantage of his absence, came and burnt and destroyed it; carried captives the wives and concubines of his men, and his own wives also. This occasioned a general discontent, and even a mutiny among the people; so that David's people, his own friends, spoke of stoning him: but notwithstanding all this, David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.

At this time of distress, he was at the eve of his outward grandeur and glory: for much about this time, very likely at the very time, that battle, from whence he was providentially withdrawn, was fought between Saul and the Philistines, in which Saul and his Sons were slain; which paved the way for David to ascend the throne of Israel. So sometimes it is, that when God is about to work salvation from his people, to bestow upon them great favors whether in a way of providence or grace, he suffers them to be brought into the greatest straits; that his power, wisdom, and goodness may be the more visible.

But David knew nothing of this for the present; his state was very distressing, hopeless, and helpless, as to human appearance: nevertheless he encouraged himself in the Lord his God. He encouraged himself, for he had none to encourage him; they all spake of

stoning him. He encouraged himself, not by virtue of any power of his own, but through the influence of the divine Spirit; which impressed his mind, directed him to God, and enabled him to exercise faith upon him: he encouraged himself in the Lord his God. In the Lord; not absolutely considered, for God is a consuming fire; but he strengthened, he encouraged himself in the Lord his God, his covenant God and Father.

The observation I make upon this, is, that covenant interest in God, and a view of what is in God, as Covenant Lord, are a sufficient encouragement to his people, in their greatest distresses and, in enlarging on this observation, I shall consider,

I. That the people of God have their times of trouble and distress.

II. That God is their covenant God; and this is a source of support and comfort to them under their troubles. And,

III. That a view of what is in God, is enough to encourage the saints in the worst of times. David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.

I. The people of God have their times of trouble and distress. The apostle Paul seems to distinguish between trouble and distress, when he says, We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed (2 Cor. 4:8). Troubled on every side, from every quarter, all around; look which way we will, there is nothing but trouble, and yet not distressed: that is, not so distressed as to be reduced to despair, as is afterwards explained; or to be brought to ruin and destruction; for it follows, perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed.

The people of God, in all ages and periods of time, have been poor, and afflicted with divers sorts of afflictions, temporal and spiritual; but this is the favor bestowed upon them, that they shall trust: they are enabled to trust, they do trust in the name of the Lord their God. Their afflictions and troubles are partly outward, and partly inward: some are outward afflictions; such as affect their bodies, their families, and estates; or arise from the world, and the men of it, their reproaches and persecutions; and these come not by chance, but are by divine appointment. They are appointed to these afflictions, and these afflictions are appointed for them; these are a legacy their great Lord and Master hath bequeathed them, In the world ye shall have tribulation (John 16:33). There

are many tribulations through which the saints enter the kingdom they attend them all the way, more or less, to the heavenly glory. They follow them to their entrance into the kingdom; then they leave them, and not till then. These troubles and afflictions are all in love, and are directed by the hand of a tender Father; yet, nevertheless, no affliction is joyous, but grievous to the flesh.

There are other troubles, trials, and exercises which are internal, and more especially affect the soul, or the spiritual state of God's people; I mean, their comfortable spiritual state. Nothing can affect, so as to destroy, their state and standing in Christ; but there are many things which distress them, with respect to their spiritual frames, and comfortable spiritual state. Sometimes they are under the hidings of God's face and, as his presence gives them the greatest pleasure; so his absence, the greatest pain and uneasiness. When he hideth his face, their souls are troubled; and upon this follows darkness, and sometimes such darkness, that they can see no light. This being the case of good men, that they walk in darkness, and have no light (Isa. 50:10); no joy, comfort, and peace in a sensible manner; hence follows many doubts and fears in them, relative to their case. They are ready to fear that a work of grace was never begun in them, or that they shall never hold on and out unto the end, but fall short of heaven at last: without are fightings, and within are fears.

Unbelief sometimes prevails to a very great degree, and their language is like that of the Psalmist, Is his mercy clean gone for ever? doth his promise fail for evermore? hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies? (Ps. 77:8, 9). Unbelief reads all this in the affirmative. You may well imagine God's people are in distress, when this is their case. Sometimes their distresses arise from the temptations of Satan: who is a very busy adversary, and goes about, like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour; though he cannot do this, with respect to the people of God, yet he can, and is, often suffered to distress them. Yea, he is said to desire to winnow one as wheat, as Peter; and he buffets another, as in the case of Paul, he throws his fiery darts thick and fast, and these give a great deal of pain and uneasiness. To all these may be added, the corruptions of their nature, which are suffered sometimes to prevail very much in them: they find a law in their members, warring against the

law of their minds, and bringing them into captivity to the law of sin and death; which makes them say, "Oh! wretched men, that we are." These old Canaanites left in the land, are as pricks in their eyes, and thorns in their sides, that give them great distress.

II. God is the covenant God of his people, and that is a source of support and comfort to them under all their troubles and distresses. David says, "Fear was on every side; but I trusted in thee, O Lord I said, thou art my God" (Ps. 31:13, 14). God is the God of his people, not only in a general sense, as he is the God of the spirits of all flesh; not in a national sense, as he is the God of the Jews. He avouched them to be his people, and they avouched him to be their God; but he is the God, the covenant God of his people, in a more special sense, in the covenant of grace, ordered in all things, and sure; the tenor of which runs thus, "They shall be my people, and I will be their God" (Jer. 32:28). This covenant interest is made manifest in effectual vocation, when God calls his covenant ones effectually by his grace; which makes it clearly appear that they are his covenant ones. Then, they who are not a people, that is, who were not known to be a people of God, either by themselves or others, openly appear to be his people; for the application of covenant blessings unto them is an undeniable proof of their interest; for, to whomsoever covenant blessings are applied, such must be most certainly interested in the covenant of grace.

Now this covenant interest always continues, it never can be dissolved, let the saint come into what condition he will, let him be in what trouble or distress he may, covenant interest always abides. Afflictions that are laid upon him, of one kind or another, are no arguments at all disproving his covenant interest; rather are proofs of the same; for, in the covenant it is provided, that when the Lord's children forsake his law, and walk not in his statutes, he will visit their transgression with a rod and their iniquity with stripes; nevertheless his loving-kindness he will not utterly take from them, not suffer his faithfulness to fail. His covenant he will not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his lips (Ps. 89:30, 34). Even the sins and corruptions of God's people, the temptations of Satan, and the snares of this world, do not, cannot dissolve covenant interest; for Jehovah knew beforehand, when he took his people into this covenant, what they would be; that they would be called transgressors from

the womb; that their neck would be as an iron sinew, and their brow as brass; and yet this did not hinder their admission into this covenant; and consequently cannot be a reason for dismissing them from it: besides, in this covenant of grace there is provision made for the forgiveness of the sins of God's people. One principal promise runs thus, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jer. 31:34). That darkness and desertion, those doubts and fears, and unbelief, which attend God's people, cannot destroy their covenant interest: that still continues the same, whether they are in the light or in the dark, whether in comfortable or uncomfortable frames, covenant interest is always invariably the same. As it was with the head, so it is with the members; as it was with our head, Christ Jesus, when suffering, and God withdrew his presence from him, and he said, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Forsaken he was; but God was his God still: so it is with the members, they may be forsaken, God may hide his face from them, they may be in darkness, and in the deeps; yet they may say my God still. So says the church, My God will hear me; when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light unto me: he will bring me to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness (Micah 7:7, 8, 9). Covenant interest always abides; and is the source of comfort to the saints in all their distresses; for he, that is their covenant God, will be their God and their guide unto death (Ps. 48:14).

III. There are such things in God, as are a sufficient encouragement to his people in the worst of times and they may, through the strength of divine grace, as David did, encourage themselves in the Lord their God. Thus, for instance,

1. There are the mercy, grace, and love of our heavenly Father, of our covenant God: he has proclaimed his name, the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin (Ex. 34:6, 7). Upon this declaration of grace, David might well, and so every believer also, with the greatest assurance, affirm, Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful (Ps. 116:5).

Now this yields relief to the people of God, when first awakened to a sight and sense of their state and condition by nature. This relieves them in their first soul trouble: namely, the declarations of the grace, mercy, and love of God. As Benhadad's servants argued with their master, We have heard, that the kings of the

house of Israel, are merciful kings; let us, I pray thee, put sackcloth on our loins, and ropes on our heads, and go out to the king of Israel; peradventure he will save thy life (1 Kings 20:31). So poor sinners, when they are first awakened to a sight and sense of their vileness, the just demerit of their sins, and time consequences of them, having heard, through the report of the gospel, that the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, is gracious and merciful; they are encouraged to go and throw themselves upon his grace and mercy, and say, as the publican did, God be merciful to me a sinner. Not that they cast themselves upon the absolute mercy of God; but upon the mercy of God, as it streams through the blood and righteousness of Christ; which is the sense of that request of the publican, "God be merciful to me," through the propitiatory sacrifice of thy Son. It is a view of this that encourages sinners in their first distress of soul, to go to God, and venture their souls upon his mercy. Let Israel (and so let every sensible sinner) hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy; and with him there is plenteous redemption (Ps. 130:7): that is, there is mercy streaming through that plenteous redemption by our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a declaration of the grace and mercy of God, that is a relief to poor sensible souls, under the first workings of the Spirit of God upon their hearts: whereby they are encouraged to hope for pardoning grace, and to obtain it, as the apostle says he did, I, who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy (1 Tim 1:13). So likewise it is a relief unto them, after having fallen into sin, and when brought again to repentance: when they stand in need of fresh discoveries of forgiving love. In affliction the Lord is pleased to reveal himself unto them in this manner, and apply his pardoning grace unto them: they find him to be a kind, merciful, and tender-hearted Father to them: like as a father pitieth his children: so the Lord pitieth them that fear him (Ps. 103:13). He sympathizes with them in all their troubles; in all their afflictions he is afflicted; his bowels yearn towards them when they are in distress; and though he may seem sometimes to frown upon them in his providence, yet he changes his dispensations towards them, in love, saying, Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? verily he is, for since I spake against him, in a providential way, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.

God, the covenant God of his people, is full of mercy, grace, love, kindness, and tenderness unto them at all times; and this is an encouragement unto them to trust in him. In a view of this, they may do as David did, encourage themselves in the Lord their God; and the rather, in as much as this mercy, grace, and love always continue the same. The mercy of God is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him: his love to his people is an everlasting love: his loving-kindness never departs from them: nor can any thing separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus their Lord.

Well then, let the saint be in what trouble and distress he will, if he can but be directed and is but enabled to look unto the grace and mercy of God, as a covenant God, always the same; it will yield him relief in the worst of times.

2. There is the power of God, which is great and unlimited. "Twice have I heard this, (says the Psalmist) that power belongs to God." There are not only one, or two, but there are many instances of the almighty power of God: he, who is almighty, is able to save his people, when in the greatest distress. His hand is not shortened that it cannot save, nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear. When they cry unto him in their distress, pray to him for deliverance, they pray to a God that can save them to the uttermost; save them out of all their troubles. This poor man cried (says David, and it may be, he means himself particularly), and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. So this poor man, and the other poor man, and thousands of poor saints, in all ages, have cried unto the Lord in their distress, and he has saved them out of all their troubles.

He has power and ability to fulfil all the promises which he has made unto his people; and they are many, exceeding great and precious. Abraham had a special promise made to him, and the fulfillment of it was attended with many difficulties, insurmountable to carnal reason; yet he staggered not at the promise, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God. And what was it kept up his faith in the view of those difficulties that attended the accomplishment of the thing promised? Why, it was this, he was persuaded that God was able also to perform (Rom. 4:21). God, the covenant God of his people, is of such power, that he is able to supply all their wants, let them be what they will; to supply all their need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ

Jesus, he is able to support them under their greatest trials, and he has promised to do it; he has said, "Fear not, I am with thee; be not dismayed, I am thy God; I will help thee; I will strengthen thee; yea, I will uphold thee, with the right-hand of my righteousness." And when he puts underneath everlasting arms, they are a sufficient support. He is able to protect and defend them from all enemies. They that trust in him, as their covenant God, are as mount Sion, that can never be removed; for as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so is the Lord round about his people, from this time forth, even for evermore. He is a wall of fire round about them, to preserve them, and to annoy their enemies: he is a glory in the midst of them. They are kept, as in a garrison, by his power through faith unto salvation he is able to build them up, and to give them an inheritance among all them that are sanctified by faith in Christ Jesus. He is able to keep them from falling; from a total and final falling away, and present them faultless before the throne of his majesty: and he will exert his power in the preservation of them safe to his everlasting kingdom and glory. Now a view of this power in God, of his ability to do these things, and much more, is a sufficient encouragement to saints in the worst of times.

3. There is the unchangeableness of God; which also, when believers have a view of, it relieves them under the greatest distresses. He is the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning not the least appearance of a change in him. He is the Lord, that changeth not; and therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed: they cannot be consumed; they cannot be destroyed who are interested in an unchangeable God. He is unchangeable in his love to them: he never varies in that, let them be in what condition they will, or let his appearance to them be what it may, in the external dispensation of things, his love is always the same. If he chides them, if he chastises them, in a providential way, on account of their sins, yet his loving-kindness he doth not take from them, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail. If he hide his face from them, to rebuke them, on one account or another, because of some misbehavior of theirs; yet still he loves them: his loving-kindness does not depart from them; having loved them, he loves them to the end. His love is everlasting; as it commenced in eternity, it will continue to all eternity; invariably and unchangeably the same. There may be different

dispensations towards them, as I have suggested; they may be in different frames of soul, and not always have the like apprehensions of the love of God yet that in itself is the same.

He is unchangeable in his counsels and decrees; particularly in that relative to the everlasting salvation of his people. This is a foundation of solid comfort, even of everlasting consolation; so says the apostle, "Wherein God, to shew the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things (his counsel, which is immutable; and his oath annexed to it, which is likewise so) in which it was impossible for God to lie; we might have strong consolation, who have fled, for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before us" (Heb. 6:17, 18).

God is unchangeable in his promises, which he hath made to his people. He is not a man, that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent, or change his mind. What he hath said, he will do; what he hath proposed, he will most certainly fulfil. Not one of the good things he hath promised, in covenant, has ever fallen to the ground, or ever shall. For all his promises are yea and amen in Christ Jesus, to the glory of God by us.

He is unchangeable in the blessings of his grace. These are the sure mercies of David; sure to David's son, and sure to all his seed. They are irreversible ones. Upon whomsoever they are bestowed, they remain; they are never revoked; God never repents of them. His Son also is as unchangeable as himself. The eternal Word. The Chaldee paraphrase upon the text respects this, and reads it thus; "And David strengthened himself in the Word of the Lord his God." In that eternal Logos, that Word which was in the beginning with God, and was God. Strengthened himself in Him; or, to use the apostolic language, he became strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, who is the same, yesterday, today, and for ever; unchangeable in his nature, person, offices, and grace. He hath, particularly, an unchangeable priesthood; an unchangeable virtue in his righteousness, to justify from all sin; in his blood to cleanse from it; and in his sacrifice, to make expiation for it. A view of this unchangeableness in God, and Christ, is a sufficient encouragement to the saints under all their distresses, be they what they may.

4. The faithfulness of God. This is a wonderful attribute. Who is like unto thee, says the Psalmist,

or to thy faithfulness round about thee? (Ps. 89:8). God is faithful to himself; faithful to his promises and counsels. His counsels of old are faithfulness and truth. All true, and faithfully fulfilled. He is faithful to every promise of his. Hence the apostle describes him as faithful who hath promised, who also will do it. He is faithful to his covenant. He will not break his covenant upon any account whatsoever, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail. He is faithful to his Son. As Christ is faithful to him that appointed him, even his divine Father; so Jehovah the Father is faithful to his Son with respect to all the promises he made to him, concerning his own glory as Mediator, and the good of his covenant people. And he is faithful to his covenant people, notwithstanding their unfaithfulness and unbelief; for though we believe not, says the apostle, he abides faithful.

Now a consideration of this perfection of our covenant God, is sufficient to support and encourage us under the greatest distresses in life. The same may be observed indeed of every perfection of his; as, his omniscience, omnipresence, and the like. He is omniscient. He knows all persons and things; and the knowledge he has of his people is special and particular. It is not merely a general knowledge, as he knows all his creatures; but is joined with the greatest affection to them. In this sense we are to understand it, when he is said to know them that are his. He knows all the world, and all the men in it; but not in the sense in which he knows his covenant ones. His knowledge, being connected with the greatest affection to them, his eyes are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cries, in a different manner from what they are upon, and to others. Indeed the eye of his providence is particular. "He is the Saviour" of all men, especially of those "that believe" (1 Tim. 4:10); and the eyes of the Lord, run to and fro, to shew himself strong in a remarkable manner, on the behalf of those whose hearts are upright towards him. He knows their persons, and their wants. Their desires are before him, and their groanings are not hid from him. This is a great encouragement to them.

So the Omnipresence of God. He is a God at hand, and not a God afar off. He is nigh to all them that call upon him in truth. It was the peculiar privilege of Israel of old, that they had God so nigh unto them in all things they called upon him for (Deut. 4:7): so have all the saints and people of God. He is the eternal God,

from everlasting to everlasting: He which was, and is, and is to come; and he has been, and is, the dwelling place of his people in all generations. He is the ever-living God, to protect, preserve, and bring them safe to the everlasting enjoyment of himself. Thus, a view of what God is, in himself, and of what is in our covenant God and Father, are a sufficient encouragement in the worst of times. David encouraged himself in the Lord his God.

But I must draw to a conclusion. You may be directed from hence where to go, and to when to apply in times of trouble: not to the creature, or an arm of flesh; but to the Lord as your covenant God. When refuge fails you, and no man cares for your soul, then say, as David did, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living (Ps. 143:5). This doctrine may serve to support the people of God under all the vicissitudes that attend them in this life, in body, soul, or estate. This may be a relief to them, that they have to do with, and are interested in a covenant God; whose love and covenant are unchangeable, and therefore the sons of Jacob shall not be consumed. What may not such persons expect, who have Jehovah for their covenant God? They may say, as Jacob did, they have all things; they have enough. The Lord is their shepherd; he is their shield, and their exceeding great reward. They have nothing to fear from their enemies, spiritual or temporal. They may say, as David did, The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? (Ps. 27:1). If God be for them, if he is on their side, if he is their covenant God and Father, who shall be against them? or what does it signify who are against them? Happy that people whose God is the Lord! they may expect every blessing of grace here, and eternal glory hereafter. His grace will be sufficient to carry them through all the trials of fire, and bring them safe to glory. He, who is their God, is a sun and shield; he gives grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

14 THE EYES OF THE LORD UPON, AND HIS POWER ENGAGED ON THE BEHALF OF THOSE WHOSE HEARTS ARE UPRIGHT TOWARDS HIM.

2 Chronicles 16:9

For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf

of them whose heart is perfect towards him.

Notwithstanding Asa, king of Judah had received such remarkable tokens of divine goodness and power, in appearing for him, when Zarah the Ethiopian came out with a vast army against him, so that he obtained a complete victory over him, and returned with a large spoil; yet, when Baasha, king of Israel, attempted to build a city upon his borders, he distrusted the providence of God; betook himself to the king of Syria, and sent him gold and silver out of his own treasury, and out of the treasury of the house of the Lord, to prevail with him to break the league which he had entered into with the king of Israel, and make a diversion in his favour; which was accordingly done. Upon which, the prophet Hanani came unto him, and said, Because thou hast relied on the King of Syria, and not relied on the Lord thy God; therefore is the host of the King of Syria escaped out of thine hand. Then he reasons with him upon that remarkable success which he had against the Ethiopians. Were not the Ethiopians and the Sabines, a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? yet, because thou didst rely on the Lord, he delivered them into thine hand. Intimating, that had he relied upon the Lord his God now, and not upon the king of Syria, that the Syrian army would have been delivered into his hands. The reason is given in the words I have read, For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect towards him. In speaking to which words, I shall

I. Inquire what we are to understand by the eyes of the Lord.

II. In what sense these are said to run to and fro throughout the whole earth. III. The end of their running thus.

I. What we are to understand by the eyes of the Lord? These words are not to be understood literally, or in a corporal sense; for though the various parts of a human body are, in Scripture, attributed to God; yet we are not to entertain such a gross notion of the divine Being, as if he had a body consisting of parts like ours. When, therefore, any thing of this kind is ascribed to him, it is only expressive of some power, or action done by him, which is similar thereunto. Hast thou eyes of flesh, or seest thou as man seest? No, Jehovah has not eyes of flesh; he does not see as man sees.

Man can only see things that are near him, not at any great distance; but the eyes of the Lord, as in our text, run to and fro throughout the whole earth. Man's eyes can only see and observe objects, one after another; but the eyes of the Lord behold altogether; all objects throughout the whole universe, at one and the same time. The eyes of man can only see when there is light; but light and darkness are both alike to the Lord. Only external objects are to be seen by the eyes of men; but the eyes of the Lord discern internal things; the heart of man, and the recesses of it. The eyes of men are often deceived; but the sight of God never. His are not eyes of flesh; nor does he see as man sees. But this is to be understood figuratively of him; and in our text, designs his all-seeing providence and that, as concerned in a special manner with his own people; who are described as having their hearts perfect towards him.

This phrase, The eyes of the Lord, designs sometimes his general providence, as it respects every individual person. The eyes of the Lord are in every place, throughout the whole universe, beholding the evil and the good; evil men and good men; their dispositions and actions, whether good or bad; but here, and elsewhere, the eyes of the Lord, intend his all-seeing providence, as concerned in a special manner with his people. So we find in the prophecy of Zechariah, seven eyes are said to be upon one stone, laid before Joshua; which stone seems to be none other than that cut out of the mountain without hands, the stone which the builders refused, and is made the head of the corner; the foundation and chief corner stone, our Lord Jesus Christ. The eye of God, in its full perfection, signified by seven eyes, is said to be upon that stone. It is also upon every one that is laid upon that stone; built upon that sure foundation which is matter of joy, as it is said, in the fourth chapter of that book. They shall rejoice when they see the plummet in the hand of Zerubabel, with those seven: they are the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro throughout the whole earth. The very phrase used in our text.

The eyes of the Lord are pure and holy. He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Sin is the abominable thing which his righteous soul hateth; being contrary to his nature, repugnant to his will, and a breach of his righteous law. It makes men abominable in the sight of God. How much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water. He is not a

God that takes pleasure in sin, neither shall evil dwell with him. He hates all the workers of iniquity, who make a trade and business of sinning. His eyes, as they are set upon the wicked, are upon them for evil, I will set mine eyes upon them for evil, and not for good, And again. The eyes of Lord God are upon the sinful kingdom, to destroy it (Amos 9:4-8). The eyes of the Lord, as they are set upon his own people, are like the eyes of doves expressive of mildness, gentleness, tenderness, and love: but as they are set upon wicked men, his eyes are as flames of fire; expressive of wrath and vengeance; sparkling with rage and fury. The face of the Lord is against them that do evil; his countenance is a terrible one, and the effect of it is to cut them off from the face of the earth. But his eyes are set upon the righteous in a favorable way. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry (Ps. 34:15). His eyes of providence are upon them, attended with love, mercy, and kindness. He takes delight in them, as they are clothed with the righteousness of his Son; for none are righteous, but such who are made so by his righteousness. No man is justified in his sight by the works of the law; but such as are clothed with the righteousness of Christ are accepted before him. He beholds them with pleasure, and he never turns his eyes from them. They are upon them for good. The eyes of some are full of envy; but his eyes are full of goodness. Is thine eye evil (envious) because I am good, kind, and bountiful? Such is the eye of the Lord towards his people, his righteous ones. It is good and bountiful. His eye is upon them to bestow all needful good; to cause all things to work together for good. His eye is an eye of love, grace, and mercy unto them. The eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, and upon them that hope in his mercy. This is no other than his grace and mercy, which are from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him; and that according to his sovereign will and pleasure, who hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and is gracious to whom he will be gracious, He looks upon his people with complacency and delight. His countenance beholds the upright. His own people are his Hephzibah, in whom he delights; his Beulah, to whom he is married: and as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so does he over them: yea, he rests in his love towards them, and rejoices over them with abundance of joy.

It is further said of the eyes of the Lord, that they

try the righteous. His eyes behold, and his eye-lids try the children of men. The Lord tries the righteous; he distinguishes them from others, even in the way of his providence; for though he is the Saviour of all men, yet especially of them that believe. He distinguishes them by the gifts of his grace; which he makes them partakers of, while others are not: so that they have abundant reason to say, with admiration Who hath made us to differ? In this sense are we to understand the eyes of the Lord, as they are concerned with his own people; which are no other than his all-seeing providence, accompanied with his love and mercy towards them.

Now these eyes of his love and mercy were set upon them from everlasting, in his eternal councils and decrees. He loved them with an everlasting love. He looked upon them and chose them, in his Son, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and happy. He blessed them with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ. Jesus. He gave them grace in Christ before the world began. He put them into the hands of his Son, made them his care and charge; and said unto him, as their surety, Feed the flock of slaughter. To which he agreed, and said, I will feed the flock of slaughter; even ye, O poor of the flock.

His eyes are upon them in time, even as soon as they are brought into the world. He takes them under his special protection, from their mother's womb; so says the apostle, Who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace. Not that he called him by his grace as soon as he was born; but so early he distinguished him by a special providence over him, in order to his being effectually called by grace in due time. This he observes concerning others, as well as himself. Who hath saved us, and called us; saved us to be called; saved us, in a special providential way. The Lord's eyes are upon all his people in a peculiar manner, as soon as they are born; and all the while they are in a state of unregeneracy. This is remarkably manifest in the case of the apostle Paul, I am now speaking of. What notice is taken of him in the sacred history, before he was effectually called by grace! When Stephen, the proto-martyr, was stoned, it is said, the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul: and, further it is observed, that Saul was consenting unto his death. There were multitudes consenting unto his death besides Saul; but he is particularly taken notice of, that the grace

of God might be magnified in his conversion. It is further said, Saul made havoc of the Church. Saul was breathing out threatening and slaughter against the disciples of Christ. Thus you see what notice was taken of him; how God's eye was upon him, even before he was called by grace; and that because he was a chosen vessel of salvation. So our Lord said to Nathaniel, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee. Before he was called either in a ministerial way, or effectually by the grace of God, the eye of the Lord was upon him. The Lord's eyes are upon all his people, even in this state, until the time comes in which they are to be effectually called. There is a time for every purpose under heaven; and there is a time for God's calling his people by his grace; for they are all of them called according to his purpose. Now till this time Jehovah waits; waits to be gracious to them; waits as it were with longing eyes, till the time is up; and with respect to some, he waits even till the eleventh hour: and his long-suffering towards his people, whether it be longer or shorter, always ends in salvation; for the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is willing that all should come to repentance. When the set time is come, he passes by them, looks upon them; and his time is a time of love. He looks upon them not with loathing and contempt; but with commiseration. When no eye pities them, he looks upon them; and shews mercy to them. He looks upon them, while in their blood, and says unto them, live; and washes them from all their pollutions and defilements. He looks upon them, when in the hands of Satan; and snatches them from thence: observes them to be as brands in the burning, and takes them from thence. He looks upon them, and sees them in a pit, wherein is no water; in the mire and clay; and taking them from thence, he sets their feet upon a rock and establishes their goings. Thus he looks upon them with an eye of pity and compassion.

The Lord's eye still continues upon his people after conversion. He watches over them night and day, lest any hurt them. They are engraven upon the palms of his hands, and their walls are continually before him. As the Lord said concerning the temple at Jerusalem, Mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually (1 Kings 9:3); so his heart and his eyes are perpetually upon them: and, as it is said of the land of Canaan, The eyes of the Lord are always upon it, from the

beginning of the year, even to the end of the year: so the eyes of the Lord are upon his people, not only from the beginning of one year, to the end of it, but from the beginning of their life, unto the end of their days. Let us now inquire,

II. In what sense we are to understand this phrase, The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth? We have seen that these eyes of the Lord signify the all seeing providence of God, attended with his grace, mercy, and love; as concerned with his people in a special manner. But in what sense are we to consider these eyes of the Lord, as running to and fro throughout the whole earth?

The Omniscience of God reaches throughout the world, and to all creatures. He looks down from heaven, and beholds the sons of men; he looks upon the inhabitants of the earth, and considers all their works, whether they be good or bad. His eyes are upon the ways of men, whether right or wrong. He beholds all their goings, every step they take, whether in or out of the way of God. There is no darkness nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves for the darkness and the light are both alike to him. He fills heaven and earth with his presence. His general providence reaches to all creatures. He preserves man and beast; not only upholds them in their beings, but supplies their wants. The eyes of all are upon him, and he satisfieth the desire of every living thing. As in one age of the world and another, he has a people in various parts of the earth: so the all-seeing eye of his providence has been concerned, in a special manner with them; and extends to them, be they where they will. The children of God, those whom he hath predestinated to the adoption of children, according to the council of his will from everlasting, are said to be scattered abroad; some are in once place, and some in another. Hence Christ is said to come to gather these together, to reconcile them to God, by being a propitiation, not for the sins of the Jews only, but for all the people of God throughout the whole world: therefore, when he gave a commission to his ministering servants, he bid them go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature; He so orders it in providence, that he either sends the gospel to them, or he brings them to it; or, however, calls them by his grace, and encourages them to look unto Christ, who says, Look unto me, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth: for I am God,

and there is none else. Hence we read of songs of praise from the uttermost parts of the earth (Isa. 24:16); songs of electing, redeeming, justifying, pardoning, adopting, regenerating, and sanctifying grace, from persons in the uttermost parts of the earth, that are partakers of his grace.

Let the wicked be where they may, they shall not escape his notice: Though they dig into hell, thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to heaven, thence will I bring them down: and though they hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will search and take them out thence; and though they be hid from my sight in the bottom of the sea, thence will I command the serpent, and he shall bite them. So let the children of God be where they may, He will find them out. He is the great Shepherd of the sheep; and he will search for them in whatsoever corner they are; and where they have been scattered in the dark and cloudy day. The special providence of God reaches them all, attended with his grace, mercy, and goodness.

When, therefore, his eyes are said to run to and fro throughout the whole earth, on the behalf of these; we are not to suppose any local motion, or change of place, in God; for he is omnipresent. Though he is said, sometimes, in condescension to our capacities, to bow the heavens and come down, and to return to his place; yet these expressions are to be understood after the manner of men; and not as true in a literal sense. When his eyes are said to run to and fro, it is expressive of his watchfulness over his people. As those who are watchful look here and there, and are very diligent in their observations; so the Lord watches over his people. He expresseth himself in this very language, As I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them to build, and to plant, saith the Lord (Jer. 31:28). He opens his eyes upon such poor worthless creatures as we are; for he that keepeth Israel, that watches over them, neither slumbers nor sleeps. The phrase is expressive of his readiness, and swiftness, to assist his people in times of difficulty and distress; and answers to that request of the church, where she says, Make haste, my Beloved, and be thou like to a roe, or to a young hart, upon the mountains of spices. Thus the Lord is a present help in time of trouble. He is ready at hand to assist his people: he helps them, and that right early. His eyes run to and

fro, here and there, on their behalf; and this in order to counter-work Satan, who is said to go to and fro in the earth (Job 1:7); and is by the apostle represented as a roaring lion, that goeth, about seeking whom he may devour. Now the eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the earth, to counter-work this adversary; to watch over his people, that they may not be hurt and destroyed by him. He hath, as before observed, those that are the objects of his love and care, in various parts of the earth and his eyes run to and fro every where on their behalf. Fear not, I will be with thee, I will bring thy seed (spiritual converts) from the East, and gather them from the West. I will say the North give up, and to the South keep not back; bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends the earth. Thus you see what is the meaning of this figurative expression, and the propriety of using this phrase; because of the people of God being in different parts of the world, and because of the exquisite care the Lord takes of them. They are under his special notice; and therefore let them be where they will, his eyes are upon them. I now come,

III. To the end, or use, of the eyes of the Lord running to and fro throughout the whole earth. It is to shew himself strong on the behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards him. Here we shall

1. Consider the descriptive character of those who are so peculiarly the objects of his care and special providence. They are described as having their hearts perfect towards God.

2. The exertion of divine power on their behalf. He will shew himself strong on the behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards him.

1. The descriptive character given of them who are the care of providence in a special way of grace, mercy, and love: they are such whose heart is perfect towards God. What! is it possible any man's heart should be perfect towards God? It seems, we read of several persons, concerning whom this testimony is borne. It is said of Solomon, that his heart was not perfect, as was the heart of his father, David; which plainly implies, that the heart of David was perfect; and yet that great and good man had many blemishes in his life: but it seems his heart was sound and perfect. So it is said of Asa, even to this very Asa to whom our text has an oblique respect, that his heart was perfect all his days; and yet here is an intimation of some imperfection in him. Which may be reconciled thus:

The bent of his heart was, in the main, towards God; and his heart was perfect, as to the outward worship of God; but not as to the inward exercise of grace, particularly faith, in as much as he relied not upon the Lord as he should have done, but upon the king of Syria. Hezekiah appeals to God himself, and says, Lord, remember how I have walked before thee with a perfect heart: and David, in the strength of divine grace, resolves to walk in his house with a perfect heart; but how are we to understand this phrase, a perfect heart?

No man's heart is so perfect in the present state, as to be entirely free from sin. The apostle Paul, speaks of sin dwelling in him; It is not I, but sin that dwelleth in me. When I would do good, evil is present with me. I find a law in my members warring against the law of my mind. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? This great, this good, this holy man, who had as perfect a heart, I am persuaded, as ever any man upon earth had, excepting our Lord Jesus Christ, was not so perfect, as to be free from indwelling sin. The beloved disciple, the apostle John, that lay in our Lord's bosom, and enjoyed so much fellowship with him, bears testimony to this, and says, If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. And long before this great and good man, Solomon, the wisest of men, had made this observation, that there is not a just man upon earth, who doeth good, and sinneth not. In many things we all offend. A man may be justified from all sin, and in that sense, be free from it; so all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses. In that sense, a man may be perfectly righteous. So Noah was, of whom this character is given. He was a just man, and perfect in his generation. How was he perfect? not by his own righteousness; no; he was a preacher of righteousness by faith; and no doubt he was justified by the righteousness he was a preacher of: and that was the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. In and by this righteousness, men are made perfectly comely. All their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake; so that when they are sought for they shall not be found. God sees no iniquity in them: they are without fault before the throne: but in themselves they are not perfect. The heart of man is extremely, is desperately wicked; and therefore every sensible sinner prays as David did, that God would cleanse him from

secret faults, and keep him from presumptuous sins. Though God sprinkles clean water upon his people, in justifying and pardoning them; cleansing them from all their filthiness and abomination; yet, with respect to themselves, who can say they are pure, and free from sinful thoughts? No man is perfect in this sense.

No man is perfectly holy. Though the work of holiness and grace is begun in them by the Spirit of sanctification, it is but begun; it is not perfected. The God of peace will but wholly those who are in any measure justified; but as yet they are not perfectly sanctified. Nor are the graces of the Spirit of God, wrought in their hearts, perfect. Faith is not perfect; there is something wanting in the faith of the strongest believer. The disciples of our Lord had reason to pray, Lord increase our faith. Love also is imperfect in the best of saints. There is room always to pray, that their love to God, Christ, and one another, may abound yet more and more. Hope is imperfect; sometimes very low, as it was with the church, when she said, My hope and my strength are perished from the Lord. Patience likewise is not perfect, in submission to the will of God, under afflictive dispensations of providence. Therefore, says the apostle, Let patience have its perfect work. Knowledge is imperfect. The path of the just, is indeed, as the shining light, which shines, more and more unto the perfect day; but the perfect day is not yet come. We know but in part. There is such a thing as growing in grace, and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord. Whereas there would be no room for it, if this were perfect. No man's heart is perfect in this life. None are free from sin, completely holy; nor are the graces of the Spirit of God in them, arrived at perfection. But when the heart is said to be perfect, the meaning, I apprehend is, sincere and upright. When the ten tribes came to make David king over all Israel, it is said, they came with a perfect heart; that is, in the uprightness and sincerity of their souls. They were quite cordial in what they came about. So David and his people express their great admiration, that they should be enabled, by the Lord, to offer so willingly, with a perfect heart, for the service of God. They did what they did heartily, sincerely, and without any grudging. In this sense we are to understand it here; whose heart is perfect. Such in whom God has created a right spirit, are styled in Scripture the upright in heart (Ps. 97:11). Their faith is unfeigned, their hope is without hypocrisy, and their love without

dissimulation.

Their faith is unfeigned. The end of the commandment is love, out of a pure heart, and faith unfeigned. Such an unfeigned faith Timothy is said to have. Now there is a faith, which is feigned; such as that of Simon Magus, who said he believed, when he was in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity. But faith is unfeigned, when a man with the heart believes unto righteousness. Hope also is unfeigned, where it is true. There is, indeed, the hope of the hypocrite; which will be of no avail when God takes away his soul. But true hope is unfeigned. It is a good hope through grace. It is founded on the person, blood, and righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. The true grace of love is without dissimulation. It is not in tongue only, or in word; but in deed, and in truth. Love to Christ is in sincerity of heart; and love to the brethren, is with a pure heart fervently, as the apostle says. Now, where these graces are unfeigned, free from all guile and hypocrisy, the heart may be said to be perfect. The worship of God also, should be from the heart, and in a spiritual manner. In some, indeed, it is merely formal and customary: they draw nigh to God with their mouths, and honour him with their lips, when their hearts are removed far from him. In others it is otherwise: they draw nigh to God with their hearts; they call upon him in truth, in the uprightness of their souls; their worship is performed under the influence of the Spirit of God; and their hearts concerned therein. Now such, in a gospel sense, may be said to have a perfect heart. But I proceed to consider,

2. The exertion of divine power on their behalf. The eyes of the Lord run to and fro in behalf of such persons, to shew himself strong; or (as in the margin of some of your Bibles), strongly to hold with such; to be on their side, or take their part to relieve and protect them. The Lord is, in himself, strong. He is the mighty God: the Almighty. He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength. If I speak of strength, lo, he is strong. If I speak of mighty men on earth, or of mighty angels in heaven, they are nothing in comparison of God. Who is a strong Lord, like unto thee? and to thy faithfulness round about thee? He hath a mighty arm: strong is his hand, and high is his right hand, to do things exceeding great and wonderful. He hath, in a variety of ways, shewn himself to be strong; as in creating all things out of nothing; in upholding all things by the word of his power; in the redemption of

lost sinners; in delivering their souls out of the hands of Satan, who is stronger than they: in all these, and in other instances, he has shewn himself to be strong. But particularly in a way of providence; as it is concerned for his people. His eyes run to and fro through the whole earth, to shew himself strong on the behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards him. He shews himself strong in supplying their wants, whether spiritual or temporal; for he is able to supply all their need, according to his riches in glory by Jesus Christ. He is able to do more for them than they are able to ask or think. He shews himself strong, in supplying them with every thing needful for time and eternity: in supplying and supporting them under all their afflictions and temptations. He will not suffer them to be tempted above what they are able to bear; but will, with the temptation, make a way for their escape. He who hath encouraged them to cast their burden upon him, hath promised to sustain them: hath said, that the righteous shall never be moved: and he is as good as his word. He upholds his people with the right hand of his righteousness; puts underneath everlasting arms, and shews himself to be the mighty God, by supporting them under such trials and exercises, which otherwise, would be intolerable. His eyes run, to and fro throughout the whole earth, on the behalf of his people, in strengthening them under all their weaknesses. They are poor weak creatures. Sensible are they of it, and cry unto him for strength. He hears their cries, strengthens them with strength in their souls, with might in their inner man; and makes them strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might: strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. He strengthens them to perform every duty required of them, and to exercise every grace wrought in them; to withstand every temptation which besets them, and every corruption which arises up in their hearts, to bear what he is pleased to lay upon them; and to do the work appointed for them in their day and generation.

The eyes of the Lord run to and fro, to protect and defend them. Sin, Satan, and the world, are too strong for them. They would never be able to stand their ground, were it not for the assistance and protection which they have from God, in a way of special providence and grace. But he not only places his angels as guards over them, but he likewise appoints salvation to be walls and bulwarks for them. Yea, he himself is a wall of fire round about them, and a

glory in the midst of them. Thus does he shew himself strong in their behalf. Happy are the persons that are under his special care in all these instances.

Let us now praise and adore the grace of our God, if we have any reason to hope and believe, that we have been under his special providential care ever since we have had a being: and especially if he has distinguished us by the blessings of his grace and goodness. Truly we have abundant reason to bless and praise his holy name, if he hath dealt with us after this manner. In how many instances must it have been bad with us, if his eyes had not been over us; if they had not run to and fro, to shew himself strong on our behalf, in things temporal? And how sad would have been our condition, if he had not expressed his love to us, in calling us by his grace? Let what he hath done for us encourage us to put our trust in him for the future. Let us not rely upon the creature. This was Asa's sin who, notwithstanding all that God had done for him, distrusted his providence: relied upon the creature, and not upon his God. O let us take warning, and not act after this manner; but trust in the living God. Our great concern, under a sense of all should be, to live to his honour. Let us now attend to the advice that Solomon gives at the dedication of the temple, Let your hearts be perfect with the Lord your God; to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments, as at this day.

15 THE CHARACTER AND END OF THE WICKED, CONSIDERED.

2 Samuel 23:6, 7.

But the Sons of Belial, shall be, all of them, as thorns thrust away: because they cannot be taken with hands; but the man that shall touch them, must be fenced with iron, and the staff of a spear: and they shall be utterly burned with fire in the same place.

This is the closing part of the last words of David; and it is the reverse of what has been said before, as the adversative particle but shews, with which the words are introduced: "but the sons of Belial." These are opposed to the Ruler over men; the Messiah, who is just, ruling in the fear of God. He is said to be as the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain; but these are as thorns: or, they are opposed to David, who expresses his faith in the everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; in which they have no interest; so far from it, that they are

thrust away as thorns. He declares, that this covenant was all his salvation, and all his desire; but as for these sons of Belial, they shall be utterly consumed, burned up with fire in the same place.

The words are applicable to bad rulers and governors in general; as distinguished from, and opposed unto, him that ruleth in the fear of God. They are represented as such who are not righteous in the administration of government; who have not the fear of God before their eyes, and upon their hearts. The sons of Belial, instead of being helpful, are hurtful to those over whom they rule; not like the just Ruler, said to be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth; a morning without clouds, as the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain. But wicked Rulers are not like him; instead of making those they govern cheerful and comfortable, as he does, they give them pain and sorrow; are like thorns thrust into the hand. This agrees entirely with an observation the wise man makes, that when the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; they are cheerful as the morning; but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn (Prov. 29:2); they are grieved, they are distressed, they are made uneasy by the sons of Belial, who are as thorns; and therefore, if possible, they are to be removed, they are to be thrust away. But in as much as they are not tractable, gentle, or easily managed, some violent measures must be used, as here suggested, the man that shall touch them, must be fenced with iron, and the staff of a spear. And though it is difficult for men to remove such sort of persons from the rule and government they are in; yet sometimes God does it for them in a remarkable way. Thus Nebuchadnezzar was driven from among men, and sent to the beasts of the field. And sometimes they are thrust away, both root and branch, as Saul and his family were; to which some apply this passage.

The words are applicable also to the wicked Jews in particular, and their rulers, who opposed themselves unto the Messiah; the person that is clearly described, and so much spoken of in the context, whom they received not, when he came to them; but rejected him as a King, threw off his yoke, and would not have this man to reign over them. Though many messages and kind invitations were sent, they rejected him; would not attend the gospel of grace, the external ministration of the word and ordinances: and not only so, but abused the messengers that came with

these kind invitations; which exasperated the King who sent them; who, according to the parable, sent his army, the Roman army, and burnt up the city of Jerusalem; and they were burnt up in the same place. The greatest part of the Jewish nation were gathered together at Jerusalem, and were destroyed in it, at the last destruction by the Romans.

Again. The words are applicable to Antichrist; that man of sin, that lawless one; who may well be called Belial, the son of perdition, and who has many children signified sometimes by Jezebel. Jezebel is said to have children which God will destroy (Rev. 2:23). These are the worshippers of the beast, and have his mark on their forehead; who shall be cast into everlasting burnings, and the smoke of their torment shall ascend for ever and ever: even those very kings, who formerly gave their kingdoms to the antichristian whore, will be filled with hatred to her, and burn her flesh with fire. Rome, or Babylon, the metropolis of the antichristian kingdom, shall be utterly burned with fire; for strong is the Lord God, who judgeth her (Rev. 18:8); so that all the images in this text are suitable enough to this catastrophe.

But the words may be understood very well of wicked men in common; who may be all of them, especially the most vile and abandoned, called sons of Belial; as they often are in Scripture: those who were so vile as to go about to seduce the inhabitants of any city in Israel to idolatry, are called children of Belial (Deut. 13:13). The sons of Eli are said to be sons of Belial, being very wicked persons, given up to lewdness, and abandoned to all manner of wickedness. So Nabal, a vile, churlish and ill-natured man, is, by his servants, called a son of Belial. Our master, say they, is such a son of Belial, there is no living with him: nay, Abigail his wife, gave him the same name. Those who stood up as witnesses against Naboth, are called men of Belial, who made no conscience of any thing; having no fear of God before their eyes. So many others of like complexion are thus called in Scripture.

In this light we may understand the passage before us: "But the sons of Belial," wicked men, who are enemies to Christ, the King before spoken of, "shall be all of them as thorns thrust away, because they cannot be taken with hands; but the man that shall touch them must be fenced with iron, and the staff of a spear; and they shall be utterly burned with fire in the same place." In which words we may observe,

I. The descriptive character of wicked men, by their name, Sons of Belial; and by a comparison made of them, as thorns.

II. The issue, end, punishment, and utter destruction of these; thrust away, and burned with fire in the same place. This will be the end of the sons of Belial.

I. We shall consider the descriptive character given of wicked men, sons of Belial. Belial is thought to be a name of Satan. This is generally supposed to the sense of that passage, 2 Corinthians 6:15,

What concord hath Christ with Belial? that is, with Satan and the etymology of the word, as differently given, well agrees with him; whether it signifies one without a yoke, or one that is unprofitable, or one that is in a low estate and never rises higher; all agree with Satan and his angels.

Belial, one without a yoke. Satan and his principalities and powers, cast off the yoke of God; would not be subject unto him, and to his laws; threw off their allegiance to him, and apostatized from him; left their first state and habitation, set up a kingdom for themselves, and set a prince over them, who in Scripture is called, Beelzebub, the Prince of Devils (Matthew 12:24). These, by their apostasy, became unprofitable to God, and hurtful to men; as in many instances appears: and they, by their sin, were brought into so low a state and condition, as never to rise from thence: they have been cast out of heaven down to hell, there they are, and will never regain their former state, or rise up to that honour and dignity they before possessed as there is no place, we are told, found for them in heaven (Rev. 12:8).

Belial, (as the original word signifies that which is very wicked, abominable, and abandoned) is a name which well suits this grand apostate, who is emphatically in Scripture called, the wicked one (1 John 5:18). Now this Belial has sons or children, seed or offspring. It was threatened immediately upon the fall of our first parents, in which he had the chief hand, that God would put enmity between the seed of the woman, and seed of the serpent; the old serpent the devil, this Belial: and we read of the children of the devil. In this the children of God are manifest, says the apostle, and the children of the devil, by such and such things there observed (1 John 3:10). They are evidently distinguished one from the other, and may be known from their different actions and course of living. Children of the Devil. Particularly this title

is given to the worst and vilest of men, such who are notorious for any crime or crimes; so the apostle Paul gave it unto Elymas, who endeavoured to pervert the Roman pro-consul from the right ways of God; thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness (Acts 13:10). And as children are of the same nature, and often appear to be of the same disposition and temper as their parents, and alike in their practices; this appears in those who are called the sons of Belial, or children of the devil: they are of their father the devil, and they appear to be so, because the lusts of their father they will do. Is he a liar, and the father of lies? they are children that will lie; they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies (Ps. 58:3). Is he a murderer from the beginning? malicious, revengeful, blood-thirsty? this is their character, living in malice, hateful, and hating one another (Titus 3:3). Cain is said to be that wicked one, a child of Belial, as appears by the slaying of his own brother.

But, as I have hinted, this word Belial admits of various significations, according to the different etymology given of it by learned men, and all agree with wicked men as when it is thought to signify one without a yoke, or one that is unprofitable, or one in a low estate, and rises not from that state; all well agree with wicked men, the sons, or children, of Belial. They are without a yoke. In whatever sense we may take this word, or find it used in Scripture, (as sometimes it signifies the chastening hand of God, which he lays upon his own people, and which it becomes them to bear quietly and patiently), it is good for a man, Jeremiah says, that he should bear the yoke in his youth (Lam. 3:27); that is, the correcting, chastening hand of God. He should be inured to it, by which he may learn many things to his profit and advantage. This yoke sometimes presses hard, and is grievous to the flesh; for no affliction is joyous, but grievous; especially to a carnal man, and even to the people of God, when they are first exercised therewith. Thus Ephraim complains, that he was like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; impatient, and unwilling to bear it, desirous of shaking it off, and being delivered from it. Now wicked men, even in this sense, may be said to be sons of Belial, without a yoke; for the rod of God is not upon them (Job 21:9). The chastening, correcting rod of God is not upon them; that rod which is upon the back of the righteous, which a wise man bears, and who hath appointed it, and receives instruction from it, that

rod is not upon the wicked; they are without this rod, without this yoke. They are not in trouble, as other men (Ps. 73:5); not chastened as other men are, even good men. These are the wicked that prosper in their wickedness, as Asaph and Jeremiah observe, (Ps. 73; Jer. 12:1). God does not deal with these sons of Belial, as with his own children; he lays his rod, his yoke upon them; he scourges every son whom he receives. If ye be without chastisement, (says the apostle) whereof all are partakers, (that is, all the children of God), then are ye bastards, and not sons (Heb. 12:8); then ye appear to be sons of Belial, and not children of the living God: for the sons of Belial are without this yoke, without the fatherly chastisements, and corrections of God.

Or rather, we may consider the yoke in a figurative sense, as signifying rule and dominion, whether human or divine. Sometimes it signifies the rule and government of masters over servants. Let as many servants as are under the yoke, under the rule and government of their masters, count their own masters worthy of all honour. Sometimes it signifies rule of a higher kind, even regal power and government; so the people of Israel requested of Rehoboam, when he came to the throne, that he would make their yoke lighter, or his government easier, than was the yoke or government of his father. Now this yoke, or government, taken in a civil sense, is to be submitted to; and all good men will be subject to principalities and powers. They will submit themselves to every ordinance of man, that is not contrary to the law of God and their own consciences: but sons of Belial, children without a yoke, are such as despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities (Jude 7); and such as do so, are in Scripture expressly called the children of Belial. When Saul was chosen king, we are informed the children of Belial said, how can this man save us (1 Sam. 10:27)? And they despised him, and gave him no presents, which was usual at the accession of a king to the throne, by way of acknowledging him as their king, and of their subjection to him; but the sons of Belial would not do that.

Divine rule or government, may be signified by the yoke; but wicked men, sons of Belial, are without this yoke. The ceremonial law is sometimes called a yoke, which neither the Jews nor their forefathers were able to bear, as it consisted of various commands, the breach of which rendered persons liable to death;

and hence many were, through fear of death, all their life-time subject to bondage; therefore, it is no wonder it was to men, especially to wicked men, a weariness; as it is said to be, what a weariness is it? (Mal. 1:13). And not only that, but the moral law may be called a yoke; it is bidding upon all mankind. Our first parents had this law written upon their hearts, which was the rule of their obedience to God. They broke it, they cast away this yoke, and apostatized from God; yet, nevertheless, there are some remains of it to be found, even in the Gentiles themselves; who appear to have the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another. This law is of such a nature, that every man is obliged by it; for the sum and substance of this law is, to love the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our soul; and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

A good man, a man that has the grace of God implanted in him, is very desirous to be under this yoke; for though those who believe in Christ are delivered from the law, in which they were held, as it is a covenant of works (for they are not under the law, but under grace, and are delivered also from the curse and bondage of it); yet they are under it as a rule of walk and conversation, in the hands of Christ, delight in the law of God after the inner man, and serve it with all their hearts; though with the flesh they serve the law of sin, But as for wicked, carnal, and unregenerate men, children of Belial, they are without this yoke; they cast it off, and do not choose to have any thing to do with it. As for the wicked, says the Psalmist, they are far from thy law: far from it, indeed they do not care to come nigh, or be under it; they despise it, and cast it away from them. Instead of its being before them, to read it, and meditate on it; instead of having it before them as the rule of their lives and actions, they cast it behind their backs, determined to have nothing to do with it. God has wrote unto them the great things of his law, but they are reckoned by them as strange things. Such is the enmity of the carnal mind against God and his law, that it is not subject unto it, neither indeed can be; there is such a contrariety between the law of God and a wicked man. The law is holy, just, and good; but he is carnal, and sold under sin, in the worst sense of this expression: it is, I say, quite contrary to him, and therefore the natural man disapproves of it, despises it, casts it away from him; and every thing he

does, thwarts and contradicts this law. The thoughts and the imagination of the thoughts of his heart, are evil, and that continually, which this law condemns. His words and actions, as they are against the will, so they are against the law of God; every sin whatever, in thought, word, and deed, is a transgression of this law: no carnal man is subject unto it; however he may be externally, yet not internally, from the heart. He cannot be so, unless his heart is changed; unless the stony heart is taken away, and an heart of flesh is given: unless a new and right spirit is renewed within him, and the Spirit of God enable him to walk in the statutes and judgments of the Lord, to do them. A man must have this law written in his heart, by the Spirit of God, or he will never be willing to obey it: he must be made willing in the day of the Lord's power, or he will never be contented to bear the yoke of the law, but will be a son of Belial, one that is without a yoke.

If this be the case of a wicked man, as it certainly is, that he is without the yoke of God's righteous law; then we may be sure he must be without the yoke of Christ, and cannot bear that, though our Lord says, Take my yoke upon you, and I will give you rest for your souls; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (Matthew 11:30). Now let this be understood either of the gospel, or the ordinances of Christ, or indeed of both, a son of Belial is without the yoke; he cannot bear the doctrines of it. The gospel, when it comes in power, and not in word only, into the heart of a poor sinner, brings light and life along with it: such an one receives the truth in the love of it, and receives the love of the truth: rejoices at it, is greatly delighted with it, yields a professed subjection to it: and, from the heart, obeys that form of doctrine delivered to him; for which the apostle expresses so much thankfulness with respect to the Romans (Rom. 6:17). But to a wicked man, a son of Belial, this is a galling yoke; he cannot bear it. Of this, and the other truth, he says, "This is an hard saying, who can bear it?" as the doctrines of distinguishing grace, the doctrine of election, and others; particularly the doctrine of a sinner's justification before God, without the works of the law, by the imputed righteousness of Christ, is such a yoke he cannot put his neck under; he cannot take it upon him. Self-righteous persons cannot. It is said of the Jews, they went about to establish their own righteousness, and submitted not to the righteousness of the Son of God; they could not bend their necks

to this doctrine, this yoke, as it may be called, even a sinner's justification before God, by Christ's imputed righteousness. The doctrines of the gospel strike not only at those principles that men value, but at such practices as they are fond of, and therefore they cannot bear this yoke: "For the gospel of the grace of God, which hath appeared to all men, teaches, that denying ungodliness and worldly lust, men should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world:" but these sons of Belial do not approve of it.

A wicked man cannot bear the ordinances of Christ, though they are not grievous. None of his commands are so to a good man, one who has received the grace of God; no, he readily yields obedience to them; he makes haste (as the Psalmist says he did), to keep his commandments he readily obeys them from the heart; willingly, cheerfully, from love, and in faith, and without trusting to, or depending on, a submission to these ordinances in the business of his justification before God, and acceptance with him. But wicked men cannot bear this yoke of Christ's ordinances; their language is, Let us break their bands asunder, and east away their cords from us. They reject the counsel of God against themselves, as the scribes and pharisees did, who despised the baptism of John. Thus we see, that this character Belial, as it signifies one without a yoke, agrees with wicked men in common; they are without the yoke of the chastening hand of God; without the yoke of the moral law; and without the yoke of the gospel, and the ordinances of Jesus Christ. Neither the one nor the other do they care to submit their necks unto. Again,

This word Belial, according to others, signifies one that is unprofitable. And this is the account the apostle gives of all men in general, Jews and Gentiles, that they are together become unprofitable (Rom. 3:12). A wicked man, a son of Belial, is unprofitable to God, unprofitable to men, unprofitable to himself; and indeed every man is unprofitable unto God; for, can a man be profitable unto God? says Eliphaz, as he that is wise may be profitable to himself (Job 22:2); no, he cannot. Even a wise and good man, with all his goodness, cannot be profitable unto God; for his goodness does not extend to him. David says, My goodness extendeth not to thee (Ps.16:2), can be of no avail unto thee; for if a man's way is righteous, what gain is it to the Lord? what does he receive at his hands? Nothing at all that can be really beneficial to

him, so as to lay him under any obligation; for who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? (Rom. 11:35). When a man has done all he can in a way of righteousness, he has done but what was his duty, and must sit down and call himself an unprofitable servant with respect to God. Now if good men cannot be profitable to God, certainly wicked men cannot. Good men may be profitable in glorifying God, and causing others to glorify him; or promote the interest of religion by their purses, or the gifts bestowed upon them, but still no man can be profitable unto God, to yield him such benefit as can add to his essential glory and happiness; for if any addition could be made to his happiness, he would not be a perfect being as he is. Now if good men, with all their goodness cannot be profitable unto God, surely wicked men cannot; they are sons of Belial, they are abominable in themselves, and to every good work reprobate: nor are they profitable unto men. One good man may be profitable to another, even to wicked men: "the righteousness of a man may profit the son of man," as Elihu owns (Job 35:8); and that is the reason the apostle gives, why those who believe in Christ should be careful to maintain good works, because these things are good and profitable to men (Titus 3:8). Though they are not profitable to God, they are profitable to men; they set good examples to them: besides there are many things in them that are really beneficial unto men. Saints are the salt, of the earth: and if there were no such persons, the earth would lose its savor, and be in a sad condition. Many temporal advantages wicked men enjoy, by means of good men; and saints, in various ways, are capable of serving one another in love: but a wicked man, a son of Belial, is good for nothing; he is unprofitable to the generation in which he lives. Evil communications corrupt good manners: or men of evil communications, that are bad in their lives and conversations, are hurtful among those with whom they live, and with whom they converse.

They are also unprofitable unto themselves. One that is wise and good, may be profitable to himself, as Eliphaz suggests in that aforementioned text, (Job 22:2). A truly wise man, that is so in a spiritual sense, may be profitable to himself; for godliness hath gain annexed to it: it has the promise of this life, and of that which is to come. A wise and good man, building his house upon a rock, it is to his advantage; the

house stands against blustering storms and rains. A man that hath an interest in Christ, as is the case with every wise and good man, has gain thereby; gain that is greater than that of gold and silver. The wise virgins, having oil in their lamps, it is profitable to them; for, when the bridegroom comes, they will not be at a loss for a lamp or oil, but be invited to come into the bride-chamber with him. But wicked men, the sons of Belial, are not profitable to themselves; for what fruit (says the apostle) had ye in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? (Rom. 6:21); none at all, but quite the reverse. Though a son of Belial, a wicked man, may be able, by various means, licit or illicit, to obtain a large share of the things of this life, what will it be unto him? what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? he is a son of Belial, unprofitable.

There is another sense in the term Belial, at which I have hinted, and that is, it may signify one that is very low and never will rise up from that state to a higher one. Man, by the fall was brought into a low estate, a very low estate indeed: which may be hinted at in the 136th Psalm, Who remembered us in our low estate; for his mercy endureth for ever. Man was upon the pinnacle of honor, but is become like the beasts that perish. He is fallen from that pinnacle into the pit wherein is no water, into an horrible pit of mire and clay. Some are raised out of it, to an high estate: the children of God are. The Lord lifteth up them that are cast down; he raiseth up them that fall: he raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory. These were raised up in Christ, when he was raised from the dead: are raised up in effectual vocation, when their feet are set upon a rock, and their goings established; and will be raised to glory and happiness, and sit on the same throne with Christ. But these are the children of God: as for the sons of Belial, they will never rise; they are left in that low estate into which sin has brought them. One is taken, and the other left (Matthew 34:40). These are the ninety-nine left in the wilderness: they are left in this low estate, and here they will live and die; and in hell they will lift up their eyes, and behold Lazarus in Abraham's bosom. Saints in heaven are in a raised condition; but the sons of Belial will never rise thither. No, there is a gulf fixed, the immutable decree of God, which they cannot pass; so that they

will never rise from their wretched state, to that high estate of glory the saints are in: they are sons of Belial, without a yoke; law, and will never rise to that high estate of honor and dignity.

These, in our text, are compared to thorns. The sons of Belial shall be as thorns: to which wicked men are often compared in Scripture. Though (says the Lord to Ezekiel) briars and thorns be with thee, be not afraid of them (Ezek.2:6): though thou be among wicked men, comparable to briars and thorns. So the church of Christ is said to be as a lily among thorns (Sol Song 2:2). Thorns bear into fruit. Can men gather grapes of thorns? they cannot expect it. Wicked men are called the unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. 5:11): they bear no fruit, have not the fruits of the Spirit of God, neither his grace in them, nor his righteousness upon them. Like thorns they are hurtful, pricking, and grieving to the saints and people of God. They are so, by their lives and conversations: so Lot's righteous soul was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked; so the lives of Isaac and Rebecca were made grievous and uneasy by the daughters of Heth, by their manners and behaviors; so David was in very distressing circumstances when he dwelt in Meshech, and sojourned in the tents of Kedar; and so the prophet Isaiah, by being among a people of unclean lips, of which he complains, (Isa. 6:5).

Wicked men are like thorns to the people of God, by their evil words, their ill speeches to them: this is what is suggested in the passage referred to in Ezekiel; "be not afraid of their words, though briars and thorns be with thee:" though the men thou art with are like thorns, pricking, grieving, and distressing as briars and thorns; yet be not afraid of them, or of their words. The words of wicked men are sometimes very sharp and cutting to the people of God; especially when they reproach them on the account of their religion and their God, as David says, As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say unto me daily, where is my God? (Ps. 42:10). So by their persecutions, in one shape and another, they are like thorns, pricking and piercing the saints: and even there are many sons of Belial, who are professors of religion, that are like thorns too; compared to the thorny ground, among whom the seed of the word is cast, and which becomes unprofitable, through the cares of the world over-topping the seed sown. Such are all those who will be rich, and who are overreaching

in their business and occupation of life; of whom it is said, the best of them is a briar; the most upright of them is sharper than a thorn hedge (Micah 7:4). All slothful professors of religion, who are slothful in business, not fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, are like the field of the sluggard, covered with nettles and thorns. So all such, whose lives and conversations are not as becomes the gospel of Christ, these are as prickling thorns, very grieving to the true professors of religion, the children of God; of whom (the apostle says) I have told you often, and now tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ (Phil.3:18). In a word, all those who, by evil principles and bad notions of religion, apostatize from the truth of the gospel, are by the apostle compared to the earth which bringeth forth thorns and briars, who are nigh unto cursing and their end to be burned (Heb. 6:8). This brings me to consider,

II. The issue, end, punishment, and utter destruction of these sons of Belial. They are said to be thrust away, and at last to be utterly burnt with fire in the same place. They shall be all of them as thorns thrust away. But now thorns, in order to be thrust away, must be rooted up, or cut down, or they cannot be thrust away; they must be rooted up, as wicked men will be. The wicked, says the wise man, shall be cut off from the earth, and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it (Prov. 3:22); so David declares, the Lord shall destroy them, and root them up out of the land of the living, as thorns may be rooted up. And these must be cut down as cumberers of the ground; for if a barren fig-tree cumber the ground, then much more briars and thorns, These are cut down, sooner or later, and they are thrust away with contempt and indignation. Nigh unto cursing: who will be, and are, cursed by the righteous law of God; for cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. Thrust away out of time into eternity, suddenly, hastily, in a moment, and in wrath. A tempest shall bear them away; the storm and tempest of divine wrath; for it is God that thrusts them away. He drives the wicked man into darkness, and chases him out of this world. A son of Belial is driven away in his wickedness; while the righteous hath hope in his death. And he will be thrust away in the great day, from the presence of the Lord, as Adam, when he apostatized, was driven out of Eden's garden; and as Cain, when he had been guilty of that shocking

sin of murder, was driven from the presence of God; so wicked men will be driven from his presence. They will hear him say, depart from me, ye cursed, I know you not. Then they will be burned with fire in the same place: with the fire of God's wrath; for his fiery indignation shall devour the adversaries.

Wicked men, whenever their consciences are awakened, are apprehensive there is nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment, and of fiery indignation: now this will break forth at the last day, and consume them. This indignation is sometimes compared to a furnace of fire, and sometimes to a lake of fire; into each of which, thorns and briars are sometimes cast. Thus, as the tares are bound up in bundles and cast into the fire, so the wicked, the sons of Belial, will be gathered by the angels, and cast into a furnace of fire, where there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 8:42). This is also expressed by a lake of fire; a lake which burns with fire and brimstone, into which the sons of Belial will be cast, and where they will be burnt. This is called in Scripture, everlasting fire. Everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels; that will be always burning, and never shall he quenched. And it will be intolerable, so that language imports, Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fires? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? This will be the end, this will be the punishment of those who are the sons of Belial.

You see now from hence, of what account wicked men are with God. They are no other than sons of Belial, children without a yoke, unprofitable, low creatures, and will never rise from that state; and like thorns, are only fit to be burnt. You see what will be the end, the issue of these persons; everlasting destruction. They will be burnt with the fire of God's wrath, which will endure for ever; the smoke of their torments will ascend up for ever and ever. There is no escaping this, but in, and through our Lord Jesus Christ, and by applying to him for life and salvation. If any of you are seeking to flee from the wrath to come, which is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men; and should be asking, Whither shall we flee? Not to rocks or mountains, whether in a literal or figurative sense. Not in a literal sense; they will do no service. Nor in a figurative sense, your own works of righteousness; these will not screen you. There is no other way of escaping the wrath to come,

due to the sons of Belial, but by fleeing for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before you in the everlasting gospel; by fleeing to Christ, turning to him, the strong hold, as prisoners of hope; and, being justified by his blood, you shall be saved from wrath, through him. It is he, and he only, who delivers from wrath to come.

16 JEHOVAH'S DECLARATION, BEHOLD THE MAN IS BECOME AS ONE OF US, CONSIDERED.

Genesis 3:22

And the Lord God said, Be/told the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever.

In the three first chapters of Genesis, we have an account of the rise and ruin of the world, and of all human nature. The first chapter gives us a compendious narration of the creation of the universe, in that gradual procedure, which the Former of all things was pleased to take therein; and particularly of the formation of man, the chief of all God's works in this lower world. The second chapter informs us of that happiness which man enjoyed, during his continuance in a state of innocence; namely, that he was the favourite of heaven; lord of this lower world; had all creatures in subjection to him; was blessed with the enjoyment of all the conveniences and delights of nature, being placed in the most pleasant and fruitful spot in all the globe: where he had a large knowledge of God, and much communion with him. Nevertheless, man, being in honour, abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish: for in this third chapter we hear of his defection from God, and we are told who was the principal instrument of it; by what artful methods he effected it; as also the dreadful consequences which followed the arraignment, conviction, and condemnation of the several parties concerned in this grand rebellion; and the sentence passed on each of them by God, the Judge of all. The account of which is continued almost to the words which I have read; which were spoken by God himself, and respect his fallen creature, man; in which may he observed these two things;

I. A declaration, either of man's present, or of his past condition.

II. A prevention of his eating of the tree of life.

I. Here is a declaration made by Jehovah himself, either of man's present, or of his past condition. And

the Lord God said, Behold the man is become as one of us. In which may be considered, 1. The person speaking, the Lord God. 2. The persons spoken to, to whom the man is said to be like; or, who are the Us, here mentioned. 3. The persons spoken of, the man or the Adam. 4. The matter contained herein, and the manner in which it was delivered.

1. It may be proper to consider, who it is that speaks these words; and we are told that it is Jehovah Eloim, the Lord God. And the Lord God said. By whom I understand, the second Person in the Trinity, the promised Messiah; who continues speaking from verse 8. This was the sense of the ancient Jewish church; as is manifest from their Targums, or paraphrases on this book. Verse 8, is thus paraphrased by Onkelos. And they heard the voice of the Word of the Lord God, &c. as it is also by Jonathan ben Uzziel. Verse 9th by the Jerusalem Targum, thus, And the Word of the Lord God called unto Adam, &c. As is verse 10th, both by Onkelos and Jonathan, after this manner: And he said, I heard the voice of thy Word in the garden, &c. Now this was no other than the same person whom the Evangelist John, in the beginning of his gospel calls the Word; of whom he says, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And thus the Jerusalem Targum paraphrases the words of our text: And the Word of the Lord God said, Behold the man which thou hast created, &c. Besides, the person here speaking, appears in such character, and performs such offices, as manifestly discovers him to be the Messiah; who here gives a specimen of all his three offices of King, Prophet, and Priest. He acted the part of a Judge, in arraigning his creature man at his bar; proceeding in a legal way against him; convicting him of his treason, and then passing sentence upon him: which is one branch of Christ's Kingly office: For the Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son. He acted the part of a Prophet, in the discovery he made of life and salvation to fallen man, through the promised seed: and who so proper a person to do this, as the Son of God; who was privy to all God's counsels and resolutions concerning it? by whom it was to be effected, and who was to be the great Prophet in Israel, by whom Grace and Truth were to come. He also acted the part of a Priest, in making coats of skins and clothing Adam and his wife with them. These were the skins of slain beasts, which, very probably, were slain in sacrifice, and were

typical of Christ, the great sacrifice; who, as the great High Priest, made reconciliation for sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness; in which robe of his he enwraps all his people.

Moreover, I make no doubt, but this glorious person, appeared in a human form, to our first parents in Eden; and there brought them the messages of grace: for, not to insist upon the audible voice they heard, and the interlocutory discourse which passed between them; why may it not be supposed that he appeared in a human form, to our first parents in the garden, as a prelude of his future incarnation; and for the confirmation of their faith in it, as well as he did to Abraham in the plains of Mamre; and to Jacob, when as a man, he wrestled with him, until break of day; and as well as to many others? And, perhaps, it may be a rule which will admit but of few, if any, exceptions, that wherever, in the Old Testament, we read of God, speaking with an audible and articulate voice, or appearing in any visible form, that the Son of God, the promised Messiah, is there intended; and it may be, our Lord has respect to this, when he says to the Jews, speaking of his Father, Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. (John 5:7) And, indeed, who so proper to speak, or visibly to appear, when there was any necessity for it, as the Word, who was to be made flesh, and dwell among us. From hence may be observed,

1st. The existence of Christ before his incarnation. The followers of Socinus deny this: and assert, that he did not exist before his taking flesh of the virgin. But this truth appears from many undeniable instances. He existed in the times of Moses, and the Prophets; was before Abraham; as he himself says, Before Abraham was, I am. (John 8:58) He existed in the beginning of all things; for, In the beginning was the Word. Nay, he was before all things: and by him all things consist.

2dly. The true and proper Deity of Christ. That the person here speaking, is truly and properly God, is manifest from that awe and dread of his majesty, which fell upon our first parents: from his perfect knowledge of Adam's case, and of the condition which he had brought himself and his posterity into; the authority which he had exercised in the arraignment and trial of man; the discovery he made of the way of life and salvation, by the seed of the woman, which before was a secret hid in God's heart from everlasting; to all which may he added, that he is expressly called

Jehovah Elohim, the Lord God, in the words of our text; which is a name that belongs to none but the most High God. See Psalm 83:18.

3dly. That what is said in those words, Behold, the man is become as one of us, whatever is meant by them, (which we shall hereafter enquire into) is certainly true; seeing it is the Lord God who says it: as also, that the prevention of man, from eating of the tree of life, mentioned in the latter part of the verse, was for man's good, and not his hurt: seeing it is the Lord God, who brought the message of grace unto him, and clothed him and his wife with coats of skins, who prevented it.

2. The persons spoken to, are next to be enquired after; or who are intended by the Us, to one of whom the man is said to be like. And,

1st. Some Jewish interpreters, who are also followed by some Christians, say, that these words are spoken Regio more, after the manner of kings, who in all their edicts and proclamations use the plural number. But this aulic way of speaking, did not obtain very early in the eastern nations; and, perhaps, was first introduced by the Romans. Nor can any instance be produced in the sacred writings, of any one man, though ever so great, proud, and arrogant, speaking only of himself in the plural number. And as for those Scriptures, which are commonly insisted on, they are rejected by a learned Jew, (R. Aben Ezra, in Gen 1:26) as false witnesses. Besides, when princes do issue out their mandates, edicts, and proclamations, it is with the advice of their privy council; which is the reason of their using this way of speaking: so that this subterfuge is like to do but little service to the antitrinitarians.

2dly. Others would have the angels here meant, to whom the Lord God thus speaks. But these are not his associates and companions; much less of equal dignity and authority with him. They were never made his privy council. He did not advise with them; nor were they assisting to him in the formation of man: neither was it after their image and likeness that he was created. They are God's servants, to do his will; are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation. But,

3dly. By the Us in our text, I apprehend, we are to understand the three Persons in the Trinity, Father, Son, and Spirit: the same Us, who said, Let Us make man in Our image; after Our likeness. This way of speaking is also used by our Lord, John 14:23. Jesus

answered and said unto him, I 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: where two persons, at least, his Father and Himself, are intended. This being the sense of our text, makes it appear that the doctrine of the Trinity is no novel doctrine. It is not only the doctrine of the New, but also of the Old Testament, It is true, it is more clearly revealed in the New Testament, than it was in the Old; though even there we have abundant testimonies of it. Nothing does more fully and compendiously contain it, than that form of words prescribed and used in baptism, Matt. 28:19. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Nor is there any greater evidence of it, than at our Lord's baptism, recorded in Matt. 3:16, 17. Hence it was an usual saying of the ancients, Go to Jordan, and there learn the doctrine of the Trinity. But though it was more manifestly discovered, in the New Testament; yet it was not unknown to Moses and the Prophets: nay, it was revealed to our first parents in Eden's garden.

3. The person who is spoken of, is the man. We read of two Adams in Scripture, the first and the second. The first man is of the earth, earthly; the second man is the Lord from heaven: the true Messiah, sent from thence to be the Redeemer of lost sinners. Agreeable to this, some Jewish writers had a notion of two Adams; the one heavenly, the other earthly: the one, as one with God from eternity; the other, as not only another person, but another thing from God, and rejected by him.

Now the question is, which of these two Adams is here meant? The above said Jewish writers understand it of the heavenly Adam; and take the words to be the words of the Lord God, directed to the angels; declaring to them, after the miserable fall of man, the mystery of his redemption, and who was to be the author of it, viz. the Adam that was with God from eternity; who was one with him, and in all things like unto him. The latter part of the text they interpret, of the prevention of this heavenly Adam's immediate entrance upon the work of Redemption; which was deferred to a longer time; and say, that an angel was dispatched, as a messenger, to acquaint the fallen Adam of it, lest he should be pressed down with overmuch sorrow, for being the cause of ruin to himself, and to all his posterity. In which account, though there is something fabulous,

yet it shews, that the ancient Jewish church had some notion of man's redemption by Christ, as the second Adam. He, however, is not intended here; but, by the man, we are to understand our first parents, Adam and Eve, who both are called by this name. Gen. 5:2. Male and female created he them, and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created. They were both created after God's image and likeness; and both fell in the transgression. But,

4. The matter contained in these words, and the manner in which they are delivered, are next to be considered. The generality of interpreters understand them as an irony, or sarcasm; a flout or jeer at man's deception by Satan; who told our first parents, that they should be as gods, knowing good and evil: by which deceitful bait they were drawn into transgression, and ruined. Now whatever hidden meaning Satan might have in this speech of his to them (which might be like those ambiguous oracles of his, by which he imposed upon the Gentile world), yet it is certain, that our first parents understood it, of an equality with the most High God; which became a snare, and proved their ruin. He might indeed, mean, that they should be as angels, who are called Elohim, Gods, in Psalm 8:5; and so Jonathan, in his Targum, paraphrases Gen. 2:5. And perhaps, Satan might design such angels as he and his company were; which was verified. For, by their sin, they came to have the woeful experience of good and evil; even as those apostate spirits had. Yet, I say, it is manifest, that Adam and his wife understood him otherwise. Now the Lord God here is supposed to upbraid man with it, and in an ironical way says, Behold the man is become like one of us. As if he had said, "See how much like a God, like one of us, the man looks; as Satan falsely promised him, and he vainly expected. See how he stands before us, with his coat of skin upon his back; and before he had that, he was obliged to sew fig-leaves together to make aprons, to cover his nakedness. Behold, how he is filled with shame and confusion for his folly. Does this man look like a God? Is this the Divinity that was promised, and which he affected? This is he, who aimed at a more exalted station than that in which he was created: but how is he sunk into the lowest condition of life!" So that the words seem to be much like those which were spoken by Pilate (when Christ was brought, clad with a purple robe and a crown of thorns upon his head, who then said to the Jews, in a sarcastic way, Behold

the man!). (John 19:5) Not that we are to imagine, that the Lord God here rejoiced at man's misery, or insulted over him in it; for he had compassion on him; remembered him in his low estate; and, in his love and pity, redeemed him. But he took this method, to bring man to a thorough conviction of his sin, to shame, and true repentance for it: as also, more fully to lay open the devil's treachery; the crafty wiles he uses to deceive mankind; that so our first parents might not be ignorant of his devices. Though I must confess, I can scarce think that the words are to be understood ironically: for it is not very easy to imagine, that our great Messiah, at his first entering on his office of publishing the gospel, should, as one expresses it, "Complete his first sabbath, with a jest on poor man's misery." Seeing, as the same author observes, "We don't read of another, broken on his poor church, in all his ministry." I am, therefore, most inclined to think, that those words are spoken seriously, and express real matter of fact, and may be understood, either,

As a declaration of man's present state and condition; who, though fallen from a state of innocence, must now be considered as believers in Christ, and as restored and renewed by grace; so that he may well be said to be, as one of us. For,

1. Adam stood clothed with Christ's righteousness, which was typified by the coats of skins, which the Lord God made for them; on which account he appeared as one of the Trinity, even as the Lord Jesus, whose righteousness was put upon him; for he who hath that imputed to him, is righteous, even as he is righteous. There is so much likeness between Christ and believers, on that account, that he end his church are called by one and the same name. See Jer. 23:6. and 23:16.

2. Adam being now renewed by grace, was conformed to the image of Christ, who is the first-born among many brethren; which is what all the elect of God are predestinated to, and therefore, as one of us. This new creation image is wrought by the Spirit; and is increased by those transforming views he gives us of the glory of Christ's person, and will be completed in the other world; when saints shall be like him, and see him as he is.

3. Adam must now be considered as in union with the Father, Son, and Spirit, as all believers are: which union is so strict and full, that he might well be said to be, as one of us. It is expressed by Christ, in such terms

as fully evince it, John 17:21. That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us. The meaning of which will more fully appear, when we are removed from this state of imperfection.

4. Adam was now in a state of friendship with God. It is true, sin had separated chief friends, and made a breach upon that former amity, which was between God and man: but now man was reconciled to God, through the appointed death of the Son of God; who, to Adam's faith, was now slain both in the promise, and in the type: and he was also under the reconciling work of the Spirit of God, to the way of salvation, by the promised seed. Or,

These words may be considered, as expressive of Adam's condition before the fall; for they may be rendered thus, Behold, the man was as one of us; which, I apprehend, is the truest reading; as well as the genuine sense of the words. This sense I also find is given and approved by a learned Jewish writer; and suits man in his first creation; who was in the image, and after the likeness of God, which consisted,

1st. In the form and constitution of his body. The body of Christ, which was prepared by God for him, is, undoubtedly, the glory of human nature; it being curiously wrought, like a piece of needle-work, in the lowest parts of the earth. That is, in the Virgin's womb, by the power of the blessed Spirit; or in the secret thoughts of God's eternal mind. For, in the book of his eternal purposes, all the members thereof were written, which in continuance (i.e. in the fulness of time) were fashioned, when as there was none of them, really and actually existing. Now it seems as though, according to the idea of Christ's human body, in God's mind from everlasting, the body of Adam was formed. Christ indeed, is said to appear in the likeness of sinful flesh; to partake of the same flesh and blood with the children, and to be made in all things like unto his brethren; but then, they are also said to be, of his flesh and of his bones. But whether it be so or no, that Adam's body was formed according to the idea of Christ's body, that was in God's mind from everlasting; yet this is certain, that the bodies of the saints, at the resurrection, will be fashioned like to the glorious body of Christ, according to Phil. 3:21. And why Adam's body may not be supposed to be formed according to the idea of it, in God's mind, I see no reason to conclude. Wherefore, it might be very

well said of him, especially in his state of innocence, before he had sinned, and his body became subject to weakness, diseases, and mortality, that he was as one of us. But this is not all that this likeness and image consisted in: for,

2dly. It also appeared in the rectitude of his mind, for God made him upright, though he afterwards sought out many inventions. Man came out of his Maker's hands a holy creature. God left an impress of holiness upon him; so that he was, in some measure, like him. Hence the work of renovation is called, The new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness. (Eph. 4:24)

3dly. This image of God, in which man was created, appeared in that wisdom and knowledge, with which he was endued; of which some instances are on record: as, his giving names to all creatures; his knowing his wife, as soon as brought to him, who she was, and from whence she was taken; as also, his knowledge of good and evil, which is the particular thing instanced in our text, Behold, the man was as one of us, to know good and evil. Though I know this is produced as an objection against the sense of the words; and it is asserted that Adam did not know good and evil before the fall. It is true, he did not know evil in the same sense; as it is said of Christ, that he knew no sin. (2 Cor. 5:21) That is, he did not know it, so as to commit it; but he knew the nature of it, its contrariety to God's revealed will, its due desert, and wretched consequences; and so did Adam. Nay, I will venture to say, that in this sense Adam had a more exquisite and complete knowledge of good and evil before his fall, than he had afterwards.

4thly. This image consisted also in his dominion over the creatures. He was made Lord of all, upon his first creation, Gen. 1:26. So that there appeared some resemblance of the Divine Majesty in him; which universal subjection of all creatures to him, is very particularly and beautifully described, in Psalm 8:5-8. Thus the man was as one of us; in which words there may also be a comparison of his past with his present state, though one branch of it is not expressed; Behold the man was as one of us. But what is he now? He is strangely altered; he is not the man he was: his body, which was before hale, robust, and free from all diseases, is now become feeble and languid; subject to all manner of distempers, and to death itself. It is now a mere house of clay, which has its foundation

in the dust; and must shortly be reduced to its first origin. His soul, which was created upright, is now destitute of its original righteousness, and filled with all unrighteousness. His understanding, which was replete with wisdom and knowledge, is now darkened. The man that was the darling of heaven, and in perfect friendship with his Maker, is now alienated from him; and he that was Lord of this world, and had all creatures in subjection to him, is now a slave to his own lusts, and afraid of those creatures which were made for his use. A strange and sudden alteration indeed! so that man, in his fallen state, appears far from being possessed of that free-will, which the Jews ascribe unto him, and endeavour to establish from those words, Onkelos, one of their paraphrasts, rendering the words thus, And the Lord God said, Behold the man is the only one in the world of himself, to know good and evil. So much for the first part of the text, which contains a declaration either of man's past or present condition.

II. Here is a prevention of him, from his eating of the tree of life. And now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat and live for ever. Which words are elliptic, or defective, and may be supplied, either thus, There's danger lest he put forth his hand; or, we must take care, that he does not; or, the man must be drove out of paradise, lest, &c. as we find in the following verses he was. So that the sense may be this, The man in his primitive state, was as one of us; but now, by his sin, he has brought himself into a deplorable condition. He is quite altered; he is not the man he was before; and seeing he is so much degenerated, what will not his corrupt heart prompt him to, and his wild imagination put him upon? It may be, to put forth his hand, and eat of the tree of life, that he may live for ever: therefore, it is highly expedient to put him out of the garden, lest he should make such an attempt.

Two things are needful to be enquired into. I. What this tree of life was. II. Why Adam was prevented from eating of it, after his fall.

I. It may be proper to consider, what this tree of life was. That it was a real tree, in the garden of Eden, which bore this name, and not merely figurative and allegorical, I make no question; any more, than that the garden, and all the trees therein, were so. It is highly probable, that it might be useful for the invigorating of Adam's body, the keeping it in a good temperament,

and the continuation of the life thereof, during his state of innocence. But what kind of plant it was, what fruit it bore, its just description and proper qualities, I shall not pretend to tell: but that it was symbolical I believe will scarcely be denied. And

1. It was a memorative sign, or symbol, of the dependence of his life upon God. As often as he saw, and eat of it, he was put in mind, that it was God who gave him life, and that it was his visitation, that preserved his spirit. That his life, and the preservation of it, were wholly owing to God, that in him he lived, and moved, and had his being.

2. it was a confirmative sign, or symbol, to him, of the continuance of his life, so long as he was obedient to the divine will. I will not say, that it was a confirmation of his being translated after a time, to a heavenly and supernatural life, had he continued in an entire conformity to the divine will: because I am persuaded that God never designed that man should attain eternal life, merely by his obedience to the law of works. For, says the apostle, (Gal. 3:21) If there had been a law given, which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But that was never God's intention. He had provided another way in his everlasting councils.

3. It might also be typical of Christ, or at least, Christ is called so, in allusion to it, both in the Old and New Testament, (See Prov. 3:18; Rev. 2:7 and 22:2, 14.) because he is the author and donor, both of spiritual and eternal life. As Mediator, he asked it of his Father, in the council and covenant of peace. He procured it by his blood, and it is now secured in his person; for our life is hid with Christ in God. But,

II. Why was Adam, after his fall prevented from eating of this tree? Some have thought, that there was either a natural, or a supernatural virtue, abiding in this tree, after the fall; so that, could Adam have eaten of it, it would have perpetuated his life, either for many hundred years; or else for ever; and that the reason why God prevented access to it was either, 1. Compassion for him, that he might not live a long and tedious life, attended with affliction and sorrows, to which he was now subject: Or, 2. By way of punishment, that he might not be able to elude the sentence of death, which was passed upon him.

But neither of these seems feasible. Not the former; because one would think, that if this tree had possessed such a virtue as to prolong his life, it would

also have preserved him from all bodily afflictions and distempers. Not the latter; because it was impossible that the sentence should be eluded in any such way, which was the just desert of sin; and what God's veracity was engaged to make good. Besides, had such a powerful virtue continued in this tree, after the fall of man, every body knows, that God, who put that virtue in it, could have removed it at pleasure so, that if Adam had eaten up the whole tree, it would have been of no significancy to him; nor would it have answered any such end. This is manifest from the daily food we eat: from which, if God withholds a blessing, or takes away the natural virtue, it will not yield any nourishment to our bodies. For, man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. (Matt. 4:4) So that there was no reason, on this account, for such a guard about this tree, as that of cherubims and a flaming sword, which turned every way to defend it. The true reason, therefore, of this prevention was,

3. That Adam might have no hope nor expectation of life, from that, or any thing else, but Christ the promised Messiah. Adam might think, as this tree was useful to him, in his state of innocence, to preserve his life, that it would be so now; and thereby be tempted to forget the promised seed, from whom he had reason to expect life and salvation. And now, that he might not lie under this temptation, the Lord God thought it expedient to thrust him out of Paradise, and place a guard about the tree. For there is nothing that man is more prone to, than to seek life any where but in Christ. There seems to be a natural aversion to that. Ye will not come to me, (says Christ) that ye might have life. No, they had rather go to mount Sinai, yea, travel all the globe over, than go to Christ, for life, could they but obtain it any other way. But God has resolved upon this, as the only way of life and salvation; and that man shall not come at it, by his own works of righteousness, be they what they will. And therefore, has so guarded this way, that he who seeks for righteousness and life, by his own doings, runs upon the flaming sword of justice; and whilst he is endeavouring to insure his own salvation, he is pulling ruin upon himself. Upon the whole, I do not consider these words as having respect to the event, or what would have been, if Adam had eaten of this tree; but the vain opinion, and the foolish expectation, that he might have entertained, of securing his life by

it. Having thus explained the words, I shall briefly deduce two or three inferences from them.

1. Learn hence, the wretched and vile nature of sin. How soon was man, the chief of God's works in this lower world, ruined by it! Nay, the whole world was laid under a curse for his sake. Sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. Rom. 5:12.

2. See the vanity of seeking life by our own performances. It is not only, what God has not established; but also, what he is resolved against.

3. Observe the grace of God, in providing a Saviour for lost man; and how early the discovery of it was made to him. A Saviour was provided before that sin was committed, which required one; and was revealed, before the man was driven out of the garden, that he might have no reason to despair of life.

4. Let us not, then, lay hold on any vain pretences for life; such as those of our own doings, services, and performances. But let us look to Christ alone; for he is a tree of life, to them that lay hold upon him; and happy is every one that retaineth him. Prov. 3:18

17 THE PLAGUE OF A MAN'S OWN HEART, WHAT IT IS; TO WHOM DISCOVERED; AND THE

Encouragement given to such Persons to expect PARDON OF ALL THEIR SINS.

1 Kings 8:38

—Which shall know every man the plague of his own heart.

The whole verse reads thus: What prayer and supplication soever he made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart; and spread forth his hands towards this house (to complete the sense, it follows) then hear thou in heaven, thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, &c.

These words are part of the prayer which Solomon offered up to God, at the dedication of the temple. After he had addressed the divine Being, by mentioning several of his attributes, and expressed his admiration that he should dwell upon the earth among men; he requests of God, that not only the present prayers might be graciously answered; but that all the future supplications of the Israelites, whether as a body of people, or individuals, might be regarded. In a more particular manner he entreats of the Lord, that when

those who shall he be sensible of the plague of their own hearts, and distressed by it, apply to him for relief, that he would hear and forgive. Thus the words I have read are introduced: now, what I shall endeavour to do, will be,

I. To shew you what the plague of the heart is what is meant by it, and what may be learned from it.

II. The knowledge that some persons have of the plague of their own heart. I say, some persons; because it seems clear, from the very manner in which the words are expressed, that all do not know the plague of their own heart.

III. What those persons may do, who are thus sensible of the plague of their own heart. They may spread out their hands to the Lord, and look towards his holy temple, in hope of having relief from thence; and even the forgiveness of their sins.

I. I shall inquire what is meant by the plague of the heart; and what we may learn from this expression, Which shall know every man the plague of his own heart.

In the first place, this plainly suggests, that the heart of man is not whole and sound. It is unhealthful; it is distempered; it is attended with a very grievous disease; for what more grievous than the plague? The disease of the heart of man is sin, and particularly indwelling sin; the sin of our nature, which has its seat in the heart. Every sin is a disease, as is clear from what the Psalmist says, Who forgiveth all thine iniquities, and healeth all thy diseases (Ps. 103:3). Here diseases and iniquities are represented as the same; and the healing of these diseases is signified by the forgiveness of iniquity.

Now as every sin is a disease, so more especially indwelling sin, or the sin of our nature. This is a natural and hereditary disease to the sons of men; there are some bodily diseases, which come immediately from parents to children; and of this sort, in a moral sense, is the sin of our nature. We are, by nature, children of wrath; and the reason is, we are by nature, sinners; otherwise, we could not have been by nature children of wrath. Sin is natural to us: it is as natural for one of Adam's fallen race to sin, as it is to do any act whatever. It is natural to men; it is derived to them in a natural way. It is hereditary: we are conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity; born in sin, and so are called, transgressors from the womb. As our first parent Adam was, and as our immediate ones are, so

in course must their offspring be; for who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.

This disease is epidemical and universal; all are tainted and affected with it. There are diseases in a natural sense which are called epidemical, which, when they come into a village, a town, or a country, go through them; but then, be they as epidemical or universal as they may, there are always some that escape; but in this case, there is not one, no not one of Adam's race. For almost six thousand years there has not been one of Adam's posterity that has escaped this disease; except the man Christ Jesus, who descended not from him; by ordinary generation; otherwise, all mankind have been infected with this plague, this pestilential disease, sin. All, says the apostle, are under sin. We have before proved, says he, that both Jews and Gentiles; which is a division of all mankind into its proper parts, and includes the whole, we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin (Rom. 3:9): all under the power of sin; involved in the guilt of sin; and liable to punishment for it. This is the case of all mankind: all have sinned in their first head, Adam. All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Yea, Jehovah himself is represented as looking down from heaven, taking a survey of the children of men, of their qualities and actions; and the result of this survey is, that they are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no not one (Rom. 3:10, 11, 12). Now if there were any person free from this infectious disease, sin; undoubtedly the omniscient eye of God would observe it. It is most manifest, then, that there are none of all the individuals of human nature that have escaped it: all are infected with it all; the body, and the members of it: the soul, and all the powers thereof. It may be said, of men in general, as it is of the body of the people of Israel, that the whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint. It is an epidemical disease.

It is a very nauseous and loathsome disease: the Psalmist speaks of it as such, My loins are filled with a loathsome disease (Ps. 38:7). He had respect to sin, or the fruit, and effect of it; for he had before observed, that there was no soundness in his flesh, nor any rest in his bones, because of his sin (Ps. 38:3). This disease makes a person loathsome to Jehovah; who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. This is a disease that mankind are very early infected with; therefore,

the apostate sons of Adam are represented by an infant cast out into the open field, to the loathing of its person in the day that it was born. Being infected with such a disease as this, it cannot but be loathsome in the eyes of God: and sin, that makes us loathsome in the sight of God, makes us loathsome in our own sight too, when we are led to take a proper view of it. Hence those words of the apostle Paul, who had a large experience of the nature, force, and power of indwelling sin; O wretched man, that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? (Rom. 7:24); or from this dead body, which I carry about with me. Do but represent unto yourselves how loathsome it must be for a living man to have a dead body fastened to him, and be obliged to carry it along with him wherever he goes; and to have it wherever he is. Just so it is with the people of God, who have any knowledge of this pestilential disease, this body of death, which they continually carry about with them.

This is a disease, also, that is mortal in itself, a deadly disease; as the plague is generally supposed to be. There are diseases which are not unto death; but the disease of sin is unto death. We read of one sin in particular which is unto death. It is emphatically so, namely, the unpardonable sin; because it is not forgiven, neither in this world, neither in the world to come (Matthew 7:32). But every sin is, in its own nature, deserving of death. The wages of every sin, is death (Rom. 6:23); eternal death. This disease is incurable, except by the grace of God and the blood of Christ. What Jeremiah says of the people of Israel, that their bruise was incurable, and their wound grievous, because there was none to plead their cause that they might be bound up, and they had no healing medicines, may be said of all mankind, with respect to this disease of sin. It is incurable by any methods they themselves are capable of making use of, or others for them: When Ephraim saw his sickness, and Judah saw his wound; then went Ephraim to the Assyrian, and sent to king Jareb; yet could he not heal you, nor cure you of your wound (Hosea 5:13). So let a sinner, that is diseased with sin, use whatever means he can, short of Christ, and his blood, they will be all ineffectual. Christ is the only physician that can cure the plague of the heart; and his blood is the sovereign balm. Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? yes; and that Physician is Christ, that balm is his blood.

Now the disease I am speaking of, is called the

plague: the plague of the heart. The plague is a distemper which, you all know, is very threatening, wasting, and destroying; and exceeding shocking and distressing. It is called the pestilence that walks in darkness, and the destruction that wasteth at noon day (Ps. 91:6). It destroys its thousands and ten thousands, when God gives it a commission; as in the case of David's numbering the people. It was sent at his own choice, and no less than seventy thousand persons were immediately destroyed by it. Whenever we hear of the plague breaking out in any of the countries abroad, to which our ships trade; we are always alarmed, lest they should, with the goods brought from thence, bring that dreadful distemper along with them; and all proper caution is taken to prevent, it. Whenever we hear of it nearer our borders, in a neighboring country, what an alarm does it give us? About forty years ago (This sermon was preached, Sept. 19, 1762), or it may be somewhat more, some of you may remember it broke forth in Marseilles, in France. What a consternation were the inhabitants of this city in! How many meetings for prayer were set up, and held for some time. But there is a plague nearer than this, it is

in the heart of every man, and yet little or no notice is taken of it. A plague of more fatal consequences than a temporal disease is. The latter only destroys the body, but this destroys the soul to all eternity, unless it is cured by the grace of God, and the blood of Christ. It is the plague of the heart; and we carry it about with us.

The word here made use of, is sometimes used of the plague of leprosy; as in the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters of the book of Leviticus. Persons infected with that plague (after it was a clear case that so it was with them) put a covering upon their upper lip, and cried, unclean, unclean (Lev. 13:45). All sinners, like wise who are made sensible of the leprosy of sin, and that they are infected with it, humbly flee to Christ, the great physician, and say, as the leper in the gospel, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. This leprosy of sin, is not only like that, which was outward in a man; but like that got into a house, which could not be removed 'till the house was pulled down. Of this kind is the plague of the heart; the leprosy of sin in us; for it is an inward, spreading one; there is no removing of it 'till this earthly house of our tabernacle

is taken down. Hence, says the apostle, We, in this tabernacle, do groan, being burdened.

These hints may serve to give you some idea of the plague of a man's heart, indwelling sin and corruption. But,

Secondly. I shall give you a fuller view of this plague of the heart, by laying before you the state and condition of the heart of man, according to the scriptural account of it; which is this: A man's heart is wicked yea, wickedness itself. So it is said in Psalm 5:9. Their inward part, that is, their heart, is very wickedness. It is not only wicked, but wickedness itself; not only wickedness, but extreme wickedness; that is, extremely wicked. The carnal mind is said to be enmity against God (Rom. 8:7): not barely an enemy to God, but enmity itself; which expresses the great degree of enmity in the carnal mind of man, to God and all that is good.

Sin is not only sinful; but it is exceeding sinful: and it is made so to appear to a truly enlightened mind, as it was to the apostle Paul; who tells us, that sin by the commandment, became exceeding sinful. Such is the heart of man. It is wicked, wickedness itself: it is sinful, exceeding sinful; yea, it is the seat of all sin.

The corruption of nature, most properly the plague of our heart, is represented by the apostle, as that which dwells in us: It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me (Rom. 7:17). By sin that dwelt in him, he means not any particular sin, distinct from others; but an assemblage of sins, corruptions, lusts, iniquities; for he afterwards represents it, not only as a person, but as a law, having power and authority; and, as a body, consisting of divers members, divers lusts and pleasures (Titus 3:3). The heart of man is like Babylon; a cage of every unclean and hateful bird, and the hold of every foul spirit. It is the seat and source of all sin. It is the forge, where all is hammered; for the evil heart devises evil imaginations. There is the mint of sin; it comes from thence. Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false-witness, blasphemies; these are the things which defile a man (Matthew 15:19, 20). Out of the abundance of the wickedness of the heart, the mouth speaketh bad things. All the evil actions of life have their rise from hence: and you may judge hereby of the malignity of man's heart, what a plague is there. It is so bad, that Jeremiah says, it is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9). It is deceitful. There

is deceitfulness in every sin: particularly in indwelling sin, the corruption of our nature. The apostle cautions the Hebrews to exhort one another daily, lest any of them should be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin (Heb. 3:13). The old man is said to be corrupt according to the deceitful lusts of which he consists. So deceitful is man's heart, and the lust that dwells there, that even the best of men have been deceived thereby. Not only the apostle Paul was deceived by it, before his conversion, agreeable to that saying, Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me; and by it slew me: but even after conversion, the best and wisest of men have been deceived by their own hearts, and the deceitfulness thereof. For a man promises himself that in sinning, which he never enjoys. He promises to himself a great deal of pleasure in sinning: hence divers lusts and pleasures are joined together, as if they were one and the same; or, as if men, in serving the one, enjoyed the other. This is proposed, this is expected; but is it enjoyed? No; the pleasures expected from sin, are all an illusion, all a dream; that fantastic pleasure which is enjoyed, is a short-lived one. The pleasures of sin are but for a season, and issue, at last, in bitterness and death. Sin, though it is rolled in the mouth, and kept under the tongue as a sweet morsel, proves, in the end, as the poison of asps.

Men promise themselves much profit in sinning, which they never enjoy. This was the temptation of our first parents, with which they were imposed upon, and deceived. Satan suggested they should be as Gods, knowing good and evil. This was the bait, more knowledge; whereas, by dallying with the temptation, instead of gaining more knowledge, they lost in good measure, what they had. A man's heart promises him much profit in sinning; that he shall gain much riches in the way of illicit trade, and other unlawful practices; but how frequently is he disappointed and were it otherwise, What would it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

Sometimes men propose to themselves and expect a great deal of honour among ungodly men, by following their examples, and complying with their customs; but how often are they disappointed! Besides, when the conscience comes to be awakened, and when the apostle's question is regarded, What fruit had ye in those things, whereof ye are now ashamed? they will readily acknowledge, they had none at all.

A man proposes to himself liberty in sinning but

does he enjoy it? No; he is brought into more and more bondage. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption (2 Pet. 2:19). Of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage (2 Pet. 2:19). Whoever commits sin, is the servant of sin, the slave of it: Is Ephraim a servant? is he a home-born slave? Verily he is and so is every ungodly man.

They promise themselves peace; that they shall have peace, though they walk every man after the imagination of his own evil heart, to add drunkenness to thirst: but do they enjoy it? No: for while they are crying, peace, peace, sudden destruction comes upon them. How deceitful is the heart of man! That is promised which is never enjoyed. There is nothing in a man's heart to be trusted to: he that trusteth in his own heart, is a fool: even he that trusts in the goodness of his heart, in the supposed integrity of his heart, and of his conversation, which he supposes springs from thence. Persons of this character, trust in themselves that they are righteous, and despise others. They trust in themselves, that they are rich, and increased in goods, and stand in need of nothing: when, at the same time, they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; and will find themselves most miserably deceived another day. The heart of man is deceitful: the plague is in it; indwelling sin, and corruption. There is nothing more deceitful than the heart of man. It is exceedingly wicked; wicked to the highest degree of wickedness: which seems to be the meaning of the expression.

All that is in the heart of man is wicked. The thoughts and the imagination of the thoughts of the heart are so, according to Genesis 6:5. So in Matthew, chapter 15 verse 19, Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts. Men's thoughts are evil. The thought of wickedness is sin; abominable in the sight of God. The apostle therefore exhorts Simon Magus to pray that the thoughts of his heart might be forgiven (Acts 8:22). The sensible sinner has reason to hope for this; therefore the wicked man is encouraged to forsake his way, and the righteous man his thoughts, and to turn to the Lord, who will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon (Isa. 55:7); both evil thoughts and evil actions. Yea, the imagination of the thoughts is evil: the first formation of evil thoughts; or those motions, as the apostle calls them, of sin, which are in our members (Rom. 7:5), are evil.

You read of some that thought themselves wise men, and good men; but became vain in their imaginations, and their evil hearts were darkened (Rom. 1:21): and of others, more openly profane, that resolved to walk according to the imagination of their evil hearts (Jer. 8:12). Every thought, and every imagination of the heart, of man are evil., God is not in all their thoughts (Ps. 10:4); nor, indeed, in any of their thoughts. His thoughts are not like theirs. His are holy, theirs are unholy: his are thoughts of peace, theirs are thoughts of evil. No good thoughts arise from the wicked heart of man. No good things come out of this Nazareth; for there is no good thing in it. Every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is evil; only so, and always so. The imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is said to be evil from his youth (Gen. 8:21): hence he is represented as like the troubled sect, which cannot rest, continually casting up mire and dirt (Isa. 57:20). The affections of the heart are inordinate; all out of course; run in a wrong channel, and to wrong objects. Men are lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God.

Their hearts are set upon the world and the things of it; the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life. The mind of man is corrupted, depraved, distempered. There is vanity in it; hence men are said to walk in the vanity of their minds. They are empty of all that is good; yea, they are averse thereunto; for the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God; neither indeed can be. The mind is darkened by sin, has no light into divine and spiritual things; is darkness itself; calls evil good, and good evil; puts darkness for light, and light for darkness. The understanding being depraved, it passes a wrong judgment on things. Conscience being darkened, does not perform its office: being in many seared, as it were, with a red hot iron; and in every one it is evil. Happy those who have their hearts sprinkled, by the blood of Jesus, from an evil conscience. Their will is stubborn and inflexible. It is not subject to God's law, nor to his gospel. It is like the adamant, and called a stony heart (Ezek. 11:19). Now, by all this, and much more, which the Scripture says on the subject, we may judge of the state of the heart of man; and in a good measure learn what is meant by the plague of it. It must be in a most sad condition, while under the influence of this pestilential disease.

Further. The plague of the heart is very deep and secret: it is an evil which none are acquainted with but

a man's own conscience and God. Secret sins, heart sins, these may be called the plague of the heart. Lord (says the Psalmist) thou hast set our secret sins in the light of thy countenance (Ps. 90:8). Secret sins, which are in their own hearts; or, if committed, none but God and their own hearts are privy to them. Yea, there are some sins that a man himself is not privy to; they pass through his heart, and he, not being always upon his guard, cannot take notice of every thing that is done. Even a good man cannot; hence David says, Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults (Ps. 19:12).

Or, the plague of the heart may denote such sins as are in a particular manner predominant in a man's heart. There are some sins which may be termed a man's own way (Isa. 53:6); constitutional sins, or sins which most easily beset (Heb. 12:1). In some pride, in some the lust of impurity; in others ambition, and so on. These are common and prevailing sins in the hearts of men, and may be called the plague of their hearts; and which give great distress to those who have the grace of God. They find them to be a plague: indeed their daily experience proves it.

There is an expression in a parallel text where the same thing is intended, though in somewhat different language. Then (says Solomon) what prayer, or what supplication soever shall be made of any man, or of all thy people Israel, when every one shall know his own sore, and his own grief, and shall spread forth his hand in this house; then hear thou from heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive (2 Chron. 6:29, 30). What is called in Kings, the plague of his own heart, is here denominated his own sore, and his own grief. This may a little enlarge our idea of the plague of the heart. A man's own sore, and his own grief. His sore; that which gives him a great deal of pain and uneasiness, as a sore does. So the corruption of nature does to a sensible sinner; when he is pricked to the heart, wounded through a sense of sin, how grievous and intolerable is it! The spirit of a man may sustain his infirmity, the outward infirmity of his body; he may be able to bear it, with some degree of patience; but a spirit wounded with a sense of sin, who can bear? This is a sore which is very painful indeed! Every man his own sore, and his own grief. Sin causes grief; and nothing more than the inward corruption of nature. David, we find expressing his grief on this account. I go mourning all the day long; for my loins are filled

with a loathsome disease, and there is no soundness in my flesh (Ps. 38:6, 7); and so all good men do. They are like the doves of the valley, every one mourning for his own iniquity; especially the sin of his nature, which is his own. Hence Jabez's prayer to the Lord, was, Keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me (1 Chron. 4:10): the corruption of nature, and its breakings forth.

This is what Solomon calls a man's sore and grief; because it produces grief to the people of God. They are grieved, because it is contrary to the holy nature of God, and his righteous law; against the Lord, who is their Maker, their Benefactor, their God, and Father: against him, who hath shewn so much favor to them, and expressed so much love towards them. It cuts them to the heart that they should sin against this God; and that his name should be dishonored in any measure by them, as it is by sin. It causes the enemy to open his mouth; and the way of truth is evil spoken of. This grieves the people of God: and because hereby the Holy Spirit of God is grieved, Grieve not the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30): and then the apostle goes on to mention various sins whereby the Spirit of God may be grieved. He who convinces them of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; he who hath been their comforter, and is the Spirit of faith in them, the Spirit, of adoption to them, and the earnest of their heavenly inheritance; that he should be grieved by them is grievous to themselves. So, likewise, because hereby they are deprived of communion with God. Iniquity, in this respect, separates between God and the soul. They are filled with confusion, distress, and contrition of mind, as Peter was through his fall. But thus much may suffice for the opening of the plague of the heart. From all this somewhat may be gathered, and your own experience will furnish you within more, upon this humiliating subject. But

II. There is a knowledge of this. Some persons have a knowledge of it, and some have not. This is supposed in the text, by "All thy people Israel, which shall know, every man the plague of his own heart." That is, as many of them as shall know the plague of their own hearts; suggesting, that all do not. Some do not know this. Carnal men do not. Only spiritual persons, that are under the influence of the Spirit of God, who convinces of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. As for others, they know nothing of the plague of their own heart. They may possibly know something of the

nature of sin, the difference between moral good and evil, by the light of nature, the laws of men, and the general notions obtained among men; but they know nothing of the spring of evil actions, of indwelling sin, the fountain of iniquity. To this they are strangers; and more especially such as are grown up to work all iniquity; whose consciences are cauterized, or seared with a hot iron. All those who are whole, know not the plague of their own hearts. The whole need not a physician, but those that are sick. The former need a physician as much as the latter; but they know not that they stand in need of one. The reason of which is, they do not know the plague of their own hearts; and therefore, in their own apprehensions, they need no physician. It is quite the reverse, however, with those that are sick; that is, who are sensible of the sickness: for, otherwise, all men are sick; but our Lord means, them that are sensible of it, as Ephraim was: "When Ephraim saw his sickness" (Hos. 5:13). Now those who are sensible of their sickness, feel their need of a physician; but those who are insensible of sickness, are like him, whom the wise man describes as upon the top of a mast; who says, They have stricken me, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not (Prov. 23:35). So it is with such insensible sinners as are whole in their own esteem. Those who think themselves increased in goods, and in need of nothing, do not know the plague of their own hearts. Those who imagine they need no repentance, do not know the plague of their own hearts. The pharisee knows not the plague of his own heart: for his language is, I am not as other men are. The apostle Paul did not know the plague of his own heart, at the time to which he refers, when he says, Touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. The perfectionist knows not the plague of his own heart; if he did, he would not say, he is free from sin. Job says, If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean; yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own cloths should abhor me (Job 9:30, 31). If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves (1 John 1:8); but good men know the plague of their own hearts; being enlightened by the Spirit of God, convincing them of sin, of righteousness, and judgment. Such as are made light in the Lord, and made acquainted with salvation by him; are made light, so as to know themselves and the plague of their own hearts. Those in whose hearts God has commanded the light to shine, not only see

the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; but they see the vileness of their nature, and the corruption of their hearts and that they know this, appears from the ingenuous confession of sin, which they make; not only of the outward actions of sin, which they commit; but also of indwelling sin. For while they are confessing the one, they are naturally led to the other; as the Psalmist was, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me (Ps 51:5). This appears from the groanings of the saints; for they groan being burdened, burdened with indwelling sin. So David says, (when speaking of sin, on which account he had no rest in his bones), My groaning is not hid from thee (Ps. 38:9). Saints, under the New Testament speak the same language (for the people of God, under different dispensations, have the same experience in this respect). O wretched man that I am, (says the apostle), who shall deliver me from the body of this death! (Rom. 8:24). It appears by the feeling they have of a law in their members, warring against the law of their minds; fighting one against the other; so that they cannot do the things that they would. It appears from their non-dependence upon any religious duties performed by them; for however outwardly religious they may appear, in the sight of others, they are sensible of imperfection in their services; they know there is not a just man upon earth, that does good, and sinneth not; that there is strange distraction of mind, wanderings of thoughts, and a mixture of sin even in their most holy things. They cannot, therefore, depend upon any thing done by them; but acknowledge, when they have done all they can, that they are but unprofitable servants. It appears also, by their prayers against the plague of their own hearts. This leads us to consider,

III. What those persons may do, who are sensible of the plague of their own hearts. They may spread out their hands to the Lord, and make supplication to him, under a sense of their great depravity. They may pray that the Lord would keep them from the plague of their own hearts; that it may not break forth to the grieving of their souls, or the dishonor of the divine name; and that they be not destroyed thereby. Was David, when reflecting on the power of his enemy, induced to say, I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul? So the saints, when they behold the force of corruption in them, fear they shall some day perish thereby: yet in the midst of all their discouragements,

they can spread out their hands to God, and pray that he would mortify those corruptions of nature. Though the Lord hath said, he will subdue their iniquities; it becomes them to pray that no iniquity may have dominion over them: that this house of Saul might grow weaker and weaker, while that of David grows stronger and stronger: that the inward man might be renewed day by day, and the old man put off, according to the former conversation: that though it be not destroyed, it may be weakened; and also, that the Lord would grant fresh manifestations of forgiving love, for sins of heart, as well as of life and conversation.

Upon the whole, this may serve to humble us before the Lord; when we consider what we are, what we have about us, and what is in us; namely, the plague of the heart. It is enough to humble the proudest heart, when sensible of it; and cause the words of Job to be adopted, Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer? I have heard of thee, by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I repent and abhor myself in dust and ashes.

This also may lead us to wonder at the grace of God, that he should have any regard to such diseased and corrupted creatures as we are; and that God should dwell upon earth, in the hearts of sinful men, as in verse the twenty-seventh. This is marvelous grace, indeed! This may lead us, who know the plague of our own hearts, to be thankful to God, that he has not left us to that blindness persons are under the influence of, who talk of the goodness of their hearts; and see no need of the cleansing blood of Jesus, that healing balsam. Blessed be God, he hath not left us to this. Such neither know the disease, nor the physician; neither know the plague of their own hearts nor how they are to be cured of it. God, blessed be his name! hath opened our eyes to see our disease; and hath shewn us who the Physician is. Let it then be our great concern, to shew forth the praises of him, who hath called as out of darkness, into his marvelous light.

18 A DISSERTATION CONCERNING THE ETERNAL SONSHIP OF CHRIST,

Shewing

By Whom It Has Been Denied And Opposed,
and

By Whom Asserted And Defended In All Ages Of
Christianity.

The eternal Sonship of Christ, or that he is the Son

of God by eternal generation, or that he was the Son of God before he was the son of Mary, even from all eternity, which is denied by the Socinians, and others akin, to them, was known by the saints under the Old Testament; by David (Ps. 2:7, 12); by Solomon (Prov. 8:22, 30), by the prophet Micah, chapter 2, verse 2. His Sonship was known by Daniel, from whom it is probable Nebuchadnezzar had it (Dan. 3:25), from which it appears he was, and was known to be, the Son of God before he was born of the virgin, or before his incarnation, and therefore not called so on that account. This truth is written as with a sun-beam in the New Testament; but my design in what I am about is, not to give the proof of this doctrine from the sacred scriptures, but to shew who first set themselves against it, and who have continued the opposition to it, more or less, to this time; and on the other hand, to shew that sound and orthodox Christians, from the earliest times of Christianity to the present, have asserted and defended it. I shall begin with,

I. The first century, in which the Evangelists and Apostles lived; what their sentiments were concerning this doctrine, is abundantly manifest from their writings. The persons in this age who opposed the divine and eternal Son-ship of Christ were,

1st, Simon Magus, father of heresies, as he is justly called; he first vented the notion afterwards imbibed by Sabellius, of one person in the Godhead; to which he added this blasphemy, that he was that person that so is. Before he professed himself a Christian he gave out that he was some great one; he afterwards said, he was the one God himself under different names, the Father in Samaria, the Son in Judea, and the holy Spirit in the rest of the nations of the world;[1] or as Austin[2] expresses it, he said that he in mount Sinai gave the law to Moses for the Jews, in the person of the father; and in the time of Tiberius, he seemingly appeared in the person of the Son, and afterwards as the holy Ghost, came upon the apostles in tongues of fire. And according to Jerom[3] he not only said, but wrote it; for it seems, according to him, he wrote some volumes, in which he said, "I am

the Word of God, that is, the Son of God." Menander his disciple took the same characters and titles to himself his master did.[4]

2dly, Cerinthus is the next, who was contemporary with the apostle John, of whom that well known story

is told,[5] that the apostle being about to go into a bath at Ephesus, and seeing Cerinthus in it, said to those with him, "Let us flee from hence, lest the bath fall upon us in which Cerinthus, the enemy of truth is:" he asserted that Christ was, only a man, denying his deity,[6] and in course his divine and eternal Sonship; he denied that Jesus was born of a virgin, which seemed to him impossible; and that he was the son of Joseph and Mary, as other men are[7] of their parents. Jerom says,[8] at the request of the bishops of Asia, John the apostle wrote his gospel against Cerinthus and other heretics, and especially the tenets of the Ebionites, then rising up, who asserted that Christ was not before Mary hence he was obliged plainly to declare his divine generation; and it may be observed, that he is the only sacred writer who in his gospel and epistles speaks of Christ as the begotten and only begotten Son of God, at least speaks mostly of him as such.

3dly, Ebion. What his sentiment was concerning Christ, may be learned from what has been just observed, about the apostle John's writing his gospel to refute it; and may be confirmed by what Eusebius[9] says of him, that he held that Christ was a mere man, and born as other men are: and though he makes mention of another sort of them, who did not deny that Christ was born of a virgin, and of the Holy Ghost, nevertheless did not own that he existed before, being God the Word and Wisdom. Hence Hilary calls[10] Photinus, Ebion, because of the sameness of their principles, and Jerom[11] says. Photinus endeavoured to restore the heresy of Ebion; now it is notorious that the notion of the Photinians was the same with the Socinians now, who say, that Christ was not before Mary; and so Alexander bishop of Alexandria[12] observes of Arius and his followers, who denied the natural sonship and eternal generation of Christ, that what they propagated were the heresy of Ebion and Artemas.

Besides the inspired writers, particularly the apostle John, who wrote his gospel, as now observed, to confute the heresies of Ebion and Cerinthus, and in vindication of the deity of Christ, and his divine and eternal generation, there are very few writings if any in this century extant. There is an epistle ascribed to Barnabas, contemporary with the apostle Paul, in which are these words,[13] having made mention of the brazen serpent as a figure of Jesus, he adds, "what

said Aliases again to Jesus the son of Nave, putting this name upon him, being a prophet, that only all the people might hear that the Father hath made manifest all things concerning his Son Jesus in the son of Nave, and he put this name upon him, when he sent him to spy the land—because the Son of God in the last days will cut up by the roots the house of Amalek: behold again Jesus, not the son of man, but the Son of God, manifested in the flesh by a type.—Likewise David said the Lord said to my Lord.— See how David calls him Lord, and the Son of God:" by which it appears that he believed that Christ was the Son of God before he was manifested in the flesh or became incarnate; and that he was the Son of God according to the divine nature, as well as the Son of David according to the human nature, which he also expresses in the same paragraph. And elsewhere he says,[14] "For this end the Son of God came in the flesh, that the full sum might be made of the sins of those who persecuted the prophets," so that according to him Christ was the Son of God before he came in the flesh or was incarnate.

Clemens Romanus was bishop of Rome in this century, and though the book of Recognitions, ascribed to him, are judged spurious, yet there is an epistle of his to the Corinthians[15] thought to be genuine: in which, after speaking of Christ our Saviour, and the high priest of our oblations, and the brightness of the magnificence of God, and of his having a more excellent name than the angels, observes, that the Lord thus says of his own Son, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee; thereby declaring his belief, that Christ is the proper Son of God, and begotten by him. Ignatius was bishop of Antioch in this century, after the first bishop of that place Evodius, and was early in it, if any truth in these reports that he was the child Christ took in his arms, when he rebuked his disciples; and that he saw Christ after his resurrection; but though these are things not to be depended on, yet it is certain that he lived in the latter end of the first century, and suffered martyrdom in the beginning of the second. Several epistles of his are extant, in which, as well as by words, he exhorted the saints to beware of heresies then springing up among them, and abounding, as Eusebius observes;[16] meaning the heresies of Ebion and Cerinthus about the person of Christ: and says many things which shew his belief, and what was their error. In one of his epistles[17]

he exhorts to decline from some persons, as beasts, as ravenous dogs, biting secretly, and difficult of cure; and adds, “there is one physician, carnal and spiritual, begotten and unbegotten. God made flesh, in a true and immortal life, who is both of Mary and of God.” In a larger epistle to the same,[18] thought by some to be interpolated, though it expresses the same sentiment; “our physician is alone the true God, the unbegotten and invisible Lord of all, the Father and begetter of the only begotten one; we have also a physician, or Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son before the world, and the word, and at last man of the virgin Mary;” and afterwards in the same[19] epistle still more expressly, “the Son of God, who was begotten before the world was, and constitutes all things according to the will of the Father, he was bore in the womb by Mary, according to the dispensation of God, of the seed of David by the Holy Ghost.” And a little farther,[20] “be ye all in grace by name, gathered together in one common faith of God the Father, and of Jesus Christ his only begotten Son, and the first-born of every creature: according to the flesh indeed of the family of David: ye being guided by the Comforter.” A plain account, as of the divine Sonship and Humanity of Christ, so of the doctrine of the Trinity. In another epistle[21] of his, he speaks of Jesus Christ, “who was with the Father before the world was, and in the end appeared,” that is, in human nature in the end of the world; and exhorts all to “run to one temple of God, as to one altar, as to one Jesus Christ, who came forth from one Father, and being in him and returning to him.” And a little lower he adds, “there is one God, who hath manifested himself by Jesus Christ his Son, who is his eternal word.” And father on he says, “study to be established in the doctrines of the Lord, and of the apostles, that whatsoever ye do may prosper, in flesh and spirit, in faith and love, in the Son, and in the Father, and in the Spirit.” A full confession of the Trinity, one of the principal doctrines he would have them be established in. All which is more fully expressed in the larger epistle[22] to the same persons: speaking of Christ, he says, “who was begotten by the Father before the world was; God the Word, the only begotten Son, and who remains to the end of the world, for of his kingdom there is no end.” Again, “there is one God omnipotent, who hath manifested himself by Jesus Christ his Son, who is his Word; not spoken, but essential, not the voice of an articulate speech, but

of a divine operation, begotten substance, who in all things pleased him that sent him.” And father on, “but ye have a plerophory in Christ, who was begotten by the Father before all worlds, afterwards made of the virgin Mary without the conversation of men.” And in the larger epistle[23] of his to other persons, he thus speaks of some heretics of his time; “they profess an unknown God, they think Christ is unbegotten, nor will they own that there is an holy Spirit: some of them say the Son is a mere man, and that the Father, the Son and the holy

Spirit, are the same:—beware of such, lest your souls be ensnared.” And in an epistle to another people[24] he says, “there is one unbegotten God the Father, and one only begotten Son, God the Word and man, and one comforter the Spirit of truth.” And in an epistle[25] ascribed unto him he has these words, “there is one God and Father,—there is also one Son, God the Word—and there is one comforter, the Spirit;—not three Fathers, nor three Sons, nor three Comforters, but one Father, and one Son, and one Comforter; therefore the Lord, when he sent his apostles to teach all nations, commanded them to baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; not in one of three names, nor into three that are incarnate, but into three of equal honor and glory.” Lucian, that scoffing, blasphemous heathen, lived in the times of Trajan, and before, as Suidas says, wrote a dialogue[26] in derision of the Christian religion, particularly of the doctrine of the Trinity: which dialogue, though it is a scoff at that doctrine, is a testimony of it, as held by the Christians of that age; and among other things, he represents them as saying that Christ is the eternal Son of the Father. I go on,

II. To the second century, in which the same heresies of Ebion and Cerinthus were held and propagated by Carpocrates, the father of the Gnostics,[27] by Valentinus and Theodotus the currier, whose disciples were another Theodotus a silversmith, and Asclepiodotus and Artemon also, according to Eusebius.[28]

1st. Carpocrates was of Alexandria in Egypt, and lived in the beginning of the second century: he and his followers held that Christ was only a man, born of Joseph and Mary, of two parents, as other men,[29] only he had a soul superior to others; which, having a

strong memory, could remember, and so could relate, what he had seen and had knowledge of, when in the circumference (as they express it) and in conversation with his unknown and unbegotten Father; and which was endowed with such powers, that he escaped the angels, the makers of the world; and was so pure and holy, that he despised the Jews, among whom he was brought up; and afterwards returned to his unknown Father; his soul only, not his body.[30] There seems to be something similar in this notion of the human soul of Christ, to what is imbibed by some in our day.

2dly, Valentinus. He came to Rome when Hyginus was bishop of that place, flourished under Pius, and lived till the time of Anicetus.[31] He and his followers held, that God the creator sent forth his own Son, but that he was animal, and that his body descended from heaven, and passed through the virgin Mary, as water through a pipe; and therefore, as Tertullian, observes,[32] Valentinus used to say, that Christ was born by a virgin, but not of a virgin. This is what divines call the heretical elapse; which yet those disavow, who in our day are for the antiquity of the human nature of Christ before the world was; though how he could be really and actually man from eternity, and yet take flesh of the virgin in time, is not easy to reconcile.

3dly. Artemon or Artemas who lived in the time of Victor bishop of Rome. He held that Christ was a mere man[33] and pretended that the apostles and all Christians from their times to the times of Victor, held the same;[34] than which nothing could be more notoriously false, as the writings as Justin, Irenæus, &c shew: and' it is said that by him, or by his followers, the celebrated text in 1 John 5:7, was erased and left out in some copies.[35]

4thly, Theodotus the currier held the same notion he did, that Christ was a mere man; for which he was excommunicated by Victor bishop of Rome: which shews the falsity of what Artemon said; for

if Victor had been of the same opinion, he would never have excommunicated Theodotus. Eusebius says, this man was the father and broacher of this notion,[36] before Artemon, that Christ was a mere man; and denied him to be God. Yea, that he was not only a mere man, but born of the seed of man. [37] Though Tertullian says, that he held that Christ was only a man, but equally conceived and born of the holy Ghost and the virgin Mary, yet inferior to

Melchizedec.[38]

The contrary to these notions was asserted and maintained by those apostolical men, not only Ignatius, who lived in the latter end of the preceding century, and the beginning of this, as has been observed, but by Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Irenæus, and others.

1. Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna a disciple and hearer of the apostle John, used to stop his ears when he heard the impious speeches of the heretics of his time. This venerable martyr, who had served his master Christ eighty six years, when at: the stake, and the fire just about to be kindled upon him, witnessed a good confession of the blessed Trinity in his last moments, putting up the following prayer; "O Father of thy beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the knowledge of thee; God of angels and of powers, and every creature—I praise thee for all things; I bless thee, I glorify thee, by the eternal high priest Jesus Christ thy beloved Son, through whom, to thee with him in the holy spirit, be glory, now and for ever, Amen." [39]

2. Justin, the philosopher and martyr, in his first apology[40] for the Christians, has these words; "The Father of all, being unbegotten, has no name—the Son of him, who only is properly called a Son, the Word, begotten and existing before the creatures (for at the beginning by him he created and beautified all things) is called Christ." And in his second apology he says, "We profess to be atheists with respect to such who are thought to be Gods, but not to the true God and Father of righteousness, etc.; him, and his Son who comes from him, and has taught us these things, and the prophetic Spirit, we adore and worship." Afterwards he speaks of the logos, or word, the first birth of God:" which, says he, we say is begotten without mixture." And again "We speak that which is true, Jesus Christ alone is properly the Son begotten by God, being his Word, and first-born, and power, and by his will became man; these things he hath taught us." And in his dialogue with Trypho the Jew, who is represented as objecting to him, "What thou sayest that this Christ existed God before the world, and then was born, and became man, does not only seem to be a paradox to me, but quite foolish." To which Justin replies, "I know this seems a paradox, especially to those of your nation, — but if I cannot demonstrate, that this is the Christ of God, and that he pre-existed God, the Son of the maker of all things, and became man by

a virgin, in this only it would be just to say, that I am mistaken, but not to deny that this is the Christ of God, though he may seem to be begotten a man of men, and by choice made Christ, as asserted by some: for there are some of our religion who profess him to be Christ, but affirm that he is begotten a man of men; to whom I do not assent, nor many who are in the same mind with me." In which he plainly refers to the heretics before mentioned, who thought that Christ was born of Joseph and Mary. And in another place, in the same dialogue, he says, "I will prove from scripture that God first begat of himself before all creatures, a certain rational power, which is called by the holy Spirit, the Glory of the Lord, sometimes the Son, sometimes Wisdom, sometimes the Angel, sometimes God, sometimes the Lord and the Word." And then, after observing there is something similar in the Word begetting a Word without any rejection or diminution, and fire kindling fire without lessening it, and abiding the same; he proceeds to give his proof from the words of Solomon, Proverbs 8 where "the word of wisdom testifies, that he is the God who is begotten by the Father of all, who is the word and

wisdom and the power and the glory of him that generates." And then observes, that "this is the birth produced by the Father, which co-existed with the Father before all creatures, and with whom the Father familiarly conversed, as the word by Solomon makes it manifest, that he the beginning before all creatures is the birth begotten by God, which by Solomon is called Wisdom." And in another place, in the same dialogue, on mention of the same words in Proverbs he says, "Ye must understand, ye hearers, if ye do but attend, the Word declares that "this birth was begotten by the Father before all creatures, and that which is begotten is numerically another from him that begets." What can be more express for the eternal generation of the Son of God, and that as a distinct person from his Father!

3. Irenaeus, a martyr, and bishop of Lyons in France, and a disciple of Polycarp. He wrote five books against the heresies of Valentinus and the Gnostics, which are still extant; out of which many testimonies might be produced confirming the doctrine of the Trinity, and the deity of Christ. I shall only transcribe two or three passages relating to the divine Sonship and generation of Christ. In one place he says,[41]

"Thou art not increated and man, nor didst thou always co-exist with God, as his own word did, but through his eminent goodness, hast now had a beginning of beings; thou sensibly learnest from the word the dispositions of God who made thee; therefore observe the order of thy knowledge, and lest, as ignorant of good things, thou shouldest, transcend God himself" And again,[42] "should any one say to us, how is the Son brought forth by the Father? we reply to him, This bringing forth or generation, etc. or by whatsoever name it is called; no man knows his existing unspeakable generation; not Valentinus, nor Marcion, not, Saturninus, nor Basilides, nor angels, nor archangels, nor principalities, nor powers, only the Father who hath generated, and the Son that is generated; therefore seeing his generation is ineffable, whoever attempts to declare such productions and generations (as the above heretics did) are not in their right minds, promising to declare those things which cannot be declared." And elsewhere, he says,[43] "The Son, the Word and Wisdom, was always present with him (God), and also the Spirit, by whom, and in whom, he made all things freely and willingly; to whom he spake, saying, Let us make man, etc." And a little after, "that the Word, that is, the Son, was always with the Father, we have abundant proof;" and then mentions Proverbs 3:19 and Proverbs 8:22, etc.

4. Athenagoras, who flourished at Athens, in the times of Antoninus and Commodus, to which emperors he wrote an apology for the Christians, in which he has these words,[44] "Let not any think it ridiculous in me that I speak of God as having a Son, for not as the poets fable, who make their Gods nothing better than men, do we think either of God and the Father, or of the Son; but the Son of God is the Word of the Father, in idea and efficacy for of him, and him are all things made, seeing the Father and the Son are one; so that the Son is in the Father, and the Father is in the Son, by the union and power of the Spirit; the mind, and word of the Father is the Son of God; now if any through the sublimity of your understanding would look further and inquire what the Son means, I will tell him in a few words, that he is the first birth of the Father; not as made, for from the beginning, God being the eternal mind, he had the word in himself (the λογος, or reason) being eternally rational, (that is, "never without his word and wisdom) but as coming forth is the idea and energy of all things." For which he

produces as a proof Proverbs 8:22 and then proceeds, “Who therefore cannot wonder, to hear us called atheists, who speak of God the Father, and of God the Son, and the holy Spirit, shewing their power in unity and their distinction in order?” A little farther,[45] he strongly expresses the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity; “We assert God and the Son his Word, and the holy Ghost, united indeed according to power, the Father, the Son, the Spirit, for

the Mind, Word and Wisdom, is the Son of the Father, and the Spirit an emanation, or influence, as light from fire.”

5. Theophilus, bishop of Antioch, flourished under the emperor Antoninus Verus: in a treatise of his[46] he has these words concerning the Word and Son of God, “God having his *λογον ενδιαθετον*, internal word within himself, begat him, when he brought him forth with his wisdom before all things; this word he used in working those things that were made by him, and he made all things by him. — The prophets were not when the world was made; but the wisdom of God, which is in him, and the holy word of God, was always present with him;” in proof of which he produces Proverbs 8:27, And in another place,[47] speaking of the voice Adam heard, says, “What else is the voice, but the word of God who is his Son? not as the poets and writers of fables, who say, the sons of the gods are born of copulation; but as the truth declares, the internal Word being always in the heart of God, before any thing was made, him he had as his counselor, being his mind and prudence, when God would do what he counseled, he begat the Word, and having begotten the Word, the first-born of every creature, he always conversed with his Word,” for which he quotes John 1:1-3.

6. Clemens of Alexandria, flourished under the emperors Severus and Caracalla, towards the latter end of the second century, he bears a plain testimony to the doctrine of the Trinity, concluding one of his treatises thus,[48] “Let us give thanks, praising the only Father and the Son, both teachers, with the holy Spirit, in which are all things, in whom are all things, and by whom all are one, — to whom “be glory now and for ever, Amen” He speaks[49] of Christ the perfect word, as born of the perfect Father; and says[50] of the Son of God, “that he never goes out of his watchtower, who is not divided nor dissected, nor passes from place

to place, but is always every where, is contained no where, all mind, all paternal light, all eye; who sees all things, hears all things knows all things by his power, searches powers, and to whom the whole militia of angels and gods (magistrates) is subject. — This is the Son of God, the Savior and Lord whom we speak of, and the divine prophecies shew.” A little after he speaks of him as, “begotten without beginning, that is, eternally begotten, and who, before the foundation of the world, was the Father’s counselor, that wisdom in whom the almighty God delighted; for Son is the power of God; who before all things were made, was the most ancient word of the Father. — Every operation of the Lord has a reference to the almighty; and the Son is, as I may say, a certain energy of the Father.” This ancient writer frequently attacks and refutes the Carpocratians, Valentinians, and Gnostics, and other heretics of this and the preceding age. I proceed,

III. To the third century, The heresies which sprung up in this age respecting the Person, Sonship, and Deity of Christ, were those of Berullus, who revived that of Artemon, and of the Noetians or Sabellians, sometimes called Patripassians, and of the Samosatensians.

1st, Beryllus, bishop of Bostra in Arctia, who for some time behaved well in his office, as Jerom says,[51] but at length fell into this notion, that Christ was not before his incarnation; or as Eusebius[52] expresses it, that our Lord and Savior did not subsist in his own substance before he sojourned among men, and had no deity of his own residing in him, but his Father’s; but through disputations he had with several bishops and particularly with Origen, he was recovered from his error and restored to the truth.

2. The Noetians, so called from Noctus, and afterwards Sabellians, from Sabellius, a disciple of the former; those held that Father, Son, and Spirit, are one person under these different names. The foundation of their heresy was laid by Simon Magus, as before observed. They were sometimes called Praxeans and Hermogeniaus, from Praxeus and Hermogenes, the first authors of it, who embraced the same notions in this period, and sometimes Patripassians, because, in consequence of this principle, they held that the Father might be said to suffer as the Son.[53]

3. The Samosatensians, so called from Paul of Samosate, bishop of Antioch, who revived the heresy

of Artemo, that Christ was a mere man. He held that Christ was no other than a common man; he refused to own that he was the Son of God, come from heaven; he denied that the only begotten Son and Word was God of God: he agreed with the Noetians and Sabellians, that there was lint one person in the Godhead;[54] of these notions he was convicted, and for them condemned by the synod at Antioch.[55]

The writers of this age are but few, whose writings have been continued and transmitted to us; but those we have, strongly opposed the errors now mentioned; the chief are Tertullian, Origen, and Cyprian, besides in some

fragments of others.

1. Tertullian, He wrote against Praxeus, who held the same notion that Noctus and Sabellius did, in which work he not only expresses his firm belief of the Trinity in Unity, saying;[56] “nevertheless the economy is preserved, which disposes Unity into Trinity, three, not in state or nature, essence) but in degree (or person) not in substance but in form, not in power but in species, of one substance, of one state, and of one power, because but one God, from whom these degrees, forms and species are deputed, under the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit,” And that he means three distinct persons, is clear from what he afterwards says: “whatsoever therefore was the substance of the Word, that I call a person, and to him I give the name of Son; and whilst I acknowledge a Son, I defend a second from the Father.” The distinction of the Father and Son from each other, and the eternal generation of the one from the other, are fully expressed by him “this rule as professed by me, is every where held; by which I testify, the Father, Son, and Spirit are inseparable from each other; —for Lo, I say, another is the Father, and another is the Son, and another is the holy Spirit; —not that the Son is another from the Father, by diversity, but by distribution; not another by division, but by distinction: —another is he that generates, and another he that is generated: —a “Father must needs have Son that he may be a Father, and the Son a Father that he may be a Son.” And again, he explains the words in Proverbs 8:22. (The Lord possessed me) of the generation of the Son; and on the clause, when he prepared the heavens, I was with him, he remarks, “thereby making himself equal to him, by proceeding from whom he became the Son and first born, as being begotten before all things; and the

only begotten, as being alone begotten of God.” On these words, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee, he observes[57] to Praxeas, “If you would have me believe that he is both Father and Son, shew me such a passage elsewhere, The Lord said unto himself, I am my Son, this day have I begotten my self.” And in another work[58] of his, he has these words, speaking of the Word, “this we learn is brought forth from God, and by being brought forth generated, and therefore called the Son of God, and God, from the unity of substance; —so that what comes from God, is God, and the Son of God, and both one:” that is, one God.

2. Origen. Notwithstanding his many errors, he is very express for the doctrine of the Trinity, and the distinction of the Father and Son in it, and of the eternal generation of the Son: he observes[59] of the Seraphim, in Isaiah 6:3 that by saying, “Holy, holy, holy, they preserve the mystery of the Trinity; that it was not enough for them to cry holy once nor twice, but they take up the perfect number of the Trinity, that they might manifest the multitude of the holiness of God, which is the repeated community of the trine holiness, the holiness of the Father, the holiness of the only begotten Son, and of the holy Spirit.” And elsewhere,[60] allegorizing the show-bread, and the two tenth deals in one cake, he asks, how two tenths become one lump? because, says he, “we do not separate the Son from the Father, nor the Father from the Son (John 14:90, therefore each loaf is of two tenths, and set in two positions, that is in two rows, for if there was one position, it would be confused, and the Word would be mixed of the Father and the Son, but now indeed it is but one bread for them is one will and one substance; but there are two positions; that is, two proprieties of persons (or proper persons for we call him, the Father who is not the Son: and him the Son who is not the Father:” Of the generation of the Son of God he thus speaks,[61] “Jesus Christ himself, who is come, was begotten of the Father before every creature was.” And again,[62] “it is abominable and unlawful to equal God the Father in the generation of his only begotten Son, and in his substance, to any one, men or other kind of animals: but there must needs be some exception, and something worthy of God, to which there can be, no comparison, not in things only, but indeed not in thought: nor can it be found by sense, nor can the human thought apprehend,

how the unbegotten God is the Father of the only begotten Son: for generation is eternal, as brightness is generated from light, for he is not a Son by adoption of the Spirit extrinsically, but he is a Son by nature.”

3. Cyprian. Little is to be met with in his writings on this subject. The following is the most remarkable and particular;[63] “the voice of the Father was heard from heaven, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased hear ye him; — that this voice came from thy paternity, there is none that doubts; there is none who dares to arrogate this word to himself; there is none among the heavenly troops who dare call the Lord Jesus his Son. Certainly to thee only the Trinity is known, the Father only knows the Son, and the Son knows the Father, neither is he known by any unless he reveals him; in, the school of “divine teaching, the Father is he that teaches and, instructs, “the Son who reveals and opens the secrets of God unto us, and the holy Spirit who fits and furnishes us; from the Father we receive power, from the Son wisdom, and from the holy Spirit innocence. The Father chooses, the Son loves, the Holy Spirit joins and unites; from the Father is given us eternity, from the Son conformity to him his image, and from the holy spirit integrity and liberty; in the Father we are, in the Son we live, in the holy Spirit we are moved, and become proficient; eternal deity and temporal humanity meet together, and by the tenor of both natures is made an unity, that it is impossible that what is joined should be separated from one another.” As for the Exposition of the Creed, which stands among Cyprian’s works, and is sometimes attributed to him, it was done by Ruffinus, and the testimonies from thence will be produced in the proper place.

4. Gregory of Neocaesarea, sometimes called Thaumaturgus, the wonder-worker, lived in this century, to whom is ascribed[64] the following confession of faith; “One God, the Father of the living Word, of subsisting wisdom and power, and of the eternal character, perfect begetter of the perfect One, Father of the only begotten Son: and God the Son, who is through all. The perfect Trinity, which in glory eternity and kingdom, cannot be divided · nor alienated. Not therefore anything created or servile is in the Trinity, nor any thing super-induced, nor first and last; nor did the Son ever want a Father, nor the Son a Spirit: but the Trinity is always the same, immutable and

invariable.” And among his twelve articles of faith, with an anathema annexed to them, this is one: “If any one says, another is the Son who was before the world, and another who was an the last times, and does not confess, that he who was before the world, and he who was in the last times, is the same, as it is written, let him be anathema.” The interpolation follows; how can it be said, another is the Son of God before the world was, and another in the last days, when the Lord says, before Abraham was, I am; and because I came forth from the Father, and am come; and again, I go to my Father?”

5. Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, was a disciple of Origen: he wrote against the Sabellians,[65] but none, of his writings are extant, only some fragments preserved in other authors. And whereas Arius made use of some passages of his, and improved them in favor of his own notions, Athanasius from him shows the contrary, as where in one of his volumes he expressly says,[66] that “there never was a time in which God was not a Father; and in the following acknowledges, that Christ the Word, Wisdom and Power, always was; that he is the eternal Son of the eternal Father; for if there is a Father, there must be a Son; and if there was no Son, how could he be the Father of any? but there are both, and always were. The Son alone always co-existed with the Father. God the Father always was; and the Father being eternal, the Son also is eternal, and co-existed with him as brightness with light.” And in answer to another objection, made against him, that when he mentioned the Father, he said nothing of the Son; and when he named the Son, said nothing of, the Father; it is observed,[67] that in another volume of his; he says, that each of these names spoken of by me; are inseparable and indivisible from one another; when I speak of the Father, and before I introduce the Son, I signify him in the Father; when I introduce the Son; though I have not before spoken of the Father, he is always to be understood in the Son.”

6. The errors of Paulus Samosate were condemned by the synod at Antioch, towards the latter end of this century, by whom[68] a formula or confession of faith was agreed to, in which are these words. “We profess that our Lord Jesus Christ was begotten of the Father before ages, according to the Spirit, and in the last days, born of a virgin, according to the flesh.” The word *ομοουσιον*, consubstantial, is used in their

creed. Towards the close of this century, and at the beginning of the next, lived Lactantius, (for he lived under Dioclesian, and to the times of Constantine) who asserts,[69] that God, the maker of all things, begat “a Spirit holy, incorruptible, and irreprehensible, whom he called the Son.” He asks,[70] “how hath he procreated? The divine works can neither be known nor declared by any; nevertheless the scriptures teach, that the Son of God is the Word of God.” Nothing more is to be observed in this century. I pass on,

IV. To the fourth century, in which rose up the: Arians and Photinians, and others, 1st, The Arians, so called from Arius, a presbyter of the church at Alexandria, in the beginning of this century, who took occasion from some words dropped in disputation by Alexander his bishop, to oppose him, and start the heresy that goes under his name; and though the eternal Sonship of Christ was virtually denied by preceding heretics, who affirmed that Christ did not exist before Mary; in opposition to whom the orthodox affirmed, that he was begotten, of the Father before all worlds; yet Arius was, the first, who pretended to acknowledge the Trinity, that actually and in express words set. himself to oppose the eternal Sonship of Christ by generation; and argued much in the same manner as those do, who oppose it now: for being a man who had a good share of knowledge of the art of logic, as the historian observes,[71] he reasoned thus: “If the Father begat the Son, he that is begotten, must have a beginning of his existence, from whence it is manifest, that there was

a time when the Son was not; and therefore it necessarily follows, that he had his subsistence from things that are not;” or was brought out of a state of non existence into a state of existence. He understood generated in no other sense than of being created or made; and asserted, that he was created by God before time, and was the first creature, and by which he made all others; in proof of which he urged Proverbs 8:22 taking the advantage of the Greek version, which, instead of possessed me, reads created me the beginning of his ways. His sentiments will more fully appear from his own words in his epistles to Eusebius of Nicomedia, and to his own bishop, Alexander of Alexandria; in his letter to the former, he says,[72] “Our sentiments and doctrines are, that the Son is not unbegotten, nor a part of the unbegotten in any

manner, nor out of any subject matter, but that by will and counsel he subsisted before times and ages, perfect God, the only begotten, immutable; and that before he was begotten or created, or decreed or established, he was not, for e was not unbegotten; we are persecuted because we say, the Son had a beginning, but God is without beginning: for this we are persecuted, and because we say, that he is of things that did not exist (that is, out of nothing;) so we say, that he is not a part of God, nor out of any subject-matter; and for this we are persecuted.” And in his letter to his bishop, he thus expresses himself,[73] “We acknowledge one God, the only unbegotten; — that this God begat the only begotten Son before time, by whom he made the world, and the rest of things; that he begot him not in appearance, but in reality; and that by his will he subsisted, immutable and unalterable, a perfect creature, but as one of the creatures, a birth, but as one of the births — We say, that he was created before times and ages, by the will of God, and received his life and being from the Father; so that the Father together appointed glories for him; — The Son without time was begotten by the Father, and was created and established before the world was; he was not before he was begotten, but without time was begotten before all things, and subsisted alone from the alone Father; neither is eternal nor co- eternal, nor co-unbegotten with the Father, nor had he a being together with the Father.” What he held is also manifest from his creed,[74] which he delivered in the following words, “I believe in one eternal God, and in his Son whom he created before the world, and as God he made the Son, and all the Son has, he has not (of himself,) he receives from God, and therefore the Son is not equal to, and of the same dignity with the Father, but comes short of the glory of God, as a workmanship; and in less than the power of God. I believe in the holy Ghost, who is made by the Son.”

The Arians were sometimes called Aetians, from Aetius, a warm defender of the doctrine of Arius, and who stumbled at the same thing that Arius did; for he could not understand, the historian says,[75] how that which is begotten could be co-eternal with him that begets; but when Arias dissembled and signed that form of doctrine in the Nicene Synod, Aetius took the opportunity of breaking off from the Arians, and of setting up a distinct sect, and himself at the head of them. These were after called Eunomians, from

Eunomius, a disciple of Aetius; he is said[76] to add to and to exceed the blasphemy of Arias; he with great boldness renewed the heresy of Aetius, who not only after Arius asserted that the Son was created out of nothing, but that he was unlike to the Father.[77] Hence the followers of these men were called Anomcoeans. There was another sect called Nativitarians, who were a sucker or branch that sprung from the Eunomians, and refined upon them; these held that the Son had his nativity of the Father, and the beginning of it from time; yet being willing to own: that he was co-eternal with the Father, thought that he was with him before he was begotten of him, that is, that he always was, but not always a Son, but that he began to be a Son from the time he was begotten There is a near approach to the sentiments of these in some of our days.

The Arians were also called Macedonians, from Macedonius a violent persecutor of the orthodox, called Homoousians,”[78] who believed that the Son is of the same substance with the Father; but this man afterwards becoming bishop of Constantinople, refused to call him a creature, whom the holy scripture calls the Son; and therefore the Arians rejected him, and he became the author and patron of his own sect; he denied the Son was consubstantial with the Father, but taught, that in all things he was like to him that begat him, and in express words called the Spirit a creature,[79] and the denial of the deity of the holy Spirit is the distinguishing tenet of his followers.

2dly, The Photinians rose up much about the same time the Arians did, for they are made mention of in the council of Nice, but their opinions differ from the Arians. These were sometimes called Marcellians, from Marcellius of Ancyra, whose disciple Photinus was, and from him named Photinians. He was bishop of Syrmium; his notions were the same with Ebion, and Paul of Samosate, that Christ was a mere man, and was only of Mary; he would not admit of the generation and existence of Christ before the world was.[80] His followers were much the same with our modern Socinians, and who are sometimes called by the same name. According to Thomas Aquinas,[81] the Photinians, and so the Cerinthians, Ebionites, and Samosatenians before them, as they held that Christ was a mere man, and took his beginning from Mary, so that he only obtained the honor of deity above others by, the merit of his blessed life; that he was, like

other men, the Son of God by the Spirit of adoption, and by grace born of him, and by some likeness to God is in Scripture called God, not by nature, but by some participation of divine goodness.

These heresies were condemned by the several councils and synods held on account of them, and were refuted by various sound and valuable writers who lived in this century: to produce all their testimonies would be endless: I shall only take notice of a few, and particularly such as respect the Sonship of Christ.

1. The tenets of Arius were condemned by the council held at Nice in Bythinia, consisting of three hundred and eighteen bishops, by whom was composed the following creed or agreement of faith, as the historian calls it:[82] “We believe in one God the Father Almighty, the maker of all things, visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only begotten, begotten of the Father, that is, out of the substance of the Father, God of God, light of light, true God of true God; begotten not made, consubstantial (or of the same essence) with the Father, by whom all things are made which are in heaven and in earth; who for us men, and for our salvation, descended and became incarnate, and was made man and suffered, and rose again the third day; ascended up into heaven, and will come to judge the quick and the dead. And we believe in the holy Spirit. As for those that say, there was a time when the Son of God was not, and before he was begotten was not, and that he was made of what does not exist (out of nothing), and say, he was from another substance, or essence, or created, or turned, or changed; the holy catholic and apostolic church anathematises.”

2. Athanasius was a famous champion for the doctrines of the Trinity, the proper Sonship of Christ, and his eternal generation; to produce all the testimonies from him that might be produced in proof of those doctrines, would be to transcribe a great part of his writings; it may be sufficient to give his creed; not that which is commonly called the Athanasian creed, which, whether penned by him is a doubt, but that which stands in his works, and was delivered by him in a personal disputation with Arius, and is as follows; which he calls an epitome of his faith.[83] “I believe in one God the

Father, the almighty, being always God the Father; and I believe in God the Word, the only begotten Son

of God, that he co-existed with his own Father; that he is the equal Son of the Father, and that he is the Son of God; of the same dignity; that he is always with his Father by his deity, and that he contains all things in his essence; but the Son of God is not contained by any, even as God his Father: and I believe in the Holy Ghost, that he is of the essence of the Father, and that the Holy Spirit is co-eternal with the Father and with the Son. The Word, I say, was made flesh.” After this I would only just observe, that Athanasius having said that the Son was without beginning and eternally begotten of the Father, farther says,[84] that he was begotten ineffably and inconceivably; and elsewhere he says,[85] “it is superfluous or rather full of madness to call in question, and in an heretical manner to ask, how can the Son be eternal? or, how can he be of the substance (or essence) of the Father, and not be a part of him?” And a little farther, “it is unbecoming to inquire how the Word is of God, or how he is the brightness of God, or how God begets, and what is the mode of the generation of God: he must be a madman that will attempt such things, since the thing is ineffable, and proper to the nature of God only, this is only known to himself and his Son.”

3. Alexander, bishop of Alexandria, whom Arius opposed, and should have been mentioned first, in an epistle of his to Alexander, bishop of Constantinople,[86] acquaints him with the opinion of Arius, that there was a time when the Son of God wits not, and he that was not before, afterwards existed, and such was he made, when he was made as every man is; and that the Son of God is out of things that are not, or out of nothing; he observes to him, that what was his faith and the faith of others, was the faith of the apostolic church: “We believe in one unbegotten Father, — and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God; not begotten out of that which is not, but from the Father; that exists, not in a corporal manner by incision, or defluations of divisions, as seemed to Sabeilius and Valentinus, but in a manner ineffable and inexplicable.”

4. Epiphanius wrote a volume against all heresies, and attempts a confutation of them: and with respect to the Arian heresy, he thus writes;[87] “God existing incomprehensible, has begat him that is incomprehensible, before all ages and times, and there is no space between the Son and the Father, but as soon as you understand a Father, you understand

a Son, and as soon as you name a Father you shew a Son; the Son is understood by the Father, and the Father is known by the Son; whence a Son, if he has not a Father? and whence a Father, if he has not begat an only begotten Son? For when is it the Father cannot be called a Father, or the Son, a Son? Though some think of a Father without a Son, who afterwards comes to a proficiency and begets a Son, and so after the birth is called the Father of that Son: the Father who is perfect, and never wants perfection, making a progress or proficiency in the deity.”

5. Hilary, bishop of Poitiers in France, wrote against the Arians, and says many things in opposition to their tenets, concerning the Sonship of Christ, and his eternal generation; among others, he says[88] “the unbegotten begot a Son of himself before all time, not from any subjacent matter, for all things are by the Son, nor out of nothing, for the Son is from him himself. — He begot the only begotten in an incomprehensible and unspeakable manner, before all time and ages, of that which is unbegotten, and so of the unbegotten, perfect and eternal Father, is the only begotten, perfect and eternal Son.”

6. Faustinus the presbyter, wrote a treatise against the Arians; who observes, that they sometimes use the same words and phrases the orthodox do, but not in the same sense; they speak of God the

Father and of God the Son, but when they speak of the Father, it is not of one who truly begets, and when they speak of the Son, it is of him as a Son by adoption, not by nature; and when they speak of him as a Son begotten before the world was, they attribute a beginning to him, and that there was a time when he was not; and so they assert him to be of things not existent, that is, of nothing. He asks, “How is he truly a Father, who, according to them, does not beget (truly)? and how is Christ truly a Son, whom they deny to be generated of him?” And again, “How is he the only begotten of the Father, since he cannot be the only begotten, other Sons existing by adoption? but if he is truly the only begotten by the Father, therefore because he only is truly generated of the Father.” And elsewhere,[89] “They say God made himself a Son; if he made him out of nothing, then is he a creature, and not a Son. What is he that you call a Son, whom you confirm to be a creature, since you say he is made out of nothing? therefore you cannot call him both a

Son and a creature; for a Son is from birth, a creature from being made.” And again,[90] “In this alone the Father differs from the Son, that the one is a Father, the other a Son; that is the one begets and the other is begotten; yet not because he is begotten has he any thing less than what is in God the Father” (Heb.1:3). Once more[91] “God alone is properly a true Father, who is a Father without beginning and end, for he did not sometime begin: he is a Father, but he was always a Father, having always a Son begotten of him, as he is always the true God, continuing without beginning and end.”

7. Gregory, bishop of Nazianzum, gives many testimonies to the doctrines of the Trinity and of the Sonship and generation of Christ, against the Arians and Eunomians: among which are the following: “We ought, says he,[92] to acknowledge one God the Father, without beginning and unbegotten; and one Son, begotten of the Father; and one Spirit, having subsistence from God, yielding to the Father, because he is unbegotten, and to the Son, because he is begotten; otherwise of the same nature, dignity, honor and glory.” And elsewhere he says,[93] “If you ask me, I will answer you again, When was the Son begotten? When the Father was not begotten. When did the Spirit proceed? When the Son did not proceed, but was begotten before time, and beyond expression. — How can it be proved, that they (the Son and Spirit) are, co-eternal with the Father? From hence, because they are of him, and not after him, for what is without beginning is eternal.” And then he goes on to answer the several objections made to the generation of the Son by the Eunomians. Again he says,[94] “Believe the Son of God, the word that was before all ages begotten of the Father before time, and in an incorporeal manner; the same in the last clays made the Son of man for thy sake, coming forth from the virgin Mary in an unspeakable manner.” And elsewhere he says,[95] “Do you hear of generation? do not curiously inquire how it is. Do you hear that the holy Spirit proceeds from the Father? do not be anxiously solicitous how it is: for if you curiously search into the generation of the Son, and the procession of the Spirit, I shall curiously inquire into the temperament of the soul and body, how thou art dust, and yet the image of God? How the mind remains in thee, and begets a word in another mind?”

8. Basil, called the great archbishop of Caesarea

Cappadocia, wrote a treatise against Eunomius, in which he says,[96] “As there is one God the Father always remaining the Father, and who is for ever what he is; so there is one Son, born by an eternal generation, who is the true Son of God, who always is what he is, God the Word and Lord; and one holy Spirit, truly the holy Spirit.” Again,[97] “Why therefore, O incredulous man, who dost not believe that God has an own Son, dost thou inquire how God begets? if truly thou askest of God how and where also, as in a place and when as in time; which, if absurd to ask such things concerning God, it will be more abominable not to believe.” And a little after he says,[98] “If God made all out of nothing by his will, without labor,

and that is not incredible to us; it will certainly be more credible to all, that it; became God to beget an own Son of himself, in the divine nature, without passion, of equal honor, and of equal glory, a counselor of the same seat, a co-operator consubstantial with God the Father; not of a divers substance, nor alien from his sole deity; for if he is not so, neither is he adorable, for it is written thou shall not worship a strange God.”

9. Gregory, bishop of Nyssa, the brother of Basil, wrote against Eunomius, in which we have this passage.[99] “He (Eunomius) does say, that he (the Son) was truly begotten before the world. Let him say of whom he was begotten: he must say of the Father entirely, if he is not ashamed of the truth; but from the eternal Father there is no separating the eternity of the Son; the word Father “contains a Son.”

10. Ambrose, bishop of Milan, after having said many things in opposition to Arius, Sabellius, Phontius, and Eunomius, observes, that “when you speak of a Father, you also design his Son, for no man is a father to himself; and when you name a son, you confess his father, for no man is a son to himself; therefore neither the son can lie without the father, nor the father without the son; therefore always a father and always a son.” He has also these words:[100] “You ask me, how he can be a son if he has not a prior father? I ask of you also, when or how you think the Son is generated? for to me it is impossible to know the secret of generation; the mind fails, the voice is silent; and not mine only, but that of the angels; it is above angels, above powers, above cherubim, above seraphim, and above all understanding, if the peace

of Christ is above all understanding (Phil, 4:7), must not such a generation be above all understanding?" And in another place,[101] "God the Father begat the Word co-eternal with himself and co-omnipotent, with whom he produced the holy Spirit; hence we believe that the substance of the Son and of the holy Spirit existed before any creature, out of all time; that the Father is the begetter, the Son is begotten, and the holy Spirit the holiness and the Spirit of the begetter and the begotten."

11. Jerom the presbyter, and a noted writer in this century, speaking of the Arians says,[102] "Let them understand, that they glory in vain of the testimony in which Wisdom speaks of being created in the beginning of the ways of God, and begotten and established; for it, according to them, he was created, he could not be begotten or born: if begotten or born, how could he be established and created?" And a little after he says "God, the "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is a Father according to substance (or essence,) and the only begotten is not a Son. by adoption, but by nature; whatsoever we say of the Father and the Son, this we know is said of the holy Spirit." Here the creed of Damasus might be taken notice of, in which he says, "God has begot a Son, not by will nor by necessity, but by nature;" and in the explanation of it, it is said, "Not because we say the Son is begotten of the Father by a divine and ineffable generation, do we ascribe any time to him, for neither the Father nor the Son began to be at any time; nor do we any otherwise confess an eternal Father, but we also confess a co-eternal Son." Also Ruffinus's exposition of the apostles creed, which stands among Jerom's works, "when you hear of a Father, understand the Father of a Son, the image of his substance; but how God begat a Son do not discuss, nor curiously intrude into the depth of this secret.[103]

12. The errors of the Photinians were not only confuted by the several above writers, but Photinus himself was condemned by the synod at Syrmium, of which place he had been bishop; and in the formula of faith agreed on therein, among others, are the following articles,[104] "We believe in

one God the Father almighty, the creator and maker of all things; — and in his only begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ, who was begotten of the Father before all ages; — and in the holy Spirit: — and as to

those that say, that the Son is of things that are not, (or of nothing) or of another substance, and not of God; and that there was a time or age when he was not, the holy and catholic church reckons them as aliens. — If any one dare to say, that the unbegotten or a part of him was born of Mary, let him be anathema: and if any one say that he is the Son of Mary by prescience, and not begotten of the Father before the world, and was with God by whom all things are made, let him be anathema. — If any one says, that Christ Jesus was not the Son of God before the world was, and ministered to the Father at the creation of all things, but only from the time he was born of Mary was called Son and Christ, and then received the beginning of deity, let him be anathema, as a Samosatenean."

13. The formulas, creeds, and confessions of faith, made by different persons, and at different places, besides the Nicene creed, and even some that differed in other things from that and from one another, yet all agreed in inserting the clause respecting their faith in Christ, the only begotten Son, as begotten of the father before all ages, or the world was; as at Antioch, Syrmium, Ariminum, Selucia, and Constantinople. [105]

14. Before the Nicene creed was made, or any of the above creeds, this was an article of faith with the orthodox Christians, that Christ was the eternal begotten Son of God. From the Writings of Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem, who lived in the fourth century, may be collected a symbol or creed containing the faith of the church, and in which this article is fully expressed;[106] that Christ "is the only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, the true God by whom all things are made;" and which article he strongly asserts and defends; and the creed which he explains, is thought to be the[107] same which the first and ancient church always professed, and from the beginning; and perhaps is what Eusebius[108] refers unto, who was bishop of Caesarea in Palestine, when he declared his faith in the council at Nice; our formula, says he, which was read in the presence of our emperor (Constantine) most dear to God, is as we received it from the bishops that were before us; and as when catechized and received the laver (that is, were baptized,) and as we learnt from the divine writings, and is in this manner, "We believe in one God the Father Almighty, — and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God, the only begotten Son,

the first-born of every creature, begotten of God the Father before all worlds, by whom all things are made, etc.” Nor indeed was the word *ομοουσιον*, consubstantial, which expresses the Son’s being of the same substance, nature and essence with the Father, a new word,[109] devised in the council of Nice; for it was in use before,[110] as Athanasius has proved from the same Eusebius. “The bishops, he says, (that is, those assembled at Nice) did not invent these words of themselves, but having a testimony from the Fathers, so they wrote; for the ancient bishops near a hundred and thirty years before, both in the great city of Rome, and in our city (Alexandria) reprov’d those that said that the Son was a creature, and not consubstantial with the Father;” and this Eusebius who was bishop of Caesarea, knew, who first gave into the Arian heresy, but afterwards subscribed to the synod at Nice; for being confirmed, he wrote to his own people thus,[111] “We find, says he, some sayings of the ancient and famous bishops and writers, who use the word consubstantial in treating of the deity of the Father and of the Son.” And certain it is, that it is used by Gregory of Neocaesarea,[112] who lived before the council of Nice, and by the synod at Antioch in their creed,[113] held A. D. 277.

V. In the fifth century Arianism continued and prospered, having many abettors, as well as many who opposed it: other heresies also arose, and some in opposition to the Sonship of Christ.

1st. Felicianus, the Arian, argued against it thus, “If Christ was born of a virgin, how can he be said to be co-eternal with God the Father?” To whom Austin replied, “The Son of God entered into the womb of the virgin, that he might be again born, who had been already begotten before, he received the whole man (or whole humanity) who had had already perfect deity from the Father, not unlike was he to the begetter, when being everlasting he was begotten from eternity, nor unlike to men when born of his mother.”

2dly, Faustus, the Manichee, asserted, that according to the evangelists, Christ was not the Son of God, only the Son of David, until he was thirty years of age, and was baptized: to which Austin replied, “The catholic and apostolic faith is, that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, is the Son of God according to Deity, and the Son of David, according to the flesh: which we so prove from the evangelic and apostolic

writings, as that no man can contradict our proofs, unless he contradicts limit express words.”[114]

3dly, The Priscillianists asserted that Christ is called the only begotten Son of God, because he only was born of a virgin; to which Leo Magnus makes answer, “Let them take which they will, their tenets tend to great impiety, whether they mean, that the Lord Christ had his beginning from his mother, or deny him to be the only begotten of God the Father; since he was born of his mother, who was God the Word, and none is begotten of the Father but the Word.”[115]

The writers in this century are many, who have plainly and strongly asserted the eternal generation and Sonship of Christ: as Augustine, Chrysostom, Proclus archbishop of Constantinople, Leo Magnus, Theodoret, Cyril of Alexandria,[116] Paulinus, Victor, Maximus Taurinensis, etc. it may be abundantly sufficient only to mention the following formulas, or confessions of faith.

1. Of Augustine, bishop of Hippo, or of Sennadius, presbyter of Marseilles in France, to whom it is sometimes ascribed: “We believe there is one God, the Father, Son, and holy Spirit; the Father because he has a Son, the Son because he has a Father; the holy Spirit because he is from the Father and the Son (proceeding and co-eternal with the Father and the Son,) — the eternal Father, because he has an eternal Son, of whom he is the eternal Father; the eternal Son, because he is co-eternal with the Father and the holy Spirit; the eternal holy Spirit, because he is co-eternal with the Father and the Son.”[117]

2. Of Flavianus, bishop of Constantinople, which he delivered in conc. Constantinop. A. D. 448 approved of by the synod at Chalcedon, A. D. 451. “Our Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and body; begotten indeed of the Father, without beginning and before the world, according to deity, but in the end, in the last days, the same was born of the virgin Mary for our salvation, according to humanity; consubstantial with the Father, according to deity, consubstantial with his mother according to “humanity; for of two natures we confess that Christ is after the incarnation in one subsistence, in one person. we confess one Christ, one Son, one Lord.”[118]

3. Of the council at Chalcedon, consisting of six hundred and thirty Fathers; “Following the holy

fathers, say they, we all harmoniously teach and confess our Lord Jesus Christ: that he is perfect in deity and perfect in humanity, truly God and truly man, of a rational soul and body; co-essential with the Father according to the deity, and co-essential with us according to the humanity, in all things like unto us, excepting sin, but begotten of the Father before the world, according to the deity: and in the last days, for us and our salvation, was of the virgin Mary, the mother of our Lord, according to the humanity, etc.”[119]

VI. In the sixth century were a sort of heretics called Bo-o-nosians, who held that Christ was not the proper but adoptive Son; against whom dustinian bishop of Valae in Spain wrote;[120] and Arianism spread and prevailed under the Gothic kings in several parts. Fulgentius speaks of the tenets of the Arians in this time, that the Word or Son of God was not of the same substance with the Father.[121] This author wrote an answer to ten objections of theirs: to the first, concerning diversity of words and names used, he replies, “When Father and Son are named, in these two names a diversity of words is acknowledged, but neither by those two different words the nature of both is signified, for the diversity of those names does not divide the natures, but shows the truth of the generation, as from one true Father, we know that one true Son exists.” To the second objection, concerning the ineffability of generation, he observes, “because the generation of the Son is unspeakable, it is not unknowable, nor does it follow, because it cannot be declared, that it cannot be known.”[122]

Chilpericus, king of the Franks, endeavored to revive the Sabellian heresy, but was opposed by Gregory Furnensis:[123] besides Fulgentius and Gregory, there were others in this age who asserted and defended the eternal generation and Son-ship of Christ, as Fortunatus, Cassiodorus, Gregorius Magnus, and others;[124] and even by a synod consisting of Gothic bishops,[125] in number sixty three. In the same century the famous Boetius declares his faith in God the Father, in God the Son, and in God the holy Ghost; that the Father has a Son begotten of his substance, and co-eternal with him, whose generation no human mind call conceive of.[126]

VII. In the seventh century, towards the beginning of it, rose up that vile impostor Mahomet, as bitter an enemy to the true, proper and eternal Sonship of

Christ, as ever was, for which he gave the following brutish and stupid reasons; “because God did not need a Son, because if he had a Son, they might not agree, and so the government of the world be disturbed.”[127] Reasons which require no answer, Not to take notice of the several councils at Toletum, held in this century, in which the article of Christ’s eternal Son-ship was asserted and maintained, I would observe what is said in a Roman synod, consisting of a hundred and twenty five bishops, in which Agatho the Roman pontiff presided; “We believe, say they, in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible; and in his only begotten Son, who was begotten of him before all worlds.”[128]

VIII. In the eighth century, the notion that Christ, though the true, proper, and natural Son of God according to the divine nature, yet according to the human nature was only the Son of God by adoption and grace, an adoptive Son, was propagated by Elipandus and Felix, Spanish bishops; but condemned by the council at Frankfort, called by Charles the Great;[129] and the eternal Sonship and generation of Christ was asserted and maintained by Damascene, Bede, Albinus, and others.[130]

IX. In the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries, the controversies were chiefly about Image-worship, Transubstantiation, etc. yet in these and the following centuries, we have testimonies from various writers to the truth of Christ’s proper and eternal Sonship by generation; it would be too numerous to produce them all; it will be sufficient to say, it was not opposed by any, but plainly and strongly affirmed by Rabanus, Macerus, and Haymo in century 9 by Theophilact, in century 10 by Anselm, in century 11 by Peter Lombard and Bernard, in century 12 by Thomas Aquinas and Albertus Magnus, in century 13, but in these and the following centuries, till the Reformation, Satan had other work to do than to stir up men to oppose the Trinity, or any of the divine persons in it, having enough to do to support the hierarchy of Rome, and the peculiar tenets of Popery, against the witnesses who rose up at different times to oppose them, and to endeavor to carry the pride and tyranny of the bishop of Rome to the highest pitch possible.

X. When the Reformation began in the sixteenth century, and spread throughout many nations in

Europe, great evangelical light broke forth among the Reformers; and Satan fearing his kingdom would greatly suffer hereby, went to his old game again, which he had played with so much success in the first ages of Christianity, namely, to stir up an opposition to the doctrine of the Trinity, and the person of Christ; which was first begun by Servetus in Helvetia, who afterwards came to Geneva and there ended his life. [131] Blandrata, infected with his principles, went into Poland, and there artfully spread his poison in the reformed churches, assisted by others, and which at length issued in a division in those churches; when Faustus Socinus, who had imbibed some bad notions from the papers of his uncle Laelius about the Trinity, came into Poland, and joined the Antitrinitarians there, and strengthened their cause, and where the notions of him and his followers took root and flourished much: and from thence bays been transplanted into other countries, Those men, who were men of keen parts and abilities, saw clearly that could they demolish the article of Christ's Son-ship by eternal generation, it would be all over with the doctrine of the Trinity; and therefore set themselves with all their might against it.[132] Socinus himself says of it,[133] not only that it is error and a mere human invention, and which he represents as if it was held to be more animantium; but that it is most absurd, most unworthy of God, and contrary to his absolute perfection and unchangeable eternity;[134] and asserts, that Christ is not called the only begotten Son of God, because generated of the substance of God; and that there is no other, nor ever existed any other only begotten Son of God, besides that man, Jesus of Nazareth: and expressly says, it clearly appears, that the human nature of Christ is the person of the Son of God; and elsewhere[135] makes the same objection to Sonship by generation as Mahomet did, for he says, "Those who accommodate the Word brought forth in Proverbs 8:24 to the Son, are not according to the judgment of the Homoousians, to be reckoned very distant from the blasphemy of the Turks, who when they hear that the Christians say, God has a Son, ask, Who is his wife?" And in this article concerning the Sonship of Christ, and also with respect to the doctrine of the Trinity, the Remonstrants,[136] in the seventeenth century and onwards, seem to agree with them; but the contrary has been maintained by all sound divines and evangelical churches, from

the Reformation to the present time, as appears by their writings and harmony of confessions: so that upon the whole it is clear, that the church of God has been in the possession of this doctrine of the eternal generation and Sonship of Christ, from the beginning of Christianity to the present age, almost eighteen hundred years; nor has there been any one man who professed to hold the doctrine of the Trinity, or of the three distinct divine persons in the unity of the divine essence, that ever opposed it, till the latter end of the seventeenth century: if any such person in this course of time can be named, let him be named: none but the followers of Simon Magus, Cerinthus, Ebion, Carpocrates,

the Gnosticks, etc. in the two first centuries, and then by the Sabellians, Samosatensians, Arians, Photinians, Mahometans, Socinians, and more lately by the Remonstrants, such as are Antitrinitarians. The only two persons I have met with who have professed to hold the doctrine of the Trinity, as it has been commonly received, that have publicly expressed their doubts or dissatisfaction about the phrase eternal generation, I mean such as are of any note or character, for as for the trifling tribe of ignorant writers and scribblers, who know not what they say, nor whereof they affirm, I make no account of them; I say, I have met with only two of this sort. The one is Roell, a Dutch Professor at Franeker, who lived at the latter end of the last century; this man professed to believe that there are three distinct divine persons, the Father, Son, and Spirit, and that these three are one; that the second person in the Trinity was begotten by the Father from all eternity, and that this is the first and chief reason that he is called a Son; nor did he object to the use of the phrase eternal generation, nor did he disuse it, but explained it to another sense than that in which it was commonly taken, that is, that it only signified the co-existence of the second person with the first, and communion of nature with him. But as the same may be said of the first and third persons, the phrase of generation so understood might be said of them as well as of the second; he therefore was obliged to have recourse to the economy of salvation, and the manifestation of the three persons in it.[137] On the whole, he was opposed by the very learned Vitringa,[138] and his opinion was proscribed and condemned by almost all the synods of the Dutch

churches, and he was forbid by the authority of his supreme magistrate to propagate it; and most of the synods have decreed, that the candidates for the ministry shall be examined about this opinion, before they are admitted into the ministry.[139] The other person, who has objected to the eternal generation of the Son of God, is Dr. Thomas Ridgeley, Professor of Divinity in London, towards the beginning of the present century:[140] who strongly asserts, and contends for the doctrine of a Trinity of divine distinct persons in the Godhead, and yet strangely adopts the Socinian notion or Sonship by office, and makes the eternal Sonship of Christ to be what he calls his mediatorial Sonship. There is indeed a third person of great fame among us, Dr. Isaac Watts, who has expressed his dissatisfaction with the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son of God, but then he is not to be reckoned a Trinitarian, being so manifestly in the Sabellian scheme, as appears by his Dissertations published in 1725. Insomuch that the celebrated Fred. Adolphus Lampe, who published his Theological Disputations concerning the holy Spirit, two or three years after, spares not to reckon him among the grosser Sabellians: his words are,[141] “Nuperius novum systema Socinianum de Trinitate Angtie J. WATS edidit, additis quibusdam dissertationibus eam illustrantibus, quaram quinta ex professo de spiritu S. agit. Existimat quidem sect. o. p. 126. eatenus se a Socino, Schlictingio, Crellio esse distinguatum, quod virtutem in Deo non accidentalem, sed essentialem, seu substantialem pro spiritu S. habeat: hoc tamen ita facit, ut non censeat hanc notionem constanter ubique obtinere: nam saepius “cum crassioribus Sabellianis spiritum S. esse Deum psum, p. 130. s. 49. defendit.”

Upon the whole, setting aside the said persons, the testimonies for and against the eternal generation and Sonship of Christ stand thus:

For Eternal Generation, etc.

Ignatius, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Athenagoras, Theophilus of Antioch, Clemens of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian, Gregory of Neoccesaria, Dionysius of Alexandria, the three hundred and eighteen Nicene Fathers; Athanasius, Alexander bishop of Alexandria,

Epiphanius, Hilary, Faustinus, Gregory of Nazianzum, Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, Ambrose, Jerom, Ruffinus, Cyril of Jerusalem, besides the many

hundreds of bishops and presbyters assembled at different times and in different places, as, at Syrmium, Antioch, Arminum, Seleucia, and Constantinople, and elsewhere;

Against It,

Simon Magus, Cerinthus, and Ebion, and their respective followers; Carpocrates and the Gnostick, Valentinus, Theodotus the currier, Artemon, and others their associates; Beryllus of Bostra, Praxeus, Hermogenes, Noctius and Sabellius, the Samosatenians, Arians, Aetians, Eunomians and Photinians, the Priscillianists and Bonotians; Mahomet and his followers; the Socinians and Remonstrants; and all Anti-trinitarians; Augustine, Chrysostom, Leo Magnus, Theodoret, Cyril of Alexandria, Paulinus, Flavianus, Victor, Maximus Tauriensis, six hundred and thirty fathers in the council at Chalcedon; Fulgentius, Gregory Turnasis, Fortunatus, Cassioclorus, Gregorius Magaus, the many bishops in the several councils at Toletum, the Roman synod of a hundred and twenty-five under Agatho, Damascene, Beda, Albinus, and the fathers in the council of Francford, with many others in later times, and all the sound divines and evangelic churches since the reformation.

Now since it appears that all the sound and orthodox writers have unanimously declared for the eternal generation and Sonship of Christ in all ages, and that those only of an unsound mind and judgment, and corrupt in other things as well as this, and many of them men of impure lives and vile principles, have declared against it, such must be guilty of great temerity and rashness to join in an opposition with the one against the other; and to oppose a doctrine the Church of God has always held, and especially being what the scriptures abundantly bear testimony unto, and is a matter of such moment and importance, being a fundamental doctrine of the Christian religion, and indeed what distinguishes it from all other religions, from those of Pagans, Jews and Mahometans, who all believe in God, and generally in one God, but none of them believe in the Son of God: that is peculiar to the Christian religion.

19 THE FULNESS OF THE MEDIATOR

A Sermon,
Preached

June 15, 1736

to the Society that support the Lord's-day Evening Lecture, Near Devonshire-Square

Colossians 1:19

For it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell.

The apostle, after his usual salutation to the church at Colosse, with a great deal of pleasure, takes notice of their faith in Christ, and love to all the saints, puts up several petitions on their account, of an increase of spiritual knowledge, holiness, fruitfulness, patience and strength; gives thanks for some special blessings of grace he and they were partakers of; such as meetness for heaven, deliverance from the power of darkness, a translation into the kingdom of Christ, redemption through his blood, and the forgiveness of sins; and then take an occasion to set forth the glories and excellencies of the person of Christ; who, he says, verse 15 is the image of the invisible God, the natural essential, eternal, uncreated, perfect and express image of his Father's person, whom no man hath seen at any time; and the firstborn of every creature: Not that he was the first creature God made, which will not agree with the apostle's reasoning in the next verse, for by him were all things created; and will be liable to this manifest contradiction, that he was the creator of himself; but the meaning is, either that he is the only begotten of the Father from all eternity, being the natural and eternal Son of God, who, as such, existed before any creature was brought into being; or that he is the first parent, or bringer forth of every creature; as the word will bear to be rendered,

if, instead of *πρωτότοκος*, we read *πρωτοτοκόσ*, which is no more than changing the place of the accent; and may be very easily ventured upon, seeing the accents were all added since the apostle's days, and especially, seeing it makes his reasoning in the following verses appear with much more beauty, strength and force; he is the first parent of every creature, for by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities or powers; all things were created by him and for him, and he is before all things, and by him all things consist. Next the apostle proceeds to consider Christ in his office-relation, and mediatorial capacity; and he is the head of the body the church, even of the general assembly and the church of the first-born, which are written in heaven; all the elect of God, over whom he is an head of dominion

and power, and to whom he is an head of influence and supply; he adds, who is the beginning, both of the old and new creation, the first-born from the dead, who first rose from the dead by his own power to an immortal life, is set down at the right hand of God, has all judgment committed to him, that in all things he might have the preeminence; for which he is abundantly qualified, since it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell. The method I shall take in considering this passage of scripture will be this:

- I. To inquire what fulness of Christ is here intended.
- II. To give some account of the nature and properties of it.
- III. To shew in what sense it may be said to dwell in Christ.
- IV. To make it appear, that its dwelling in Christ is owing to the good will and pleasure of the Father.

I shall inquire what fulness of Christ is here intended; since the scriptures speak of more than one: And,

First, There is the personal fulness of Christ, or the fulness of the deity, which is said by our apostle (Col. 2:9), in this same epistle, to dwell in him; for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. There is no perfection essential to deity, but is in him; nor is there any the Father has, but he has likewise. Eternity is peculiar to the Godhead: Christ was not only before Abraham, but before Adam; yea, before any creature existed; he is the alpha and omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the ending; which is, and which was, and which is to come: (Rev. 1:8) he is from everlasting to everlasting. Omnipotence, or a power of doing all things, can only be predicated of God. The works of creation, providence, redemption, the resurrection of the dead, with other things, in which Christ has been concerned, loudly proclaim him to be the Almighty. Omniscience, another perfection of deity, may easily be observed in Jesus Christ; he needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man; (John 2:25) he is that living word of God, who is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart; neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do, or to whom we must give an account; (Heb. 4:12, 13) who in a short time will make all the churches, yea, all the world know, that he it is which searcheth the reins and hearts.

Omnipresence and immensity are proper to God, and are to be found in Christ Jesus, who is in heaven at the same time he was here on earth; which he could not be, if he was not the omnipresent God; any more than he could make good the promises he has made, that he will be with his people when they meet in his name, and with his ministers unto the end of the world; nor could he be present with the churches in all places, as he certainly is; nor fill all things, as he certainly does. Immutability only belongs to God: Christ is the same yesterday, today, and for ever. (Heb. 13:8) In short, independence and necessary existence, which are essential to Deity, are to be ascribed to him; for he is God of himself: Though as man and mediator, he has a life communicated to him from the Father; yet as God, he owes his being to none; it is not derived from another, he is over all, God blessed for ever; and must, therefore, be the true God and eternal life. If any perfection of Deity was wanting in him, the fulness, all the fulness of it could not be said to dwell in him, nor he be said, as he is, to be equal with God. Now some think that this is the fulness designed in our text, and read it, the fulness of the Godhead, which seems to be transcribed from another passage in this epistle already mentioned; and suppose that this suits well the apostle's design in proving the primacy and preeminence of Christ over all things: But it should be observed, that the fulness of the Deity possessed by the Son of God, does not depend on the Father's will and pleasure; but is what, as such, he naturally and necessarily enjoys by a participation of the same undivided nature and essence of the Father and Spirit, and therefore cannot be the fulness here intended.

Secondly, There is a relative fulness which belongs to Christ, and is no other than his body the church, of which he is head, who is called the fulness of him that filleth all in all; (Eph. 1:32) and for this reason, because she is filled by him. When all the elect are gathered, the fulness of the Gentiles brought in, and all Israel saved; when these are filled with all the gifts and grace of God designed for them, and are grown up to their just proportion in the body, and have attained to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; then will they strictly be, and may be truly called so. Some interpreters are of opinion, that this is the fulness here meant: But, though the Church dwells in Christ, and he in her, and that through the good will and pleasure of the Father; and though she is complete in Christ,

and is said to be his fulness; yet, properly speaking, she is not so yet, at least in such sense as she will be: Nor is she ever said to be all fulness, as in the text, and therefore cannot be here intended.

Thirdly, There is a fulness of the fitness and abilities in Christ to discharge his work and office as mediator, which greatly lies in his being both God and man, or in the union of the two natures, divine and human, in one person. Hereby he becomes abundantly qualified to be the day's-man betwixt us, able to lay his hand upon us both; or in other words, to be the mediator between God and man; to be both a merciful and faithful high-priest, in things pertaining to God, and to make reconciliation for the sins of the people: (Job 9:33, 1 Tim. 2:5, Heb. 2:17) For being man, he had somewhat to offer in sacrifice to God, and was thereby capable of making satisfaction in that nature which sinned, which the law and justice of God seem to have required, and also of conveying the blessings of grace procured by him to elect men; for which reason, he took not on him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham. The holiness of Christ's human nature greatly fitted him to be an high-priest, advocate and intercessor, and very often an emphasis is put upon this in the sacred writings; as when he is said (John 3:5, Heb. 9:14, 1 Pet. 1:10) to take away sin, and in him is no sin, to offer up himself without spot to God, and we are said to be redeemed by the blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot or blemish: And, indeed, such a redeemer is proper for us, such an advocate suit us, who is Jesus Christ the righteous: such an high-priest became us, is every way fit for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. Being God as well as man, there is a sufficient virtue in all his actions and sufferings to answer what they were designed for; in his blood to cleanse from all sin, in his righteousness to justify from it, and in his sacrifice to expiate and atone for it. Being the might God, he could travel in the greatness of his strength, draw nigh to God for us, offer up himself to God, bear our sins, and all the punishment due unto them, without failing or being discouraged; his own arm alone was capable of bringing salvation to himself and us; there is nothing wanting in him, to make him a complete Savior of the body, and head of the church. Now, this may be taken into the sense of our text, yet is not the whole of it: For,

Fourthly, There is dispensatory, communicative fulness, which is of the Father's good will and pleasure,

put into the hands of Christ, to be distributed unto others: And this is principally designed here, and is, A fulness of nature. Christ is the head of every man, and the head over all things to the church; God has appointed him heir of all things, even in nature: The light of nature is in him and from him; and he is the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world: (John 1:9) The things of nature are all with him, and at his disposal; the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; (Ps. 24:1) and he gives it to his chosen and special people in a peculiar manner: The blessings of nature are wisdom's left hand blessings, as those of grace are her right hand ones: The world, and they that dwell therein, are his, even the men of the world; the wicked part of the world are, in some sense, given unto him to be subservient to the ends of his mediatorial kingdom and glory. Ask of me, says the Father to him, (Ps. 2:8, 9) and I shall give thee the Heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession; which cannot be understood of the chosen vessels of salvation; since it follows, Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

A fulness of grace. Christ is said to be full of grace and truth; (John 1:14, 16) and it is of this fulness that the believer receives, and grace for grace; a sort of a fulness out of it, all kind of grace, every measure, and every supply of it.

(1.) There is a fulness of the Spirit of grace, and of the gifts of the Spirit in Christ; For he is the Lamb in the midst of the throne, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God; (Rev. 5:6) not seven distinct personal subsistencies; but the phrase designs the one blessed Spirit of God, and the perfection of his gifts and grace, signified by the number seven, which, in the most enlarged sense, dwell in Christ; the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge, and of fear of the Lord (Isa. 11:2) rest upon him; he is anointed with the oil of gladness, the holy Ghost, above his fellows, any of the sons of men, who are made partakers of his grace and glory; for God giveth not the Spirit by measure to him. (Ps. 45:7) All those extraordinary gifts of the holy Ghost, with which the apostles were filled on the day of Pentecost, were given from Christ, as the head of the church; who, when he ascended to heaven to fill all things, received gifts for men, and gave them to them, to qualify them for extraordinary work and

service: And he has been in all ages since, more or less, bestowing gifts on men, to fit them for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying of his body the church, and the residue of the spirit is with him.

(2.) There is a fulness of the blessings of grace in Christ. The covenant of grace is ordered in all things, as well as sure, it is full of all spiritual blessings. Now this covenant is made with Christ, it is in his hands, yea, he is the covenant itself; all the blessings of it are upon his head, and in the hands of our antitypical Joseph, even on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brethren; and therefore, if any are blessed with these blessings, they are blessed with them in heavenly places in Christ; And, indeed, in a very strange and surprising manner do they come from him to us, even through his being made a curse for us; for he was made a curse for us, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through him: particularity, there is in Christ a fulness of justifying, pardoning, adopting, and sanctifying grace.

There is a fulness of justifying grace in him. One part of his work and office, as mediator, was to bring in everlasting righteousness; a righteousness answerable to all the demands of law and justice, which should answer for his people in a time to come, and to last for ever: such a righteousness he has wrought out and brought in, by which justice is satisfied, the law is magnified and made honourable, and with which God is well pleased: whence he is truly called, the Lord our righteousness and the Sun of righteousness and strength, (Jer. 23:6, Mal. 4:2) from whom alone we have our righteousness. Now this righteousness wrought out by the Son of God, is in him, and with him, as the author and subject of it; and to him are sensible souls directed, to him they look, and to him they apply for it; and every one for themselves say, as their faith grows up, surely, in the Lord have I righteousness and strength: From him they receive this gift of righteousness, and with it an abundance of grace, as flow, an overflow of it. As it was freely wrought out for them, it is freely imputed to them, and bestowed upon them, without any consideration of their works; and is so full and large, that it is sufficient for the justification of all the elect, and that from all things, from which they could not be justified in any other way.

There is also a fulness of pardoning grace in Christ. The covenant of grace has largely and fully provided

for the forgiveness of the sins of all the Lord's people. One considerable branch of it is, (Heb. 8:12) I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember more. In consequence of this covenant, and the engagements of Christ in it, his blood has been shed for many, for the remission of sins. The issue of which is, that in him we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; (Matt. 24:28, Eph. 1:7) which, as it is entirely free, the riches, the glory of grace and mercy are eminently displayed in it, so it is large and abundant, full and complete; for God, pursuant to the covenant of his grace, and looking upon the precious blood of his Son, forgives all the trespasses of his people, past, present, and to come: Through the man Christ Jesus is preached unto us, and bestowed upon us, the free and full forgiveness of our transgressions. This is the declaration of the gospel; and what makes it good news and glad tidings to sensible sinners, that whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.

There is likewise a fulness of adopting grace in Christ. The blessing of the adoption of children springs originally from the love of the Father: Behold, says the apostle John, (1 John 3:1) what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. Predestination to it is by, or through Jesus Christ: The enjoyment of it is greatly owing to the redemption which is in him, for he came to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. (Gal. 4:5) The right, the privilege, the liberty of becoming the sons of God, is actually given forth from Christ, to them that receive him and believe in him; so that those who are the children of God, are openly and declaratively so by faith in Christ Jesus.

Add to this, that there is a fulness of sanctifying grace in Christ. The whole stock and fund of the saints holiness is in Christ's hands; he is their sanctification, as well as their righteousness; it is of his fulness they receive one sort of grace, as well as another: All the holiness is derived to them from Christ, which they are made partakers of in life, and which is made perfect in the hour of death; for without holiness, even perfect holiness, no man shall see the Lord. (Heb. 12:14) In the first work of conversion, a large measure of sanctifying grace is given forth from Christ; when the grace of our Lord is exceeding abundant, with faith

and love which is in Christ Jesus. (1 Tim. 1:14) As he is the author and finisher of faith, he is the author and finisher of every other grace; every measure of it is owing to him, every supply of it is from him: There is a fulness of all grace in Christ, to supply all our wants, support our persons, and to carry us safely and comfortably through this wilderness: There is a fulness of light and life, of wisdom and knowledge, strength and ability, joy, peace, and comfort in him: all spiritual light is in him, and from him. As all that light which was scattered throughout the whole creation, was on the fourth day collected together, and out into that great luminary the sun, so all fulness of spiritual light dwells in Christ, the Sun of righteousness, from whom we receive all we have: which by degrees grows, increases, and shines more and more unto the perfect day: All spiritual life is in him, with him is the fountain of it; from him we have the living principle of grace, and by him it is maintained in us unto eternal life. In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and from him they are communicated to us. As in him is righteousness to justify us, so in him is strength to enable us to oppose every corruption, withstand every enemy, exercise every grace, and discharge every duty. Though we cannot do any thing of ourselves, and without him can do nothing; yet through him strengthening us we can do all things. In a word, there is a full fountain, and a solid foundation of all spiritual peace, joy and comfort in Christ: If there is any consolation to be had any where, it is in Christ; it arises from and is founded upon his person, blood, righteousness and sacrifice; in a view of which a believer is sometimes filled with joy unspeakable, and full of glory: For as the sufferings of Christ, those which we suffer for Christ, abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. (2 Cor. 1:5) There is a grace in Christ sufficient for us to bear us up under, and bear us through all the trials, exercises and afflictions of life; to make us fruitful in every good work: and to cause us to hold on and out unto the end. There is a fulness of fructifying and persevering grace in Christ.

(3.) There is a fulness of the promise of grace in Jesus. There are many exceeding great and precious promises, suited to the various cases and circumstances of the children of God. There never has been a case a believer has been in since the creation of the world, and I may venture to say, there never will be one to the

end of it, but there is a promise given forth suitable to it. The covenant of grace is full of these promises; from thence they are transcribed into the gospel, and are spread all over the Bible; and what is best of all, all the promises of God are in Christ yea, and in him amen, to the glory of God by us; (2 Cor. 1:20) they are all put into his hands for our use, and are all safe and secure in him, who will see to it, that they are actually and fully accomplished not only the grand promise of life, even of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began, is in Christ Jesus, but all other promises are in him likewise: So that whosoever are partakers of them, are partakers of them in him, by the gospel.

3. Besides the fulness of nature, and of grace, which is in Christ, there is also the fulness of glory, and of eternal life and happiness. God has not only out the grace of his people, but their glory also into the hands of Christ. Their portion, their inheritance, is reserved for them with him: where it is safe and secure. They are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; so that their estate is sure unto them. As their life of grace, so their life of glory is hid with Christ in God; and when Christ who is their life shall appear, then shall appear with him in glory; which will greatly consist in being like Christ, and seeing him as he is. The saints will be like to Christ, both in body and soul. Their bodies which are redeemed by his blood, and are members of him, will be fashioned like unto his glorious body, in spirituality, immortality, incorruption, power and glory; and will shine forth like the sun, with brightness and lustre, in the kingdom of their Father. Their souls will be made like to Christ in knowledge and holiness, so far as creatures are capable of. They will then see him as he is; behold his mediatorial glory, view him for themselves, and not another; will be inexpressibly delighted with the excellencies of him, and always continue with him, and be in his presence; in whose presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore. Now all this is secured in Christ for the saints; all which they may expect; on this they may depend; for this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. (1 John 5:11) Thus all fulness of nature, grace and glory, is in Christ Jesus our Lord. I proceed.

II. To give some account of the nature and properties of this fulness; particularly the fulness of grace, And, It is a very ancient. We are not to suppose that

this fulness was first put into Christ's hands upon his ascension to heaven, and session at the right hand of God; for though he is then said to have received gifts for men, and to have given them to them, because there was then an extraordinary distribution of the gifts and grace of the Spirit to the apostles, yet God had given the Spirit to Christ without measure long before. The disciples in the days of his flesh, in his state of humiliation, when the word being made flesh dwelt among them, beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14) And long before them Isaiah saw this branch of his glory, his train filling the temple. All the Old-Testament saints looked to him, believed in him, and depended on him, as their living Redeemer; one and all said, Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength. (Isa. 14:24) They were supplied with both out of this fulness: they drew water with joy, out of the wells of salvation in Christ; and were saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus, even as we are. Yea, this matter is to be carried still higher, not only to Old-Testament times, or to the foundation of the world, but even into eternity itself. For as early as the elect were given to Christ, so early was grace given to them in him; which was before the world began; as early as the choice of them in him, which was before the foundation of the world, so early were they blessed with all spiritual blessings in him; as early as Christ was the mediator of the covenant, and that was as early as the covenant itself, which was from everlasting; so early was this fulness of grace deposited with him. The Lord possessed me, says Wisdom or Christ, that is, with this all fulness of grace, in the beginning of his ways of grace; he began with this, before his works of old, of creation and providence; I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was, (Prov. 8:22, 23) as the mediator of the covenant, entrusted with all the blessings and promises of it. Now this serves greatly to set forth the eternity of Christ's person, the antiquity of his office, and the early regard Jehovah had to his chosen people; which strongly expresses his wondrous love, and distinguishing grace towards them.

This fulness is a very rich, and an enriching one. It is a fulness of truth, as well as of grace; for Christ is full of grace and truth, which the gospel largely opens to us; every truth of which is a pearl of great price, and all together make up an inestimable treasure,

more valuable than all the riches of the Indies. Now in Christ are laid up and hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. (Col. 2:3) What a rich and enriching stock, fund, and fulness of truth, is there in Jesus Christ! The promises of grace are precious ones to all those who have seen grace that is in them, to whom they have been opened by the Holy Spirit of promise, and have been by him suitably and seasonably applied; to such they are exceeding precious indeed, they are like applies of gold in pictures of silver, rejoiced at more than at a great spoil, and preferred to all the riches of the world; and these, as has been observed, are all in Christ. There are not only riches of grace, but riches of glory in Christ, even unsearchable riches, which can never be traced out or told over; which are solid and substantial, satisfying, lasting and durable. Through the poverty of Christ we are enriched with those riches here and hereafter; and this serves much to enhance the glory, excellency, freeness and fulness of his grace: For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich. (2 Cor. 8:9).

This fulness is entirely free, with respect to the spring and source of it, the distribution of it, the persons concerned in it, and the manner in which they receive from it. The source and spring of it is the sovereign goodwill and pleasure, grace, and love of God. It pleased the Father to lay it up in Christ: He was not induced to it by any thing in his people, or done by them; for it was laid up in Christ antecedent to their having done good or evil. He could not be influenced by their faith and holiness to do it; since these are received out of it: For of his fulness have we all received, and grace for grace; (John 1:14) one grace as well as another, every sort of grace, and faith, and holiness among the rest: nor could he be moved to it by their good works; seeing these are fruits of that grace which is derived from it. It is indeed said to be for them that fear him, and trust in him; but these phrases are only descriptive of the persons who have received from it, and are made so by it; not that their fear and faith were the causes or conditions of it: for then the goodness of God would not be so largely displayed in it, as the Psalmist (Ps. 31:19) suggests; when he says, O how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought, or appointed, or made for them that trust in thee, before

the sons of men! And as it was freely laid up, it is as freely distributed; our Lord gives it out liberally, and upbraideth not; he gives this living water to all that ask it of him, yea, to them that ask it not; he gives more grace, large measures, fresh supplies of it, to his humble saints, readily and cheerfully, as they stand in need of them; he withholds no good things from them that walk uprightly. The persons to whom it is given are very unworthy, and yet heartily welcome. Whoever is thirsty, and has a will to come, may come and take the water of life freely; such who have no money, nor anything that is of a valuable consideration, who have neither worth, nor worthiness of their own, may come and buy wine and milk, without money, and without price. And whereas this fulness of Christ, this well of grace is deep, and we have nothing to draw with, faith, the bucket of faith is freely given: that grace, by which we receive of it, is not of ourselves, it is the gift of God; and with this we draw water with joy out of the full wells of salvation, which are in Christ Jesus.

This fulness is inexhaustible. As the whole family in heaven and in earth is named of Christ, so it is maintained by him. If by the family in heaven we understand the angels, as it was usual with the Jews to call them a family, and the family above; what large measures of confirming grace have the elect angels received from Christ! For he is the head of grace to them, as well as to us: we are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power. (Col. 2:10) Or, if by the family in heaven, is meant the saints who are gone to glory; what a vast deal of grace has been expended out of this fulness to bring them thither! The grace of our Lord has been abundant, superabundant; it has flowed, and overflowed; there has been a pleonasm, a redundancy of it in the case of a single believer. O what must the aboundings of it have been to all the saints in all ages, times and places, since the foundation of the world! And still there is enough for the family on earth yet behind. Christ is still the fountain of all his gardens, the churches, a well of living water, which supplies them all, and streams from Lebanon, which sweetly refresh and delight them. His grace is still sufficient for them; it is the same to-day, yesterday, and for ever. I go on.

III. To shew in what sense this fulness may be said to dwell in Christ, and what that phrase imports. And,

It expresses the being of it in him. It is not barely in intention, in design and purpose, but it is really

and actually in him; it is given to him, out into his hands, and laid up in him: And hence it comes to be communicated to the saints; because it is in him, they receive of it, and grace for grace. He is the head in whom it dwells, they are members of him, and so derives it from him. He is theirs, and they are his, and so all that he has belongs unto them. His person is theirs, in whom they are accepted with God; his blood is theirs, to cleanse them from all sin; his righteousness theirs, to justify them from it; his sacrifice is theirs to atone for it; and his fullness theirs, to supply all their wants; and out if this they are so filled, as to be said to be full of the holy Ghost, full of faith, and full of goodness: (Acts 6:3, 8; Rom. 15:14) not that they are so in such sense as Christ is; for this fulness is in him without measure, in them in measure; it is in him as an overflowing fountain, but in them as streams from it. This fulness is in Christ, and in no other. The wells of salvation are only in him, there is salvation in no other; it is in vain to expect it from any other quarter; no degree of spiritual light and life, grace and holiness, peace, joy and comfort, is to be had elsewhere. Such therefore who neglect, overlook, or forsake this fountain of living waters, hew out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water. (Jer. 2:13) Wherefore it becomes all who have any knowledge of themselves, any sense of their wants, and views of the fulness of Christ, to apply to him; for whither should any go, but to him who has the words of eternal life?

It imports the continuance of it with him. It is an abiding fulness, and yields a continual, daily supply; believers may go every day to it, and receive out of it; the grace that is in it will be always sufficient for them, even to the end of their days. And to this abiding nature of it, the perpetual dwelling of it in Christ, is owing the saints final perseverance; for, because he lives as full of grace and truth, they do and shall live also. Great reason have believers to be string in the grace which is in Christ Jesus. (2 Tim. 2:1) This fulness will abide in Christ unto the end of time, until all the elect are gathered in, and they are filled with grace, and made meet for glory. There will be as much grace, and as large a sufficiency of it for the last believer that is born into the world, as for the first. Besides, there is a fulness of glory on Christ, which will abide in him to all eternity; out of which the saints will be continually receiving glory for glory, as here grace for grace; the will have all their glory from and through Christ then,

as they now have all their grace from him and through him.

It denotes the safety and security of it. Every thing that is in Christ is safe and secure. The person's of God's elect being in him, are in the utmost safety, none can pluck them out of his hands. Their grace being there, it can never be lost; their glory being there, they can never be deprived of it. Their life, both of grace and glory, is hid with Christ in God, and so out of the reach of men and devils. Christ is the storehouse and magazine of all grace and glory, and a well fortified one; he is a rock, a strong tower, a place of defense, such an one as the gates of hell cannot prevail against. I hasten,

IV. To make it appear, that the being and dwelling of this fulness in Christ is owing to the good-will and pleasure of the Father.

The phrase, The Father, is not indeed in the original text, but is rightly supplied by our translators; since he is expressly mentioned in the context, and is spoken of as he who make the saints meet to be partakers of the heavenly glory, who delivers from the power and dominion of sin and Satan, and translates into the kingdom of his dear Son, verses 12, 13, and as he who by Christ, reconciles all things to himself, whether in heaven or in earth, even such who were alienated and enemies in their minds unto him, verses 20, 21. Now,

It is owing to the good-will of the Father to his Son, that this fulness dwells in him. Christ was ever as mediator, as one brought up with him, daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; (Prov. 8:30) and so he always continued to be; and as an evidence and demonstration of it, he treasured up all fulness in him. This seems to be the import of our Lord's words, when he says, the Father loveth the Son, and hath put all things into his hands; (John 3:35) that is, he hath shewed his love to him, and given a full proof of it, by committing all things to him, to be at his will and disposal. This sense of the words well agrees with the context, which represents Christ in his mediatorial capacity, as exalted by the Father, with this view, that in all things he might have the preeminence.

It is owing to the good-will of the Father to the elect, that this fulness dwells in Christ; for it is for their sakes, and upon their account, that it is put into the hands of Christ. God has loved them with an everlasting love; and therefore takes everlasting care of them, and makes everlasting provision for them.

They were the objects of his love and delight from everlasting; and therefore he set up Christ as mediator from everlasting, and possessed him with this fulness for them. There was good-will in God's heart towards these sons of men; and therefore it pleased him to take such a step as this, and lay up a sufficient supply for them, both for time and eternity.

It pleased the Father that this fulness should dwell in Christ; because he considered him as the most proper person to trust with it. It is well for us, that it is not put into our own hands at once, but by degrees, as we stand in need of it; it would not have been safe in our own keeping. It is well for us, it was not put into the hands of Adam, our first parent, our natural and federal head, where it might have been lost. It is well for us, it was not put into the hands of angels, who, as they are creatures, and so unfit for such a trust, were also in their creation-state mutable creatures, as the apostasy of many of them abundantly declares. The Father saw that none was fit for this trust but his Son, and therefore it pleased him to commit it to him.

It is the will and pleasure of God that all grace should come to us through Christ. If God will commune with us, it must be from off the mercy-seat, Christ Jesus. If we have any fellowship with the Father, it must be with him through the Mediator. If we have any grace from him, who is the God of all grace, it must come to us in this way; for Christ alone is the way, the truth, and the life; (John 14:6) not only the way of access to God, and acceptance with him, but of the conveyance of all grace, of all the blessings of grace unto us. No inasmuch as it is the pleasure of the Father that all fulness of nature, grace, and glory, should dwell in Christ the Mediator, this,

Sets forth the glory of Christ. One considerable branch as Christ's glory, as Mediator, lies in his being full of grace and truth; which souls sensible of their own wants, behold with pleasure. It is this which makes him fairer than the children of men, because grace, the fulness of it, is poured into his lips. It is this which makes him appear to be white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand; and look so lovely, even altogether lovely, in the view of all that know him. It is this which makes him so exceeding precious to, and so highly valued and esteemed by, all them that believe.

This instructs us where to go for a supply. The Egyptians, in the seven years of famine, when they cried to Pharaoh for bread, he having set Joseph over

his storehouses, bids them go to him, saying, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you do. (Gen. 41:55) Christ is by his Father made head over all things to the church. He is our antitypical Joseph, who has our whole stock of grace in his hand:

All the treasures of it are hid in him; he has the entire disposal of it, and therefore to him should we go for whatsoever we stand in need of. And this we may be sure of, that there is nothing we want but what is in him: and nothing in him suitable for us, but he will readily and freely communicate to us.

This directs us to give all the glory of what we have to God, through Christ: For since he is the way of the conveyance of all grace unto us, by him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips; giving thanks unto his name. (Heb. 13:15) It is by the grace of God in Christ, through him and from him, we are what we are; it is that which has made us to differ from another. We have nothing but what we have in a way of receiving, nothing but what we have received out of the fulness of Christ; and therefore we should not glory, as though we had not received it: But if any of us glory, let us glory in this; that Christ is of God made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. (1 Cor. 1:30)

20 CHRIST A PRIEST AFTER THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK.

A Sermon

Psalm 110:4.

The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.

I have in a late discourse shown you that Levi's Urim and Thummim are to be found with Christ, and I shall now endeavour to make it appear, that notwithstanding that, he is not a priest of Levi's order, but of the order of Melchizedek; there was a weakness and an imperfection in Levi's priesthood, therefore it was necessary that another priest should rise, not after his order, but after the order of another, who is here mentioned in these words. This Psalm was not wrote by Melchizedek, as some of the Jewish Rabbis have imagined; for he was a greater person than Abraham, he blessed him, and received tithes from him, and therefore could not call him Lord: nor by Eleazar, as others of them have thought: for though it is true he might call him his Lord, but then he could not assign

unto him session at the right hand of God; nor say of him, that he had an everlasting priesthood after the order of Melchizedek: nor is it a composure of David's concerning Abraham, and that victory which he obtained over the kings, for the same reasons as before: nor was it wrote by David, or by any of the singers in his time concerning himself, for David had nothing to do with the priesthood, it is true David was the penman of it, as is manifest from the inscription, A psalm of David; but then he did not write it concerning himself, but concerning one that was greater than he, even one whom he acknowledges to be his Lord; for if God never said to an angel, Sit thou at my right hand, &c., certainly he would never say to a mere man.

The person who is the subject of this psalm is the Messiah, as is acknowledged by many of the ancient Jewish Rabbis; though many of the modern ones, observing how manifestly some places in this Psalm are applied to the Lord. Jesus Christ in the New Testament, have endeavored, as much as in them lies, to wrest it to any other person; but we have a more sure word of prophecy, and a better rule to go by, than their glosses and interpretations: for the first verse is evidently referred to the Messiah by Christ himself; in Matthew 22:42, 43, where he puts this question to the Scribes and Pharisees, What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he? They say unto him, The son of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in Spirit call him Lord? Saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, &c., now as they were not able to answer this question, so neither do they charge him with a misapplication of the text; which, no doubt, they would have done, had they not been convicted in their own consciences that it was right. It is also applied unto him by the apostle Peter, in Acts 2:39, and there the words of my text, in all those (Heb. 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:17, 21) places where they are cited in the epistle to the Hebrews, are manifestly referred unto Christ. The three first verses of this Psalm speak of the glory of Christ's kingdom, in his being placed at the Father's right hand, in the subjection of his enemies to him, and in the mighty conquests of his grace over his own people; and in this fourth verse there is an easy transition from his kingly to his priestly office; both which offices were eminently conjoined in him, of whose order he is here said to be.

Three things are here said of Christ's priesthood;
First, That it is after the order of Melchizedek.

Secondly, That it is an everlasting one.

Thirdly, That its stability and firmness is in the immutable and unrepealable oath of God. Each of which I shall consider in their order.

First, Christ is a priest after the order of Melchizedek: And in speaking to this, it will be necessary, 1st, To give you some account, who and what Melchizedek was; 2dly, How Christ may be said to be a priest after the order of Melchizedek: In treating of the former, I suppose that; I shall gratify the curiosity of some; and in considering the latter, I hope to bring out something, for the edification of others; but, in the

1st place, Let us consider who and what Melchizedek was. The first mention that is made of him, is in Genesis 14:18. And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. His name, by interpretation, is, King of righteousness; and it is very probable that he was called so, because that he was a king who reigned in righteousness, and executed justice in his realm; as he does, of whom he was a glorious type. In Joshua's time, we find that there was a king in Jerusalem, which is supposed to be the same with Salem, whose name was Adonizedek: which is, by interpretation, Lord of righteousness: a name of much the same signification with this, and perhaps it was a common name of the kings of this place; even as Abimelech was a common name of the kings of Gerar, and Pharaoh of the kings of Egypt. Now this inquiry of ours consists of two parts, 1st, Who he was. 2ndly, What he was.

1st, Let us consider who he was; there has been a variety of opinions concerning him, which may be reduced to these two heads: 1st, Such who have thought him to be more than a man; 2ndly, Such who have thought him to be but a mere man: of those who have thought him to be more than a man,

Some have imagined that he was an angel, which appeared in a human form to Abraham: this was the opinion of Origen; which, though not approved of by a learned author, yet is preferred by him to that which Jerom, and many others, both of the ancient and modern writers, have embraced; of which hereafter. That angels have appeared to Abraham in the plains of Mamre, Genesis 18 and are there called men: are in the 19th verse called angels; but then we never read of angels being priests, or of this office being ascribed to them; for every high priest is taken from among men, and not from among angels.

Others have thought him to be a divine power, superior to Christ: this was the heresy of those who were called Melchisedecians: the first author of this was one Theodorus, a silversmith, a disciple and follower of one Theodorus, a tanner, who lived under Zepherinus, Pope of Rome, and Severus, Emperor, about the year of Christ 174. This heresy consisted of two parts. 1st, That Christ was a mere man. 2dly, That Melchizedek was not a man but the power of God; more powerful, august, and happy, than the Son of God; after whose image Christ was made by God. This heresy arose from a mistaken sense of Christ's being said to be after the order of Melchizedek; but rather the contrary follows from hence; for if Melchizedek, was a type of Christ, and Christ the truth of that type, then Christ must be greater than Melchizedek, because the truth is greater than the type.

Others have fancied, that he was the Holy Ghost; this was the notion of the Hieraclites, as appears from Epiphanius; though Augustine, in treating concerning those heretics, makes no mention of this tenet of theirs: yet Danæus, in his commentary upon him, does; by whom we are informed, that they were so called from Hieras, or Hieraela, an Egyptian monk, who lived under Dionysius, Pope of Rome, and Gallieus, Emperor, about the year of Christ 234. That the Holy Ghost appeared once in the form of a dove, and descended on Christ at his baptism, is well known; but that he ever appeared in the form of a man, the scripture does not furnish us with one single instance of, nor is he ever called a priest, or that office assigned unto him, in all the word of God.

Others have supposed that he was the son of God himself: which opinion as defended by a learned author who supposes that Christ appeared to Abraham when he returned from the slaughter of the Kings, in the shape and form of that body which he afterwards dwelt in here on earth; and hence he is said to be *αφωμοιωμενος δε τω υιω του θεου*, "made like unto the Son of God:" and that because Abraham saw him in the likeness of that body which when incarnate he really assumed, therefore it is said by Christ, that Abraham rejoiced to see his day, and he saw it, and was glad (John 8:56): he argues, that if Melchizedek, and the Son of God, is not one and the same person, then it follows, that there are two priests, whose priesthood is everlasting; for the apostle says of Melchizedek, that he abides a priest continually (Heb. 7:3): he lays

some stress upon his blessing so great a patriarch as Abraham, which the apostle observes as an undeniable evidence of his being "greater and more excellent than he:" but his chief argument is founded on Hebrews 7:8 where the apostle, comparing Melchizedek with the Levites, says, and here men that die receive tithes: but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth; where two things may be observed of the Levites, which are opposed in Melchizedek's character; one is, that they were men, the other is that they died; but this priest to whom Abraham gave titles, was not a man, nor mortal: for there is a witness of him that he liveth; these priests were made after the law of a carnal commandment; but Melchizedek, or the Son of God, after the power of an endless life; he cannot see how Melchizedek's priesthood was more perfect than that of the Levites, if he was a mortal man, and a king and priest among the Salemites; those people having not as yet embraced the true Religion; for Abraham was but just come amongst them: and if so be they had, yet, says he, every one knows that religious worship, even in the families of the patriarchs, was but rude and without form, until God instituted the Levitical order; he asks what reason we have, why we should not believe this King of righteousness and peace, to be the same Son of God, who appeared to Abraham in the plains of Mamre? Genesis 18 accompanied by two angels, who, with him, are called men; he thinks there is a greater evidence of divinity in this King of righteousness, who on a sudden came from above, as out of a machine, and met Abraham on the road, and blessed him, and refreshed him with bread and wine; than there is in that person who appeared to Abraham in the plains of Mamre, and was hospitably received by him only, as he observes, there is this difference, that he in Genesis 18 is expressly said to be The Lord, but this is not said of Melchizedek in Genesis: but he supposes, that Moses left this mystery to be explained by David and Paul, who he thinks have left us no room to doubt of it. He thinks that Abraham gave him these names, Melchizedek and Malecsalem; which he thinks are not proper, but appellative names; that salem is no more the name of a place than zedek, but both expressive of the characters of this great person, the one, as the apostle observes, signifying King of righteousness, the other, King of peace: and that the reason of his being called a priest of the most High, is, because that he appeared in the habit of a priest when

he met Abraham, This opinion, I must confess, is more eligible, and carries a greater appearance of truth in it, than those before mentioned; yet there are some things which oblige me not to come into it; that the Son of God did appear to Abraham, and to the other patriarchs, in a human form, I do not at all doubt, but that he appeared so to Abraham, in the habit of a priest, when he returned from the slaughter of the kings, I see no reason to believe: when Melchizedek is said to be like to the Son of God, it rather proves him a distinct person from him, than the same; and when an endless life and an eternal priesthood are ascribed to him, it is to be understood of him, not really and properly, but mystically and typically; he having no predecessor nor successor in his priesthood; and when Christ, the Son of God, is said to be of his order; it is evident to me, that he must be distinguished from him. But let us proceed now to consider the opinions of the latter sort, who have thought him to be but a mere man, and of these,

Some have thought that he was Shem, the Son of Noah; and this was the constant opinion of the Hebrew Doctors; which opinion might arise partly from that esteem he was in for his piety and knowledge. Hence the Targumists call him Shem the Great; and frequently make mention of the school of Shem the Great. And Ben Sira says, that Shem and Seth obtained glory among men: and partly from an unwillingness in the Jews to believe that a stranger should be greater than Abraham; that one of another nation should be preferable to him who was the author of theirs. This opinion has also been embraced by persons of a considerable figure in the Christian world: what has induced them to it, are these considerations, namely, that he was then living, and that he had lived an hundred years before the flood, and there was none born before that time then living; so that his parentage might well be unknown: that God is called the Lord God of Shem, and so he may fitly be called the priest of the most high God; that he was a righteous person, and so justly called Melchizedek: that he was the most honorable in the earth, and so greater than Abraham; that he was the root of the church, and from whence Abraham and his posterity sprang; as also the Messiah according to the flesh; to him the promise was made, Genesis 9:26 and upon all accounts the most proper person then living to bless Abraham. This opinion was opposed by Epiphanius, on account of his being

then dead, as he imagined: but that was a mistake of his, as is manifest from chronology; for he was then living, and lived some years afterwards: nevertheless, there are some things which may dissuade us from embracing this opinion; for it cannot be said of Shem that he was without father, and without mother, and without descent; no, not in the common sense that is given of the words; for Shem's genealogy is well known, and a full account of it we have in scripture: besides if Melchizedek was Shem, then Levi must be in his loins, as well as in the loins of Abraham; and so the apostle's argument would be of no force to prove the superexcellency of Melchizedek's priesthood to Levi's: nay the apostle tells us, that Melchizedek's descent is not counted of them, that is, the Levites, their descent is different; nay more, it does not seem credible that Shem should come into the land of Canaan, and reign in a country that belonged to his brother Ham and his posterity: nor does it appear probable that Abraham should be a stranger there, if it were so, and be obliged to buy a piece of ground to bury his dead, when he had so near akin to him a king there: nor is it reasonable to suppose, that Abraham should give to him, but rather he to Abraham.

Others have thought him to be of the posterity of Canaan, the son of Ham: that he was a king in Salem, in the land of Canaan that he was a man of great piety and knowledge, whom the Lord had remarkably raised up in that corrupt generation, and endued with the knowledge of him and his true worship his name seems to make it manifest that he was a Canaanite, it being usual with those people to interpose God in compounded names, as in Adonizedek, Abimelek, &c. as also the place of his kingdom, Salem, which was a city in the land of Canaan: and likewise he is said to have a descent different from the Levites and their ancestors: and this seems well to agree with the design of the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, to cut off all boasting from the Jewish nation concerning the law of Moses, and priesthood of Levi; as also to magnify the grace of Christ among the Gentiles. Many, both ancient and later divines, have been of this opinion.

Others who think him to be a mere man, of whose genealogy the scripture is silent, on purpose that he might be as fit a type of Christ as the state of a mere man would allow of, not only think it in vain, but sinful to inquire who he was; and I must confess, we ought not to be too nice in our disquisitions, nor too positive

in our determinations in this affair; but I cannot see that the last opinion which I have mentioned breaks in upon this; which at present, I am most inclined to embrace.

Thus much in answer to the first part of the question, Who he is? Let us now consider,

2dly, What he was: first we are told in Genesis 14:18 that he was king of Salem; which, according to some, is the same place which afterwards was called Jerusalem: so all the three Targums upon the place carry it: and we find that Jerusalem is called by this name in David's time, (Psalm 76:2) in Salem also is his tabernacle; though others think that it was Salem, a city of the Shechemites, in the Land of Canaan, mentioned in Genesis 33:18, which by another name was called Shechem, and afterwards Salim; near to which John was baptizing (John 3:23), and here Jerom says, in his time, was shown the palace of Melchizedek; the magnificence of which was manifest by its ruins: but this could not be true, for this city was beat down and sowed with salt by Abimelek (Judges 9:45), and I am most inclined to think that it was Jerusalem of which Melchizedek was king; who herein was a glorious type of Christ, who was constituted king over Zion; and in this very city, as our great high priest, offered up himself a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savor to God.

2ndly, He is also said to be a priest of the most high God, one that was called by God to that office, was employed in the service of God; and by this title distinguished from the priests of idols: what his sacrifices were, we are not told: but no doubt they were such, which other priests offered who were so by divine appointment: and certain it is, that the bread and wine which he brought out to Abraham; were not his sacrifice; for he did not do that as a priest, but as a king, out of his royal and princely bounty, to refresh Abraham and his weary soldiers; as will be hereafter shown. So that Melchizedek was both a King and a Priest; instances of which indeed we have among the heathens, and perhaps they borrowed or rather stole the practice from this instance: yet we find this was not allowed among the Jews; the priesthood belonged to one tribe, and the kingdom to another: neither

David, nor any of his posterity, were allowed the exercise of both offices, till the Messiah came, who was prefigured herein by Melchizedek.

Thus have I considered both who and what he was: and I conclude that he was neither an angel, nor a

divine power, nor the Holy Ghost, nor the Son of God himself, but that he was a mere man; yet not Shem the son of Noah, but a Canaanitish prince, who was remarkably raised up and endued by God with piety and knowledge, and was both king of Salem, that is, Jerusalem, and priest of the most high God, and herein a glorious type of Christ Jesus. I shall now consider,

Secondly, How Christ may be said to be of the order of Melchizedek. Aben Ezra renders it (κατα την ομοιοτητα), according to the custom, or manner of Melchizedek: and the apostle according to the similitude; and in all those places where these words are mentioned in the epistle to the Hebrews, they are also rendered by the Syriac, in the similitude, or likeness of Melchizedek; so that the sense of the words is, that just in the same way and manner that Melchizedek was a priest, Christ is, or that there is a similitude and likeness between Christ and Melchizedek which we shall consider in a few particulars.

1st, There is a likeness or similitude between them in their names and titles; Melchizedek's name by interpretation, is, King of righteousness; and well agrees with Christ, who loves righteousness and hates iniquity: who is a king that reigns in righteousness, who sits upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment, and with justice. The sceptre of his kingdom is a sceptre of righteousness, and his throne is established thereby; he is king of saints, and all his ways are just and true; all his regal administrations are according to justice and truth; for righteousness is the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. As also he may well be called King of righteousness, because he is the author of one, he has wrought out and brought in an everlasting one, which is commensurate to the requirements of the law; and therefore sufficient for all those, for whom he effected it; this is called the righteousness of God; not that it is the essential righteousness of God, but it is a righteousness, which Christ, who is God as well as man, has wrought out for all his people; for he who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him; to this righteousness of his should we submit, on this should we depend, and in it desire to be found living and dying, and then we shall not be found naked. Again;

Melchizedek's title is King of Salem, which by interpretation is, King of peace; which may well he

applied to the Lord Jesus Christ, whose title in Isaiah (Isa. 9:5), is The prince of peace; his kingdom is a kingdom of peace, his government and his peace are of equal duration; as there will be no end of the one, so neither will there be of the other in his days shall the righteous flourish, and abundance of peace so long as the moon endureth: which was fulfilled in Solomon, who herein was an eminent type of Christ, and to whom those words are principally to be referred, as the Jews themselves acknowledge. Also he may be so called, because that he is both the author and giver of peace; he has made peace between God and sinners, a lasting and an inviolable one; he has been at great pain and charges to obtain it, it has cost him his precious blood; he hath made peace by the blood of his cross; the tidings of which are brought unto us in the gospel; and therefore that is called the gospel of peace; he is also the giver of all the inward, spiritual, conscience-peace, which saints enjoy as he himself said (John 14:27), Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you not as the world giveth, I give unto you; thus is Christ not only king of righteousness, but king of peace; as he is the author of the one, so he is of the other; and from him alone must we expect them both.

Secondly, There is a likeness or similitude between Christ and Melchizedek, in the account that is given of him in Hebrews 7:3, without father, without mother, without descent; having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; not but that Melchizedek had both father and mother, and likewise descent and beginning of days, and end of life; but the scripture gives us no account who were his father and mother, nor of what stock he descended; neither when he was born, nor when he died; and these things are on purpose concealed from us, that he might be a proper type of Christ. The Syriac renders it thus, "neither whose father nor mother are written in the genealogies; neither the beginning of his days, nor the end of his life;" and another learned interpreter thus, "of an unknown father, and of an unknown mother, the original of whose stock cannot be declared;" now this may be referred both to the person and priesthood of Christ.

1st. To the person of Christ; the several branches of this account given of Melchizedek, may very fitly be applied to Christ.

First, he is said to be without father; this is true of Christ, as man; for as God he has a Father; God is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: and frequent

intimations did he give of this to the Jews; for which more than once, they took up stones to stone him: as such he made his application to God in his agonies in the garden, and as such he commended his Spirit to him, when ready to expire on the cross; and also ascended to him as his God and our God, as his Father and our Father: but as a man he had no Father; for Joseph was only his supposed, and not his real father; and herein lies the wonderful and astonishing mystery of the incarnation, which was so long prophesied of by Isaiah, Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel (Isa. 7:14): and therefore when the tidings hereof were brought to the virgin, it is no wonder that she made the reply she did, how shall this be, seeing I know not a man? But the answer which the angel returned unto her, was entirely satisfactory, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee; therefore that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. In Christ's incarnation, as there was a surprising display of God's grace, so there was an astonishing instance of his power; it was not after the ordinary way of generation; he was without father.

Secondly, He is said to be without mother; this is true of Christ as God; as man, he had a mother, but no father; as God, he has a father, but no mother: he was from all eternity begotten by the father, in a way ineffable and unspeakable to us; the modus of his generation who can tell? We are not to entertain any carnal conceptions of Christ's generation, nor compare it with that of ours, nor any other creatures; for he is without mother; it is true, the virgin Mary is sometimes called, by the ancients, the mother of God; but this is said by reason of the hypostatical union of the two natures in one person, upon the account of which sometimes what is proper to one nature is ascribed to the other.

Thirdly, He is said to be without descent; that is, there is no account of his pedigree, kindred, and ancestors, in any authentic genealogy: this is true of Christ as God; for his genealogy as man is given us both by Matthew and Luke; but as God, without genealogy; and hereby is distinguished from the gods of the heathens, of whom are given long, tedious, and unaccountable genealogies: but he is the first and the last; before him was no God formed, neither shall there be after him.

1st, He is said to have neither beginning of days, nor end of life; this is true of Christ as he is God; for he is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end, from everlasting to everlasting; and he is the same yesterday, today, and for ever; he who was born in Bethlehem, his goings forth were of old, even from everlasting; there never was a time when he began to be, and there never will be one when he will cease to be: and also, though as he is man he had a beginning of days, and an end of life, in this world, yet being risen from the dead, he lives, and will live for evermore; death shall no more have dominion over him.

2dly, These things may be referred to the priesthood both of Melchizedek and Christ: Melchizedek may be said to be without father and without mother, &c., because his father was not a priest, nor did his mother descend from those that were priests; his descent either on father or mother side was not counted from them, nor had he any predecessor or successor in the priesthood; now this was, or at least ought to have been, carefully observed during the Levitical dispensation, that none be admitted to service as a priest, but who appeared from their registers and genealogies, to be of the right line: and therefore we find in Ezra's time, when there was a reformation in the Jewish church state, that those who were not found in the registers and genealogies, were looked on as polluted, and put from the priesthood: and herein Melchizedek was different from the Levites, and was a proper type of Christ; who did not descend from parents of the priestly line, for neither his supposed father Joseph, nor his real mother Mary, were of Levi's tribe, but of the tribe of Judah; of which tribe no man gave attendance at the altar; as also of which Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood; and out of this tribe, it is evident, our Lord sprang, who never had one that went before him, nor ever will have any come after him in the priesthood.

Thirdly, There is a likeness or similitude between Christ and Melchizedek, in the conjunction of the kingly and priestly offices in him; Melchizedek was both king of Salem, and priest of the most high God; and there are some particular actions which are recorded of him, which concern him in both characters; in which he prefigured Christ.

1st, As a king, there is one single action of his in which he typified Christ, and that is, his bringing out

bread and wine to refresh Abraham and his wearied soldiers: he did not do this as a priest, but as a prince; here is no sacrifice to God, but an instance of his regard to one of his saints: this royal and generous act of his, is expressive of the great regard which Christ has for his people, who are engaged in a warfare, are fighting the Lord's battles, and are enduring hardness as good soldiers of Christ; What royal entertainments? What large and rich provisions of grace has he made for them? He feedeth them with himself, the bread of life: whose flesh is meat indeed, and whose blood is drink indeed; and sheds abroad his love in their souls, which is better than wine; he has made a gospel-feast, and it is a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow; of wines on the lees, well refined; and to this feast does he invite his people, and brings it forth unto them, and bids them heartily welcome; and says, Eat O friends; yea, drink abundantly, O my beloved; and then when the good fight of faith is fought, when the battle is ended, and the victory is obtained, then will he lead them into his banqueting-house above, and bring forth his best wine, which is reserved till last, and cause them to sit down at his table, where they shall feed for ever on those inexpressible joys and everlasting pleasures which are at his right hand.

2dly, There are several actions of his as a priest wherein he was typical of Christ.

1st, He blessed Abraham, and said, Blessed be Abraham of the most high God; this he did as a priest, it being the priest's work to bless the people: it is probable this might be a ratification or confirmation of the blessing of the promised seed to Abraham; for the Apostle says, he blessed him which had the promises (Heb. 7:6, 7); which is introduced by him as an argument of his being greater than he: no Christ in this is represented by Melchizedek, who blesseth his with all spiritual blessings, such as a justifying righteousness, the pardon of sin, adoption, and eternal life: and these blessings are lasting and durable; for those who are blessed by Christ, are blessed for ever; he never removes them himself, nor is it in the power of men or devils to reverse them: these then are blessings indeed; and happy are those who are possessed of them.

2dly, He gave thanks to God for the victory obtained by Abraham over his enemies: for thus we read he said, and blessed be the most high God, which hath

delivered thine enemies into thy hand (Gen. 14:20): this may very well be referred to Christ's praising his Father in the great congregation, and his paying vows there before them that fear him; he has obtained a complete victory over all his and our enemies, and has made us more than conquerors; and now he is set down at the right hand of God, and is there blessing his father, and giving thanks unto him for strengthening, assisting, and enabling him to do this work, as man and mediator. He asked of his father, and he gave him the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost part of the earth for his possession; and now is praising him for it; he has delivered all our enemies into his hands, and us out of the hands of them all, and now is blessing God for both.

3dly, Another act recorded of him as a priest, is his receiving tithes from Abraham. Christ is our great high priest, by whom we should offer up all our sacrifices to God; and in whom alone they are acceptable to him; and also to him should we prefer our sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving for those many blessings wherewith we are blessed by him; he should have not only a tenth of what we have, but even all we have; we should give him our hearts, and present our bodies a living, holy and acceptable sacrifice to him.

Thus we have considered those actions of Melchizedek, which concern him both as king and priest, wherein he was a peculiar type of Christ the royal priest. Samuel was a prophet and a priest, but not a king. David was a king and prophet, but not a priest; nor any of his posterity. Uzziah once attempted the priestly office, but was severely rebuked by God, and struck with a leprosy, which continued with him to his death, Melchizedek alone was king and priest; these two met together alone in him, and therefore more especially on this account, Christ is said to be a priest of his order; that is, he is just such a priest as Melchizedek was, who was both king and priest; but Christ exceeds all his types, for he is prophet, priest and king; he is said to be the faithful witness (Rev. 1:5), which is expressive of his prophetic office; and the first begotten of the dead, which denotes his priestly office; and the prince of the kings of the earth, which directs us to his kingly office; all those three, which meet in one person, are clustered here in one verse; and perhaps the conjunction of the regal and priestly offices is intended in Zechariah 6: 12, and he shall be a priest upon his throne, and the counsel of

peace shall be between them both; he that sits upon the throne is a priest, and there is nothing interferes to hinder the discharge of either office, but an entire harmony between them.

Fourthly, As Melchizedek was a greater priest than Levi, or any of his sons, so is Christ: Melchizedek appears to be greater than Levi, by the account that is given both of his person and priesthood; by his blessing Abraham, from whom Levi sprang, and by his receiving tithes not only from Abraham, but also from Levi, who was then in Abraham's loins. Christ now is greater than Melchizedek, and therefore must be greater than Levi, or any of his sons,

1st, Christ is greater than any of the Levitical priests in his person; for he is truly and properly God; these were but men; hence Christ is fully qualified for this work, which was too weighty for a mere creature: and all he did was effectual; his blood sufficient to cleanse, his sacrifice to atone, and his righteousness to justify from all sin; he is also the Son of God: Melchizedek was made like to the Son of God; but Christ is really the Son of God; in that sense in which none of Levi's tribe were; and as he was the ablest, so the fittest for this work. He is God's first and only begotten; who has interest in his Father, and who would, no doubt, be as faithful to him as merciful to us: and his assuming human nature added yet to his fitness, for hereby he was made like unto us, as it behooved him, and had something to offer: and what he offered was in our nature, that so the benefit of it might redound to us he was truly and properly man; and yet herein excelled the Levites; for though he was a man, yet not a mere man: he was united to the Word, the second person in the Trinity, so were not they: he was perfectly holy, so were not they, but had need to offer for their own sins as well as for the people's.

2dly, In his sacrifice he is greater than they: his was perfect; by it a full atonement was made; sin was entirely put away, and his people perfected: but their sacrifices could not take away sin, nor make either them that did the service, or those that came thereunto, perfect: and therefore there was a repetition of them: the priests stood daily ministering, and offering the same sacrifices; but Christ was but once offered, and will never be offered more: there remains no more, neither is there any need of any more or any other sacrifice for sin.

Fifthly and lastly, There is a likeness between them

in the perpetuity of their priesthood: Melchizedek is said to abide a priest continually (Heb. 7:3); because we have no account of the end of his priesthood, or that he ever had any successor therein; moreover, his priesthood, as the Syriac renders it, does abide for ever in Christ, who is of his order, and the truth of this type; for what is said mystically and figuratively of Melchizedek, is really and properly true of Christ: but this leads me to consider,

Secondly, The everlastingness of Christ's priesthood: Thou art a priest for ever, &c. There will never be a change of Christ's priesthood, it will never be antiquated. Offering of sacrifices, which is one main branch of the priestly office, began very early: Adam, no doubt, quickly after his fall, was taught by God to offer sacrifice for sin; and he taught his children to do the same: and now every man was his own priest: Abel offered sacrifice as well as Cain: which practice, perhaps, continued until the Levitical order was instituted. Though the Jews say, that before this was set up, the priesthood belonged to the first-born: but however, be it how it will, here is a change of the priesthood now, it is appropriated to a particular tribe; and none of another tribe might exercise this office: and this continued till Christ came in the flesh: and now, he being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle; this priesthood is changed, as also the law thereof, which is disannulled, and abolished, because of the weakness and unprofitableness thereof: though sacrifices were of God's own appointing, yet now sacrifice and offering, and burnt offering, and offering for sin, he will not; neither does he take any pleasure in those things that are offered by the law; but now the priesthood is in Christ's hands, and there will never more be another change. There were frequent changes in the Levitical priesthood, by reason of age and death; they truly, as the apostle observes, were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue (Heb. 7:23, 24). Some by reason of age; for they were not allowed to be in service after fifty years of age: and others not suffered to continue by reason of death; but this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood; or, as it may be rendered an intransible priesthood. A priesthood that does not pass from one to another. Christ will never have any successors in his priesthood, it will never pass from him to another: there is now no real priesthood among men; ministers

of the gospel are no more priests, than the people to whom they minister: for in a metaphorical sense, all the saints are made Kings and Priests to God; there is none a real and proper priest but himself, nor ever will be; for he is a priest for ever.

But you will say, Has not Christ performed his priestly office? Does he continue to act as a priest? Has he not finished his work as such? I answer; it is true Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; and he will never be sacrificed more: he was once offered to bear the sins of many, and he will be offered no more: he has offered one sacrifice for sin, and he will offer no more: for he is set down for ever, having done his work: but then the virtue and efficacy of his sacrifice will abide for ever; by it he has put away sin for ever; by it he has brought in everlasting righteousness; a righteousness which will last for ever; by it he has perfected for ever them that are sanctified: as the virtue and efficacy of his sacrifice reached the saints from the foundation of the world: and therefore is said to be the Lamb slain from thence: so it will reach the saints in all ages of the world, to the curl of time, and throughout the endless ages of eternity. Nay further, though he has done sacrificing, yet he has not done interceding for us: now we have an advocate with the Father; now he is pleading the virtue of his sacrifice for us, and this is one branch of his priestly office.

But you will say, when all the elect are called by grace and brought to glory, and all the blessing purchased by his blood bestowed on them, will he then continue to intercede? I answer; The apostle tells us, that he ever liveth to make intercession for us (Heb. 7:25); and one way by which Christ intercedes, is by appearing in the presence of God for us; and this he will do for ever: and as our being brought to glory, will be owing to his intercession, so our continuance will be owing to the same; and though he may not continue to intercede formally for us, yet the virtue of his intercession will continue for ever. Moreover also, the glory of his priestly office will be continually given him, both by his father, who after he had offered one sacrifice for sin, set him down at his own right hand, which is a branch of his mediatorial glory, in which he will be continued for ever: and then also this glory will be given to him for ever by all the saints in heaven; who will be continually saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and

blessing (Rev. 5:12) all the blessings of grace and glory they enjoy, they will for ever ascribe to his sacrifice and intercession. But now let us proceed to consider,

Thirdly, That the stability and firmness of Christ's priesthood lies in the immutable and irrevocable oath of God; The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, thou art a priest, &c. The priesthood is not only assigned to Christ by the word of God, but by the oath of God; which is no other than an unalterable decree of his, which was revealed to David by inspiration: of which oath or decree he will never repent. God sometimes indeed changes his work, his way of acting; but he never changes his will: for he is not a man, that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent; and whenever repentance is ascribed to God, it is to be understood in the former, and not in the latter sense: thus when it repented him that he had made man upon earth, he did not change his will, but he changed his way of acting; he changed the dispensation and therefore brought a flood and destroyed man from off the earth: and even this was according to an unalterable counsel of his own will. So when he repented that he had made Saul king, he did not change his will, but his way of acting, and therefore he cut him off; and gave his kingdom to another: and yet all according to his unchangeable will. Now he has conferred the priesthood on Christ; and as he will never change his will, so he will never change the dispensation, his way of acting in regard hereunto; he will never transfer the priesthood from one to the another. This may show us,

1st, The validity of Christ's call to the priestly office: he was not called to and invested in the priestly office by men; but God called him to, and fixed him in it by his unalterable decree: neither did he take this honor to himself; he did not thrust himself into this office; Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest, but he that said unto him; Thou art my Son today have I begotten thee (Heb. 5:5): and therefore as God has called him to it and confirmed him in it by his oath, he will never be removed from it.

2dly, The singularity thereof: it might seem somewhat strange and incredible that God's own Son, his only begotten Son, should be made an high priest, to offer sacrifice for sin and to make intercession for transgressors: and therefore he confirms it by his oath, that he shall be a priest: as also, Christ was of another tribe, of which Moses said nothing concerning

priesthood; and therefore this was a singular instance; and, to put an end to all hesitation about it, he swore to it.

3dly, It shews also the dignity of Christ's priesthood; the apostle observes this, and mentions it as an undeniable evidence of the preferableness of Christ's priesthood to the Levitical priesthood; that those priests were made without an oath, but he with an oath, by him that said unto him, The Lord swore and will not repent, &c. and he also adds, by so much as Jesus made a surety of a better Testament (Heb. 7:20-22): they were made priests by a law which is changed and abrogated, but he by two immutable things, God's word and oath.

4thly, It evidently makes it appear, that Christ's priesthood is a matter of moment; an oath is not to be taken by men in matters that are trivial and of no moment; and we may be sure that when God swears it is not in a trivial affair, but in a matter of great importance, such as the priesthood of Christ is; for on his sacrifice and intercession, the whole hinge of our salvation turns: because that he hath an unchangeable priesthood, and ever liveth to make intercession for us; that he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him; therefore we should set an high value on Christ's sacrifice and intercession, and be careful that we do not let these things slip, or suffer them to be wrung out of our hands.

5thly, This lets us see the durability of Christ's priesthood; God has called him unto it and bestowed it on him; and his gifts and callings are without repentance: and therefore he shall continue a priest for ever. The law indeed made men high priests which had infirmity, and therefore they did not continue long; but the word of the oath which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore (Heb. 7:28).

6thly and lastly, God gives his oath in this affair, not so much on his Son's account, who would never have doubted of his call unto, and investiture in the priestly office; but upon ours; therefore God willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, concerning this matter, confirms it by an oath; that all doubts and hesitations might be removed, and that we might have strong consolation who have fled unto and laid hold upon Christ our high priest (Heb. 7:17, 18). Thus have I considered the several parts of the text, and shall

close with some brief improvement.

First, From hence we learn the excellency and greatness of Christ's person. The Jews vainly asked him this question, Art thou greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? and the prophets are dead; Whom makest thou thyself (John 7:53)? Yes, he was greater than Abraham; for he was greater than Melchizedek, who was greater than Abraham; to whom Abraham paid tithes, and by whom he was blessed. Christ is great both in his person and office; he is God over all, blessed for evermore; therefore should we entertain high thoughts of him, and have a great value and esteem for him.

Secondly, Hence we learn the preferableness of Christ's priesthood to all others; they are changed and abolished, but Christ's is an everlasting and unchangeable one; and therefore seeing then that we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession, and come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Thirdly, Hence we learn how suitable Christ is for us; all offices meet in him; he is a king, to rule and govern us and to subdue all our enemies, both inward and outward; he is a priest, to atone for our sins, and make intercession to the Father for us; and he is a prophet, to teach and instruct us: whither should we go, but unto him? Such an high priest becomes us, who is after the order of Melchizedek, both king and priest.

Fourthly and lastly, Hence we learn, that all our blessings and privileges are secured, and will be continued to us for ever: Christ is a priest for ever; and the virtue and efficacy of his sacrifice and intercession continues for ever: and therefore all the blessings which depend thereon, will be continued to us for ever; we shall for ever be reaping the fruits and benefits of Christ's priestly- office; it affords abundant matter of consolation now, and will be the subject of our wonder to all eternity.

21 THE APPEARANCE OF CHRIST IN HUMAN NATURE, AND THE DISCOVERIES OF HIMSELF TO HIS PEOPLE, COMPARABLE TO THE LIGHT OF THE MORNING

2 Samuel 23:4

And he shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds.

In a former discourse we considered the preceding verse, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God. Now of this same Ruler, it is here said, He shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds. "He shall be;" that is, He that ruleth over men, just and righteous, ruling in the fear of God; "He shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds."

As the favor of an earthly prince is like a cloud of latter rain, and dew upon the grass, as the wise man says (Prov.16:15; 19:12): so his government, being mild and gentle, he is like the light of the morning when the sun riseth, pleasant and acceptable like the rising sun, bright and glorious; like a morning without clouds, that forebodes no ill, distress, affliction or adversity to his subjects, but all the reverse. This is still more true as it is applied to the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, the King of Saints, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, whose Kingdom ruleth all; the administration of whose government is just and righteous. He is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. He is, and shall be, like the light of the morning when the sun riseth, as a morning without clouds.

There are various metaphors applied to Christ similar to this; as, when he is said to be the bright and morning Star (Rev. 22:16): the phosphorus, the forerunner or introducer of the morning light. The day spring from on high that hath visited us (Luke 1:78); that brings on that bright and glorious day of the gospel dispensation. He is the day Star that arises in the hearts of his people; and that Sun of righteousness that arises upon them with healing in his wings (Mal. 4:2). So that the expressions of his grace, and the nature of his government may be fitly signified by the beautiful metaphor and figure here made use of. And

I. This may be applied unto him as coming into the world by the assumption of human nature.

II. To the discoveries he makes of himself to his people, in and after conversion.

III. To his government as a Ruler over men, just and righteous, ruling in the fear of God: especially with regard unto his rule and government as it will be more visibly and gloriously exercised in his spiritual and personal reign.

Note: Roman Numerals II and III (see above) are part of Sermon V.

I. This may have respect to his coming into the world; his appearance in human nature, where he was as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, a morning without clouds. It was foretold of him, that his goings forth should be prepared as the morning (Hosea 6:3): which is to be understood, not of his going forth of old, from everlasting, in the counsel and covenant of grace and peace; but his coming forth in time, his appearance in human nature, to work out the redemption and salvation of his people. The first hint of the Messiah, as a Saviour for lost sinful men, was as the dawn of morning light.

The sin of Adam brought a darkness upon him and the whole world. The first man was created with a great deal of light and knowledge. He was made after the image, and in the likeness of God, and which greatly consisted in knowledge, not merely of things natural, civil, and moral, but things divine. In the knowledge of God, his nature and divine perfections, will, and worship; of which Adam had a large share. But not content therewith, and being ambitious to know good and evil, he lost, in a great measure, the light and knowledge he had. Darkness overspread him; his understanding immediately became darkened; and so is the understanding of all men that descend from him by ordinary generation. Their understandings are darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them. This darkness, this blindness, is universal: there are none free from it. God's elect, while in a state of nature, are so. Dark with respect to their knowledge of spiritual things: yea, they are darkness itself till they are made light in the Lord. This is the case of all men universally. Jews and Gentiles are all under the power of sin, and liable to the consequences of it, and the elect among the rest; for there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeks after God. The way of peace, righteousness, life and salvation by Jesus Christ, they know not: and in such circumstances as these Adam found himself. As soon as he had sinned against God, he was immediately deprived of his gracious presence: enjoyed no more communion and fellowship with him in the way he did before: an emblem of which was, his being driven out of the garden. So he drove out the man (Gen. 3:24); signifying that sin had separated between God and him. There was an eclipse, as it were, between God and him: in consequence of which, it was a night of black darkness. He found himself in a most

wretched state and condition: a most uncomfortable frame of soul: in the greatest anguish and distress: trembling at the thoughts of coming before that God, against whom he had sinned; and therefore attempted to hide himself from his presence amongst the trees of the garden (Gen. 3:8). He knew not what would be the issue and consequence of things. He could see no way of escaping the wrath of God. He had no hint of a Savior. He was as much without the knowledge of one, or any hope of salvation by one, as the blindest heathen that ever lived upon the face of the earth. This was the case of the first man.

Now all at once, behold, an hint was given of the Messiah: a discovery of a Savior for lost, sinful man, in that threatening to Satan, the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head (Gen. 3:15). This was the first dawn of morning light to lost sinful man: and there was, at this time, a ray of light darted into Adam's mind, which he never was sensible or knew any thing at all of, in a state of innocence, amidst all the light and knowledge he then had. It was indeed a glorious ray of light

which darted into his mind, upon this single hint of the seed of the woman, who should bruise the serpent's head. From hence, he might and did conclude, that he and Eve should not die, since there was a seed, a son to spring from them, and one that should bruise the serpent's head, and destroy the works of him who had been the ruin of them. O! how it must gladden his heart! what cheerfulness must be in his countenance, which it is not possible for us to describe.

And this, like the light of the morning, was of an increasing nature. As the morning light spreads upon the tops of the mountains as soon as it appears, and gradually diffuses itself throughout the horizon; so this light, this morning light, which sprung up in this first promise of grace, diffused itself greatly: partly by means of sacrifices, which God appointed to be offered up from that time, and partly by prophecies, which were delivered out at certain times, respecting the glorious person that should appear in our world as the Savior of lost men.

This light, this morning light of divine grace spread itself or was spread by means of sacrifices, which were immediately ordered to be offered up. Adam was soon taught the way and method of offering sacrifices as an atonement for sin; as typical of the sacrifice of the seed

of the woman, that should bruise the serpent's head. By these means he was more and more enlightened into the way, and nature of the method of his salvation and redemption: and still more when the Lord God was pleased to make, of the skins of slain beasts, coats for him and Eve, and clothed them which were emblems of the robe of righteousness, and the garment of salvation, to be wrought out by the woman's seed, the Savior of men. And Adam taught his posterity the way and method of offering sacrifices; for we may observe that his son Abel, by faith in the promised Savior, by faith in his atoning sacrifice for sin, offered up a more excellent sacrifice than Cain (Heb. 11:4). Hence it is, with reference to these early sacrifices, and the institution and practice of them, that Christ is said to be the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Rev.13:8). By these, and succeeding sacrifices, under the Levitical dispensation, which were numerous, this morning light, respecting a Savior, salvation by him, and acceptance through his sacrifice, was spread more and more.

This morning light of divine grace, shining through a Mediator and Savior, was likewise spread more and more by means of prophecy. Various and numerous were the prophecies concerning Christ the woman's seed; for he was spoken of from this time forward, by the mouth of all God's holy prophets, from the beginning of the world: they all had respect to him. He was the sum and substance of their prophecies; for so the disciples and followers of our Lord said, we have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write (John 1:45). Moses wrote of him, and all the prophets did so; the Spirit of Christ in them signified what he should be, and what he should do; testified of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. Every prophecy relating to him, spread more and more light concerning him. The light that came therewith was like the morning light, a spreading and increasing one. By and through these prophecies it was known from whom he should particularly descend. The first hint is only that he should be the seed of the woman; and it would have been enough to have been born of any woman, to have completed that prophecy. But by degrees this was opened more and more; that he was to be born, not in a common or ordinary way, that he was to be born of a virgin, and his name called Immanuel, God with us (Matthew 1:23); and that he was to spring from Abraham the father of the faithful,

in whose seed all the nations of the earth were to be blessed (Gen. 28:14). Another prophecy gives us farther light into this matter, and informs us, he was to spring from Judah; from whom the sceptre was not to depart, nor a Lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh, our Lord Jesus Christ, should come (Gen. 49:10). Other prophecies inform us more particularly that he was to spring from David's family, and to be a branch or stem out of the root of Jesse: others give us an account where he should be born, and when he should appear in the world. One prophecy fixes the very place of his birth; Thou Bethlehem, Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be Ruler in Israel (Micah 5:2): and others point out the exact time of his coming; that he should come before the rule, sceptre or government was to depart from the Jews, before the second temple was destroyed—for that he should come into, and give it a greater glory. Daniel fixes the exact time from the going forth of such a commandment; that there should be so many weeks, that is, so many years till the coming of the Messiah.

The first promise of the Messiah, only gives a hint of the work he should do, which was to bruise the serpent's head: but other prophecies more clearly declare, that he was to do the whole will and work of God; obtain salvation for his people; finish transgression; make an end of sin; and bring in an everlasting righteousness. That he was to be a Prophet like unto Moses; and a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec—that he was to be King over God's holy hill of Sion, and the sceptre of his kingdom a righteousness. Other prophecies also shew what he was to do in obedience to the will of God; and what he was to suffer in the room and stead of his people. That he was to be brought to the dust, and numbered amongst the transgressors: that he was to die and be buried, and lay in the grave, though not so long as to see corruption: that he should rise again, ascend up on high, sit down at the right hand of God, and there reign till all enemies were put under his feet. These, with many others, brought on such light and knowledge concerning a Saviour and Redeemer, as plainly made it appear that this light, like the morning-light, was a growing, spreading, and increasing one.

This, like that also, was attended with joy and cheerfulness, as the morning light is. The first hint of

a Messiah, a Savior and Redeemer of lost man, was attended with joy and cheerfulness to Adam, as we have seen already; so every fresh prophecy, and after revelation of the will of God, concerning this matter, gave joy and pleasure to those to whom the discovery was made; as it did unto Abraham, of whom it is said, that Abraham saw the day of Christ and was glad. So every fresh discovery made by any of the prophets unto the church of God, in the several periods of time, were all attended with joy and cheerfulness. Zechariah, one of the last of the prophets, speaking concerning Christ, says, Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation, lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass (Zech. 9:9). As the morning light is a pledge of the rising sun, a sure pledge of it, whenever we see day break, or the morning light appear, we are sure that the sun will rise, and that it will not be long ere it is risen; so that light which broke forth and spread gradually under the former dispensation, was an earnest and pledge of Christ the Sun of righteousness arising in due time, with healing in his wings. As yet, indeed, he was not risen; there was only the morning light spreading, but the Sun was not risen. There were still the shadows of the ceremonial law remaining. That law is by the apostle described, as a shadow of good things to come, which had not the very image of the things (Heb. 10:1). All those representations, under the legal dispensation, were shadowy ones. Christ is represented as the body and substance of them: the apostle, speaking of some of them in particular, adds, which were a shadow of good things to come, but the body is of Christ (Col. 2:17). Those continued under the legal dispensation, notwithstanding the morning light had broke forth; Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn my beloved, and be thou like a roe, or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether (Sol. Song 2:17).

That law which is comparable to the moon, was indeed the lesser light, and the light which rules by night. This seems to be intended in Revelation 12:1, where the church is represented as having the moon under her feet; the moon of the ceremonial law: and it may very fitly be signified by the moon, since that consisted among other things, in the observance of new moons. Its festivals, and ordinances were regulated by the moon, and like that, were changeable;

and because of the weakness and unprofitableness thereof, vanished away. There was in this season stars of light. As Gospel ministers are sometimes called (Rev. 1:20); so the prophets, teachers, and instructors under the Old Testament dispensation, may very properly be signified thereby, who held forth the word of God, which was a light unto their feet, and a lamp unto their paths. But all this plainly intimated that the Sun was not risen: there was the moon of the ceremonial law, and stars which gave light; yet there was a comparative darkness under that dispensation, though the morning light did appear: a comparative darkness in the Jewish world and state. The children of Israel were not able to look to the end of that which was to be abolished. The way into the holiest of all was not so manifest as now, until the vale was rent asunder; and as to the Gentile world, that was full of darkness and ignorance. A time of ignorance that God winked at, took no notice of, but left them to walk in the vanity of their minds: and these are said to walk in darkness, and sit in the shadow of death.

When our Lord actually appeared in our flesh, came into the world, and appeared in our nature; then he was as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, a morning without clouds. He came in like the light of the morning, which dispelled darkness, and introduced light: dispelled darkness in the Jewish state, and scattered the shadows of the ceremonial law. Dispelled darkness from the Gentile world when his gospel came amongst them; for he came to be a light unto the Gentiles, as well as to be the glory of his people Israel. So to remove and banish that night, of which the apostle speaks, when he says, the night is far spent; the day is at hand (Rom. 13:12).

By his coming into our world, the glorious light of the everlasting gospel was introduced. He came a Light. John his forerunner was not that light; but Christ was that light, and is called the light of the world (John 8:12); both of the Jewish and Gentile world. The light of the everlasting gospel which came by him, appeared very bright even unto all men; which teaches to deny ungodliness and worldly lust, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present evil world. This made that day, that glorious and illustrious day, which the prophets so much spoke of, the gospel day, concerning which, the apostle thus expresses himself, now is the accepted time, and now is the day of salvation.

The coming of our Lord was like the light of the morning, sudden and swift: according to what was foretold of him that he should suddenly come into his temple (Mal. 3:1); or unawares, as he did. There were some indeed who were waiting for the consolation of Israel; as good old Simeon, and Anna the prophetess: but there were but few of this kind. Christ came suddenly into the world and into his temple; at unawares to the greatest part of mankind. Like the light of the morning he came swiftly: he was, as the church desired he would be, like a roe or a young hart on the mountains of Bethel (Sol. Song 2:17). As soon as the time was up, which was fixed between him and his divine Father, God sent him; and he came readily. He was made of a woman; made under the law (Gal. 6:4). As the morning light is attended with pleasure, joy and cheerfulness to all kind of creatures; so the coming of our Lord was attended with joy, spiritual joy, to those who knew any thing of him, and that salvation which he came to effect. The Angels who brought the first news of it say, that they brought good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people (Luke 2:10): and the first disciples and followers of our Lord, who had the first intimation of his being come, with what joy did they express themselves! In raptures, they said, we have found Him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write, Christ the anointed one, the Son of God. So, wherever the gospel came with power, there was joy attended it; witness Samaria. We are told, there was joy in that City (Acts 8:8). Thus it was wherever Christ was preached, or any notice was given of his being come, and of salvation being wrought out by him.

The light which came by him was, like the morning light, spreading and increasing. He and his disciples went over all the land of Judea; and the gospel was published throughout the several parts thereof. It indeed was at one time limited and confined thereunto. The disciples were ordered to preach only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and not go into the way of the Gentiles: but after the resurrection of Christ from the dead, they were commanded to go into all nations, teaching and baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. They did so; their words went out through all the earth, and their sound unto the end of the world. Before the destruction of Jerusalem, which was about forty years after the death of Christ, the gospel was

preached to all nations: to every creature under heaven (Col. 1:23), as the apostle expresses it. He himself was a great instrument in this affair; for he went about, from Jerusalem round about unto Illyricum, preaching the gospel of Christ.

Once more; like the light of the morning he came irresistibly. As there is no such thing as preventing the light of the morning, when it once breaks forth, nothing in nature can possibly do it; so there was no preventing that gospel light which came by Christ. The word of the Lord had a free course; it ran and was glorified. Though there were all the methods taken to prevent its spread that could be devised among the Jews, they could not do it; the word of the Lord grew and multiplied. Nor could it be shut out from the Gentile world: though emperors, and governors of provinces and cities, were almost all, to a Man, against it, (those spiritual wickednesses in high places;) yet the apostles triumphed in Christ, and made manifest the savor of his knowledge in every place; which was a means of reducing thousands of souls to the obedience of Christ.

The coming of Christ is said to be not only like the light of the morning, but like the light of the morning when the sun riseth. He is styled the Sun of righteousness (Mal. 4:2). He, whom John saw visionally, like the light of the morning when the sun riseth; for he himself is a glorious Sun. A luminous body, the sun: the greater light, made to rule by day. An emblem of Christ, who is the light of the world: from whom all light comes. The light of Nature; for he is that light that lighteth every man that cometh into the World (John 1:9). The light of grace in conversion, is from him; and all after light also. Men are darkness itself until they are made light in the Lord: and the light of glory, that perfect, happy state the saints shall be brought into, and enjoy for evermore, it is all from Him. That glorious city is represented as standing in no need of the light of the sun, or of the moon, because the Lamb is the light thereof (Rev.21:23). The Sun is a glorious body. "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars" (1 Cor. 15:41); but the glory of the sun is greatest: that is of superior glory. A fit emblem of Christ, who is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person: in whom shines the glory of all the divine perfections. Any one that has a spiritual sight of things, can behold the glory of Christ as the

glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14). He, having a spiritual sight, by means of the light of the everlasting gospel, does behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, the glory of Christ's person, and the glory of his offices; and is changed into the same image from glory to glory. As the sun is a lucid body, clear, and to appearance free from spots; so it is expressive of the spotless purity of our Lord Jesus Christ. If the Saints, being washed in his blood and through his righteousness imputed, are said to be, all fair and without spot; much more may He be said to be so: fairer than the sons of Adam. If They are said to be without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; much more is He so.

And if this light, which comes from the sun, in a natural sense, is what is most delightful to behold; much more must that light which comes from Christ, and shines from him. Truly the light is sweet (says the wise man) and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun (Eccl. 11:7); O! how much sweeter is spiritual light from Christ; and how much sweeter must it be to behold him, the Sun of righteousness, arising upon us with healing under his wings!

He coming, and grace and truth by him, caused a greater and stronger light under the gospel dispensation, than was under the legal one, when it was only as the dawn of the morning. Perhaps to this difference of states, respect may be had in Solomon's Song (7:10), where the church is said to be, fair as the moon; so she was under the legal dispensation: but it is added, clear as the sun; so she is under the gospel dispensation, having the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.

From him, the Sun of righteousness, come the rays of light and love: and, as from the natural sun heat is derived, so likewise, from Christ the Sun of righteousness, heat as well as light proceeds. His coming inspired his people, his followers, with love to him, and zeal for him; and their hearts burned within them while he opened the Scriptures of truth unto them. From hence also springs all their spiritual fruitfulness. We read of precious fruits brought forth by the sun (Deut. 33:14); all the fruits of grace and righteousness are owing to Christ the Sun of righteousness.

Now when he appeared, he was as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; for all clouds disappeared when he

arose; all the shadows of the ceremonial law: there was a disannulling of this commandment through the unprofitableness thereof. These shadows disappeared, when he the body and substance came.—A morning without clouds. There was not so much as a shadow of the ceremonial law, much less any of the storm or tempest of the moral law: that which is expressed by blackness and darkness and tempest, (Heb. 12:19); no, these were all over; the stormy dispensation is at an end; the rain is over and gone. No more the thunders of mount Sinai; all the curses of that law are fallen upon the surety and Savior; he has borne them; he has been made, himself, a curse for his people, that he might redeem them from the curse of the law. So that now, the gospel dispensation is a morning without clouds; no storm, no tempest, no indication of any. A morning without any clouds of divine wrath and displeasure; here is nothing but peace proclaimed upon earth and good will towards men. The love and kindness of God our Savior towards man appears. Peace is made by the blood of Jesus; reconciliation is made for iniquity; a Sacrifice offered up of a sweet smelling savor to God: a righteousness wrought out that is well pleasing to God; because by it the law is magnified and made honorable. The language of the gospel is, fury is not in me (Isa. 27:4); no, Christ appearing in our nature, doing the will and work of his God and ours, is as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds.

I should now have proceeded to have shown you how it is applicable to his manifestation of himself to his people, in and after conversion; which is like the rising of the sun, dispels darkness and ignorance from their minds; and is of a spreading nature, like the light of the morning; and sometimes so clear that it is like the light of the morning when the sun is up; when there is a clear sky, and a serene heaven; a morning without clouds.

And how particularly it may be applied to Christ as a Ruler among men, and his rule and government of his spiritual kingdom, which ere long will be as the light of the morning when the sun is risen, a morning without clouds; and especially in his personal reign.—But I must leave these things, with what follows in this verse, to another opportunity as God shall give it.

22 THE APPEARANCE OF CHRIST IN HUMAN NATURE, AND THE DISCOVERIES OF

HIMSELF TO HIS PEOPLE, COMPARABLE TO THE LIGHT OF THE MORNING, AND TO THE TENDER GRASS SPRINGING OUT OF THE EARTH, BY CLEAR SHINING AFTER RAIN.

2 Samuel 23:4

And He shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds; as the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain.

These Words are in dose connection with the latter part of the third verse, and are spoken of the same person. He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God; and he shall be as the light of the morning, even a morning without clouds. That is, He that rules over men; a righteous ruler over men, ruling in the fear of the Lord, he shall be as the light of the morning. Whether this is to be understood of an earthly ruler, of a ruler in and among men, that rules and reigns in righteousness, governing his people according to the rules of equity and justice, according to the laws of God and his country; executing justice and judgment among his subjects, and ruling in the fear of God, having that before his eyes, and upon his heart; considering himself as God's vicegerent, as standing in his room and stead, acting in his name, and under his authority, and so accountable to him; or whether we understand this of a greater Ruler still, of Christ Jesus in the exercise of his Kingly office, who is King and Ruler of all men; of the greatest of men, of the worst of men, and of the best of men who is King of saints; the righteous branch raised up unto David; a King that reigns in righteousness, rules in the fear of God, has the grace of fear in him, as Mediator, and the spirit of the fear of the Lord upon him, and who rules the fear of God, (as it may be rendered:) that is, governs, orders and directs the whole worship of God, as he does under the gospel dispensation, having all power and authority, in heaven and in earth, given to him as Mediator: Whether, I say, we understand this, of the one or of the other, this must be said of each of them, He shall be as the light of the morning.

If we understand the above of an earthly ruler, then the sense is, that he shall be as welcome and grateful to his subjects, as the morning light. He shall be like the rising sun, illustrious and glorious; he shall be like the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain. The favor of an earthly prince, his good will, and goodness to his subjects, in the gentle and mild

administration of his government, is (as David's son, the wisest of men says) as a cloud of the latter rain, and as the dew upon the grass. But if we understand this of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, as we may most truly do; then these beautiful figures and metaphors may serve to set forth the glory of his person, and the riches of his grace; and particularly the benefits of his rule and government unto his subjects. Here are two sorts of figures or metaphors, made use of: very elegant, beautiful and apt ones. The first is, That he shall be as the light of the morning when the sun ariseth, even a morning without clouds. The second is, that he shall be as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain.

The first of these we have entered upon, namely that in which the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, is compared to the morning light when the sun arises; a morning without clouds. We proposed to consider this passage,

I. As it might respect the coming of Christ in the flesh and his appearance in our nature in this world.

II. As it might respect the discoveries of himself to his people in and after conversion. And

III. As it may respect his government as a Ruler over men, righteous ruling in the fear of God.

NOTE: Roman Numerals II and III (see above) continued from Sermon IV.

The first of these has been considered I shall now proceed,

II. To take notice of the discovery, or manifestation, Christ makes of himself to his people in conversion, in a spiritual manner; to which these figurative phrases are applicable; He shall be as the light of the morning when the sun riseth; even a morning without clouds.

As the morning light dissipates the darkness of the night, and introduces light into the hemisphere; so the first discovery of Christ unto his people, the revelation of him, in them as the hope of glory, dispels the darkness of their understandings: for the understanding of every man is darkened, yea, and darkness itself. This is the case of God's own people, in their natural state, with respect to divine and spiritual things; but when Christ is discovered and made known to them, then this darkness passes away, it goes off it is no more, comparatively; Christ's children are no longer the children of the night and of darkness, but the children of the day and of the light. Light is introduced into

them by Christ's appearing, in a spiritual manner, to their souls, by the everlasting gospel: and in this light, they see light. By and through the light of his Spirit shining into their hearts, they not only discern the exceeding sinfulness of sin, the just demerit of it, their want of righteousness, the insufficiency of their own, the glory and excellency of the righteousness of Christ, and the necessity of such a righteousness to appear in before the judgment seat of God: but through his divine light shining into them, they see the glory of Christ's person, the riches of his grace, the fulness and suitableness of his righteousness, and the completeness of his salvation. By the light of the divine word, which enters into them and gives light (for the entrance of thy word, says the Psalmist, giveth light, Ps. 119:130) they are led into the mysteries of divine grace, and into the wonders of divine love, to behold things which their eyes had never, no never seen before. This morning light, this spring of day to them, dispels there darkness and introduces light into their souls.

And this, often times, and generally speaking, is like the morning light, sudden and surprising. As that outward light which shone round Saul at his first conversion was, so that inward light which shines into the hearts of God's people at conversion, is sudden, marvelous and surprising to them. And as the morning light brings joy and cheerfulness with it, and makes the whole creation glad; so does spiritual light infused into the heart of a poor sinner. When Christ is first revealed to him, he is filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory; and no wonder, considering him as having a deep sense of sin, the guilt of it upon his conscience, and seeing no way of being delivered from it; at such a time to have Christ the Saviour revealed to him, his righteousness revealed from faith to faith to justify him, his blood to cleanse, his atoning sacrifice to expiate all sin; this must needs gladden his heart. And every new discovery and fresh revelation of him, has such an effect upon the hearts of God's people; and especially if he has been absent from them some time: as it is said of the disciples, when he had been a few days withdrawn from them, and came again, then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord (John 20:20).

Once more, as the morning light is of an increasing nature, when it breaks forth it spreads, and that irresistibly so is the revelation of Christ unto poor

sinners. At first, their sight of him is but glimmering and obscure; they see, as the poor man in the gospel did to whom Christ restored sight, men as trees walking; they see things in a confused manner: but when Christ had touched that man again, and bid him look up, he saw all things clearly. So it is with those to whom Christ reveals himself: though their first sight of him may be (lark and obscure, they by degrees obtain a clearer sight of his person, offices and grace. The Spirit of God afresh opens their understandings, increaseth their knowledge; and hereby their path is as the path of the just, which is as a shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day. Thus the light which is communicated in first conversion, as it grows and increases, is like the light of the morning when the sun rises; when the sun is risen in all its brightness; when there is a serene heaven and a clear sky: so it is with the Lord's people when the Sun of righteousness arises upon them, with healing in his wings, with applications of pardoning grace to their souls: when in his light they see light; for as in the light of the sun, we behold the sun, so they, in the light they receive from him, behold him, can claim him as their own, and say, this is my beloved, and this is my Friend (Sol. Song 5:16). I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine (Sol. Song 6:3). My Lord and my God (John 20:28). He loved me and gave himself for me (Gal.2:20). When this is the case, Christ is as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth: when they are enabled to say, "who shall separate us from Christ? and from the love of Christ? and from the love of God in Christ?" of which they have now no doubt. It is a morning without clouds.

Sometimes it is indeed with the Lord's people a dark and cloudy day; a day of thick darkness and gloominess: they know not where they are, or how things are with them; they are ready to call in

question every thing; and walk in darkness and see no light; but when this darkness is dissipated, through the rising of the Sun of righteousness upon them, then it is a morning without clouds. No darkness upon their minds, no doubts hang upon them, no fears about their eternal state, nothing intervenes between Christ and them, or hinders their sight of him; but they, with open face, behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, and are changed into the same image from glory to glory, by the Spirit of our God.

III. I shall proceed to the application of this metaphor and figure, to the government of Christ as a Ruler over men, just and righteous, ruling in the fear of God; especially with regard unto his rule and government, as it will be more visibly and gloriously exercised in his spiritual and personal reign. Let it be observed, that the times of reformation from popery, may, fitly enough, be called the light of the morning, with respect to Christ's kingdom. This is signified in that mysterious book, the Book of the Revelations, chapter 2:28, and I will give him (that is, him that overcometh) the morning star. Now that is said after the Thyatirian church state; which is a representation of the Church of God in the times of popish darkness. The Lord promises to give the morning star: that is, the morning star of the reformation, the phosphorus, the forerunner or introducer of the light of his glorious kingdom here upon earth. And a wonderful spread of light there was at that time: which like the light of the morning, increased in every place in the Western parts of the world. This brought on the Sardian church state; in which I apprehend, we now are, and perhaps towards the close of it. The character of that state agrees with ours, that we have a name to live and are dead (Rev. 3:1): and yet there are some few names in this our Sardis that have not defiled their garments with bad principles or bad practices. The present state of the church, with respect to light, seems to be well expressed in the prophecy of Zechariah, where it is said, in that day the light shall not be clear nor dark; but it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day nor night: but it shall come to pass that at even time it shall be light (Zech. 14:7). It is so With us with respect to our light in general; it is neither night nor day, clear nor dark. It is not day, as in the times of the apostles, and it is not so dark as it was in the times of popery; but it is a sort of twilight we are in; and though it might be feared, from the growing darkness upon us, that it will issue in an evening twilight, yet it will turn out otherwise: at even time, or when we shall be reckoning the shadows of evening are coming upon us, it will be light, it will turn out a morning twilight. So stands the kingdom of Christ with respect to us; I apprehend the sun is not risen, with that splendor in which it will appear, in the spiritual and personal reign of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the spiritual reign of Christ, there will be such an illustrious appearance of him, that he shall

destroy antichrist with the breath of his mouth and the brightness of his coming; and more especially in his personal reign, when he himself shall descend in person, and the dead in Christ shall be raised first; when his tabernacle shall be among men, and he will dwell among them, and be the light of the new Jerusalem. Now these states of Christ's kingdom will be attended with great light and great joy: both of which attend the rising of the sun.—Light. In the spiritual reign of Christ there will be a great deal of light. Many shall run to and fro; and spiritual knowledge will be increased every where. Then as the waters cover the sea, the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. Light shall break forth abundantly among all ranks of men in the churches of Christ: the watchmen will see eye to eye, the ministers of the gospel, and private Christians also, will agree in their sentiments about gospel doctrines and gospel ordinances. Yea, the light of that state is said to be as the light of the moon, and the light of the moon as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be seven-fold as the light of seven days (Isa. 30:26). So great will be the light of that dispensation, that it may truly be said to be as the light of the morning, even a morning without clouds. And especially in the personal reign of Christ, when the sun shall no more go down by day, nor the moon by night; when the Lamb shall be the light of the New Jerusalem, and there will no more darkness in any sense: but an everlasting day.

And both these states in which the kingdom of Christ shall appear, will be attended with a great deal of joy. When this righteous one, ruling in the fear of God, shall take to himself his great power, and reign in the spiritual state, the four and twenty elders round the Throne will cast their crowns at his feet and say, "We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come: because thou hast taken to thee thy great power and hast reigned." And when he will reign personally, then those that have gotten the victory over the beast, and stand upon a sea of glass with harps in their hands, will sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb, saying, "great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints; who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name?" The apostles, prophets, and all the people of God will join in one general thanksgiving, one song of praise, to him who hath avenged their blood upon antichrist. Innumerable

voices will be heard in the church, saying, "salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, be unto the Lord our God, for true and righteous are his judgments. Amen, Hallelujah." And again they will say, "let us be glad and rejoice and give honour to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready."

So then, this morning light, when the sun riseth, this morning without clouds, may very aptly represent the state of the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ as a Ruler among men, righteous, ruling in the fear of God.

But I proceed now to take some notice of the Second figure here made use of. He shall be as the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain; which may be applied to Christ himself, and to the influences and benefits his people receive from his government.

The figure may be applied to Christ himself. He shall be as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain: so it may point out unto us the nature of Christ as man: his original and descent, springing out of the earth; and the moving, producing cause thereof, the love and favour of God: and the whole may be expressive of his acceptableness and loveliness to his people; which seems to be greatly the design of this figure.

1. It may be considered as pointing out his nature as man. He sprung out of the earth. He is called the fruit of the earth (Isa. 4:2); An handful of corn upon the top of the mountains, which is part of the fruit of the earth (Ps. 72:16); a branch out of root of Jesse (Isa. 50); a tender plant growing up before the Lord (Isa. 53:2), and our text says, He shall be as the tender grass. Now though this may convey an idea of weakness and infirmity in Christ as man, and which is just; yet there is something more intended. The tenderness and verdure of the grass, and the flourishing circumstances in which it is in the morning (Ps. 90:6), may lead us to observe, that great grace that appeared upon Christ in his human nature, even in the morning of his infancy, of whom it is said, that he waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him (Luke 2:40). Great grace was upon him then: he increased in wisdom, and in favour with God and man. Yea, the Spirit of grace, or the grace of the Spirit was bestowed upon him without measure.

This simile of grass, is sometimes made use of in

Scripture to express a multitude. The spires of grass are innumerable. Now, though Christ's person is but one; yet he has two natures, human and divine, united in that one person. He is the head of the body, the church, which consists of a variety of members; and he has a spiritual offspring, which are numerous, even as the sand of the sea; a number which no man can number, out of every kindred, tongue, people, and nation. But I said the metaphor conveyed an idea of weakness and infirmity; and so it leads us to consider the weakness of Christ in human nature. He had all the sinless infirmities of that nature; he was, encompassed with infirmity; and was in the esteem of men, a worm, and no man; treated as the most contemptible creature: yea, the apostle says, he was crucified through weakness (2 Cor. 13:4). And, as the tender grass is liable to be trodden under foot, and to be cut down; so he, in human nature, was trodden under foot by those strong bulls of Bashan, which compassed him about (Ps. 22:12); by whom are meant the rulers of the Jews, both ecclesiastical and civil, as well as Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, and his soldiers. He was borne down under their calumnies, their cruel scourgings; and at last brought to the dust of death: for this tender plant was not only bruised for our iniquities; but cut down as the grass of the field, and that for our sins and transgressions.

But he arose again as grass after it is cut down; and therefore the resurrection of the dead, and even of Christ himself, is signified thereby; as in Isaiah 26:19, Thy dead men shalt live, together with my dead body shall they arise: awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead, just as it casts out its herbs and plants, under the influence of rain and dew. So Christ, though he was crucified through weakness, lives by the power of God: and though he was put to death in the flesh, was quickened in the Spirit; and though he was dead, is now a live, and lives for evermore.

2. The original of Christ, in his human nature, is here expressed by the tender grass springing out of the earth. It is true, indeed, he is said to be the Lord from heaven (1 Cor. 15:47). He is the Lord: he is Jehovah; and he is from heaven, which is the seat of his habitation and glory; from thence he came, (not by change of place, but by assumption of nature) into our world: therefore is said to come down from heaven, to do the will of his Father, which is in heaven: and

because of the glory and excellency of his person, he is said to be above all. But as to his original as man, he is of the earth. He did not descend from heaven, bringing his human nature with him, as he will do when he appears a second time, without sin, unto salvation, he took human nature from the earth; that is, he took it of an earthly woman: He was made of a woman (Gal. 4:4). The human nature of Christ was made in secret, in the lowest parts of the earth, and from thence it sprang; which probably is the meaning of that expression, Psalm 85:11, , truth shall spring out of the earth: that is, he who is the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6). The truth of all promises, prophecies, types, and figures: the true tabernacle which God pitched, and not man, that sprung out of the earth.

And this may also denote, the meanness of our Lord's descent as man. He sprung out of the earth; out of Jesse's family, when that was, as it were, cut down to the roots so he is said to be a root springing up out of a dry ground (Isa. 53:2). His supposed father a carpenter, his mother a poor virgin in Israel; which was what disgusted the Jews. Is not (say they) this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? Poor Mary in such a place? Are not his brethren and sisters all with us? Do not we know them; what a mean company they are? what poor people they be? and therefore they treated him with the utmost contempt.

3. The moving, producing cause of this tender grass springing out of the earth, is ascribed to clear shining after rain. As grass springs up apace, and revives much after a shower of rain, and the clear shining of the sun upon it; so our Lord is represented as growing up in like manner.

By this clear shining after rain, we may understand the love and favour of God; whose favour is light: and when it is manifested, the people of God have light and joy in their souls. Nothing is more desirable to them, than to have the light of that morning, and to walk in that light. So the good-will and favour of God may be compared to rain; for if the favour of an earthly prince, may be said to be as the latter rain, and as the dew upon the grass much more the favour of the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

Now our Lord's springing up as the tender grass, or his appearance, as man, is owing to the love and favour of God. Zechariah, the father of the forerunner of our Lord, John the Baptist, in his song, says, that it is

through the tender mercy of our God, the day-spring from on high hath visited us (Luke 1:78). That is, the Messiah, the Sun of Righteousness, which made the glorious day of the gospel: his rising and appearance he ascribes to the free grace and mercy of God. And to this also the angels ascribe the incarnation of our Lord: his coming in the flesh; his springing up as the tender grass out of the earth. They unitedly sing this song, Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace, good-will toward men (Luke 2:14). Yea, our Lord himself ascribes his mission, primarily, to the love of God. 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 3:16). And, indeed, there is no one instance in which the favour, good-will, and loving-kindness of God are so displayed, as in the mission and gift of Christ. The apostle says, that God hath shewn forth the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us, through Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:7): that is, in his kindness in sending and giving Christ to us, and for us. He observes, that not only the kindness and goodness of God are here expressed, but the riches thereof; yea, the exceeding riches of his grace. The Lord, in order to shew his love to Israel, says, since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable; and I have loved thee: therefore, will I give men for thee, and people for thy life (Isa. 43:4). This was doing a great deal; but is nothing, no nothing at all, in comparison of his giving his Son to, and for his people. He gave his own Son, his only begotten Son; and when it is considered for what purpose he was given, may we not say with the apostle, Herein is love! herein is love amassed together: herein is love, here it centers; herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins (1 John 4:10). For God to send his Son to be the propitiatory sacrifice; that this should be his love, and favour, and good-will towards us, to make the soul of his Son an offering for sin; that he should part with him; give him up for us all: herein has he manifested his love in the highest degree. That while we were yet sinners Christ should die for us: O wonderful love! This is the clear shining after rain, to which is owing the descent of our Lord; and his springing up in the world to save poor, lost sinners.

4. This metaphor leads us to view the loveliness of Christ. As the grass looks exceeding gay and cheerful,

comely and beautiful, after a shower of rain, when the sun shines upon it; so amiable does our Lord appear to his people. This fruit of the earth, is said to be comely and excellent (Isa. 4:2): comely and excellent to his saints; to those who have any spiritual sight of him, he is the chiefest among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. This fruit of the earth is also said to be glorious (Isa. 4:2); which may denote the glory of his divine person, as the Son of God; who is the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person. His glory, as Mediator, full of grace and truth: the glorious man, adorned with all the gifts and graces of the Spirit of God. His glory after his resurrection from the dead. The glory even of his body; according to which the bodies of the saints at the resurrection morn will be fashioned, His glory at the Father's right hand, as sat down with him upon his throne; angels, principalities, and powers, being made subject unto him (1 Pet. 3:22). And especially in his government; both in his spiritual and personal reign. O how lovely wilt he appear then; when he, and he alone shall be exalted, and reign before his ancients gloriously. Thus this figure and metaphor may be applied to our Lord Jesus Christ,

I thought to have said a few things to show how this may be applied to the influences and benefits his people receive from him, under his government: and then the sense is this; "He shall cause his people, who are like grass springing out of the earth, to be like that, as it appears after clear shining after rain." Or, he shall be to them, who are compared to grass springing out of the earth, more than rain; for so the words may be rendered. That is, he is more to them than rain, and the clear shining after it; but I cannot now enlarge on this subject. To conclude,

Let us learn to bless the Lord for what Christ is already unto us, If he is unto us as the light of the morning, a morning without clouds; if his light has shone into our hearts, and we have had a discernment of spiritual things; let us bless God for this light, and say, as the Psalmist did, Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name: bless the Lord, O my soul; and forget not all his benefits (Ps. 103:1, &c.) And again, blessed be the Lord, who hath shewn us light (Ps. 118:27). Spiritual light, caused light to shine into our dark hearts, and gave us the light of the knowledge of the glory of himself, in the face of Jesus Christ. Let it be our great concern,

therefore, to shew forth the praises of him, who has called us out of darkness, into his marvelous light: and to walk as children of the light, and of the day; putting off the works of darkness, and putting on the whole armor of light: putting on Christ Jesus; and making no provision for the flesh, to obey it in the lust thereof.

And this may lead us to look for what will be hereafter, when Christ will come down, like the rain upon the new mown grass, and like showers of rain to water the earth; to those days, when the righteous shall flourish, and there will be abundance of peace, as long as the sun and moon endureth.

23 THE INFINITE CONDESCENSION OF JEHOVAH, MANIFESTED IN DWELLING ON THE EARTH

1 Kings 8:27.

But will God indeed dwell on the Earth?

Solomon, having finished the building of the temple, and placed all the vessels thereof in their proper situation, the Lord took up his residence therein; which was signified by the cloud filling the temple, a symbol of the glorious presence of God; and Solomon observes upon it, the Lord hath said, that he would dwell in the thick darkness.

Solomon and the people of Israel, being gathered together for the dedication of the house of the Lord, he begins it with blessing the people; congratulating them upon the building of the temple; wishing them all happiness in such an enjoyment; and praying for them, that they might have the presence of God therein. He informs them that David, his father, had it first in his heart to build this house, which was acceptable to the Lord; but for some reasons, he was not suffered to do it. It was the pleasure of God, that he, Solomon, his son, should do it; which was accordingly performed. Then he spread forth his hands in prayer unto God, and addressed him as the One only living God, and said, Lord God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath; who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart. He addressed him as the only living and true God; none like him, or besides him. None to be compared with him for his nature, and the perfections of it: for the works of his hands, and the blessings of his goodness. He addresses him as a covenant-keeping God, and as a merciful God; as he had proclaimed himself long before. He takes notice

of the promises he had made; of one he had already fulfilled, as to the building of the temple; and he makes mention of another, concerning a succession of the kings of Israel in the house of David; and doubted not of the performance of it, since God was faithful that had promised. Then, in the words I have read, expresses his admiration, that God should dwell upon earth, Will God indeed dwell on the earth? Is it fact? Will he truly and really dwell on the earth? Is there no doubt to be made of it? May it be credited? Is it not a thing almost incredible? at least, how wonderful and amazing is it, that he should dwell upon the earth! for we are not to understand these words as expressive of any diffidence, hesitation, or doubt in Solomon concerning it; but as expressive of admiration; Will God indeed dwell on the earth! Will he, who dwells on high, and who humbles himself to look upon things in heaven and upon the earth; will he deign to dwell with men upon earth! It is amazing that he should; considering his immensity, for he adds, Behold, the heaven, and the heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee! He is that God, who fills heaven and earth with his presence; and is not circumscribed in place, or by space: no; he is the immense and infinite Being. As he is not bounded by time, so neither by space; and how much less, says Solomon, in this house that I have built. This, magnificent as it was; this, though very spacious and probably more grand than any building in the known world, before or since; yet even this could not contain the Most High, who dwells not in temples made with hands; that is, in such sense as to be circumscribed by them.

God is an immense Being: he is every where: in heaven, earth, and hell. There is no fleeing from his presence: let a person be where he will, in any part of the universe, he is not out of the reach of God, or at a distance from him. If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there; if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. (Ps. 139:8-10) 3God is every where, by his power; upholding and maintaining the works of his hands. He is every where, by his providence; taking care of; and governing all his creatures. He is every where, by his Omniscience; for it reaches to all places and things. The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good and more especially, his eyes run to and fro throughout

the whole earth; the various parts of the globe, where his people are, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose hearts are perfect towards him. He is every where; yet heaven is more especially the place of his residence; or where he displays his glory, and makes it the most manifest; hence it is called his habitation, Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness (Isa. 63:15). The Lord dwelleth in his temple, and his throne is in the heavens: yea, heaven itself is his throne, on which he sits. There is his palace, there he keeps his court; there are his attendants, his ministering servants wait upon him: his angels are all around him; they behold the face of our Father, which is in heaven, and therefore are styled the angels of heaven. It is therefore amazing, that this God, who is immense, and whose glorious presence is more especially in heaven should dwell upon earth. Will God indeed dwell upon the earth? He hath formed the earth to be inhabited (Isa. 45:18); but by whom? not only by the beasts of the field, but more especially by man, the chief of the lower creation; yet, surely, not for himself. He hath made both the heavens and the earth; but the former he hath retained for his own dwelling place, and the latter he hath allotted to the sons of men. The heaven, even the heavens are the Lord's; but the earth hath he given to the children of men (Ps. 115:16). It is, therefore, wonderful that he should dwell upon the earth, which he hath given to the children of men, to be inhabited by them; and the rather, since the earth is his footstool. The heaven is his throne, on which he sits: and the earth is his footstool. It is not usual for kings and great princes of the earth, to sit upon their footstool; well, therefore, may the question be put in the manner it is, Will God indeed dwell upon the earth? and especially, upon earth, in its present situation; and as it has been ever since the fall of Adam? By sin the earth is defiled and corrupted, is nigh unto cursing, and its end is to be burned. Will God indeed dwell on such an earth as this? It was defiled by the sin of man; it was cursed for his sake; Cursed is the ground for thy sake (says the Lord to Adam); thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth (Gen. 3:17, 18). It was more and more defiled and corrupted by the sins of men in after times; as by those of the men of the old world. The whole earth was corrupted, and filled with violence; for all men had corrupted their way in times of Noah; for which reason a flood was brought upon the earth. In after

times corruption increased; and indeed in all periods of time, there has been abounding of sin, whereby the land mourns; because of cursing, swearing, lying, shedding of blood, and the like. The earth, therefore, is reserved to fire, against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men (2 Pet. 3:7). Will God indeed dwell on such an earth as this? how amazing it is!

Will he dwell with the inhabitants of such an earth as this? It was his pleasure, and has been his condescension at one period of time, and another, to look down upon the earth, to see if there were any that did understand what was good, if there were any that followed it: and the result of such a survey, has been this: There is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh after God; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Now is it not amazing that a God of purity should dwell on earth with such persons as these? It is marvelous condescension in him to look upon things in heaven and in earth. It is a wonderful instance of his goodness, that he should regard sinful man in a providential way: What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? (Ps. 8:4). Visitest him in a providential way. How much more astonishing is it, that God should dwell with men, in a spiritual way and manner! that God, who inhabiteth eternity, who dwells in the high and holy place, and whose name is holy; should dwell also with such who are of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. These words may be referred either,

I. To the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ; his tabernacling in human nature, upon this our earth; in order to work out the salvation of his people. This is a most amazing instance of his condescension; and with respect to which, such words as these may well be used. Very probable it is, that Solomon had a view unto it; since the temple that he built was a type of the human nature of Jesus Christ.

II. They may be referred also to God's dwelling among his people; or his divine presence in the churches of Christ; which is also an instance of amazing grace; and with regard to which, such words may well be used, Will God indeed dwell with men upon earth?

I. This passage may very well be referred to the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ; his dwelling upon earth among men, in order to work out their

salvation: "Will God indeed dwell upon earth?" God. Our Lord Jesus Christ is truly God: he was to dwell, and he has dwelt upon earth; but it is marvelous, it is astonishing indeed!

1. He is God: yet he tabernacled in our nature. He is the Word, that was with God, and was God. This may have respect unto that event, when the Word was made flesh, and dwelt, or tabernacled, among us (John 1:14): in allusion to the tabernacle of Moses, which was a type of Christ's human nature. His human nature is the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man (Heb. 8:2). So the temple of Solomon, built in some respects after the model of the tabernacle, was a type of Christ's human nature. Destroy (says our Lord) this temple (meaning his body), and in three days I will raise it up. It was the Word of God that became incarnate and dwelt among men, in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the word was God (John 1:1); truly and properly God. The true God; for says the apostle John, We know that the Son of God is come; that is, come into the world in our nature; and we have understanding of him, that he is the true God, and, eternal life (1 John 5:20): the author and giver of eternal life; having obtained it through his obedience and death. He is the great God, as he must needs be; since he hath obtained eternal redemption for us. "Looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Savior Jesus Christ." He has all the perfections of the Godhead in him. All the Father hath, he has; so that he that sees the one, sees the other; Christ being the express image of his Person, thought it not robbery to be equal with him; the fulness of the Godhead dwelling bodily in him. All this could not be said with any propriety, had he not been truly and properly God.

He is the Maker of all things. By the Word that was made flesh, all things were made, and without him was not any thing made, that was made (John 1:1, 2, 3). All things were created by him, whether visible or invisible; thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers. He hath laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of his hands. He is over all, God blessed for evermore (Rom. 9:5). He is high above all nations, and great above all creatures: he has obtained a more excellent name than they, being of a more excellent nature: for to which of the angels did he ever say, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?" All the Angels of God are called upon

to worship him (Heb. 1:6); and for very good reason, because they are all his creatures. All men, good and bad men, are subject unto him: he dwells, and ever did, in the highest heavens. In the sixty eighth Psalm, which is a Psalm concerning Christ, it is said of him, that he rideth upon the heavens by his name Jah; therefore he is called the Lord from heaven. He is said to come down from heaven, to do the will of his Father; and is said to be in heaven, whilst he was here upon earth (John 3:13).

Now it is amazing, that this great, glorious, and illustrious person should dwell upon earth. Will God indeed dwell upon earth? God, the Word, the Maker of all things, who is over all, God blessed for evermore, who dwells in the highest heavens; and will he dwell on the earth? Verily he will: and most certainly he has dwelt upon the earth. It was proposed to him in the ancient council and covenant of peace, that he should assume our nature, and dwell upon earth with mortal men: he agreed to it, and said, Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me; I delight to do thy will, O my God (Ps. 60:7), I come in human nature: I come into the world, and among men; I delight to do thy will; that is, to obtain redemption for lost sinners. This was proposed; and to this he agreed; thenceforward he is represented as rejoicing in the habitable parts of this earth; in that part of the world, where he himself had agreed to dwell; and upon those spots of ground, where he knew those people would dwell for whom he became a surety and, a Saviour. His delights were with the sons of men: and we have various instances of his appearing on earth, long before he dwelt upon it. He appeared in Eden's garden immediately after the fall of our first parents. "They heard the voice of the Lord, God: or as the ancient Jewish paraphrase has it, "They heard the voice of the Word of the Lord their God:" of that eternal Logos, that Word which was in the beginning with God, was God (John 1:1); and was to dwell with man upon earth.

He appeared to Abraham in the plains of Mamre, and gave him, not only an assurance that he should have a son born to him at such a time: but predicted the immediate destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. He appeared in the form of a man to Jacob, wrestling with him till the break of day. Under the emblem of flaming fire, he appeared to Moses in the bush, and sent him to be the deliverer of Israel. He appeared to Manoah and his wife, declaring his name to be

secret, or wonderful; and so to many others. Now those appearances of his, were presages that he would dwell upon earth: they were pledges and earnest, assuring the saints, that thus it would be; they seemed to indicate a kind of delight and pleasure the Son of God had in this, as it were desirous of the time when he should tabernacle among men.

Besides these appearances, which gave hints of what would be, there were certain prophecies concerning it. The first prophecy and promise was that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head (Gen. 3:15). Eve, perhaps, had reference to this, when she said, upon the birth of her first born, I have gotten a man from the Lord (Gen. 6:1): or, as it may be rendered, I have gotten the man the Lord: which many Jewish interpreters understand of the Messiah; imagining (though she was mistaken), that she had got the man, the Lord Messiah. However, it is certain that in the time of Job there were assurances of this. Job expresses his full assurance of it: I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth (Job 9:1). So various other prophecies indicate the same, and point out even the very land in which the Messiah should dwell. Salvation is nigh them that fear him, that glory may dwell in our land (Ps. 85:9); that is, the glorious person promised to be the Saviour, who would work out the salvation of his people, and who is the brightness of the Father's glory, is coming to dwell in this our land, the land of Canaan. For which reason it is sometimes called Immanuel's land (Isa. 8:8); because he was to be born, dwell and suffer in that land. Sometimes particular parts of that land are pointed out; as Galilee and the parts adjacent (Isa. 9:1): yea, the mount of Olives is said to be a place whereon his feet should stand (Zech. 14:4); and it is well known, from the Evangelical history, that he was frequently upon that mount in prayer; and it was from that mount he ascended to heaven.

In the fulness of time, according to all these hints and predictions, he came into this world; was made flesh, and dwelt among us. He came, not by any change of place, for that is impossible: but by taking to his divine person, the human nature. For we are not to entertain such gross sentiments of him, as though, when he became incarnate, he moved from place to place, from heaven to earth; for even when he had assumed our nature and dwelt among us, he was in the bosom of the Father: the only begotten Son, which is (it is not

said, which was in the bosom of the Father, and is now come from thence; but which is) in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him (John 1:18). Now it was, that he tabernacled in the flesh, as before observed. And among sinful men chiefly did he dwell when here upon earth; which gave umbrage to the scribes and pharisees, those self justiciaries, who could not brook that one who set up for a prophet, and appeared to be a holy man, should have conversation with profane sinners. It is said of him, by way of reproach, this man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them (Luke 15:2). Hence the objection made by the scribes and pharisees: Why eateth your master with publicans and sinners? (Matthew 9:11), which being reported to him, he made this reply; They that be whole, need not a physician, but they that are sick (Matthew 9:12). Signifying, that these proud pharisees were whole, in their own esteem; and so stood in no need of him as a physician. But there were others that were sick; distressed persons, that were brought to a sense of themselves. To them he was a physician; and thus he vindicates his character. As if he should say, I am a physician, and I act in character. I have nothing to do with those that are whole: my business lies with those that are affected with soul maladies, and are sensible of them. With whom should I be, as a physician, but with them? But after all he could not shelter himself from their opprobrious language, calling him a friend of publicans and sinners.

The persons whom he conversed with upon earth were sinful men. Upon earth he was some time. He was not (as in his former appearances, under the Old Testament dispensation) here for a few minutes, or hours at most; but he dwelt among men. He was not as a way-faring man, that continues only for a night; but dwelt many years among men upon earth. We read of him at different periods of his life. When he was about two years old, as we may suppose, that shocking massacre was made by Herod, of infants of two years old and under. Supposing him to be about that age, he ordered the infants of that age to be slain. We hear of him at twelve years of age, when he went with his parents to Jerusalem to keep the Passover; and was found among the Doctors in the temple.

We hear of him again when he was about thirty years of age, when he came from Galilee to John, to be baptized of him. How long he lived after cannot be said with any exactness; but at least he must abide

upon earth four or five years more, since we read of four Passovers that passed between the time of his baptism and his death. When he had done the work he came about, which was the salvation of his people, then his life was taken away, and he was received up into heaven, by his divine Father, in the sight of his apostles. There Stephen saw him sitting [standing] at the right hand of God (Acts 7:56); and every believer, by faith, beholds him crowned with honour and glory, at the right hand of the Majesty on high. There he must be till the time of the restitution of all things; and then he will come again, according to his promise. We expect Jesus our Saviour from heaven, and he will most certainly come. To them that look for him, he will appear the second time, without sin unto salvation. When this earth has been refined and purified by fire, he will descend, and the tabernacle of God shall be with men, and he will dwell among them.

But is it not amazing that the Son of God, the Word of God, he who is truly God, should dwell upon earth, as he did at his first coming? to which this passage chiefly refers; that he should dwell upon earth, who says, "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was! When there were no depths, I was brought forth: when there were no fountains abounding with water; before the mountains were settled; before the hills, was I brought forth: while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest parts of the dust of the world, then I was by him" (Prov.8:23-30). That he who was before the earth existed, should dwell upon this earth, how astonishing! He must have a place of residence before, and where was he? it may be answered, He was with God. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God (John 1:1): with his divine Father; in his bosom, as it is elsewhere said (John 1:18). Yet in the fulness of time, he came forth from the Father, and came into this world. Is it not amazing that he should dwell upon earth, by whom the earth was made? He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not (John 1:10); even the same glorious person that was made flesh and dwelt among us, with whom, and in comparison of whom, the whole earth, and all its inhabitants, are as nothing, less than nothing, and vanity. He sits upon the circle of the earth, and all the inhabitants of it are as grasshoppers before him; yet such has been his condescension and goodness as to dwell with men upon earth. He who

is the great God has been manifest in the flesh. He who is the mighty God, the everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace, has been the child born and the Son given (Isa. 9:6). He who thought it no robbery to be equal with God, has been found in fashion as a man, and in the form of a servant, walking up and down upon this earth of ours. How astonishing is this! Will God indeed dwell on earth? So it was to be; so it has been. And the wonder is the greater, when we consider what it was he came into this world to do! It was, not merely to instruct men in divine and spiritual things. He was indeed a teacher sent of God, as Nicodemus justly observes (John 3:2). He taught the way of God in truth, plainly and perfectly. Never man spake like him. He spoke as one having authority, and not as the scribes and pharisees. He was sent to preach the Gospel to various cities; for which he was abundantly qualified, being anointed with the Spirit of God, without measure, to preach glad tidings to the meek.

He went about throughout Judea and Galilee, preaching the gospel of God; but this was far from being the principal thing for which he came and dwelt upon our earth: it was to work out the salvation of his people. He came, as he himself says, to seek and save that which was lost (Luke 19:10): lost men, lost in Adam: so lost that they could never find the way to heaven. He came to save sinners, even the worst and chief of sinners. This is the glory of the gospel, the fulness, the marrow of it: This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am the chief (2 Tim. 1:15). He became our God, our near kinsman, and dwelt among us, in order to redeem us from sin, from Satan, and from the curse of the law: this was his errand into the world. In order to this, he spent his life, attended with the greatest poverty and meanness, difficulties and sorrows, which issued in death itself. He spent his life upon earth in much poverty and meanness, being born of poor parents, brought up in a mean manner: when arrived at man's estate, and entered on his public ministry, he had not where to lay his head; as he himself expresses it (Matthew 8:20). He was, in a sort, beholden to others for his support, though Lord of all. How amazing is this! yet so it was: for he came not to be ministered unto, to be served in state, as princes are; but to be a servant to others. He spent his life upon earth, attended not only with

meanness, but with great affliction; for he was a man of sorrow, from his cradle to his cross. Many were the troubles he met with from the temptations of Satan, from his own disciples, and still more from the Jews: according to that prediction, Who shall declare his generation? (Isa. 53:8); or the men of that generation in which he lived; their barbarous and ill usage of the Messiah, which issued in the shameful and painful death of the cross. All this he underwent to work out our salvation. How amazing is this! Will God indeed, the God of heaven and earth, God over all, blessed for ever, dwell upon earth? and for such a purpose?

II. This may also be referred to God's dwelling among his people, or his divine presence in the churches of Christ.

Our Lord Jesus Christ says, of them that love him, and keep his commandments (by which they shew that they love him), that his Father will love them, as well as he, and adds, We will come unto them, and we will make our abode with them (John 14:23). More than one divine person must be here intended; for our Lord says, We will make our abode with them. The Father comes and makes his abode with his people, in a spiritual sense, as he promises; "I will dwell in them, and walk in them" (2 Cor. 6:16). Who says this? God: he that says, He will be their Father, and they shall be his sons and daughters.

The Spirit of the Lord dwells in the saints on earth, Ye are the temple of God, says the apostle (1 Cor. 3:16); and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. This distinguishes the regenerate from the unregenerate man; ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you (Rom. 8:9).

The Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, dwells in the saints, in their hearts by faith (Eph. 3:17). Whoever believes in Christ, eats his flesh, and drinks blood; dwells in Christ, and Christ in him (John 6:56). He dwells in all his churches, as in his proper house; according to that saying, Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope, firm unto the end (Heb. 3:6). He dwells among them as his family, and provides for them food, raiment, and every thing they stand in need of; or that is for their spiritual pleasure and delight. He dwells among them, as in his palace; they being the city of the great king. He dwells among them as in his kingdom: for a gospel church state is called the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 25:1); where Christ is acknowledged as

king by his saints; and where he reigns as king; and his dominion is, for ever and ever. Here he dwells, and here he will dwell for evermore; for he has promised to be with his churches and ministers to the end of the world.

But particularly, he dwells in the hearts of true believers; dwells with them upon earth: not in such a general way as he may be said to dwell with all men; in as much as all live, move, and have their being in him: nor in so special a sense, as the divine Logos, or Word, dwells hypostatically in the human nature: nor yet in so sublime a sense, as he is in the Father, and the Father in him; but he lives in them, as the author of life; and he dwells in them in order to revive them, to revive the spirit of the humble. He dwells in their hearts, not merely in their heads, as in some: dwells not upon their tongues, as in them who profess to know him, and do not, experimentally; but he dwells in their hearts, these everlasting doors being thrown open by his grace: there he sets up his throne, and reigns through righteousness, unto eternal life. He dwells (and O, how astonishing is it!) where sin dwells; for sin dwells in the saints. Christ dwells where no good thing dwells but himself; for in us, that is, in our flesh, dwelleth no good thing (Rom. 7:18). What good thing there is in his people, is put there by himself. He dwells (and how astonishing is it!) where he is often slighted; as he was by the church when he stood at her door and knocked; and desired she would open to him, when she said; I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them? (Sol. Song 5:3). He dwells, I say, where he is often slighted, where he is provoked, where his Holy Spirit is grieved, where he is rebelled against; which sometimes occasion him to withdraw his comfortable presence.

This is expressive of union between him and his people, who are members of his body, and one spirit with him. It is also expressive of communion with him; fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And this communion they may expect to experience in the use of means; for where the shepherds pitch their tents, or where the word is preached, and the ordinances administered, there he is. He is held in these galleries, and here believers behold him in his beauty. Where he records his name he comes and blesses; and where two or three are met together in his name, there he is in the midst of them.

He dwells with his people for ever more; for though they may be at a loss for his sensible presence, at times, and inquire where he is; yet he is not really withdrawn from them. He dwells with them still; as with Mary, when she said, they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. Christ was at that time just at her elbow, but she knew him not. Christ never leaves nor forsakes his people: he dwells in them and they in him.

But I shall now come to a close. How astonishing, then, are the grace and condescension of our Lord Jesus Christ, in dwelling among men upon earth! You that know Christ, and have believed in him, know this to be true. Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.

If you enjoy spiritual communion with him, and know the sensible inhabitation of him in your hearts by faith, make use of those means which he has directed unto, an attendance upon his word and ordinances: for our Lord hath assured those that love him and keep his commandments; that is, observe his word and ordinances, from a principle of love to him, that he will come unto them, and make his abode with them.

24 THE CHARACTERS OF A RULER OVER MEN: JUST, RULING IN THE FEAR OF GOD; FOUND WITH CHRIST.

2 Samuel 23:3

He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.

These words may be considered as a declaration of what ought to be in every one that bears the character of a Ruler over men. He ought to consider, that he is a ruler of men, and not of brutes that he should be just; just to men in protecting their persons and property, and in administering justice and judgment unto them; that he should act as in the sight of God, as having the fear of God before his eyes, and do those things which are agreeable to him. Or they may be considered as a prophecy of what would be: that that there should, in after times, arise a Ruler over men, that would be just and righteous, ruling in the fear of God. I say, it may be considered as a declaration, under divine inspiration, of what ought to be found in every one that beareth so high a character among men, as to be a ruler over them. I repeat it again, such an one

should consider, that he is appointed a ruler of men, not of brutes; and therefore ought to treat his subjects as rational creatures, and rule over them in a humane, kind and gentle manner; and not as tyrannical princes and governors do.

The Lord, by the prophet Ezekiel, complains of some that go by the name of Shepherds in Israel (which not only intends ecclesiastical, but civil rulers), that they ruled with force and cruelty, though the people they ruled over were the flock of the Lord; concerning whom he says, Ye my flock, the flock of my pasture, are men, and I am your God, saith the Lord God (Ezek. 34:31). Persons that rule over men in such a tyrannical manner, disgrace human nature, and degrade themselves from the character of men, to that of beasts and therefore such are compared in Scripture to them. The four monarchies, and the heads of them, in Daniel are said to be four beasts that arose out of the sea (Dan. 7:3). They are compared to those wild creatures that are the most fierce, cruel and savage: As a roaring lion and a raging bear, so is a wicked ruler over the poor people (Prov. 28:15).

One that, rules over men, ought to be just and righteous in the administrations of his civil government. David delivers this as a precept under divine inspiration, commanding and obliging such persons so to be: and he confirmed and established it by his own example, who was a just ruler over men. "He ruled over all Israel, and executed justice and judgment among them:" this is the testimony bore of him in 2 Samuel 8:15. There was nothing more desirable to him than that the same administration should be continued in his successors, particularly in Solomon his immediate successor. Psalm 72, which was a psalm wrote for Solomon, begins thus, Give the King thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the King's son: that is, may he be directed, assisted and enabled to execute justice, judgment and righteousness among his subjects. This is requisite in every ruler of men whatever, wherever he is, or over whomsoever he is a ruler; for the king's throne is established by righteousness: that is the surest basis, the best security and strength of his throne and government.

A ruler of men ought also to rule in the fear of the Lord: and the rather as he is to consider that he is the Lord's vicegerent; that he stands in his room and stead; personates and represents Him; acts in his name; is

accountable to him for what he does; and still more, as he, whom he represents, and under whom he acts, is able to set up and put down at his pleasure. Then may a ruler over men be said to rule in the fear of God, when he rules as under the eye of the omniscient God whom he represents and according to the law's of God: and when he is an encourager of every thing good and virtuous, and a discourager of every evil; a terror to evil doers, and a praise to them that do well; when he makes use of his power and authority, to promote and protect the interest, of God and of religion among his subjects; when he not only tolerates, but encourages, those that fear the Lord, to serve and worship Him according to his revealed will: then, may such a ruler, he, or she, be said to be a nursing father or a nursing mother to God's Israel.

But the words may be considered as a Prophecy of some certain person that should arise; to whom these characters altogether agree. A ruler over men should be righteous, ruling in the fear of God (the words will bear to be rendered, There shall be, &c.) and the rather, this may be supposed to be the sense, because the last words of David, of which these are a part, were spoken under a spirit of prophecy; and David might encourage and comfort himself with a view of this, as he did with a view of the everlasting covenant ordered in all things and sure (2 Sam. 23:5). Although my house be not so with God: though his family was not in such a condition and circumstances as he could wish for, yet this was what gave him relief and supported his spirits, that God had made with him an everlasting covenant; ordered in all things and sure. And well it might he a support unto him, and yield him relief and comfort in a view of the discouraging prospect he had of his family; when he was assured that there would be one arise, of his seed, that should be a Ruler over men, that would be righteous, and rule in the fear of the Lord; he could see, by the spirit of prophecy, that there would be a numerous race of kings spring from him, and few of them good: the greater part evil rulers; but yet there would be one, the King Messiah, who should rule over men just and righteous, and ruling in the fear of the Lord. To him I apprehend these words belong: and our business will be, to shew that these characters agree with him; or that there is that to be found in the true Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, which answers to them all.

This prophecy, which is here given forth concerning

Christ, may be observed to agree with some others. Thus the prophet Isaiah speaks of the Messiah as the Prince of Peace; of whose government and the peace thereof, there shall be no end: who sitteth upon the throne of David to order and establish it in righteousness, to execute justice and judgment in the earth (Isa.9:6, 7). Jeremiah has a like prophecy, where he says, that the Lord would raise up unto David, a righteous branch; a branch that should spring from him; a son of his; one of his seed and offspring; one that should be just and righteous in the administering of judgment; and afterwards he adds, a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute justice and judgment in the earth: in his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is the same whereby he shall be called, The Lord our righteousness (Jer. 23:5, 6), or the righteous Lord. Zechariah speaks as clearly to this point as any; and says, for the comfort of Zion in her low estate, Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, having salvation, lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass (Zech. 9:9).

Now our work will be to shew how these characters agree with Christ, and make it appear that there is that in him which answers to them, as

I. He is a Ruler.

II. A Ruler over men.

III. A just and righteous one. IV. Ruling in the fear of God.

I. He is a Ruler. This, we find is a character which is given unto our Lord in Scripture prophecies; as in that famous and well known one, Micah 5:2. But thou Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be a Ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting. And by ruler, is not meant an inferior magistrate: but the chief and principal one the supreme Ruler of the tribe of Judah. It is said of Judah that he prevailed above his brethren, and for this reason, of him came the chief Ruler (1 Chron.5:2). This is no other than the Messiah the King, that should rule in righteousness; and who is different from all other kings, and his kingdom different from all other kingdoms, as to its nature, quality and extent. His kingdom ruleth over all. As he is a divine person, the Creator of all things; the government of the whole world, of right, belongs to him. The kingdoms of

nature and providence are his, and he is the Governor among the nations.

But this title of Ruler, King, or head, which is frequently given to our Lord, respects him in his mediatorial office and is that branch of it which may be properly styled, his kingly office: for let it be observed, that he was set up, as such from everlasting. From everlasting he was King and Head of his church and people. I was (says Wisdom) set up from everlasting (Prov. 8:23): that is, as Mediator, or with respect to his office-capacity, and particularly in this part and branch of it, his Kingly office: agreeable to what God says, I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion (Ps. 2:6): that is, "I have anointed him," as in the original text: and that, from everlasting. God has given him to be head over all things to the church (Eph. 1:22): He has appointed him King. These are our Lord's words, I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me (Luke 22:29). Agreeable to those purposes, counsels, and designs of God, that his Son, the second person in the glorious Trinity, should be King, should he Ruler over men, particularly over his church and people; He was promised and spoken of from the beginning of the world, throughout the whole Old Testament dispensation as such.— Thus he was spoken of by the prophet, A Sceptre shall arise out of Judah; that is, a sceptre bearer: a sceptre being a token of regal dignity. David in the Book of Psalms speaks of him as a king, again and again. We have a remarkable prophecy of him as king in the forty-fifth Psalm, where it is said his tongue was as the pen of a ready writer to speak of the things he had made touching the King: and by what follows, it plainly appears he means the King Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ; as, that he is fairer than the children of men: riding forth in his majesty and glory: and whose arrows are said to be sharp in the heart of his enemies. Isaiah, and all the prophets after him, spake of Messiah, as a King; a Ruler of men. Especially does Isaiah, in that glorious vision he had of him, and when he had such an apprehension of himself, as a poor, vile, unclean creature; the reason of which was, because his eyes had seen the King, the Lord of hosts, of armies in heaven and earth: when he saw him upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple, and the seraphim covered their faces with their wings, and cried one unto another and said, holy holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory (Isa.

6:1, 2, 3).

So, many other of the prophets spake of him as a King, especially Zechariah, in the place I have before referred to (Zech. 9:9). Daniel calls him, the Messiah, the Prince (Dan. 9:25); that is, the King Messiah. He came into the world as such, he was born such. The wise men inquired after him saying, where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the East, and are come to worship him (Matthew 2:2). They might, perhaps, have no other notion of him, than as a temporal King; but he was more than that. Indeed he was not a temporal one at all; his kingdom was not of this world, but of another kind and nature. His kingdom came not with observation, so that it gave the Jews a disgust against him; because they expected a temporal prince, and no other. Indeed his spiritual kingdom did not appear very conspicuous at that time. Very few that were converted under the ministry of Christ, his forerunner, or the apostles: and few that entered into the kingdom of heaven, (the gospel-dispensation), that embraced the doctrines of the gospel, and submitted to the ordinances thereof, had a clear view of him as a King, in a spiritual sense. But after his sufferings and death, resurrection and ascension to heaven, he was declared to be both Lord and Christ. Then it appeared more plainly, that he was King and Ruler over men. God the father highly exalted him; then he placed him upon the same throne with himself; crowned him with glory and honour; set him at his right hand until he should make his enemies his footstool, or they should become subject to him in one way or another.

In consequence of his being thus exalted as King, He sent forth the rod of his strength out of Zion, the everlasting gospel, the power of God unto salvation: that word that comes out of Sion, and out of Jerusalem. He sent forth this, and sent forth his apostles to preach it: and as King of saints, and Head over all things to the church, gave them gifts in an extraordinary manner, by which they went and preached the Gospel every where; He going along with them, and diffusing the savor of his knowledge in every place to great advantage. He rode forth upon the white horse of the gospel, conquering and to conquer. These were the weapons of their warfare which were not carnal but spiritual, and mighty through God for the reducing of souls to the obedience of Christ; which they were enabled through divine grace to do everywhere; so

that wherever they came, there were multitudes ready to say, the Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King, he will save us. The hearts of men were opened by the powerful and efficacious grace of God. The everlasting doors were made to stand open at the voice of this King of Kings; and the King of Glory entered in, and took up his residence in their hearts; set up his throne there; dwelt by faith there, as a King in his palace. They became subject unto him, willing to serve him, and willing to be saved by him. This has been more or less the case in the Gentile world: and will be more manifest in the latter day, when Christ will take to himself his great power and reign; and the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; when he will reign before his ancients in Jerusalem gloriously. Thus he appears to have a just title to this character of a Ruler. Let us consider further, more particularly,

II. His being a Ruler over men. Christ is indeed a Ruler over angels; and he has a right to rule them, as he is the Creator of them: for all things were made by him, whether visible or invisible. As he created them, he has a right to govern them: and he is, as Mediator, appointed to be head over principalities and powers, angels as well as men; all are subject unto him. Angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject unto him (1 Pet. 3:22). The angels wait upon him to receive his orders; ready to obey his commands, whatsoever he enjoins them. They are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who are the heirs of salvation.

But here he is said to be a Ruler over men. He is a Ruler over the greatest of men: yea, one of his titles is, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords (Rev. 19:16), and upon his vestment and his thigh it is written. He is the Prince of the kings of the earth. All are subject to his dominion and government. By him kings reign and princes decree justice: and they are all accountable to him. He can, at his pleasure, set them up, and put them down; and they must all stand before him another day, to give an account of their administration of civil government. He is a Ruler over men, over the greatest of men. He is made higher, by his divine Father, than the kings of the earth.

He is a Ruler over the worst of men: over wicked men, who say, we will not have this man to reign over us: yet, whether they will or not, he is a Ruler over them. Though they refuse subjection to him, he will let them know he has power and authority over them,

by punishing them for their rebellion. But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me (Luke 19:27). Such who are unwilling to yield subjection to his government, he will rule them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces as a potter's vessel. Whether they will or no, some way or other, they shall be subject unto him; for he has sworn in righteousness, the word is gone out of his mouth, that to him every knee should bow, and every tongue should confess to God (Rom. 14:11).

But in a particular sense, he is a Ruler over the best of men; over good men; over holy men; over the children and people of God, which are sometimes in Scripture, signified by Sion. The church is signified thereby in the Old, and in the New Testament. In the New Testament it is represented as the privilege of the people of God, that they are come to Mount Sion; which is explained of the general assembly and church of the first born, whose names are written in heaven (Heb. 12:23). Called by the name of Sion; because Sion was the object of divine love—because it was the object of his choice. He has chosen Sion for his habitation. An high, conspicuous, firm, and stable mountain: the holy hill; a representation of holy and good men. Now God has set his Son over this holy hill of Sion, or over his church and people, whom he has loved, chosen, redeemed, and sanctified. Good men are sometimes called Israel, as in Micah 5:2. Yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me, that is to be Ruler in Israel. Not Israel in a literal sense for the greater part of them, the Jews, would not have him to reign over them; nor merely the spiritual part of them, the lost sheep of the house of Israel: but the whole Israel of God, Jews and Gentiles. Every one of these will say as Nathaniel did, Rabbi, thou art the son of God, thou art the King of Israel (John 1:49). Of good men Christ is the Ruler. They are called saints, and hence his title runs, King of saints: just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints (Rev.15:3). Saints, such who are sanctified and set apart by God the father, separated to holiness and happiness. Such whom Christ has sanctified by his blood, making atonement and expiation for their sins; wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate (Heb. 13:12). Such to whom Christ is made sanctification as well as redemption and righteousness; and such who are sanctified by his Spirit and in his name, have

a principle of grace and holiness wrought in them; in virtue of which, they live holy lives and conversations. Christ is King of them.

And these are sometimes represented as a kingdom of priests, or made kings and priests unto God for what is said by the Assyrian in a boasting manner, Are not my princes altogether kings? (Isa. 10:8). Christ may say of his subjects, that they are princes, and these princes are altogether kings; and these are not only whom he rules over, but they reign with him. They shall reign with him on earth, and shall reign with him for ever and ever.

Now these persons whom Christ rules over, are not subject to him, naturally; no, they are rebels, as others. They disapprove of him as a king; reject his government; are unwilling to submit to his institutions and ordinances; and enemies in their minds by wicked works; yea, they possess enmity itself against God. Their language is like that of the carnal Jews, We will not have this man to reign over us (Luke 19:14). They do not care to be subject to his ordinances and appointments; but say, "let its cast away these cords from us, and break these bands asunder." In conversion, the Lord strikes his arrows into their hearts, whereby these enemies fall under him, and submit unto him. He cuts them to the heart by his Spirit, in the power of his grace, under the administration of the gospel: then they cry out, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? They are willing then, to do, and be any thing. They are made willing in the day of his power to be saved by him in his own way; to submit to his righteousness; to receive him as their King, and be subject to his ordinances. Then their language is, other Lords beside thee (Satan and the world), have had dominion over us, but by thee only will we make mention of thy name (Isa.26:13): that is, thou only shalt be our King, and we will serve and obey thee, and thee only. Thus their hearts being opened by his power and grace, he enters in, takes his throne, and sets up his grace as a governing principle, which reigns in them, through righteousness, to eternal life. He now, as a king, exercises his authority over them by enacting laws, which they yield ready obedience to; and by writing these laws upon their hearts, in which he acts a different part from all other rulers whatsoever. When they make laws and publish them, they are written. fixed in different places, or printed in books, that persons may read them; but

this Ruler of men, writes his laws in the hearts of his people. I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts (Jer. 31:33): and more than this, he puts his Spirit into them, in order to enable them to walk in his statutes, and do them. He subdues the enemies of his people over whom he rules. This was the view the Israelites had in desiring a king, that he might go in and out before them, and fight their battles for them. Christ is such a king. He fights the battles of his people. He subdues their enemies. He has finished transgression, and made an end of sin; has overcome the world; destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the Devil; has abolished death itself, the last enemy, and makes his people more than conquerors through him.

He, as a Ruler, protects them from all their enemies. In his days Israel shall be saved, and Judah shall dwell safely, for he employs all his power on their behalf. He is able to keep, and save them and none shall pluck them out of his hands.

As a Ruler and King, he provides for them every thing they want. It is very usual to denominate kings, shepherds, who feed their flocks. Christ is such an one, that stands and feeds in the strength of the Lord, and in the majesty of his God. He feeds his people like a shepherd, leads them into green pastures, and beside the still waters. He has all fulness in his hands for the supply of their wants; and therefore they want no good thing. As he is a Ruler of men, and exercises his authority in the manner he does, it is most happy for them. It is not only an instance of divine love and favour that Christ, as man and mediator, should be head over all things to the church, and have all fulness of grace in him for the supply of their wants; but it is an instance his love and affection to his church and people, to appoint such a Ruler over them, who is every way qualified for such an office, being so wise, so good, so kind and tender, and so powerful. It is a remark of the queen of Sheba, concerning Solomon, that the Lord had a love to his people, and therefore appointed him to be king over them: so God the Father has a love to his church and people, and therefore appointed Christ to be the Ruler over them. It is an act of his free favor and good will towards them.

This rule and government is what is delegated to him, by his divine Father, of a spiritual nature; and, as we before said, is a government for which he is every way qualified.

III. This Ruler over men, is just or righteous: which respects not his essential righteousness as God, who is righteous in all his ways and works. Nor does it regard the course of his life as man: as such he was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. Nor does it respect his being the author of righteousness, working out a righteousness for his people. Nor his mediatorial office at large, which he performed with so much integrity that he justly merited the character of God's righteous servant; but it respects him as a King. His sceptre is a sceptre of righteousness. His ways are just and true as King of saints. Righteousness is the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness is the girdle of his reins, in all the administrations of his kingly office; thus he answers to his type, Melchisedec, whose name signifies the king of righteousness; as well as also king of Salem, which is king of peace.

IV. He also rules in the fear of God. As man, the grace of fear was in him; as mediator, the spirit of fear was upon him. Not only the spirit of wisdom, knowledge, and counsel, but of the fear of the Lord; which respects his administration of the kingly office. He always did what pleased the Father. What he did flowed from affection for him; so that he might be said, in the highest sense, to serve the Lord with reverence and with godly fear.

But there is another sense in which these words may be taken. They may be rendered, ruling in the fear of God. Not only ruling such persons that have the fear of God upon their hearts, and before their eyes; but ruling, appointing and ordering the worship of God; having it at his command, and wholly under his direction.

The fear of God, sometimes signifies the whole worship of God, internal and external; because this, when rightly performed, is done in the fear of God: serve the Lord with fear and rejoice before him with trembling (Ps. 2:11). Now our Lord Jesus Christ, as king of saints, has this fear, this worship of God, wholly at his command, altogether under his authority; and by his direction every gospel ordinance is administered. Thus in Matthew 28:18 he says, all power is given to me in heaven and in earth: all power and authority as Mediator. In consequence of which he appoints and commissions his disciples to preach the gospel; for it follows, therefore, (because I have all power given to me in heaven and earth) go ye, and teach all nations. Go and preach my gospel every where, baptizing them

that are taught (for that is the meaning of it) in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.

Christ, as king of the church, has power and authority over the fear and worship of God, under the gospel dispensation. Indeed the very law itself is in the hands of Christ, as King of saints and of the church; and there it is as a rule of walk and conversation to his people; so that they are not without law to God, but under the law to Christ (1 Cor. 9:21).

Now there are various duties incumbent upon us with respect to Christ as a Ruler of men, of the church and people of God. We ought to own him as King of saints: to say of him, the Lord is our King, the Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, and he will save us: my Lord and my God. And not only own and acknowledge him to be King, but to be subject to him; for to acknowledge this in words is not enough. "Not every one that says, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom, but he that does the will of my Father which is in heaven:" (Matthew 7:21). Which is the rather to be attended unto because his commands are not grievous: his yoke is easy, and his burden is light (Matthew 11:30). You regard him as a priest, and expect the pardon of your sins through his blood. He is, indeed, an interceding High Priest (of good things for you at the throne of God): and should you not regard him as your King? What! think to receive all benefit from him as a priest, and not serve him as a King! Your receiving him as a Priest lays you under the highest obligations to serve him as a King. It is your duty also to rejoice in your King; let the children of Zion rejoice in their King. They have reason so to do: he is so wise, so good, so just, so able to subdue their enemies, and provide all good things for them. O what matter of joy is this, that Zion's King reigneth! You should do all you can for the enlargement of his kingdom: pray for the prosperity of it, and its coming in greater glory. Say, thy kingdom come: and, as he is pleased to say, behold I come quickly, you should reverberate, and say, even so, come, Lord Jesus.

25 CHRIST THE RANSOM FOUND

Occasioned by the Death of Mr. John Davenport.

Preached

Oct. 13, 1754.

Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver

him from going to the pit, I have found a ransom.— Job 33:24.

The occasion of my reading these words to you at this time, is the decease of Mr. John Davenport, late member and deacon of this church, which by some circumstances were thought to be much upon his mind of late, and of singular use to him; and therefore were judged proper to be the subject of a funeral discourse.

The words are in strict connection with those that immediately go before; If there be a monger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness, then he is gracious, etc. that is, if there be a messenger with God; or with the sick man; who is described in the preceding verses, 19-22 by the strong pain he is chastened with on his bed, with which all his bones are affected; by his nausea and abhorrence of food, even the most delicious and dainty; by the consumption of his flesh, being reduced to skin and bone, and so emaciated, that scarce any flesh is to be seen upon him; and his bones, which were covered with it, now stick out, and may easily be told; and by his near approach to the grave, and to the destroyers: not the destroying angels;[1] rather, destroying diseases; so Broughton renders it, "killing maladies;" or it may be the worms,[2] which in the grave destroy the flesh that remains, see chapter 19:26. or else deaths, the first and second, and the horrors and terrors of them.[3] Now in such a case, and at such a season, if there be a proper, useful, affixing person at hand, it is well for the sick man; if there be a messenger, or an angel, as the word signifies: and some[4] understand it of an angel by nature; one of those thousands, and ten thousands, that stand before God and minister unto him; one of those ministering spirits that are sent forth to minister to the heirs of salvation, who, as they perform good offices to them in life and health, so in sickness, and at the hour of death; when it is certain they are present with them, to take care of the separate spirit, and convoy it to heaven and may be of use to suggest things comfortable to the mind of the sick person, and direct him what is right for him in such circumstances. This sense the Popish interpreters greedily catch at; though, should it be admitted, it would not follow, that because that angels may be of some use on sick-beds, and death-beds, that therefore they are to be invoked, prayed unto, and made use of as mediators between God

and man; but I think this sense is to be rejected: and rather by the messenger, etc. is meant a minister of the word,[5] who is by office an angel; hence we read of the angels of the seven churches,[6] which are no other than the pastors of them; who have their million and commission from God, to preach the gospel: and such an one is an interpreter of the scriptures, which he studies rightly to divide and explain; and of the mind and will of God in them, which he is favored with,

and enlightened into: and a spiritual, evangelical and faithful dispenser of the word is one among a thousand, scarce and rare; there are but few such, especially in times of declension, and in such places where the word of the Lord is precious or rare; and very probably there were but few in those countries where Job and his friends lived, see Ecclesiastes 7:28. Now the business of such a one is to shew unto man, to any man, and particularly “the sick man,” his uprightness, or rectitude, or righteousness; either the righteousness of God in this dispensation of his providence; to inform him, that as God is righteous in all his ways and works, so in this; that it is in very faithfulness he has afflicted him, and therefore should not think hardly of God, or that he is hardly used by him; should not murmur and repine, but patiently submit to the will of God: or else the righteousness of the God-man and mediator Jesus Christ; that everlasting righteousness he has wrought out, and which is revealed in the gospel, and is a principal article of it; and therefore a proper part of a minister’s work to shew it unto men; hence they are said to turn many to righteousness, or to justify many;[7] that is, by pointing out and directing them to the righteousness of Christ, as the alone justifying one; and which, as it is the solid foundation, of peace, joy, and comfort in life and health, it is more proper to be observed to the sick man drawing nigh to the gates of death; which is a righteousness that will answer for him in a time to come. Moreover, it is the business of a minister at such a time to shew the sick man what is right for him to do: if the sick man is stupid and insensible of his flare and condition by nature; then he is to inform him that God made man upright, but he by sinning lost his uprightness; and this is not now to be found in men, but must be had in another: he is to labor to convince him of the sin of his nature, and

the sinfulness of his life and actions; and to shew him the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the just demerit of it, eternal death and damnation, and the absolute necessity of repentance for it. If the sick man is a sensible man, and is depressed under a sense of sin, and the guilt of it, and under fearful apprehensions of wrath and ruin; the minister is to set before him Christ, and him crucified; he is to tell him of his blood, righteousness and sacrifice, and the efficacy of them to take away sin; and to direct and encourage him to believe in Christ; assuring him, that whoever believes in him shall be saved. Add to this, if the sick man is a good man, a truly gracious man, and yet has doubts and fears of his uprightness, and the truth of grace in him; then, the minister observing that this is the fruit of unbelief, and of Satan’s temptations, is to do all he can to clear up this point to him, that he is truly a regenerated and converted man; that he has truth in the inner part, and that the work of grace is begun, which will be performed in him: and this, as[8] one rightly observes, is the hardest work that the ministers of the gospel have, to make men understand and see their own uprightness: all this being done, then he is gracious; the minister is gracious, has pity and compassion on the sick man, and speaks of the grace of God to him, and makes a gracious supplication for him; (to some[9] render the words) and prays in the following manner; “O Lord God, deliver this sick man from going down to the pit, redeem his life from destruction; for I find in the everlasting gospel, there is a ransom or atonement for sin provided for such persons.”

But after all, I rather think, with others,[10] that the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, is meant by the messenger or angel; who is the angel that went before the Israelites in the wilderness, in whom the name of the Lord was, who could, though he would not, pardon their iniquities; the angel of God’s presence, who always appears before him, and introduces men into his pretense, and through whom they enjoy it; and the angel or messenger of the covenant, who has confirmed it by his blood, and has revealed it more clearly in the gospel, who also is an interpreter of his Father’s mind and will, with which he is thoroughly acquainted, lying in his bosom; or an orator, the essential Word of God that spake for his people in council and covenant; their advocate with the Father, and the

antitypical Aaron, that can speak well, having as man and mediator the tongue of the learned given him to speak a word in season: and he is one among a thousand; the chiefest among ten thousand, angels or men; he has obtained a more excellent name, and is of a superior nature to angels, being their creator, Lord, and head; and is higher than the kings of the earth; there is none like unto him among all the creatures in heaven or earth; and to a believer he is all in all. And his office as a prophet is to shew unto men the uprightness or righteousness of God; the strictness of his justice, what that requires, even perfect conformity to his law, and which is sufficiently declared by his propitiatory sacrifice; and also his own uprightness, or righteousness he has wrought out and which he, by his spirit, convinces men of their need of, and brings it near to them, and clothes them with it, as well as shews it unto God for them as their advocate; and he also shews to them what is right and good for them to do, even to love mercy, do justice, and walk humbly with God and then upon all this God is gracious; he manifests his grace and love, and orders deliverance from ruin and destruction, even upon the foot of a ransom found and given; and seeing there is with him such a divine person in office in favor of the sick man: for the participle [11] does not denote any thing doubtful and uncertain, but is expressive of something certain, and infers it from it. In the words may be observed,

I. The great blessing of the text, a ransom found.

II. The happy effect and consequence of it, deliverance from going down to the pit.

III. The grace of God displayed herein, both in finding the ransom, and delivering from the pit upon it; he is gracious, and faithful.

I. The great blessing of the text, a ransom found
Two things I shall consider under this head; 1st, Who or what this ransom is;

2dly, The act of finding it, and to whom it is to be ascribed.

1st, Who or what this ransom is. A ransom is a price paid for the redemption of captives, or some satisfaction given upon which they are released. In such a state and condition by nature are the elect of God, and ransomed of the Lord; they are the prey of Satan, and are led and detained captives by him at his will; they are brought into bondage by their sins and corruptions, and are held under the same; and they are

shut up under the law, and liable to its condemnation and curse; now Christ is the ransom of them from all this. This will appear by a passage or two out of the New Testament, which will serve greatly to illustrate the text; for there is the same gospel in one Testament as in the other, only it is in the Old more covertly, and in the New more clear and express; and the one serves to open and explain the other. Our Lord, speaking of the Son of man, by whom he means himself, says, he came not to be ministered unto, but to minister (Matthew 20:28); not to be waited upon, as a nobleman, prince or potentate; but to be a servant to others, and particularly to give his life a ransom for many; so that it is the life of Christ that is the ransom-price of men. Again, the apostle Paul says of the man Christ Jesus, the mediator, that he gave himself a ransom for all; ἀντελυτρον, “a ransom-price” in the room and stead of all his people, Jews and Gentiles, to be testified in due time (1 Tim. 2:6); as it has been most clearly through the ministration of the gospel; whence it is manifest that not riches, nor righteousness, nor repentance, nor prayers, nor alms-deeds, are the ransom of men, but Christ himself. Not riches: The Israelites indeed, when they were numbered, gave every one an half shekel for the ransom of their souls, which was called

atonement-money (Ex. 30:12-16); but then this was not a real, but a typical ransom; typical of the ransom of Jesus Christ; which is expressly denied to be by corruptible things, as silver and gold, but by his precious blood (1 Pet. 1:18, 19). Had a man ever so great riches, the riches of the Indies, or of the whole world, he would not be able to redeem himself or his brother, or give to God a ransom for either; for if once wrath goes forth from the Lord, and he takes away with a the stroke of it, a great ransom, even a king's ransom cannot deliver from it; for will he esteem thy riches? no, not gold, nor all the forces of strength (Ps. 49:6,7; Job 36:18, 19): nor is a man's own righteousness, or his good works, a ransom for him; these are what God has a prior right unto before the performance of them, and therefore men cannot expect a recompence for them, or a ransom by them; for: who hath first given to him (the Lord,) and it shall be recompensed to him again? (Rom. 11:35).

These are debts they owe to God, and when performed ever so well, they do but their duty; and therefore can never pay off the old scores of sin by

them, or thereby make atonement for them; these are not profitable to God, whatever they may be to men, and cannot merit any thing at his hand; and besides are exceeding imperfect and unacceptable to God of themselves; they are thrown out of man's acceptance with God, justification before him, and eternal salvation; and if there is no acceptance, justification and salvation by them, as we are sure from the word of God there is not, then they cannot be the ransom-price for the souls of men, or atone for their sins: nor is the ransom, repentance, tears and humiliation; for what satisfaction do these give to an offended Being, to injured and inexorable justice, and to the righteous law of God? which those that sin against die without mercy, unless it is fulfilled, magnified, and made honorable: could men bring instead often thousands of rivers of oil, such a quantity of brinish tears, they would not wash away sin, or atone for it; still it would remain marked before God. Vain, stupid man! to imagine that his own tears will do what a Savior's could not; for though in the days of his flesh he offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears (Heb. 5:7); yet not these, but his blood was the ransom of souls. Nor are prayers and almsdeeds a ransom, though ever so well performed; these may come up before God for a memorial, through the mediation of Jesus Christ, but not for a ransom or atonement, when done in faith, and from a principle of love, and to the glory of God; but for many of the prayers of men, they do but receive the greater damnation, as the Pharisees of old did; and a man may bestow all his goods to feed the poor, and yet not have charity, or the true grace of love, and be loft and perish; and if he had that grace, and did what he did from such a principle, it would not atone for his sins, or be the ransom of his soul; no, this is in Christ, and him only. The word here used comes from a root which signifies to cover,[12] and is much the same in found as our English word, which seems to come from it: the mercy-seat is called by this name, and indeed it was no other than a lid or covering to the ark, in which the law was, and exactly of the same measure with it; and was typical of Christ who by his blood and righteousness covers all the sins of his people, their transgressions of the law of God; and by his sacrifice expiates them, or makes atonement for them, and so is the ransom of them. For the further illustration of this precious truth, I shall briefly shew you what that is which Christ has given as a ransom,

which is sufficient; and for whom it is given.

1. What that is which Christ has given for the ransom of men: and from scripture it appears that it was his precious blood; for as redemption is always ascribed to the blood of Christ, as the procuring cause of it, that must be the redemption or ransom-price; and the apostle Peter is express for it; he says, ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold—but with the precious

blood of Christ (1 Pet. 1:18, 19); a price sufficient to purchase the whole church of God, to expiate all their sins, and ransom their souls from ruin; and therefore may well be called precious blood; blood of great price and value: hence under the law so much regard was had to blood; it was to be covered with dust, and was not to be eaten, because it made atonement for the soul, though but in a typical way; for not the blood of bulls and goats, but the blood of Christ is our real atonement and ransom-price. Again, from a text before-mentioned it is clear, that it is the life of Christ that was given for a ransom; he came to give his life a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28): life, than which nothing is more dear and valuable, and especially such a life as Christ's was; a life entirely at his own dispose, which another man's is not, and which he laid down, and took up again of himself; it was not forfeited by any act of his own, or forced from him by another; it was what he freely laid down, and voluntarily gave into the hands of men, justice and death, in the room and stead of his people; and as a ransom-price for them; his life for theirs: moreover, it is said to be himself that is this ransom; who gave himself a ransom for all (1 Tim. 2:6); and so it is often expressed, that he loved us and gave himself for us, that he might redeem us; and gave himself an offering and a sacrifice, and offered himself without spot unto God (Titus 2:14; Eph. 5:2; Heb. 9:14), even his soul and body, his whole human nature; and this as in union with his divine person; which union ceased not when he became the ransom-price. And what is contained in this word himself who can tell? this we may be lure of, it was a sufficient ransom, whereby the law was fulfilled, and justice satisfied. This is a full ransom or redemption from sin, from all sins original and actual, from all the demerit of them; and in consequence of this men are freed from the dominion and power of sin, under which they were held captives, and will

be from the being of it; for Christ has by his atoning sacrifice finished and made an end of sin, and put it away for ever, and perfected them that are sanctified: it is a complete ransom of them out of the hands of Satan: the Lord hath ransomed Jacob out of the hand of him that was stronger than he (Jer. 31:11); by virtue of this ransom the prey is taken from the mighty, and the lawful captive is delivered; and even captivity itself, or he that led others captive, is himself led captive by the Savior and Redeemer of sinners. This is a plenary ransom from the law, its curse and condemnation; Christ has redeemed his that were under it from it, being made a curse for them, and suffering its sentence of condemnation to be executed on himself; and therefore there is none to them that are in him; and they may boldly say, who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died (Rom. 8:1, 34); and by dying he gave his life a ransom for them, and so secured them from the curse and condemnation of the law. In a word, it is a ransom from hell, and wrath, and the second death, to which men are liable through sin; Christ has even ransomed his people from the power of the grave, as a punishment for sin, and so as that they shall not be always detained in it; as well as has redeemed them from the second death, by which they shall never be hurt, and which shall never have any power over them; he has delivered them from wrath to come, and from going down to hell, or the pit of corruption. But I proceed to shew,

2. For whom this ransom is given. It is said to be given for many; even for as many as are ordained to eternal life; for as many as the Father has given to Christ; for those many for whom his blood has been shed for the remission of their sins; for those many whom he justifies by his knowledge, or by faith in his righteousness; for those many forts, he, the captain of their salvation, brings to glory; and theft are a great number, which no man can number and on account of which, as well as many other things, this ransom or redemption by Christ is called (Ps. 130:7) a plenteous one, and lays a good foundation for hope in him: but then it is not for all men, or for every individual of mankind; for though he is said to give himself a ransom for all, it is not expressed for all men, or for every man; but the sense is, that he gave himself for all the chosen, or for men of all sorts, ranks and degrees, high and low, rich and poor; and for all sorts of sinners, for Gentiles as well as Jews, as the context

shows (1 Tim. 2:6; 1:2, 5): those that are ransomed and redeemed, are ransomed from among men, and are redeemed unto God by the blood of Christ, out of every kindred, tongue, people, and nation and cannot be all men, every kindred, tongue, people, and nation, or every individual of them (Rev. 14:4; 5:9): the ransomed ones are represented as a peculiar people, and have such characters ascribed to them as do not agree to all men, they are the church of God, the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven, which are purchased by the blood of Christ; and they are his sheep, he has laid down his life, and given it as a ransom for: moreover, the ransomed of the Lord come to Zion with songs of everlasting joy, sooner or later, either to the church below, or to heaven above; to neither of which do all mankind come (Acts 20:28; John 10:15; Isa. 35:10). Add to all this, that if the ransom-price is paid for all, all would be ransomed, and so eternally saved, which is not true; or else the ransom-price is paid in vain, which surely will not be said; it reflecting so much dishonor on the justice of God, and the blood of Christ. The typical ransom-price under the law, the half-shekel, was paid for the ransom of the souls of Israelites only, and so is the real one; though not for all Israel in a literal sense, because all were not Israel who were of Israel, only a remnant according to the election of grace; it is the spiritual and mystical Israel of God whom he has chosen for his own peculiar people; the whole Israel of God, or all his elect, consisting both of Jews and Gentiles, that Christ is become a ransom-price for; and who, in consequence of it, through his spirit and grace, are Israelites indeed, in whom there is no guile. God so loved the world of the Gentiles, as to see and find forth his own Son to be the propitiation or expiatory sacrifice for their sins; and Christ is become the propitiation, not for the sins of the Jews only, or his elect among them, but for the sins of the whole world; or for the sins of all his people throughout the whole world, even for the sins of all the children of God that are scattered abroad (John 3:16; 11:51, 52; 2:2). This ransom price, as the typical one, is given for the ransom of the soul; it is that which has sinned, and is liable to death, the second death, or an eternal one; it is for that most excellent part of man, and therefore to be most regarded; and hence it requires so great a price: the redemption of the soul is precious (Ps. 49:8); and nothing can ransom it

but the blood of Christ; and therefore it is so great a blessing as it is to be ransomed, because it is no other than the redemption of the life or soul of man from destruction: and this ransom-price, like the typical one, is paid equally for all alike; every Israelite gave an half shekel, the rich did not give more, nor the poor less (Ex. 30:15); the same price of Christ's blood is paid for one as for another; for though some sins be greater than others, and some are greater sinners than others are, and are redeemed from more sins than others be, yet there is but one price paid for all; for every sin being objectively infinite, requires an infinite price to be paid to make satisfaction and atonement for it, and which has been given; hence all obtain the same precious faith, are justified by the same righteousness, and share in the same common salvation. And, to add no more, this price is paid for them into the hands of God; for it is against him that sin is committed, and who only can pardon it, and does upon the foot of satisfaction made: he is the law-giver, whole law is broken by sin, and must be fulfilled; the judge of all the earth, whose justice must be satisfied, or he will not clear the guilty; and the creditor to whom men owe more than ten thousand talents, and have nothing to pay; and therefore the price, by the surety, must be given into his hand to clear off the debt, and ransom from prison; and accordingly Christ has given himself an offering and a sacrifice unto God, and has given to him a ransom for his people, and has redeemed them unto him by his blood (Eph. 5:2; Rev. 5:9); and hence they shall certainly be saved by him, and in him, with an everlasting salvation. But I hasten to consider,

2dly, The act of finding this ransom, and to whom it is to be ascribed. If it respects the original scheme of it in eternity, as it seems to do, it was found out: by God the Father; who laid help upon one that is mighty; exalted one chosen out of the people; found David his servant, and anointed him with his holy oil (Ps. 89:19, 20); that is, he found his own Son to be the most proper person to be the Savior and Redeemer of his people; one that was mighty, almighty, and so equal to the work of redemption; and of all the individuals of human nature he designed to bring into being, which came into his vast and infinite mind, he chose out of them all one single individual of human nature, to be united to his own Son in due time; and so he invested him with the office of mediator; and thus a ransom was found for men: and this is not the invention of

angels, nor of men, but of God only; not of angels, for they knew nothing of the matter but by revelation; so far were they from having any concern in the finding it out, that when it was found, they were strangers to it until it was made known unto them; and whatever hint might be given them of it immediately from God himself, whose invention this is, previous to the fall of man, as some have thought; which occasioned a great part of them to leave their first estate, and become apostates rather than be subject to Christ in human nature; yet it seems as if great part, at least of their knowledge of this affair, is attained to by them through the church of God, and the ministry of the word in it; since it is said, to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known (that is made known) by the church, the manifold wisdom of God (Eph. 3:10); that wonderful wisdom of God in finding out a ransom for men: yea, it looks as if their knowledge of it was not yet perfect; or however, that they have not fully satisfied themselves with it, but take fresh pleasure in the contemplation of it; for it is said, which things the angels desire to look into (1 Pet. 2:12), even yet more and more; they bow their heads, as it were, they stoop, they look down, and curiously pry into the mysteries of grace: the allusion is thought to be to the cherubim over the mercy-seat, which looked to one another, and both to the mercy-seat, the type of Christ, the propitiation and ransom of his people. Nor is this the invention of men; could all mankind have been summoned together, and had ever so long a time allowed them to have found out a proper ransom for them, it would ever have remained a puzzling question to them, how should man be just with God? (Job 9:2), or who will be a propitiation or ransom for him? for they could never have thought of the Son of God as a ransom; it could never have entered into their hearts to conceive it; for if the world by wisdom knew not God, it could never, with all its wisdom, find out a way of reconciling themselves unto God: and we see what fooleries the heathens have gone into, being left to the dim light of nature, and without a revelation, in order to make the Deity propitious to them: and even when this scheme of redemption and salvation by Christ is declared, it is treated by carnal men with contempt and ridicule; we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks' foolishness (1 Cor. 1:23); and therefore this can never be an invention of man's:

no, it is the invention of God himself; all things are of him, and especially in a way of grace, and particularly our reconciliation, and the scheme of it.

God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself (2 Cor. 5:18, 19), drawing the scheme of their reconciliation, ransom, and redemption: this flows from his divine counsels, who does all things after the counsel of his will; as there was a consultation held about the formation of man, no doubt there was one about his ransom and recovery; and which, with great propriety, may be called the council of peace, that was held between the eternal three on this special affair: this is the fruit and effect of his infinite wisdom, which shines in all his works, but abounds in the ransom and redemption of men, and the contrivance of it; this is the manifold wisdom of God, the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, ordained before the world for our glory; this is the result of an eternal purpose he purposed in Christ, of a resolution and determination he came into to have mercy on his people, and save them by the Lord their God; whom he set forth in his decrees and purposes to be the propitiation for their sins, and fore-ordained before the foundation of the world to ransom them with his precious blood. This is owing to a covenant of grace, which he made with Christ, in which he called and appointed him to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and restore the preferred of Israel: and in consideration of his making his soul an offering for sin, and giving himself a ransom for his chosen, he promised him a numerous feed, length of days for ever and ever, and the utmost prosperity and glory as man and mediator; to all which he agreed, and said, Lo I come to do thy will; (Isa. 49:5, 6; 53:10-12; Ps. 40:7); which was no other than to give his life a ransom for many. And now it was with the utmost pleasure, and to his great satisfaction, that he found such a ransom; and which seems to be expressed in the language of the text, I have found a ransom; Christ, as such, was the object of his delight and joy when he was let up as mediator by him from everlasting. But this must be understood of God the Father, not to the exclusion of the Son, [13] since the council of peace was between them both; (Zech. 6:13); and Christ is, as the Septuagint version of Isaiah 9:6 calls him, the Angel of the great council; and he is the Wisdom of God, that dwells with prudence, and finds out the knowledge of witty inventions (Prov. 8:12); of which this of the ransom and redemption of

men is not the least. And especially if the finding a ransom respects the impetration of redemption"; [14] this peculiarly belongs to Christ; of him it is said, having obtained, or as it is in the original text, having found eternal redemption for us (Heb. 9:12); he is the ransomer, and the ransom-price; he is the man the peace, and who has made peace by the blood of his cross, and reconciled men to God by his sufferings and death, and is become the author of eternal salvation. But I go on to consider,

II. The happy effect and consequence of the ransom found, which is an order for deliverance from going down to the pit. And here I shall inquire what pit this is, a deliverance from going down to which is here ordered; and then by whom this order is given, and to whom directed.

1. By the pit is commonly understood the grave, and which in this book, and elsewhere, is so called; the word signifies corruption, and it has this name from hence, because in it the bodies of men putrefy and corrupt: but the grave is what all men go down into; it is the house appointed for all living; it is man's long home, to which he is going, and where he must lodge till the resurrection: all men by divine appointment, die, and are brought to the grave, and there laid; good men as well as bad men, such as are ransomed by Christ, as well as others. It is true indeed that saints are delivered from it as a punishment; death is abolished, and the grave destroyed, as penal evils; but then they are not delivered from death itself; and from going down into the grave; they may have a reprieve for a time, and be spared a while longer; the sick man may recover strength before he goes hence and is no more; he may not be given over to death, though sorely chastened; this sickness he labors under may not be unto death; he may be restored and return, when he has been brought to the gates of it: but then such an ordinary event as the recovery of a sick man, seems to be too small a matter be founded upon such an extraordinary and marvelous affair as the ransom of Christ, and does not answer the grand design of it; rather therefore by this pit is meant the bottomless pit, the pit of destruction, which the wicked go into, even hell, eternal wrath and ruin; [15] and which, though the elect of God are deferring of as others, yet, being ransomed by thrift, they are delivered from it. I proceed to inquire,

2. By whom, and to whom is this order given, those who think the grave is intended by the pit, suppose there words, deliver him from going down to it, are addressed either to the disease itself the sick man is afflicted with; so Mr. Broughton renders the words, "Spare him, O killing malady, from descending into the pit;" diseases are the servants of God, they come when he bids them, and they depart when he orders them so to do: he sometimes says to them, as he did to the destroying angel, It is enough; the ends are answered for which the malady was sent, and it must be continued no longer; often so it is, that upon the sick man's prayers, or those of his friends, he is railed up from his sick-bed, and delivered from the grave: or else the address is to the minister, as others think,[16] that attends the sick man, assists him, and prays for him; who is sent to tell him that he shall not die but live, as Nathan was sent to David, and Isaiah to Hezekiah, which is declaratively, though not authoritatively, delivering from the grave: but the words are rather an address of God the Father to his Son, the angel and interpreter with him, lying in his bosom; upon finding the ransom, upon the contrivance of the scheme of redemption, after the agreement and covenant made; fending him forth in the fullness of time, to give himself a ransom for his people, and redeem and fare them from destruction, since such a way was found out and agreed upon, for the words may be rendered, "redeem him from going clown to the pit;" as the word signifies;[17] and to whom can this be so properly said as to Christ the redeemer? or else this is the address of the Father to law and justice, upon the ransom being found, or the redemption obtained by Christ; since that is done, justice, let this man go free; law, set open thy prison doors, and no longer detain this captive; hell and death, give up your claim to him, seeing the ransom-price is paid for him. Or there words may be considered as the words of the Son to the Father, the angel, the messenger and interpreter with God, the advocate with him; who appears in the presence of God for his people, and pleads his propitiatory sacrifice for them, urges on their behalf the atonement he has made, and the ransom he has given for them, and insists upon their deliverance from wrath and ruin; and declares it to his heavenly Father as his will, that they be fared from hell, and be with him in heaven, where he is, and behold his glory (John 17:24). I come now to the last general head,

III. To observe the grace of God displayed in all this; then be is gracious, and saith; not the minister that assists the sick person, and has pity on him, and prays for him; but either the angel, the messenger, the interpreter, one among a thousand, the Word that is with God, the advocate with the Father, who is gracious and merciful to his ransomed ones; and has in a very wonderful manner shewn his grace and love in becoming surety for them; engaging to be their Savior and Redeemer; promising to pay their debts for them, and to be their ransomer, and give himself a ransom price for them: the grace of Christ is well known, and clearly seen in his assumption of human nature, taking part of the same flesh and blood with his children, appearing in the form of a servant, who was Lord of all; and becoming poor, who was rich, even God over all, blessed for ever: and greater love than this could never be expressed by men, than to lay down his life for a friend; but such is the grace of Christ, that he has laid down his life for his enemies, and died for men while they were sinners, and had no love for him. and his grace is further displayed in his wonderful and prevalent intercession for them; for their conversion; for the application of pardoning grace to them; for the preservation of them from all evil; for their final perseverance; for their deliverance from hell and death; and for their eternal glorification. Or rather, the He here is God the Father,[18] who is said to be gracious, and is so; he has proclaimed his name in Christ, a God gracious and merciful, abundant in goodness and truth pardoning iniquity, transgression and sin (Ex. 34:6, 7); he is the God of all grace, and has in , various ways manifested his grace unto the sons of men and especially in the affair of their ransom, redemption and salvation. His grace appears in finding

Christ the ransom; for though this was the invention of wisdom, it was grace set wisdom at work to contrive the amazing scheme; it was because God loved his people with an everlasting love, and as an instance of that love, chose them to be holy and happy, and resolved upon their eternal salvation, that he call: about in his infinite mind to find out and pursue the best ways and means of effecting it; it was wondrous grace in him to send his Son to be the ransomer and ransom-price, when Wisdom could find none so fit and proper for this purpose as he; it was marvelous

grace to agree to part with him, and in the fullness of time to send him to redeem lost sinners from sin, Satan, law, death and hell: herein he shewed forth his grace, yea the riches, the fullness of his grace, even the exceeding riches of it in this instance of kindness; sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sacrifice for sin, to make atonement for it, and be the ransom of his people: herein his love was manifested to the highest degree, and he gave the greatest commendation of it that could be; for a greater person could not be lent, or a greater gift bestowed: if it was an instance of the love of God to his people the Jews, that he gave Egypt for their ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for them, men for them, and people for their life (Isa. 43:3, 4); how much greater proof of his love has he given, by not sparing his own Son, but delivering him up for us all? Had he given all the angels in heaven, and all the rest of mankind on earth, a ransom for his chosen, it would not have been such an evidence of his love as the gift of his Son. And then, when Christ had given his life a ransom, it was grace to accept of this ransom-price in the room and stead of his people; for though it was a full and sufficient one, which law and justice could not object unto, and with which they must be both pleased and satisfied; yet God was not obliged to accept of it in the room and stead of sinful men, had he not voluntarily agreed in the covenant of grace to accept of it as a vicarious sacrifice and proper atonement for them; otherwise he might have insisted upon satisfaction from the sinner himself; but such was his grace, that he accepts the ransom of his Son in his room. Moreover, the grace of God is greatly displayed in what he has done upon the score of this ransom-price paid, and redemption obtained, in the justification of the persons, and in the pardon of the sins of those for whom it is given: justification proceeds upon, and is through the redemption which is in Christ; and this is an act of God's free grace; so says the apostle, being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:24); it is with a view to the righteousness of Christ, and to his life and blood being given as a ransom for his people, and to the redemption thereby procured, that God justifies any, and this is by his grace; and as if to say so was not enough to express the riches of it, it is said to be freely by his grace; not only the righteousness of God, his strict justice is declared, in this method of justifying sinners, whereby he

appears to be just, strictly just, whilst he is the justifier of him that believes in Jesus; but the free grace of God is abundantly manifest in it, in accepting the righteousness of Christ, in the imputation of it to his people without works, and in the application of it by his Spirit: hence it is called the free gift, the gift of grace, and an abundance of grace (Rom. 5:15-17): so likewise forgiveness of sin is a branch of redemption obtained by the ransom-price; hence, lays the apostle, is whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace (Eph. 1:7); though pardon of sin is through the blood of Christ shed for it, and with respect to that is an act of justice, yet notwithstanding it is according to grace, and the riches of it; though it is upon the foot of satisfaction and atonement, yet it was grace that provided Christ the lamb for the burnt-offering; it was grace that lent him to make reconciliation for sin, and to shed his blood for the remission of it; and it was grace that accepted the expiatory sacrifice, and declares the sinner forgiven on account of it; and which makes application of the blood of Christ to the sinner's conscience for that purpose; and who becomes very sensible of the freeness of the grace of God, and of the multitude of his tender mercies in the forgiveness of his sins. In short, the whole of salvation, which flows from the ransom given, and is no other than a deliverance from going down to the pit, or from hell, wrath, and ruin, is entirely of grace, and not of works. God, in saving men, does not proceed according to their works, but according to his own grace; it is not by works of righteousness which they have done, even the best, but by his abundant mercy and rich grace, that he saves them, through the blood and righteousness of his Son, and the regeneration of the blessed Spirit; and to this it will be ascribed by all the saints throughout an endless eternity, when the constant acclamation will be, Grace, grace unto it.

And thus have I endeavored to open and improve this passage of scripture on this solemn occasion, as time would allow me. It may be expected I should now say something concerning our deceased friend and brother. I am very sensible that he himself was very averse to encomiums of the dead at such seasons, and for my own part I have no inclination to them; I shall therefore say nothing of him in his civil and moral character; how he behaved in his family as a parent and master, you that are of it know full well; and how

he behaved as a neighbor, you that were his neighbors can bear witness; I shall only say a few things as to his spiritual and eternal concerns. It pleased God to call him by his grace, and reveal his Son in him, in his younger days; and as he knew it was his duty with the mouth to make confession unto salvation, as well as with the heart to believe unto righteousness, he very early gave up himself to this church of Christ, of which he was a member upwards of twenty-six years; and, allowing for the common infirmities of life, his conversation, so far as known by us, was agreeable to the profession he made. I doubt not but that he had that true faith which works by love to Christ and his people; a crucified Christ was precious to him; his blood, his righteousness, and all that belong to him; he loved him, his people, his gospel, and his ordinances; he was an humble Christian, tender and compassionate to the poor, to whom he behaved very respectfully both by words and deeds; he had a very mean opinion of himself; being very sensible of the corruption of his nature, and the plague of his heart, and of his deficiencies and imperfections in life: to this was owing the great reluctance with which he accepted the office of a deacon, as many of you well know, and for the same reason chose to officiate in it only when pure necessity obliged him to it. In a visit to him in his late illness, which issued in death, he told me he had had some delightful views of eternal things, and his interest in them; and added, that he should be very ungrateful if he did not believe that Christ shed his blood for him: that passage of scripture being mentioned in conversation, O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help; (Hosea 13:9); he observed, that these words had been of wonderful use to him at a certain time, and had yielded him abundance of spiritual consolation and strength; as indeed in a few words are expressed the destruction and salvation, the ruin and recovery of men. And though his disorder increasing rendered him afterwards very little convertible, yet by broken expressions, and various tokens and circumstances, he was judged to die comfortably; and no doubt but he is fallen asleep in Jesus, and will be one of those that he will bring with him. May you, his children that survive him, tread in his steps, and imitate him in every thing praise-worthy, civil, moral and religious; attend the means of grace, and may the Lord call you by it in his due time, that you may fear and serve your father's

God, and fill up his place in the world and church. I shall close with a word or two by way of reflection on what has been said.

Since there is a ransom found and given, and God is gracious upon it, and has displayed his grace in such a wonderful manner, this may be an encouragement to sensible sinners, who are depressed with the guilt of sin, to hope in him; Let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy (Ps. 130:7), and with him is plenteous redemption: this being the case, there is no room nor reason for despair: behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world (John 5:29); look to a sin-bearing and sin-atonement Savior; his blood cleanses, and his righteousness justifies from all sin, and his sacrifice expiates all iniquity; and God for his sake forgives all trespasses. Hence true believers in Christ have great reason to rejoice and be glad, who know the ransom-price is given for them, and they are delivered upon it from deferred wrath and ruin: there ransomed ones may come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; and when faith is in exercise, and they have a comfortable view of their interest in the redeemer; may say as the apostle did, we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement (Rom. 5:11): such have reason to adore and admire distinguishing grace, and to call upon their souls, and all within them, to bless the name of the Lord, for the forgiveness of their sins, the ransom of their souls, and the redemption of their lives from destruction; and the grace displayed in all this, should teach and influence them to live soberly, righteously and godly, in this evil world.

Bierton Strict And Particular Baptists 2nd Edition

BIERTON STRICT AND
PARTICULAR BAPTISTS
2ND EDITION

David Clarke

Authored by Mr David Clarke Cert.

List Price: \$13.99

5.25" x 8" (13.335 x 20.32 cm)

Black & White on White paper

356 pages

ISBN-13: 978-1519553287 (CreateSpace-Assigned)

ISBN-10: 1519553285

BISAC: Biography & Autobiography / Religious

This book tells the story and life of David Clarke in the form of an autobiography. It is no ordinary book in that David and his brother were both notorious criminals in the 60's, living in Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, where they were MODs and were both sent to prison for and malicious wounding and carrying a fire arm without a license . They were however both converted from crime to Christ and turned their lives around.

This story tells of David's conversion to Christianity in 1970 and that of Michael's conversion, 1999 some 30 years later.

It tells of their time in HMP Canterbury Prison and David's time in HMP Wormwood Scrubs and Dover Borstal. It also tells of David's criminal activity and the crimes he committed before his miraculous conversion from crime to Christ, during a bad experience on LSD, in 1970.

It tells how he became a Christian over night and how he learned to read in order to come to a fuller

knowledge of the gospel. He learned to read through reading the bible and classical Christian literature. David tells of the events that led to him making a confession to the police about 24 crimes he had committed since leaving Dover Borstal in 1968 and of the court case where he was not sentenced. It tells how David's educated himself and went on to Higher education, and graduated with a Certificate in Education and how he went on to teach Electronics, for over 20 years, in colleges of Higher and Further Education.

It tells of his life as a member of the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist church, which was a Gospel Standard cause, and how he was called by the Lord and sent by the church to preach the gospel. David tells of the various difficulties that he faced once he discovered the many doctrinal errors amongst the various Christian groups he met and of the opposition that he experience when he sought to correct them. David recorded his experience and finding in his book "The Bierton Crisis" 1984, written to help others.

David's tells how his brother Michael was untouched by his conversion in 1970 and continued his flamboyant lifestyle ending up doing a 16 year prison sentence, in the Philippines, in 1996.

David tells how Michael too was converted to Christianity through reading C.S. Lewis's book, "Mere Christianity", and him being convinced that Jesus was the Christ the Son of the living God. David then tells of his mission to the Philippines, to bring help and assistance to Michael, in 2001 and of their joint venture in helping in the rehabilitation of many former convicted criminals, not only in New Bilibid Prison but other Jails in the Philippines.

David tells how he felt compelled to write this story in his book , "Converted On LSD Trip". once he got news of his brothers arrest, in the Philippines, via ITN Television news broadcast, in 1995. This book was published when he got news of his brothers conversion from crime to Christ in 1999, which was after serving 5 years of his 16 year sentence.

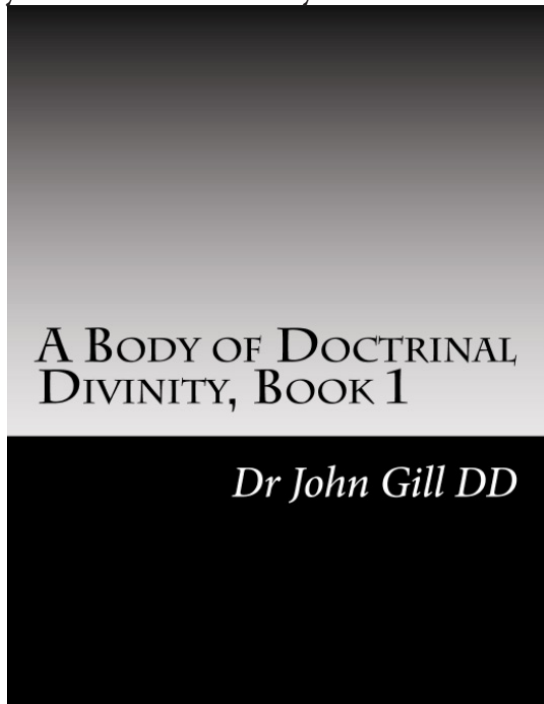
This story is told in their joint book, "Trojan Warriors", that contains the testimonies of 66 notorious criminals who too had turned there lives around, from crime to Christ, 22 of which testimonies are men on Death Row.

David say he believes his story could be of great help to any one seeking to follow the Lord Jesus

Christ but sadly Michael died in New Bilibid Prison of tuberculosis, in 2005 before their vision of bringing help to many was realized.

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A Body of Doctrinal Divinity Book



A System of Practical Truths

Authored by Dr John Gill D.D, Created by David Clarke Cert Ed

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176 pages

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BISAC: Religion / Christian Theology / Systematic

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8 Of The Omnipotence Of God.

9 Of The Omniscience Of God.

10 Of The Wisdom Of God.

11 Of The Will Of God And The Sovereignty Of It

12 Of The Love Of God

13 Of The Grace Of God.

14 Of The Mercy Of God.

15 Of The Long suffering Of God.

16 Of The Goodness Of God.

17 Of The Anger And Wrath Of God.

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27 Of A Plurality In The Godhead, Or, A Trinity Of Persons In The Unity Of The Divine Essence.

28 Of The Personal Relations; Or, Relative Properties, Which Distinguish The Three Divine Persons In The Deity.

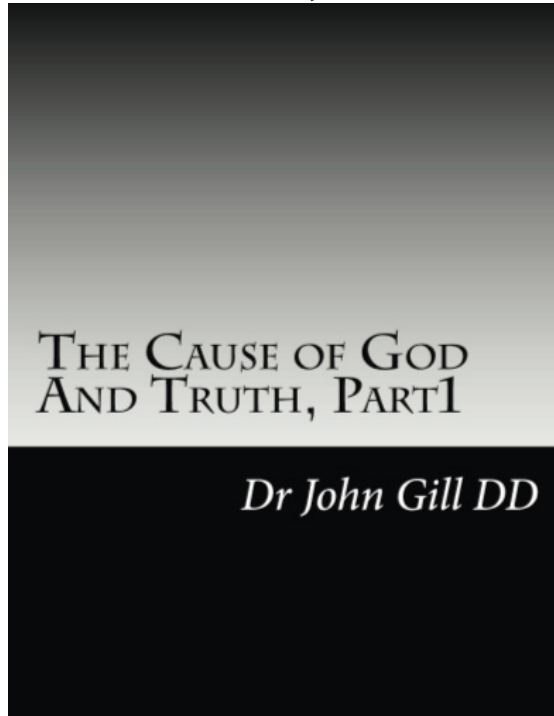
29 Of The Distinct Personality, And Deity Of The Father.

30 Of The Distinct Personality, And Deity Of The Son.

31 Of The Distinct Personality, And Deity Of The Holy Spirit.

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The Cause of God And Truth, Part 1



Authored by Dr John Gill DD, Created by David Clarke CertEd

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Black & White on White paper

94 pages

ISBN-13: 978-1544094670 (CreateSpace-Assigned)

ISBN-10: 1544094671

BISAC: Religion / Christian Theology / Systematic

The following work was undertaken and begun about the year 1733 or 1734, at which time Dr. Whitby's Discourse on the Five Points was reprinting, judged to be a masterpiece on the subject, in the English tongue, and accounted an unanswerable one ; and it was almost in the mouth of every one, as an objection to the Calvinists, Why do not ye answer Dr. Whitby ? Induced hereby, I determined to give it another reading, and found myself inclined to answer it, and thought this was a very proper and seasonable time to engage in such a work.

In the year 1735, the First Part of this work was published, in which are considered the several passages of Scripture made use of by Dr. Whitby and others in favour of the Universal Scheme, and against the Calvinistical Scheme, in which their arguments and objections are answered, and the

several passages set in a just and proper light. These, and what are contained in the following Part in favour of the Particular Scheme, are extracted from Sermons delivered in a Wednesday evening's lecture.

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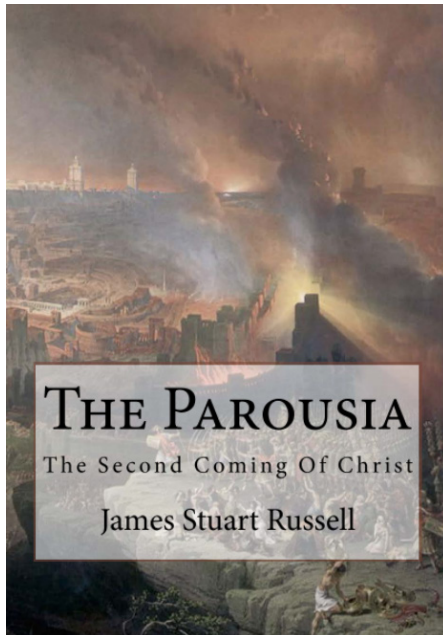
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 2 Peter 3:9.
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 Jude 1:21.
 Revelation 2 and Revelation 3.
 Revelation 3:20.
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The Parousia



The Parousia 2nd Edition: The Second Coming Of Christ

Authored by James Stuart Russell, Preface by Mr David Clarke, Preface by Dr Don K Preston DD

List Price: \$17.85

7" x 10" (17.78 x 25.4 cm)

Black & White on White paper

404 pages

ISBN-13: 978-1519610942

ISBN-10: 1519610947

BISAC: Religion / Theology

A reformation – indeed – a revolution of sorts is taking place in modern evangelical Christianity. And while many who are joining in and helping promote this movement are not even aware of it, the book you hold in your hand has contributed greatly to initiating this new reformation. This “new” movement is sometimes called full preterism, (Also, and preferably by this writer, Covenant Eschatology). It is the belief that all Bible prophecy is fulfilled.

The famous evangelist Charles H. Spurgeon was deeply impressed with the scholarly, solid research in the book, although he did not accept the “final” conclusions reached by Russell. In modern times, this work has, and continues to impress those who read it. The reason is simple, the New Testament is emphatic and unambiguous in positing Christ’s coming and the end of the age for the first century generation. To say this has troubled both scholars and laymen alike is an understatement of massive proportions.

This book first appeared in 1878 (anonymously), and again in 1887 with author attribution. The book was well known in scholarly circles primarily and attracted a good bit of attention, both positive and negative. The public, however, seemed almost unaware of the stunning conclusions and the research supporting those conclusions, until or unless they read of Russell’s work in the footnotes of the commentaries.

Scholars have recognized and grappled with this imminence element, that is the stated nearness of the day of the Lord, seldom finding satisfactory answers. Scholars such as David Strauss accused Jesus of failure. Later, Bultmann said that every school boy knows that Jesus predicted his coming and the end of the world for his generation, and every school boy knows it did not happen. C.S. Lewis also could not resolve the apparent failed eschatology. Bertrand Russell rejected Christianity due to the failed eschatology - as he perceived it - of Jesus and the Bible writers. As a result of these “skeptical” authors, modern Bible scholarship has followed in their path and Bible commentaries today almost casually assert the failure of the Bible writers - and Jesus - in their eschatological predictions.

This is where Russell’s work is of such importance. While Russell was not totally consistent with his own arguments and conclusions, nonetheless, his work is of tremendous importance and laid the groundwork for the modern revolution known as the preterist

movement.

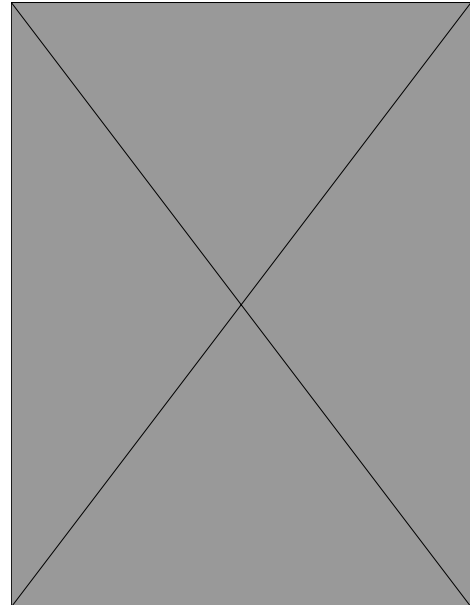
Russell systematically addressed virtually every New Testament prediction of the eschaton. With incisive clarity and logical acumen, he sweeps aside the almost trite objections to the objective nature of the Biblical language of imminence. With excellent linguistic analysis, solid hermeneutic and powerful exegetical skills, Russell shows that there is no way to deny that Jesus and his followers not only believed in a first century, end of the age parousia, but, they taught it as divine truth claiming the inspiration of the Holy Spirit as their authority.

Russell not only fully established the undeniable reality of the first century imminence of “the end,” he powerfully and carefully shares with the reader that “the end” that Jesus and the N.T. writers were anticipating was not the end of the time space continuum (end of the world). It was in fact, the end of the Old Covenant Age of Israel that arrived with the cataclysmic destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in AD 70. Russell properly shows how the traditional church has so badly missed the incredible significance of the end of that Old Covenant Age.

Russell’s work is a stunning rejection – and corrective -- of what the “Orthodox” historical “Creedal” church has and continues to affirm. The reader may well find themselves wondering how the “divines” missed it so badly! Further, the reader will discover that Russell’s main arguments are an effective, valid and true assessment of Biblical eschatology. And make no mistake, eschatology matters.

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Difficulties Associated With Articles Of Religion Among Particular Baptists: Second Edition



Authored by David Clarke

List Price: \$7.00

8.5” x 11” (21.59 x 27.94 cm)

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72 pages

ISBN-13: 978-1976541438

ISBN-10: 1976541433

BISAC: Religion / Christian Theology / Systematic

Articles of religion or confessions of faith are used to inform others of what a person, a church or society believe with respect to religious beliefs. Some churches restrict membership to those who will subscribe to their articles of religion. One of the problems that this brings is that there comes a time when a new believer cannot, in conscience, subscribe to a tenet of belief that they do not understand. It may be the article is badly worded or poorly written or may, in fact, be in error. In which case a new believer could not in conscience subscribe to something they do not understand. Or it may be a member of the church begins to realize their articles of religion are in error.

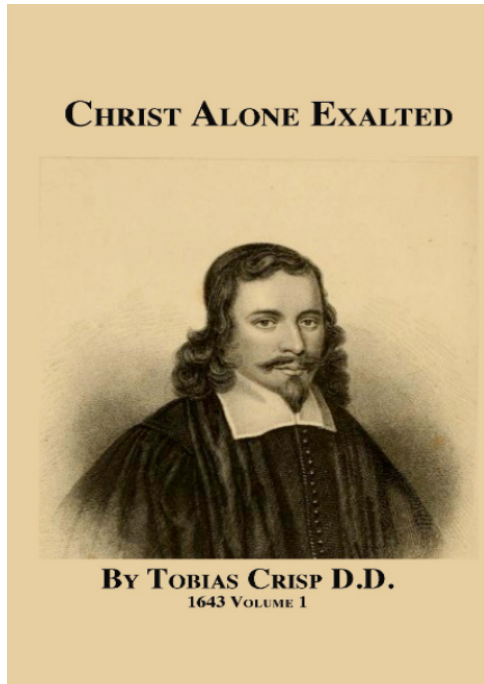
This book seeks to inform of the difficulties that articles of religion among Particular Baptists have experienced since the first London Baptists 1646 2nd Edition was published and offers an alternative solution to this problem.

This book contains the First Particular Baptists London Confession 1646 2nd Edition, The Second London Baptists Confession 1689, Bierton Particular Baptists 1831, The Gospel Standard articles of religion

1878 and Bierton Particular Baptists, Pakistan 2016 with observations of the difficulties that have proven difficult, in the past.

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Christ Alone Exalted: Volume 1



Authored by Tobias Crisp D.D., Authored by David Clarke

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5.5" x 8.5" (13.97 x 21.59 cm)

Black & White on White paper

266 pages

ISBN-13: 978-1535296922 (CreateSpace-Assigned)

ISBN-10: 1535296925

BISAC: Religion / Christian Theology / Soteriology

Tobias Crisp was preacher of the gospel in England. He was born in 1600 and died in 1643 at which time these 13 sermons were first published. Within 3 years further sermons were published in further volumes this is the first. He lived at the time when The First London Baptist Confession of Faith 1644 was being prepared for publishing and it is clear from these sermons he taught Calvinistic truths. He preached the doctrines of grace and was charged with being an Antinomian and provoked opposition from various quarters. Dr John Gill in defence of Crisp republished these sermons along with his own notes showing that Tobias Crisp taught clearly the truths of the lord Jesus Christ

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